



Giving God

A CHANCE TO BLESS US

By Michael R. Morris

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How does a district in Argentina with only a few small branches have 17 temple marriages in less than four years? Leaders say the answer is simple: obedience.

When 21-year-old Gisela Silva moved with her family from Mendoza, Argentina, to the nation's southernmost city of Ushuaia, she wondered whether she'd left behind her chances of marrying in the temple. Mendoza, after all, has a stake filled with wards of Latter-day Saints, while isolated Ushuaia—located on the island of Tierra del Fuego—has only about 600 members attending three small branches.

“My parents had married in the temple, and I wanted this blessing for myself—to marry a faithful member of the Church, someone with whom I could form an eternal family,” she recalls. “But when I arrived in Ushuaia, there were so few young adults here that I wondered whether that would happen.”

Lucas Romano had the same concerns as Gisela. During his mission to Uruguay, his family had moved to Ushuaia. When he joined them after completing his mission, he quickly noticed that young single adult men outnumbered young single adult women. He was determined, nevertheless, to obey the counsel of local leaders to date only members of the Church.

That counsel became easier to follow after Lucas met Gisela at church and she enrolled in English classes at a school where he teaches. He began walking her home after class, and they soon began dating. As they prayed individually about their growing



PHOTOGRAPH OF BUENOS AIRES ARGENTINA TEMPLE BY NÉSTOR CURBELO; MAP BY MOUNTAIN HIGH MAPS © 1993 DIGITAL WISDOM, INC.

relationship, they say that confirmation came “line upon line, precept upon precept” (2 Nephi 28:30; D&C 98:12).

In April 2005, Lucas and Gisela married civilly, as required by Argentine law, and then were sealed in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple. Their sealing was significant for the young Church membership in Ushuaia: it was the first of 17 temple marriages in less than four years.

A Great Success Story

How does a district with only a few small branches have so many temple marriages in such a short time? The answer, according to local leaders, is simple: obedience.

“This is a great success story,” says Marcelino Tossen, former president of the Ushuaia district. “These young people are setting a great example for Church members. One of the qualities they have is that they obey the Lord, the prophets, and their local leaders, and they follow the impressions of the Spirit. This quality unites the young people here in the Ushuaia district.”

President Tossen admits, however, that local leaders “had to work on this districtwide effort for a while” before their teaching and counseling about the importance of temple marriage bore fruit.

Roberto Ignacio Silva, Ushuaia district president, says what got his attention after he moved with his family to Ushuaia in 2004 was the number of unmarried returned missionaries and young adult women. His daughter Gisela became part of that group. He said young adults had a goal to marry in the temple but needed some encouragement and direction.

“I told them that if we desire an eternal companion, we don’t have to look for someone perfect,” says President Silva. “But we must pray and ask the Lord to help us, and we must remain faithful in the Church.”

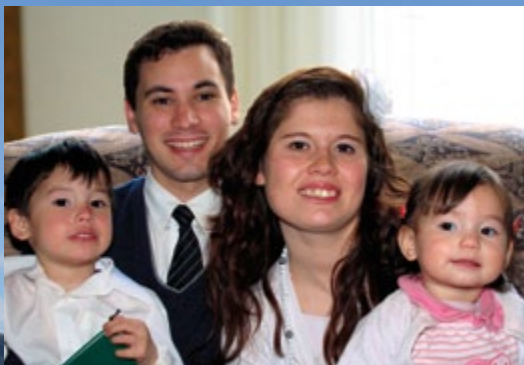
In addition to increasing activities for young single adults—including firesides and combined activities with young single adults from Rio Gallegos and other cities to the north—leaders emphasized the importance of prayer, faithfulness, and worthiness. They also encouraged young adults in Ushuaia to muster sufficient faith to overcome their fears.

We Had Nothing

“One big preoccupation the young people have here is how they can marry if they don’t have much,” President Silva says. “We have helped them understand that we don’t have to have everything before we get married.”

“The largest blessing of being married in the temple is the happiness I feel in knowing that we are united as an eternal family,” says Ruth Silva, pictured at right center with her husband, Emanuel, and their daughter, Banira. Top: Ezequiel and Marina Frau, with their daughter, Ailin. Bottom: Lucas and Gisela Romano, with their children, Benjamin and Rebeca.

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Ruth Rodríguez got to know Emanuel Silva when the two were asked to help organize a combined district young single adult activity in Rio Gallegos, more than 200 miles (320 km) to the north, in February 2006. The friend who asked the two to work together hoped they would hit it off. “It worked,” recalls Emanuel, who had been home two years from serving in the Arizona Tucson Mission.

When he and Ruth married six months later, their preparation—spiritual and temporal—helped them overcome their fear of the future.

“I felt the love of my Father in Heaven and that He wanted me to form my family,” Emanuel says of answers to his prayers. “Once I set that goal, He showed me the way and helped me find a wife.”

Ruth adds that goals they set as a couple, including working hard to save money for their trip to the temple, helped them move forward. “Sometimes there were things we wanted to buy,” she says, “but we said, ‘No, we have to save so we can go to the temple.’”

The cost of their flight to and from the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple in 2006 exhausted their savings. “Afterward we had nothing,” says Emanuel, echoing a common newlywed refrain. Today he and Ruth laugh at that memory, grateful that their faith afforded them the “beautiful experience” of being sealed in the temple—an experience that still means everything to them.

“We can have a lot of fearful feelings as we contemplate marriage,” says Ruth. “What about the things we lack? What about our economic situation? What about raising children? But if we are obedient to the word of the Lord, go to the temple, and start our families, we don’t need to worry. The Lord will bless us in ways we never could have imagined.”

You Can't Plan Everything

When Ezequiel Agustín Frau lost his job in early 2006, he'd been home from his mission to Colombia for nearly two years. He was still single but felt that his future wife was not in Ushuaia. He decided to go to the temple to seek direction.

"I wanted to be more in contact with the Holy Ghost, learn the Lord's will for me, and seek inspiration," he says. "The temple helped me find it."

When he reached Buenos Aires following a three-day, 2,000-mile (3,200 km) bus ride, he stayed with friends and then a relative while frequenting the temple. Several weeks later Ezequiel was running out of money and considering a return to Ushuaia. A local bishop found him a job, however, so he decided to stay.

At a Church activity a short while later, Ezequiel met a young woman named Marina Mas. They found it easy to talk, and he quickly felt comfortable around her. When he saw Marina again at a young single adult gathering, she said something that impressed him.

"We should be living at the level of the kind of person we are looking to marry," Ezequiel recalls Marina saying during a discussion about goals.

For her part, Marina had been praying to find a worthy companion. She knew a lot of young men but was immediately impressed with Ezequiel's spirituality.

A mutual friend helped Ezequiel find a place to live that was closer to his work, then three hours by bus from where he was staying. It turned out that his new apartment—in a city of 13 million people—was only two blocks from Marina's home.

"I didn't plan to live two blocks from her home," he recalls. "I didn't even know where she lived."

Living in close proximity gave Ezequiel ample opportunity to see Marina, whose family gave him a warm welcome. The confluence of events was an answer to his prayers.

The couple dated and soon began planning their future together. After marrying in the temple in the fall of 2006, they moved to Ushuaia.



THE DIVINE CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE

"How wonderful a thing is marriage under the plan of our Eternal Father, a plan provided in His divine wisdom for the happiness and security of His children and the continuity of the race. . . .

"Surely no one reading the scriptures, both ancient and modern, can doubt the divine concept of marriage. The sweetest feelings of life, the most generous and satisfying impulses of the human heart, find expression in a marriage that stands pure and unsullied above the evil of the world."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "What God Hath Joined Together," *Ensign*, May 1991, 71.



“We can’t always understand the vision our Father in Heaven has, and we can’t plan everything,” Ezequiel says in retrospect. “But we can be obedient and give Him a chance to bless us.”

It’s a Beautiful Thing to Have a Family

President Tossen says one of the greatest blessings temple marriage has brought to Ushuaia is that “the day is arriving when the Church will be led by children of the covenant. The gospel will spread here as a result, and the Lord will bless the Church”—just as He is blessing faithful couples who marry in the temple.

“When I was small and our leaders spoke to us of marriage, all the stories were happy ones,” says Ruth Silva. She realizes that “happily ever after” takes work, “but I feel that those stories were true. The largest blessing of being married in the temple is the happiness

I feel in knowing that we are united as an eternal family.”

Her example helped her father enter the waters of baptism in 2008 and then take his family to the temple, where they were sealed a year later.

“The blessing I enjoy the most, in addition to rearing my children in the gospel, is the joy and peace in my heart of knowing that I have complied with the saving ordinance of eternal marriage,” adds Lucas Romano.

“Being with my wife and children renews that feeling of happiness. Like a rolling snowball, it’s constantly growing. Every day I’m more grateful to the Lord that I got married and started a family.”

Marina Frau adds, “It’s a beautiful thing to have a family. It can be difficult at times because there’s much to learn, but it’s beautiful.” ■

“If we desire an eternal companion, we don’t have to look for someone perfect. But we must pray and ask the Lord to help us, and we must remain faithful in the Church,” Roberto Ignacio Silva, Ushuaia district president, told young adults, many of whom (pictured above) have taken that advice to heart and have married in the Buenos Aires Temple.