

The Gospel News

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January, 2001

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A New Nation Receives the Gospel of Jesus Christ

By Evangelist Paul Liberto

The great commission, given by Jesus Christ in Matthew 28, has rung out through the ages. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Thank

God! The Gospel has been taken to another nation in South America, Colombia, and the Church is now established there.

One can only marvel at how God draws men and women to Him through Jesus Christ and then uses them to draw others. The work in Colombia is a wonderful example of this drawing power. God began to

work in the life of Sister Rocio Conte, of Detroit, Michigan, in the year 1992. Sister Rocio was miraculously spared from death after being shot twice in the back by an assailant. In October, 1996 she was given a marvelous dream wherein she was forgiven of her sins and was shown a man whom God promised would be her husband before the end of the year. She was told that the man chosen for her was a child of God, and that he would lead her to the right ways of the Lord. Later, she was given another dream in which she saw a great church established in Colombia.

In November, 1996, Brother Salvatore Conte felt directed to travel to Colombia with the hope of meeting a woman to marry. He met Sister Rocio, and immediately recognized him as the man in her dream. They eventually married and Sister Rocio was baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ in Detroit, Michigan. She recognized that The Church of Jesus Christ is the only church that fulfills everything the scriptures require. From the moment she met the Church, she had a desire to see the Gospel go to her native country of Colombia. She began to tell her family about the Church and



The Church of Jesus Christ in Colombia.

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Church in Colombia

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eventually they visited with her in Detroit. They expressed an interest in having the Church in Colombia and vowed that they would prepare a place for the Church to meet.

At the same time God was working with Sister Rocio, He was also directing the brothers of the Americas Missionary Operating Committee to visit the country of Colombia. The New Works subcommittee had already established missions in Venezuela and Peru and was desirous to visit other countries in South America. Colombia was not their first choice because of great dangers involved in traveling to that country. After much fasting and prayer, however, God made it plain to all that it was time to go there.

Plans were coordinated with Brother Salvatore and Sister Rocio to visit their family in Bogata, Colombia from August 26 to September 4, 2000. Sister Rocio reported that the family had been working hard to prepare a place to meet and was ready to accommodate all who would come. It was decided that Apostle Issac D. Smith, Evangelist Paul Liberto, and Brother Alan Metzler would travel to Bogata with the Conte's. Later in the week, they would also be joined by Brother Miguel and Sister Melissa Bicelis. Brother Salvatore would serve as language translator until the arrival of Brother Miguel.

All of the travelers believed that God would protect them and be with them throughout their missionary journey. They knew that God was coordinating their efforts and that He would take care of everything. However, none of them were prepared for the graciousness of their hosts, the care they would be given, or the desire of the people to welcome the Church to their country.

The group was met at the airport by Sister Rocio's family. After a joyous welcome, they were directed to a small rented bus and given a police motorcycle escort (one of Sister Rocio's brothers is a policeman) to the Torres home. When the bus

arrived, Brother Salvatore and Sister Rocio were stunned to see that the home had been completely transformed. The ground floor was completely remodeled, a second story was added, and a small chapel had been built on the roof – all in preparation for The Church of Jesus Christ! It was very touching to see that the preparations were made with great faith that the Church would come. When the brothers stepped into the chapel, with the name of the Church already on the wall, a beautiful lectern in place, and chairs waiting to be filled, they were touched by the efforts and love of the Torres family. When the brothers learned the family is not wealthy, and they borrowed a lot of money to accommodate emissaries



Bro. Isaac Smith speaking in tongues as he greets newly baptized Bro. Juan Carlos Torres.

from the Church, they were blessed to an even greater extent. Even though it was late, a meal was served and the brothers spent several hours fellowshiping with family and friends.

The first service in the country of Colombia was conducted on Sunday, August 27th. There were 26 adults in attendance. Each of the brothers expressed themselves giving an overview of the Church and expressing their delight in being there. They anointed 17 people for physical and spiritual needs. God's spirit was evident during the service. The congregation was moved to tears and Apostle Isaac spoke in the gift of tongues while a young woman was being anointed for spiritual strength.

Throughout their stay in Colombia, the brothers met together in

prayer in the morning and visited families and anointed the sick in the afternoon. Services were conducted every night.

On Monday evening, the brothers gave a presentation on the "Holy Ghost." There were 18 adults in attendance.

On Tuesday evening, they talked about "Why the Bible and Book of Mormon must be used together." There were 22 adults present and three people were anointed. After the service, the brothers were privileged to witness a reconciliation of the Torres family. Sister Rocio's mother and her three sisters had been estranged from each other for some time. The family felt that, with the Church present, it would be a good time to discuss their differences and try to get together. The Spirit of God was evident during the meeting as the entire family embraced each other and cried tears of joy as they reconciled. The family felt that the reconciliation could not have taken place without the support of the Church. That evening, Apostle Isaac woke up in the middle of the night with the song, *I Surrender All*, going through his mind. He could not sleep for several hours as he continued to hear the words of the song. The next morning, as Brother Alan was discussing the Church with one of the family, Sister Rocio's mother, Maria Sol Torres, was sitting nearby silently listening. She began to cry and then interrupted the conversation, telling Brother Alan that she desired to "surrender all" and be baptized!

Prior to the service on Wednesday evening, there were over 50 in attendance for a "fiesta" prepared by the Torres family. Afterwards, 32 adults and several children remained for the service. The congregation was in anticipation of the arrival of Brother Miguel Bicelis later in the service. The brothers had struggled all week to teach the congregation songs in Spanish and promised "better singing" when Brother Miguel arrived. After a short sermon was delivered on the "peace that only Jesus can give," Brother Miguel arrived. The congregation then sang joyfully as Brother Miguel taught them several new

songs. Preaching and singing continued until 10:30 pm. During fellowship after the service, Sister Rocio's sister, Johanna Elena Pedraza Torres, declared her desire to be baptized. Several others also said they were interested but did not commit at that time.

On Thursday morning, the brothers visited a government office to investigate requirements for registering the Church in Colombia. They were advised that the government is supportive of all religions and that over 700 different churches were already registered. The brothers were given instructions on how to proceed and the process did not appear to be difficult or expensive. When necessary requirements can be fulfilled, such as having a resident minister, they will proceed with the registration.

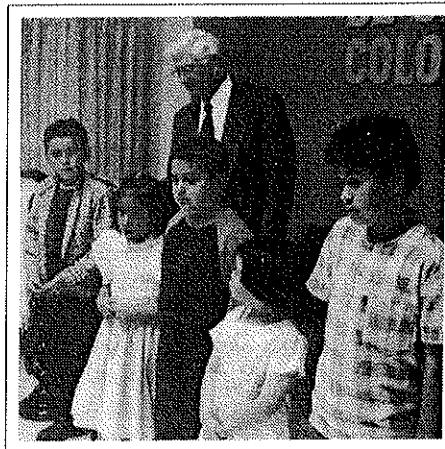
During a counseling session regarding baptism on Thursday afternoon, one of Sister Maria Sol's sisters requested prayer for physical affliction. There was a powerful spirit evidenced during the anointing and many were weeping. Afterwards, the woman said she felt at peace and her head no longer ached. At the conclusion of the counseling session, another woman requested baptism. There were 18 in attendance for the evening service. The brothers gave a brief overview of the Faith and Doctrine of the Church. There were several testimonies given and 11 people asked the ministry to pray for them. After the service, three others expressed a desire to be baptized.

On Friday, the brothers set out to find a suitable baptismal site. They traveled 2 ½ hours into the country to a beautiful lake. Their minds went immediately to the Book of Mormon account of the Waters of Mormon as they meditated about the baptisms which would take place the next day. There were 12 adults and children at the evening service. The brothers preached about the drawing power of Christ and explained the significance of the Restored Gospel.

Sister Melissa Bicelis arrived in Colombia on Saturday morning. Her desire to support the work in Colombia was very much appreciated. She

was a blessing to the mission, as she bonded with the women and children there. It is also important to note what a great blessing it was to have the support of Sister Rocio and Brother Salvatore. Without their desire to see the Church established, the efforts they made to be there, and their hard work in caring for the brothers, the trip would have been very difficult.

As the group of nearly 30 people boarded the bus to go to the baptisms, the brothers were not certain how many would be baptized. There were 11 or 12 who said they were interested but not all had committed. Four of Sister Johanna's teenaged girl friends were touched and wanted to be baptized but were worried they would have to give up their worldly plea-



Apostle Isaac Smith with the children of Colombia, the Church of tomorrow!

sure. Three of the four decided not to be baptized. The fourth girl would have gone along with them except that God gave her a beautiful experience to let her know it was her time. She testified that on Friday after school her classmates invited her to go dancing with them. At first she said, "No," knowing she wanted to be baptized. However, they persisted and she finally relented. When they arrived at the discotheque, all of her friends were admitted; but when they came to her, the usher said she was too young to get in. She thought it was a sign from God that she should not go in; but her friends pleaded with

the usher, and he let her in. She proceeded to sit at a table with her friends but could not sit down. She said she could not stay and began to walk away. One of her friends followed and asked what was wrong. She replied that she was ill but her friend looked into her eyes and said "No, you are not ill. There is something different about you!" She then left and declared her intention to be baptized shortly before the group departed for the waters.

At that point, there were six candidates and two more made their commitment at the water shore: Sister Rocio's brother, Juan Carlos Torres, and his wife, Sandra Yadira Gonzalez. Words cannot express the blessings experienced at that beautiful site. The brothers felt very privileged to be instruments of God's hands in establishing the Gospel in Colombia. It was late evening when the group returned home and it was decided to confirm the new converts at the Sunday service. Following is a list of those baptized and those who officiated:

Maria Sol Torres – baptized by Alan Metzler and confirmed by Miguel Bicelis.

Johanna Elena Pedraza Torres – baptized by Alan Metzler and confirmed by Isaac Smith.

Laura Elena Alvarez – baptized by Alan Metzler and confirmed by Alan Metzler.

Maria Rosa Elvira Bernal – baptized by Alan Metzler and confirmed by Paul Liberto.

Yalile Ramirez Bernal – baptized by Miguel Bicelis and confirmed by Isaac Smith.

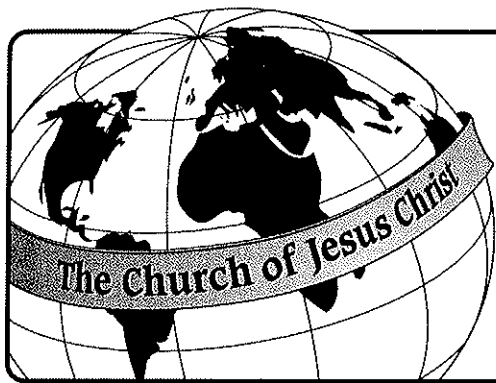
Sandra Yadira Gonzalez Gomez – baptized by Miguel Bicelis and confirmed by Paul Liberto.

Juan Carlos Torres – baptized by Miguel Bicelis and confirmed by Miguel Bicelis.

Diana Marcela Higuera – baptized by Miguel Bicelis and confirmed by Alan Metzler.

There were 40 adults and six

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A message from the Seventy

Growth Being Experienced As The Lord Touches More Hearts

By Evangelist Carl J. Frammolino

As readers of the *Gospel News* have noted, the missionary activities of The Church of Jesus Christ have increased as the Lord has touched more hearts in many lands. The added numbers have come from different parts of the world, so the outreach activities now span many diverse miles.

The quickening of the pace has made it incumbent on both seasoned workers and new volunteers to venture out. First-time participants are coming forth in many instances with the anticipation of becoming more fully involved in the future. Others, it is hoped, will also join as time progresses. Teams have been formed to go into the fields. Besides ministerial personnel, members of the laity have come forth and are participating as needed. The expansion has come about after many prayers.

TEN TRIPS

The growth can best be illustrated by the number of trips planned for between the October 2000 General Church Conference and the end of the year. They were made to existing fields, as well as to a new one in the Philippines. Five of the trips were made under the auspices of the American Missions Operating Committee and five under the Foreign Missions Operating Committee. The AMOC is comprised of the work in North,

Central and South America, and the FMOC is responsible for the labors in other parts of the world.

After a new work has been initiated, it is essential to follow-up and remain in constant touch with the field. The new members there value the visits of the missionaries and want to learn more about the Gospel, The Church of Jesus Christ, and the role they now must undertake. The shepherds who are designated to lead the flock must then make certain they are fulfilling these desires. Although many miles may be involved, their constant trips and communication with the fields must be maintained.

Evangelist Paul Liberto, Chairman of the AMOC, reported to the Quorum of Seventy Evangelists at their October Conference meeting about their goals and objectives. He said, the Lord's direction in these matters is humbly sought, as he talked about the recent start of the church in Colombia and new undertakings being planned.

Evangelist Joel Gehly, Chairman of the FMOC talked about the care required on behalf of new members. In projection, he, like leaders in all areas, reiterated the need for more committed, active missionaries. He said that each day a missionary trip is underway, members of the committee are fasting and praying for that particular field. Happily, many other members of the Church have now joined the fasting and praying ranks.

ADVANCEMENTS

Advancements in travel now make it possible to go to places faster and more frequently. Air travel and communication electronically can now, in some instances, be used to be in almost continuous touch with people abroad. Many times, more frequent trips mean less costs because of the reduction in accommodations and related expenses which may be required in lengthy stays.

Interestingly and thankfully, much of the costs are being paid by the missionaries themselves, which lighten the financial burden on the Church. God's providence is thus being shared willingly.

Budgetary needs for missionary work, of course, are still present, and the General Church Finance Committee has been diligent in indicating the requirements specified by the AMOC and the FMOC and in disbursing the authorized funds, which have been approved by the General Church Ministry at the annual General Church Business Conference.

Besides budgetary receipts, the Missionary Foundation Committee of The Church of Jesus Christ has been very successful in accumulating additional funds to maintain in the foundation for which the interest is given directly to the missionary work. Pass-through donations are also administered as specified by contributors.

The auxiliary units; the General Ladies' Uplift Circle and her units, the General Missionary Benevolent Association and its local groups, and the Sunday Schools of branches and missions have also extended their support.

WHERE NEXT?

The increase in activity has brought excitement and anticipation of where the Lord is preparing hearts of sincere souls and will be making opportunities available in the immediate and intermediate future. As the new year is beginning, there is determina-

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
 Carl Huttenberger, Jr.
 58 Hickory Court
 Jamesburg, NJ 08831

ASSISTANT EDITOR
 Donald Ross
 201 Royalbrooke Drive
 Venetia, PA 15367

CONSULTANTS
 Alex Gentile
 Paul Liberto
 Leonard A. Loyalvo
 Anthony Scolaro

OFFICE MANAGER
 Cathy Gentile

GMBA EDITOR
 Mandy Griffith
 12810 Teakwood Lane
 Bayonet Point, FL 34667

GENERAL CIRCLE EDITOR
 Karen L. Progar
 277 Holt Rd.
 Alliquippa, PA 15001

REGION EDITORS

ATLANTIC COAST
 Kenneth Lombardo
 10 Rockview Terrace
 North Plainfield, NJ 07060

GREAT LAKES
 Carolyn O'Connor
 3158 Potomac
 Ann Arbor, MI 48108

OHIO-MIDWEST
 John Ford
 1924 16th Street
 Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223

PACIFIC
 Annette Azzinaro
 910 St. Andrews St.
 Ontario, CA 91761-6832

PENN-MID ATLANTIC
 Lucetta Scaglione
 303 Union St.
 Monongahela, PA 15063

SOUTHEAST
 Daniel Risola
 8035 Deer Foot Drive
 New Port Richey, FL 34653

SOUTHWEST
 Joel Calabrese
 1069 W. 20th Avenue
 Apache Junction, AZ 85220

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Editorial Viewpoint . . .

"And it came to pass that the wind did never cease to blow towards the promised land while they were upon the waters; and thus they were driven forth before the wind" (Ether 6:8).

This verse is in reference to the Jaredites, who crossed the sea several thousand years ago to reach the "promised land," or the land we know today as America. Please note that the wind *never* ceased to push them towards the promised land.

We are now well under way into the new century. It's hard to believe that the year 2001 has already begun. Time waits for no one. By the time you finish reading this editorial, more time will have passed by, never to return. Just as the wind never ceased to blow the Jaredites to their destination, time never ceases to push us closer to our destination. God had a purpose for the Jaredites venturing out upon the waters. He had a destination in mind; a better land for them and for their descendents. Psalm 37:23 says, *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way."* Once we have taken hold of the Gospel plough, there is no turning back. Every step we take has been ordered or directed by the Lord. Nothing can stand in our way, and we'll never walk in the wrong direction (unless we choose to). God has a better land for us, and has set us out on the sea of life so that the wind can blow us to our final resting place. Isn't it beautiful to know that God will be the one pushing us in the direction we need to go to get there? In the days of the Jaredites, there wasn't radar or special equipment to direct them. God was their radar; He was their captain and guide, and they needed to do nothing except trust Him.

It says that many times the Jaredites were buried deep in the ocean because of the mammoth waves that crashed over them. But no water could enter into their vessels, because their vessels were tight like the ark of Noah. When they cried unto the Lord He brought them up on top of the water. In our spiritual lives, we may find ourselves buried in the depths of the sea many times, but we will never drown, being in the ark of safety. When we cry out to the Lord, He brings us up out of the water every time. It says that no monster of the sea or whale could harm them and they had light continually because of the lighted stones that God provided for their vessels. We too cannot be harmed by Satan's attacks if we trust in our Saviour. We too will have the light of Jesus Christ within us even when we are surrounded by darkness. The Jaredites sang praises to God day and night. We too should lift our voices in praise to Him continually for His mercy and love. He is an awesome God and deserves our continual praise!

The Church has a destination. Someday the church will be set free and Satan will be bound. Peace will reign like a queen upon this promised land, and everywhere you go you'll meet a brother and a friend. Make no mistake, the wind will never cease to blow us to Zion. There will be times the Church will go through persecution and travail, but it will never drown, and it will always have the light of Jesus Christ, even in a dark world.

When the Jaredites reached their destination, it says that they bowed themselves in humble gratitude upon the promised land, and shed tears of joy for the multitude of His tender mercies. What will it be like when we reach our spiritual destination? Like the Jaredites, I'm sure we will fall upon our faces and shed endless tears of joy. No more pain; no more sorrow, no more hurting or suffering. What will it be like to run into the arms of Jesus? Imagine His embrace of everlasting love!

What a precious gift to have Jesus directing our every step. On the sea of life, isn't it comforting to know that the land we see on the horizon will only get closer and closer as the wind of His Spirit pushes us steadily there.

The Children's Corner



By Sister Janet Steinrock

The One True God

Dear Boys and Girls,

The good thing about serving God is how easy it is. The Bible and Book of Mormon tell us how to believe and what to do when we are afraid or have done wrong. It is easier than starting a new school or moving into a new place or job, where you don't know the rules or way to act so that things work out.

In the Bible, in the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments tell us ten rules of living that bring peace to people's lives and families. Then after Jesus came, he taught us two great commandments that include everything. They are found in the book of Mark, Chapter 12, verses 29-31. Jesus said, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, oh Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

This means that there IS only one God. We don't believe in lucky numbers, crystals, ougie boards, horoscopes, psychics or fortune tellers. God is a jealous God. We belong to Him. He does NOT want us to pay any attention to any power other than His power. Those powers belong to Satan and we are NOT supposed to play around with them at all. Otherwise we give Satan a way into our lives to scare and confuse us. And we all know that Satan has no love for

mankind. He wants us all to feel as miserable and far away from God as he does.

But the Bible shows us how God and His son, Jesus, are stronger than the old devil. We see how Jesus resisted the devil who tried to get Him to listen to him. Jesus also promised us, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." So, when your friends try to tempt you to play around with things of the devil, be strong. Tell them that God does not want you being involved with those things. Resist them. Pray in your heart and ask God to give you the right words to say the the courage to say them.

Then, think about the second commandment which tells us to love our neighbor like ourselves. This means if we all did this, nobody would push ahead of others in lines to get the best of something. Everyone would help each other and really care whether others were getting their fair share and doing well too. Cars in traffic would watch and let others go as they needed. Nobody would be left out of any party or gathering. Everyone would share their wonderful toys and food. We'd share so that everyone would have the same blessings that we enjoy. A sense of peace and helpfulness would exist everywhere.

Try this. For one day, without telling anyone what you are trying to do, practice doing this second commandment. Quietly be loving to others. Whatever you wish you had, be sure someone else has it too. If you would like someone to listen to you, then listen to them. If you eat something tasty, share it. Say only kind and fair things about others since you

wouldn't want others to talk badly about you. Take turns and don't be sneaky about getting your own way. See what happens and how you feel. Say you are sorry when you are wrong.

God has also promised us that if we give to others, he will be pleased and reward us by giving good things back to us. So watch and see what happens. You will develop new friendships. People will start to trust you and want you to be around. You will start to grow inside and will not be so lonely as you were before.

God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. His rules on how to live a joyful and rich life have not changed. We do not serve a tricky God who judges us unfairly. But we serve a living God who really loves and cares for each one of us. Enjoy His commandments and see how wonderful it feels to reach out to others and love them too. The one, true God is watching over you. We can trust in Him.

With love,
Sister Jan

WORD SEARCH

MARK	SOUL
TWELVE	MIND
LOVE	STRENGTH
GOD	LOVE
LORD	NEIGHBOR
GOD	AS
ALL	THYSELF
YOUR	

H	S	T	L	O	R	D	A	D
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R	K	L	O	V	E	Y	Y	G
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S	E	V	L	E	W	T	G	D



Club KFC

By Sister Linda Zane

Another summer has come and gone, and so has another season of *Club KFC*! What is *Club KFC* you ask? *Club KFC* (Kids For Christ) is an outreach of the MBA of the McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania branch. Each *Club KFC* class is held at the same time as our mid-week church service, so that the children are being spiritually enriched along with their parents.

This exciting program was established in 1996, when members of our local MBA wanted to give the children a chance to learn and grow

spiritually during the mid-week service. Thus far, it has been limited to the summer, when children have less school-work and activities during the week.

Every year, the *Club KFC* classes focus on a specific theme. The themes that have been covered in the past four years are as follows: *Getting To Know God and Jesus*, *Verses Reflecting the Love of God and Jesus*, *The Names of Jesus*, and *The Family of God*. Each week a different aspect of the theme is explored in a way that allows for active participation among all of the children.

This past summer, our classes discussed the various "members" of the family of God, as well as the many areas around the world where our family of God is located. Many thanks to the brothers and sisters of our branch, who were invited each week to share their missionary experiences with our *Club KFC* class. This summer, we truly got a chance to broaden our scope

past McKees Rocks, and learn that the family of God extends to the four corners of the earth!

It is our heartfelt desire to not only teach our children about the things of God, but also to get them enthused about going to church! Hopefully, *Club KFC* can be used by the Lord to make King David's words, recorded in Psalm 122:1 come alive to the children: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Notice

The Southeast Area MBA is conducting a Marriage Enrichment Weekend. It is scheduled for January 26-28, 2001 in Port St. Lucie, Florida. For more information, please contact Brother Jim Draskovich, phone (954) 596-1001.



Ordination in Lorain, OH

By Sister Rose Palacios

On August 20, 2000, saints from Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania and California gathered in Lorain, OH to witness the ordination of Brother Frank Palacios as an Elder in The Church of Jesus Christ. We were blessed to have 17 Elders and four Apostles in our midst to support Brother Frank. It was such an encouragement to the family to see the love of the saints as they traveled from afar to share in this day.

As the sacrament table was being set, Brother Larry and Sister Rosanne Champine sang a selection. Brother Peter Scolaro opened in prayer. Brother Flip Palacios opened the meeting with the 4th chapter of Joshua which speaks about building a memorial with two stones. He spoke that when people or our children ask what

is meant by these stones or experiences, we can tell them why it means so much to us in our lives. Apostle Peter Scolaro and Brother Ron Genaro followed with words of encouragement and support for Brother Frank. Apostle Paul Palmieri spoke about the stones also, and encouraged Brother Frank in his calling. He told Brother Frank that it is not going to be easy, and many times he will cry for the saints and feel their pain, but God will be with him. Brother Mark Naro spoke about his father, Brother Chuck Naro, and how Brother Chuck and Brother Frank had worked together in one accord as Teachers in the branch. Apostle Joseph Calabrese spoke about the angel and the authority of Jesus Christ in this priesthood. He then read the duties of a minister in the church.

Apostle Joseph Calabrese washed Brother Frank's feet to set him apart and as they embraced, the Spirit spoke through Brother Frank saying, "My calling, saith the Lord." The Elders formed a circle around Brother Frank as Brother Wayne Martorana offered prayer before the ordination. Apostle Peter Scolaro then ordained him, and

closed with the following words: "Brother Frank Palacios, I confirm the authority of Jesus Christ upon you and ordain you an Elder in The Church of Jesus Christ." Glory and honor to God!

As the Elders took their seats, Brother Frank came forward to embrace his whole family. Brother Larry Champine sang *Make Me an Instrument of Thy Love*. Brother Frank then spoke a few words thanking God for all the saints who came and most of all for his calling and that he would do his best to prove himself. He also told some experiences surrounding his calling. In one experience, he dreamed he was given a police uniform. In another experience, when Brother Frank was afflicted, as he was anointed, the Word of the Lord came forth saying, "I will extend your life because I still have work for you to do." Sister Rose Palacios told an experience of Brother Frank's calling in which a scripture was given for Brother Frank from John Chapter 16; "You have not called me but I have called you and ordained you to go forth and bring forth fruit."

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Ordination in Lorain, OH

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Brother Frank's family was then given the opportunity to bear their testimonies. Brother Dan Palacios testified about how when he was young, the Lorain saints opened their hearts and took the family in, even when they had nothing. The spirit then spoke saying, "I put this love in their hearts."

Apostle Dominic Thomas spoke and gave encouragement to Brother Frank and his family and said how Brother Frank's family reminded him of his own family. He related the words of a brother in Lorain who would often say, "Those who have time don't wait for time."

Jesus was seen in our midst as well which we thank God for. He truly allowed us to go to the fountain of living waters. Brother Fred Olexa then closed our meeting in prayer.

Penn-Mid Atlantic Regional Conference

By Sister Leah Nath

We ended September and started October on a spiritual high at the Penn-Mid Atlantic Regional Conference in Monongahela, Pennsylvania.

Sunday morning started off with singing praises to the Lord. Brother Chuck Jumper opened the morning meeting in prayer, followed by Brother Dick Lawson asking a few questions such as: "How many were rushed this morning? How many have anchored their souls in the haven of rest, and how many would like to? In Jesus, we're safe evermore." He reminded us that sometimes we think as soon as we're baptized we won't have any more problems. "They will come, but it is how we deal with them. God made us a promise, that when trials come, He'll be there. If we have a problem, look at it as an opportunity—maybe He wants us to grow closer to Him. Many look at things and pity themselves. Take advantage of your sorrows, because God wants us to come to

Him. God looks for us to serve Him with every ounce of energy we have. Are we willing to give our best? There should be no doubt or fear that He'll be there."

Brother English Webb read the first three powerful verses of Romans, Chapter 12. Brother Bob Buffington followed saying, "God leads His dear children along. He sees you and me today, He sees us through the fire and the flood and all our great sorrows. We are the only scripture some people will ever read; we are the light and salt of the world, so we should make someone thirsty."

The young people then sang *We're Marching to Zion* and *For Those Tears* and gave thanks to the Lord through testimony. Communion was then passed to the congregation.

Brother Bob Nicklow Jr. challenged us to share Jesus with someone else. "We owe Him, He owes us nothing. Is there a reason not to serve our God? Give Him at least ten percent and He'll bless you."

We closed with singing *Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow*, followed by the closing prayer.

The Region would like to thank the Monongahela Branch and all those who attended the spiritual uplift Conference. Thank God most of all for the blessings we received throughout the weekend.

The Turn of Wandering Feet

By Sister Merideth Martin

"While the world is racked and distracted, while millions are groping as the blind for the wall, and while all men are resting upon uncertainty," the meek, humble followers of the Lamb, met once more before the angels of heaven. A lowly band of God's people made their way down to the water's edge. Another soul enlisted into the army of the Lord, fully repented and prepared to take upon him the name of Jesus Christ through baptism.

T'was a beautiful Sabbath morn.

The sun was high, beaming down upon the waters, witnessing this act of obedience. The ducks silently and reverently flowed with the tide and stopped as if they were in tune with the sweet, sincere, humble prayer offered by Brother John DiBattista. All of a sudden the sublime, majestic, awesome peace that only descends from the portals of glory surrounded the area as we the saints of the most high God, were encompassed about by love. Who would not rejoice to be in the presence of angels as we watched our Elder Brother Alphonso Hopkins, a servant of God, declare the authority given him by God, filled with the power and glory of God, called the name, Agapito Escobedo and baptized him in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Yes, we did indeed rejoice with the angels of heaven, this Sabbath morning, October 29, 2000.

Our new Brother Agapito received confirmation of the Holy Ghost so eloquently requested in prayer and the laying of hands by our beloved Brother Mitchell Edwards.

It is our sincere prayer, as God has turned the wandering feet of our new brother, that He will bless his way, "till worlds shall fade and faith shall greet, the dawn of endless day."

Gathering of the Saints at Omaha-Bedford Mission

By Sisters Dorothy Miller and Joyce Mahl

We serve an awesome God who is able to do all things according to his will and pleasure. Under God's inspiration, the brothers and sisters of the Omaha-Bedford Mission held their annual mini-conference, a gathering of the saints, the weekend of August 19-20, 2000. God inspired the gathering from beginning to end. The ministry was inspired to set the date, and one of our sisters was inspired to send handwritten invitations in such a way that the entire Church was invited. At each juncture of our planning we received signs of encouragement as we pro-

ceeded in unity with God's Spirit.

Among those attending were Brother English Webb from Clairton, Pennsylvania; Brother Dan and Sister Olivia Parravano and their granddaughter from Detroit, Michigan; Sister Cindy Parravano from the Denver, Colorado Mission; Brother Randy and Sister Jill Ciccati and their children from St. Cloud, Minnesota; Sister Shirley Gray from the Spartanburg, South Carolina Mission; and we received a special blessing by having our own Sister Emma Grooms from Alabama with us. Remember Sister Emma in your prayers as she makes plans to move back to the Omaha area.

God inspired us to gather at the home of Brother Clifton and Sister Valerie Wells on Friday evening before the conference for a teaching session which was led by Brother English Webb. He used 1st Nephi, 22nd Chapter to introduce the God inspired theme for the weekend, which was "Wisdom, Knowledge, and Understanding being the Revelation of God's love for His people in these last days."

A fellowship brunch was served at the church on Saturday morning. After this, we sang *The Songs of Zion* and other hymns, which lifted our souls and prepared us for what God had in store for us. Our presiding Elder, Brother Clifton Wells, opened our conference welcoming all the visiting saints, thanking them for their efforts to be with us. He introduced the format of the conference emphasizing that the Spirit of God was in charge. After praying, Brother English completed the study of 1st Nephi, 22nd chapter. He then called our attention to the blueprint of times to come using the Psalms as a reference point. He shared his testimony of 47 years in the Church highlighting some of the experiences God had given him. He spoke of the symbolic language in the tabernacle and of the tame and wild olive tree. This inspired a question and answer session that carried a beautiful spirit, was informative and enjoyed by all present.

Before the opening of our Saturday evening service, many came forward to be anointed for afflictions and strength. In the opening prayer, the

evening meeting was dedicated to the preaching of the Word. By inspiration, Brother Randy Ciccati opened with a question: "Are you alive in Christ or are you like a bear in hibernation?" He used Romans Chapter 6:10-11 as the scripture. He warned us not to be complacent in our service to God and exhorted us to exercise our faith and cry unto God over all things in our lives that they would not become stumbling blocks, but would become helps in building up the Church. We then sang *It is Well With my Soul* and Brother Dan Parravano was inspired with the words, "... that Christ has regarded my helpless estate ..." in the hymn. He took our thoughts back to the Garden of Eden and man's creation. Sin brought on man's helpless estate but the love of God became the shed blood that redeemed us, making it possible for us to be possessed with that love at the last day. Like a trumpet sounding, Brother Clifton arose calling us to our service to a Living God who is able to do all things according to His will and purpose. The ministry felt to serve sacrament and a beautiful spirit prevailed as we supped in remembrance of our Redeemer.

We gathered for our Sunday service with much anticipation. The preaching continued as Brother English opened concerning the covenant God made with us using Mt. Sinai as an example of God promising to never leave us alone; the seven candlesticks being God with us in all dispensations of time even down to our day with the address of Joseph's work in the latter day. He spoke of the mystery of Godliness in the midst of us doing the work. Brother Clifton followed, preaching that we should come to our Mt. Sinai with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and because of the shed blood, we receive not the broken law, but the law of the Spirit which He puts in our hearts to lead and guide us in all things. Jesus said, "learn of me," so we move from the water's edge using the Word of God to instruct us to be what He would have us to be. Brother Dan spoke from 2nd Peter 1:5-8 saying that we should walk upright with all our might because God is pruning His vineyard for the last time. Brother

Randy exhorted us to let the Chief Shepherd do the driving and the directing for the best is yet to come.

After a season of testimony, Brother Clifton closed the meeting speaking the following words: "Fire; we have received the oracles of life which were given to the children of Israel. Don't let the fire of God burn out in you . . . be in the will of God in all things . . . the Spirit of God like a fire is burning."

As we said before, we truly serve an awesome God. He gave us the theme for the weekend: "Wisdom, Knowledge and Understanding is the revelation of God's love." By his grace, He inspired our visiting Elders to preach with power and inspiration.

In closing we want to thank the many saints across the Church who have kept our Mission in their prayers. We hope that God will put it upon your hearts to not only continue to pray for us, but also to visit our Mission whenever possible.

Visitors in Lockport, NY

By Sister Antoinette Giansante

On March 19, 2000, many came from the east, west, north and south to the Lockport, NY Mission. Brother Lenny Benyola organized this gathering that included a visit from the President of the Church, Apostle Dominic Thomas and his wife. We had visitors from Michigan, New Jersey, California, Ohio, Florida, and Canada.

When our Sister Deaconess came into the meeting with the Sacrament basket to set the table, Brother Mike Nuzzi had a vision of three personages following her. Two sisters from Ohio sang a duet. Brother Sal and Sister Sharon Azzinaro from California also sang a duet.

Brother Dominic opened the meeting speaking of his younger days in the Church when he was the youngest Apostle, and he worked closely with Brother Paul D'Amico in this

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