

Carlos René Padilla-Jijón



C. René Padilla was born in Quito, the capital city of Ecuador, on October 12, 1932. His parents, Carlos Padilla and Dolores Jijón, became Christians at the inauguration of the first evangelical church in Quito, December 3, 1922. René was the fourth of seven children. When he was two years old, due to economic reasons his family moved to Sevilla, in the fertile southwest province of Valle in Colombia, and two years later to the city of Bogotá. René's parents were tailors and worked long hours at home to support the growing family. René remembers the generosity of his mother in spite of the family's scarcity. He also remembers his father's eagerness to evangelize and to read.

Due to religious persecution the family moved back to Ecuador when René was twelve years old. After graduating from high school, René was accepted at Wheaton College, outside of Chicago, Illinois, where he received his B.A. (1957) in philosophy, with a minor in Greek, and his M.A. (1960) in theology proper. In 1957 he visited his family in Ecuador and then returned to Wheaton by land. On the way he visited Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. This trip gave him an excellent firsthand view of the needs of Latin America.

During the missions conferences at Urbana in 1954 and 1957 he heard the challenge to get involved in student ministry. Stacy Woods phoned René with an invitation to go with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) to Central America immediately after the 1957 Urbana conference, an invitation René did not accept because he wanted to finish his studies at Wheaton College Graduate School. He had the opportunity to participate in the first Latin American IFES student conference, held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 1958. In July of 1959, he formally joined the IFES team in Latin America. In January of 1961 he married Catharine Ruth Feser, whom he had met at Wheaton College. Catharine had joined the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) as a staff worker in Nebraska and South Dakota. Her experience with IVCF (the US student movement affiliated to the IFES) was a strong asset for their student ministry in Latin America. Shortly after their wedding they went to live in Bogotá, Colombia, where their first child, Ruth, was born. René's "parish" included Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Two years later the family moved to Quito, Ecuador.

In 1963 René had the opportunity to pursue doctoral studies in New Testament under the tutelage of New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce at the University of Manchester, where he graduated in 1965. After his studies in the United Kingdom, the Padillas moved to Lima, Perú, and René became the first Latin American General Secretary of IFES for Latin America. In that capacity he traveled across the continent, recruiting new staff, organizing student conferences, and speaking at evangelistic rallies in universities and colleges. In 1967 the family moved to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to oversee *Ediciones Certeza*, the Spanish publication ministry of IFES. In 1972, René was