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CHRISTIAN TODAY

SIMPLY LET YOUR 'YES' BE 'YES', AND YOUR 'NO', 'NO'. (MT 5:37)

MISSIONS

Open Doors' Brother Andrew Reflects on 50th Anniversary

by Eunice K. Y. Or

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Friday, 15th July marks the 50th Anniversary of Open Doors, the oldest international ministry to support persecuted Christians. From a press release, the founder Brother Andrew reflects on past, present and future of the ministry.

The history of Open Doors dates back to the age of the Iron Curtain in Europe. On 15th July 1955, the young Dutch missionary Brother Andrew made his first trip behind the Iron Curtain, as he travelled by train into Poland with his suitcase bulging with Christian booklets. Through this, he discovered Christians behind the Iron Curtain desperately needed the Word of God. This is the humble start of his ministry.

He shared in the press release about his feelings back then, "It was an eye opener in every aspect. I found churches and a Bible society that we knew nothing about. I also found there was a great lack of Bibles but lots of enthusiasm."

A story he had heard has inspired him deeply and gave him determination to start the ministry. Brother Andrew recalled, "I heard from the Bible Society Director, Mr. Enholm, who told me stories about professional smugglers who would come to his shop, buy 10 Russian Bibles, smuggle them across the border into Russia and make a fortune... I thought, if people do that for the love of money, unbelievers taking such a risk, how much more we should go over there and take the Bibles to the Russians."

Since then, Brother Andrew has devoted himself in taking the Bible or Christian literature to countries where Christians are being persecuted. The work of Open Doors broadened from Europe to China, Vietnam and later Africa and the Muslim World, including many places that Western Christians have never explored. Today, Open Doors is working in approximately 60 countries.

In addition, Open Doors conducts Bible-based literacy classes, discipleship training and vocational training as well as providing practical aid for suffering Christians.

Official figures from 2003 reveals that Open Doors delivered almost 4 million Bibles, children's Bibles, study Bibles and other scriptural books to persecuted Christians. It has trained 22,000 pastors and church leaders across the world in the same year.

When asked about how it is possible that the ministry for persecuted Christians can come to this point of success in 50 years, Brother Andrew humbly replied that is all by the guidance of God.

He admitted that the ministry is too big and has too much responsibility that he would not like to take. However, he said, "Fortunately, God only shows us one step at a time. One step we can take. If we do that then the Lord sees how we land on one foot, then the other. If you accept responsibility and grow spiritually, then God will show you the next step."

Even though currently Brother Andrew is very grateful and satisfied with what has been amazingly achieved by Open Doors with limited resources, he forecasted that the challenge of persecution on Christians will be greater because the conflict in the world is increasing. He noted that is what the whole end-time theology of the Scriptures and specifically the Book of Revelation has taught.

Brother Andrew urged Christians to be ready to connect to the Persecuted Church and learn from it as God is the God of unity, there is no difference in standard to be called as a Christian. In addition, persecuted churches have an increasing influence in the society.

For the Persecuted Churches, Brother Andrew said that prayer is most important for them. He said, "God is building his Church but you and I have to help. We have to witness, we have to be obedient to the Great Commission, we must supply the needs, we must go and say what can we do for you."

He described the mission of Open Doors, "...like a cry of distress, an SOS from God, 'strengthen what remains and is at the point of death.'"

Brother Andrew also delivered his message to all Christians in the press release amid Open Doors' 50th Anniversary, "The Church needs to accept the fact that there is a suffering church and repent of our lack of understanding and compassion. We have not taken good care of one another and unless we do that, there will be no change in our culture which is getting worse and worse all the time, declining in moral spirituality and church influence."

According to Open Doors, an estimated 200 million Christians worldwide suffer interrogation, arrest and even death for their faith in Christ, with another 200 to 400 million facing discrimination and alienation.