

Miners' Jesus T-Shirts Spark Flood of Interest

A Jesus T-shirt worn by several Chilean miners during their miraculous rescue this week has created a “deluge” of public interest and may soon be widely available for purchase, with the proceeds benefiting the miners' families.

A gift from Campus Crusade for Christ Chile, the tan T-shirts read “Gracias Senor! (Thank you, Lord!) on the front, and on the back is a reference to Psalm 95:4, which says, “In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also.” A logo for Campus Crusade's The Jesus Film Project is on the left sleeve.

Since several of the 33 trapped miners donned the shirts over their coveralls as they were being pulled from Chile's San Jose mine this week, Campus Crusade for Christ has been “deluged” with requests for the shirts, said Greg Gregoire, director of operations for the Orlando, evangelistic ministry.

Seventeen days into the miners' ordeal, Campus Crusade for Christ Chile director Christian Maureira made contact with the family of Jose Henriquez, one of the trapped miners who also is an evangelical pastor.

Responding to Henriquez's request for spiritual materials, Maureira sent an MP3 audio version of the New Testament in Spanish and an MP3 audio version of the Jesus film, an evangelistic movie about the life of Jesus that has been translated into more than 1,100 languages.

Henriquez later sent Maureira a letter through one of the narrow tubes that became the miners' lifeline. It said: “Thank you for this tremendous blessing for me and my coworkers. It will be good for our spiritual edification. I am fine because Christ lives in me. We have prayer services at 12 noon and 6

p.m.," according to an account given to CNN. He closed the letter with Psalm 95:4.

Gregoire said the miners later asked for something to demonstrate their spiritual solidarity, and the idea for the T-shirts was born. Maureira told Baptist Press the miners even gave input on the design of the shirt.

Maureira is currently seeking to register the T-shirt design, and if approved Campus Crusade will begin printing them. Any revenue would benefit the miners.

"[Maureira] is not taking advantage of it to make money for the ministry," Gregoire said. "All of our ministries are there to serve people and serve the body of Christ, and that's exactly what he's doing there."

Since being trapped 2,300 feet underground Aug. 5 when a partial collapse blocked the mine exit, several miners have testified of their faith in God.

After his rescue, Mario Sepulveda said he buried 40 years of his life down in the mine. "God and the devil were fighting over me and God won," he said. "I always knew they would get me out. I always had faith in the professionals here in Chile and in the Great Creator."

In a letter sent above ground before his rescue, the youngest miner, 19-year-old Jimmy Sanchez, said there were actually 34 in the mine "because God has never left us down here," Time magazine reported.

Bolivian Carlos Mamani and Omar Reygadas knelt down as soon as they were rescued and gave thanks to God. Reygadas held a Bible in his hands and wore a helmet with "God lives" written on it.

Only time will tell whether the miners remain committed to Christ, especially those who came to faith during the ordeal.

But with all the media attention their rescue generated, Gregoire said the miners' testament of faith could have broad resonance.

"I think if the Christian community learns to take advantage of opportunities like this, they can use it to initiate and continue spiritual discussions with their friends and neighbors and family members," he said. "Media has created talking points for us to discuss our faith, to tell our story. If we neglect that then we're wasting an opportunity God's given us."

Maureira hopes the miraculous rescue will also be a defining moment for Chile, a nation he describes as humanistic and secularist. He told Baptist Press the situation has caused Chileans to "accept that we are a Christian community."

"With these T-shirts, we want to tell [Chileans] it is the plan of God and the glory of God," Maureira said. "God is in this situation. That was the mission, and we completed the mission."