



Father Manuel Lopez
(By Wirephoto)

Cuban Exiles Begin Prayers for Liberation

MIAMI (AP)—Cuban exiles have begun a prayer campaign for the overthrow of Fidel Castro, something the exiles themselves have failed to accomplish in nearly 10 years of revolutionary plotting.

The campaign leader, the Rev. Manuel Lopez of Miami, said more than 200,000 persons have joined it. That is about two-fifths of all Cubans in exile.

Father Lopez, a Roman Catholic expelled from Cuba in 1961 with 113 other clerics, is chaplain of the sponsoring organization, the Union of Cubans in Exile. It has headquarters in Caracas, Venezuela, and members in 16 countries and 21 U.S. states, he said.

"I have faith that Cuba will be liberated this year," said Father Lopez. "The hand of God strikes like lightning when people have faith."

'Gained Momentum'

The prayer campaign, Father Lopez said, began on a small scale two years ago. It has gained momentum recently with what he called the growing realization that divine help is needed in achieving the objective.

"We have received letters from more than 67,000 families saying they are participating in the campaign," Father Lopez said.

"A miracle can happen. It can be an assassination, an accident or a coup d'etat. And when Fidel Castro falls, it's all over. Fidel is the idol," he said.

Each participating family agrees to pray a decade of the rosary daily to the Virgin of Charity, Cuba's Catholic patroness, asking the liberation of Cuba from communism. The decade consists of one Our Father and 10 Ave Marias.

In addition, each Saturday there are special prayer sessions for exiles in Miami area Catholic churches.

A recent Cuban prayer session at the Miami site of a projected shrine to the Virgin of Charity outdrew any anti-Castro war rally ever held there. A traffic policeman at the entrance estimated that over a period of several hours more than 20,000 arrived to pray. The same day, an anti-Castro rally at Miami Stadium drew fewer than 200 persons.

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