

PRAYER GUIDE # 3

BASQUE ECONOMY

(18) This new economic direction provided new impulse for development within the Basque Country. Bigger and better ships were needed to move raw material. And within the Basque country, railroads. Even today, the Basques still have significant impact worldwide in both of these two transportation areas. Another critical advance in their economy was the need to develop multiple banking companies. And finally, the development of major cities occurred to provide a larger pool of workers and drive all this new economy.

PRAYER QUESTION: How important has the economic development within the Basque Country been to the overall shape of life there today?

(19) One observation needs to be made. There is an enormous difference in the wealth and power between the Spanish Basque Country and the French Basque Country in relation to the overall economies of their respective nations. The French Basque Country is the poorest region of France. The Spanish Basque Country is the wealthiest region of Spain. There are many reasons for this disparity. The size of the French Basque Country is much smaller than the Spanish Basque Country. Administratively, the French Basque Country is included in a larger region of France. Spain is made up of seventeen autonomous regions. Nafarroa is a region by itself. Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Araba form a second autonomous region known as the Basque Country. See our first prayer guide to better understand the relative difference in size (square kilometers) and population between the Spanish and French parts. **PRAYER QUESTION:** How important is the size (think "resources") and population (think "workforce") for the economic wealth for any given area?

(20) The following table (numbers from 1998 and 1999) will give you a better idea of the population concentration in the major cities of the Basque Country.

Territory	Population	Capital	Population	Territory	% Capital to
Araba	286,177	Vitoria-Gasteiz	217,639		75.9%
Bizkaia	1,139,012	Bilbao	256,045		31.2%
Gipuzkoa	678,871	San Sebastian	179,336		26.4%
Nafarroa	538,009	Pamplona	80,483		33.5%
French Basque	262,311	Bayonne	40,113		15.3%

Note at least two things. Compare French Basque to each of the four Spanish Provinces in terms of overall population and Capital to Territory %. Obviously, French Basque is much, much more rural in terms of where people live. Second, examine the Capital to Territory % of the Spanish provinces. Think about the radical change reflected in those numbers as compared to the old lifestyle of small self-sufficient farms throughout the Basque Country. **PRAYER QUESTION:** How important is it to reach the cities for Christ in the Basque Country or any other nation?

(21) The following table shows the distribution of the employed population by sector. (numbers from 1999)

Sector	French Basque	Nafarroa	Basque Country
Agriculture, livestock, fishing, forests	6.3%	6.5%	2.5%
Industry	14.8%	31.4%	31.8%
Business	6.6%	9.1%	7.0%
Services	72.2%	53%	58.7%

Note how small the more traditional forms of employment are across the Basque Country. How much more important is industry in the Spanish Basque Country (Nafarroa & Basque Country) than in French Basque? Services reflect, among other things, the tourism industry. The French Basque Country is most famous as a tourism destination – especially along the coast. Tourism is also important in the Spanish Basque Country. **PRAYER QUESTION:** How much has employment patterns changed with the Basque Country over the past 100 years?

(22) Unemployment in the Basque Country is a difficult area. Here are the numbers for 1999.

Unemployed	French Basque	Nafarroa	Basque Country
Unemployed	14,855	18,300	149,400
25 and older	28.8%	15%	32.60%
Total	13 %	8.1%	15.50%
Women	16%	14.3%	22.70%
Men	10%	4.2%	10.70%

Two additional notes, unemployment in the Basque Country actually peaked in 1996 at 22% and is now falling. Second, unemployment is an acute problem in all parts, exceeding 25% in most all areas. **PRAYER QUESTION:** How difficult is the employment situation in the Basque Country...especially for young people?

(23) Basques are still known as a hard-working, industrious people. In our country, they were known as sheepherders in the western U.S., not because they were trained in that style of sheep herding (it is a very different type of work in the Basque Country as compared to former days in the U.S.), but because they were willing to work at a difficult employment when others were not. In Australia, they went there intending to herd sheep, but when they realized that other people did not want to cut sugarcane (another very difficult kind of work), they moved into that sector and achieved success there. **PRAYER QUESTION:** How important is work ethic in any society?

(24) As previously noted, there are Basques scattered all around the world. There seem to be two primary reasons for this. First, there were waves of refugees during different periods of conflict in the Basque Country. Some of those people chose to stay where they had been placed. Second and more common, in the large Basque family, the oldest son received the family land. Other siblings had to look in other places for employment. Many chose to look abroad, earn their fortune through hard work, and then return home. Many chose to stay in their new countries. **PRAYER QUESTION:** In the case of the United States, many people around the world still view this as a place to come, a land of opportunity. How would life be different if you had to think of going to a different country to make a life for yourself?

(25) Finally, Basques have often seemed to "move up" in their new countries. In the case of the Spanish colonies, they started out with many advantages over others and used that for their good. But in many other parts of the world, through hard work, they still improved themselves. In the American west, sheepherders became sheep owners. In Australia, cane cutters became cane owners. They also moved up into different positions of prominence. A good example would be former U.S. Senator Paul Laxalt from Nevada. When he retired from the U.S. Senate, he was a widely respected and influential member of our nation's government. In this country, Basques can be found in all walks of life, and apparently the overwhelming majority of them have done well! **PRAYER QUESTION:** How far would you have to go to discover and get to know a Basque that lives near you?

Hopefully, you can see how economy has shaped the history and development of the Basque people. You also have discovered how widespread they are around the world. Where will you start in your study to learn more about them? Would it be possible to find Basques living close to you? Discovering Basques who are also believers in Jesus Christ could provide a huge step forward in our ministry to this unreached people group. Will you continue to study the Basques? Will you look around to see if you might have a Basque neighbor, and, potentially, a Basque friend?

The title of this prayer guide will probably surprise most of you. But if you will use it for a few months, I believe that a couple of things will happen. #1 – You will come to learn a lot more about the Basque people, and, in doing so, understand them better. #2 – you will find new ways in which you can pray for them NOW! These are the two reasons for preparing each of these guides. A third benefit MAY be to learn about some other books from which you can do some further reading.

My two primary sources for this guide are two books published by the University of Nevada/Reno Press: (1) Basque Economy by Mikel Gómez Uranga and the first two chapters of (2) Amerikanuak by William Douglass and Jon Bilbao. The first book I have asked for twice through inter-library loan. The second book I now have thanks to a gift from a special friend at Reno.

(1) There are several "ancient keys" to present Basque economy, a unique system of "old government", a land rich in iron ore and timber, a people "at home" on the sea, and even large family sizes. But no key is more essential to understanding the Basques as a people group than their small, self-sufficient, family farms so we will begin there. **PRAYER QUESTIONS:** a. How do you understand the word "self-sufficient"? (positive or negative?) b. Without knowing anything about their ancient farm system, how would you imagine it functioning with those accompanying adjectives "self-sufficient" and "small"?

(2) By small, I mean SMALL – four to eight hectares (approx. 10 to 20 U.S. acres) of land. Yet except for wheat (think "bread") and sometimes meat or wine, the family farm produced everything that was needed except for the extra cash used to buy extras or barter for other essentials that might not be at the farm at a given time. Up until about fifty to seventy years ago, this way of life had stayed largely unchanged for hundreds of years. **PRAYER QUESTIONS:** a. How important do you think that farm machinery or even farm animals (horses, oxen, etc.) are to the Basques? b. What do you imagine their "work ethic" is like?

(3) Historically, the Basques were not wealthy, but they had "enough". The following is a quote entitled "Enough". The quote is NOT Basque. "There is something perverse about more than enough. When we have more, we never have enough. It is always somewhere out there, just out of reach. The more we acquire, the more elusive 'enough' becomes." Until quite recently, most Basques understood "enough" and were content with that. **PRAYER QUESTION:** How long ago did we lose the concept of "enough" in our country and culture?

(4) While Basques had small family farms, the surrounding woods and mountains were open to free exploitation by all residents – as either communal land or the property of the municipality or village. Each community had common pasture lands. People could harvest timber or mine (especially iron ore) as they wanted to do so. That arrangement was established and maintained through the "fueros" – their ancient system of government. This ancient form of government was actually one of several that were studied by our forefathers as they considered "fueros" – their ancient system of government. This ancient form of government was actually one of several that were studied by our forefathers as they considered the type of government that they wanted to establish in "America". Some of the basic principles in our "Declaration of Independence" and "Constitution" came from the Basques! **PRAYER QUESTION:** Have you ever heard anything about this? Why do you think not?

(5) The following quote is taken from a book entitled “The Old Law of Bizkaia” and published by the University of Nevada, Reno Press. (Note: Bizkaia is one of the seven provinces of the traditional Basque Country) the speaker is John Adams, eventual second president of the United States, who visited Bizkaia in 1779. “In a research like this, after those people in Europe who have had the skill, courage and fortune, to preserve a voice in the government, Bizzay, in Spain, ought by no means to be omitted. While their neighbors have long since resigned all their pretensions into the hands of kings and priests, this extraordinary people have preserved their ancient language, genius, laws, government, and manners, without innovations, longer than any other nation of Europe.” **PRAYER QUESTION:** Do we, in the United States, owe a debt of gratitude to the Basques for their “fueros”?

(6) Even reading the six pages of preface of the book mentioned above – the preface is written by William Douglass – would help you to answer the question above in the affirmative. (I apologize for not having the name of the author of this book at my fingertips as I was writing this guide.) Douglass writes: “The most modern and extraordinary aspects of the Old Law were its treatments of both women and the rights of the individual....Of particular interest, and an ancient echo of fundamental rights within Occidental law, were the defendant’s immunity from double jeopardy and the right of habeas corpus. The Old Law was explicit in this regard more than two centuries before England’s vaunted and ostensibly watershed Habeas Corpus Act of 1679!” **PRAYER QUESTION:** Do you feel indebted enough to ask through inter-library loan for a copy of the book to further investigate the “fueros” our “Old Law” of the Basques?

(7) What happened to the “fueros”? A first major event in their decline was the French Revolution in 1789. This movement dismantled the institutional framework of that day, which included the idea of public and private rights. The new ideas of “economic freedom” and individual private property (a beginning of capitalism?) also stood directly opposed to communal or municipal land that was so essential to the Basque way of life. As a result, there was no longer widespread access to municipal grazing lands nor communal timber and mining options and its resulting cash income for the Basque villagers. People had to earn a living with farming (extremely difficult to do with such small land holdings) or decide to pursue other occupations. The “enough” of the old way of life became more and more difficult to maintain, and “enough” was not enough for a growing number of people. **PRAYER QUESTION:** In our system of capitalism and its accompanying desires to acquire more, is contentment still a realistic goal for the masses?

(8) The common Basques did not give up their “fueros” without a fight. In Spain, there were two Carlist Wars (1833-39) and (1872-76) fought, in one sense, over the question of succession rights to the throne of Spain. But in reality, the struggle was over a complicated mix of different opinions regarding: (1) the place of a strong central government as opposed to maintaining different “autonomous regions” that were Spain until the time of Franco – including the Basque fueros, (2) the place and power of the Catholic Church in Spain, (3) a desire to embrace the new thinking of the French Revolution or to reject it, (4) a desire to “be progressive” or continue in the old ways. Basques fought on both sides of the conflict as well as people from other regions. For that reason, some historians view the Carlist Wars as a type of Civil War. Change and a strong central government prevailed. The law abolishing the “fueros” was enacted in 1876. It would take another Civil War (1931-36) and forty years of Franco’s dictatorship to solidify the nation of Spain as we think of it today. **PRAYER QUESTION:** We know how difficult the American Civil War was for our nation. How difficult do you think the past 200 years have been for the Basques?

(9) Add to that “ambience of conflict” the realization that three provinces of the Basque Country ended up in French hands (many years earlier) and there was much conflict before, during that long process, and even afterwards for many years between forces in France and Spain and between Basques themselves, and you can start to understand how much upheaval has occurred in that little corner of the world. In a real sense, the formation of the European Community opened the border between those long divided parts of the Basque Country, since both France and Spain are original members of that entity. **PRAYER QUESTION:** One problem with a long history is that, oftentimes, that story can be one of great conflict and upheaval. How much has life in the Basque Country changed and how much of that has been brought about by conflict?

(10) Traditionally, Basques have earned their living as subsistence farmers, shepherds, and fishermen. The Basques were among the first people to do commercial whaling. The French Basques were also cod fishing off the North American Eastern coast before Columbus discovered the New World. You can read of their footprint there in Operation World, the entry for St Pierre & Miquelon, eight rocky islands at the mouth of Canada’s St. Lawrence River. The people of that tiny area are “French of predominantly Breton and Basque origin”. Spanish Basques were also a huge part of Columbus’ initial voyage. The flag-ship, the Santa Maria, was Basque owned and manned, and the crew of the Niña was largely Basque. They were also the part of his crew that threatened to throw him overboard when they realized that he sailed farther than the 750 leagues to the west that he had promised when leaving Spain. **PRAYER QUESTION:** How large a role did the Basques play in the discovery of the New World?

(11) Who was the first man to sail around the world? Our history books give that credit to Magellan, right? WRONG! Magellan started that voyage with five ships and 265 men. He was killed in the Philippines. Only one ship made it back to Spain with 18 men. That ship was led by Joan Sebastian Elkano. You can visit the tiny town of Getaria today and see the statue of their native son overlooking the ocean. You can look at the list of sailors & explorers for any of the New World trips and discover that Basques figured very prominently in many of them – especially as navigators...just like Elkano! **PRAYER QUESTION?** What other roles did Basques play besides that of discoverers?

(12) One key role has already been alluded to. Because of their long history on the sea, they were master ship builders. Many of the ships that traveled back and forth between Europe and the New World were made in the Basque Country. Another idea that has been mentioned previously is also of great importance in this discussion. The materials for making ships – timber and iron ore -- were also in great abundance and freely available to those who wanted to use them. **PRAYER QUESTION:** How important would ship building be in an age of exploration and later an Industrial Revolution?

(13) There is another interesting consideration as well – an advantage given the Basques through their “fueros”. Among other things, the ancient law specified these rights – exemption from taxes on any maritime activity and the freedom of every Vizcayan to engage in commerce. It was actually less expensive for Basques to do commerce by sea than overland through Spain. The “fueros” also granted Vizcayans universal nobility, which gave them important privileges and opportunities in other parts of Spain. Finally, they had an exemption from military service outside the Basque Country. **PRAYER QUESTION:** How many other advantages were afforded the Basques by their ancient law? I will give no more insights in this guide but further study on your part and mine will almost certainly uncover other ideas!

(14) What comes after exploration in history? Colonization. The Basques had two huge advantages here as well. I have already given you all you need to know understand both of these ideas...if you can “connect the dots”. First, their traditional life of small, self-sufficient farms gave them all the skills necessary to survive in the New World except one. Their history of conflict with outside invaders provided that missing piece. They were known as good fighters, even mercenaries. When a wealthy businessman from Sevilla planned to organize a colony in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, the first city of the new world, which people do you think he tried to recruit to make that happen? Yes, 200 Basques families! **PRAYER QUESTION:** Can you imagine how a group of people could be more ideally positioned to colonize the New World for Spain than the Basques?

(15) Delve into the history of nearly any colony of the Spanish Empire – especially South and Central America – and you will find that the Basques played a major role at one point or another. In our nation’s history, excluding the Spanish southwest, Basques have come primarily at a later time in our history and primarily as gold seekers to California and then sheepherders throughout the west (and they came initially more from other Spanish colonies than directly from the Basque Country), but in those places where Spain ruled, the Basques were among the aristocracy -- people of power, influence and ability to get things accomplished. You can still find them throughout Central and South America as well as all fifty states of our country! **PRAYER QUESTION:** How much presence and influence do Basques have throughout the world?

(16) A great example of this Basque influence over the development of an entire nation is the Royal Guipuzkoan Company of Caracas (Venezuela). You can find a more complete summary of this story in Amerikanak, chapter two, pages 85 (last line) to 94. Venezuela, from its beginning in 1498, was one of the most remote outposts of the Spanish Empire. From 1498 to the 1730’s, it was actually a drain on the Spanish crown, requiring more funds to administer it than it generated for Spain through trade and taxes. Its major export was cacao, which was becoming more and more popular in Europe. But there was actually more trade occurring with Dutch and other contrabandists than the Spanish government. The contrabandists paid much more than the Spanish! In light of the situation, private Basque interests along with the government of Gipuzkoa presented a grand plan to colonize Venezuela and form a trading company. In 1728, the king of Spain agreed to the plan and granted a 20-year contract to the Royal Gipuzkoan Company of Caracas. Thus began an arrangement that lasted more than fifty years and literally transformed Venezuela into a productive colony and a major focus of Basque immigration. **PRAYER QUESTION:** In how many other ways did Basque interests shape entire nations of Central and South America?

(17) Another watershed event in world history played right to the strengths of the Basque people. That event was the Industrial Revolution. That event began in England and the Basques played a crucial role in that process – first in England, then other parts of Europe and in our country as well. Can you begin to guess why, based on what has been shared up to this point? Of first importance was their long-standing tradition of shipbuilding. Basques built many of the ships that drove the Industrial Revolution. Second, they provided a qualified workforce in all different kinds of areas. But perhaps most important of all, they had an abundance of iron ore, the crucial raw material for the modern steel industry. The quantity of extracted ore increased from 70,000 metric tons in 1860 to 250,000 tons just ten years later. In 1880, 2,684,000 tons were extracted, but only 71,000 tons was used in Basque steel mills. Over 90% of the extracted ore was exported. Their main client? England. **PRAYER QUESTION:** How important was Basque iron ore to the Industrial Revolution of England?