



By Elder Neil L. Andersen

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## ELDER ULISSES SOARES: **A Man without Guile**

In the early days of His ministry, as Jesus was selecting His Apostles, He saw Nathanael coming toward Him. He immediately discerned Nathanael's goodness, declaring, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"<sup>1</sup>

Jesus knew that Nathanael was a man of pureness of heart, honest in his intentions, and without hypocrisy or deceit. The Lord loves this quality of righteous integrity, and He called Nathanael to be an Apostle.<sup>2</sup>

Ulisses Soares is like Nathanael of old, and the Savior has called him as well.

### "The Light of My Parents"

Ulisses, the youngest of four brothers, was born in São Paulo, Brazil, on October 2, 1958. He came from humble beginnings, but his parents, Aparecido and Mercedes Carecho Soares, were honorable, hardworking people who honestly listened to the missionaries. They joined the Church in 1965 when Ulisses was six years old.

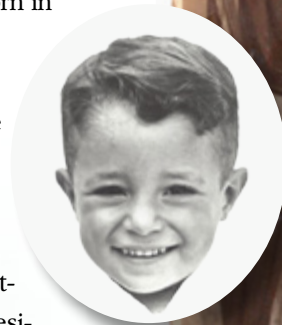
"I never saw Brother Aparecido miss a meeting," says Osiris Cabral, who served as stake president when Ulisses was a young man. "Mercedes was also very faithful. Ulisses inherited his parents' dedication."

Ulisses's naturally good heart blossomed as he learned the ways of the Lord. "I grew up in the Church following the light of my parents," Elder Soares says. As he followed

that light, his testimony grew stronger despite opposition.

"I was the only member of the Church in my school, and the other boys were always trying to drag me down and push me to do things that were wrong," he says. "I had to learn to defend myself in these challenges, but I always trusted in the Lord with all my heart to help me succeed. I learned as a young man that if you do your part, the Lord will do His. But you have to hold tight to His hand and to His gospel."

When Ulisses was 15, his bishop asked him to teach a youth Sunday School class. One lesson he taught centered





on gaining a testimony of the gospel. Ulisses had studied the Book of Mormon, always felt that the Church was true, and believed in the Savior Jesus Christ.

As he prepared his lesson, he wanted to strongly testify to his class of the gospel's truthfulness. "I studied and prayed fervently," Elder Soares recalls. "After I knelt down, there came to my heart a very sweet feeling, a small voice that confirmed to me that I was on the right path. It was so strong that I could never say that I didn't know."

As Ulisses matured, he learned that if he would do more than what was expected or

Ulisses Soares "grew up in the Church following the light" of his parents, Aparecido and Mercedes Soares (left). As Ulisses trusted in the Lord despite opposition, he learned as a boy to hold tight to the Savior and His gospel.

small business and armed with the ability to type fast, Ulisses found a day job helping a company prepare its payroll.

After passing a difficult entry exam, he began studying accounting at a technical high school in the evening. Each month, after paying tithing, he would save money for his mission. After a year, he was transferred to his company's accounting department.

"That's how I saved money to pay for my mission," Elder Soares says. "And each month during the three years before I left, I would buy something I needed—a shirt, a pair of pants, a pair of socks, a tie, a suitcase." He also

asked, the Lord would generously bless him. One such lesson came as he prepared for a mission. During interviews with Ulisses, his bishop emphasized the importance of obeying the commandments and living worthily. He also stressed financial preparation.

Today all missionaries from Brazil contribute to their mission costs, with many families contributing all the costs. As Ulisses approached mission age, he determined that he would earn all the money needed for his mission. Taking advantage of the strong work ethic he had learned working in his father's

needed, and received, strong love and support from his parents and local leaders.

Ulisses was called to the Brazil Rio de Janeiro Mission. He served the first part of his mission under President Helio da Rocha Camargo, who would later become the first General Authority called from Brazil. Ulisses began his mission in early 1978. The first temple in Latin America was dedicated later that year in São Paulo by President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985).

In January 1980, Ulisses and his companion, who also had not received his endowment, boarded a bus in Rio de Janeiro for an eight-hour ride to the São Paulo Brazil Temple. Ulisses's parents and siblings met him there, and the Soares family was sealed for time and eternity. Ulisses has never forgotten those five hours together in the São Paulo Temple. Later that day, he and his companion returned to the mission field.

### Putting God First

Ulisses enjoyed a successful mission, which further strengthened his testimony. When he returned home, he found a job and began studying accounting and economics at a local university.

He had been home about seven months when he ran into “Sister Morgado” at a multi-stake dance. Ulisses had served as her zone leader for a time, and the two spent the evening catching up and sharing mission stories. Three weeks later, they began dating.

Rosana Fernandes Morgado was eight when her older sister, Margareth, began taking her to church. Eventually, the two faithful young investigators received permission from their father to be baptized, but each had to wait

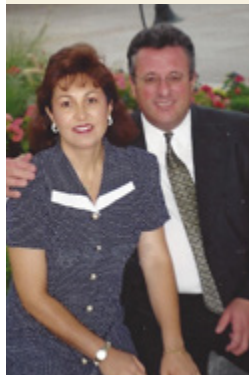
Elder Soares credits his wife, Rosana, with “all the good things in my life.”

The couple married in 1982 (far right), two years after a chance meeting following their service in the Brazil Rio de Janeiro Mission.

until she was 17. Rosana attended church for nine years before receiving permission to be baptized.

Ulisses lived in northern São Paulo, and Rosana lived with her parents in the city's southern sector. Travel across the sprawling city took two to three hours by bus and subway. Fortunately, Margareth and her husband, Claudio, lived near her parents' home.

“When Ulisses came on weekends to date Rosana, it was tough for him to return home so far at night,” recalls Elder Claudio R. M.



Elder Soares with Rosana in 2000 (above); with his family (lower right); and as a full-time missionary in 1979 (above right), with new member Eliezer Wagner de Souza Santos and his then-fiancée (now wife), Regina. Brother Santos currently serves as president of the Vila Velha Brazil Stake, in the state of Espírito Santo. Kim Pickett, Elder Soares's companion, appears in the background.



Costa, General Authority Seventy, of his future brother-in-law. So, he and Margareth invited Ulisses to spend the night at their home after his dates. “We adopted him for a while,” Elder Costa adds.

“He would sleep on the couch in our living room,” says Sister Costa. “We were recently married, so we didn't have extra blankets. But he would cover himself with an old curtain we had. He was happy because he could see Rosana again the next day. He was good to my sister, and my parents liked him very much.”

Ulisses and Rosana were married in the São Paulo Brazil Temple on October 30, 1982.

If you spend a few minutes with Elder and Sister Soares, their love, admiration, and

respect for each other quickly become apparent. For Elder Soares, Rosana “has been an example of goodness, love, and total devotion to the Lord for me and my family.”<sup>3</sup> For Sister Soares, Ulisses is “a gift from heaven.”

Sister Soares adds: “He has always been extremely responsible and righteous, he has always taken good care of our family, and he has always treated me very well. In all of his Church callings, he has done his best. He goes and he does. He always puts the things of God first in his life. I fall in love with him over and over because I know if he puts the things of God first, he will also put me first.”

Of his wife, Elder Soares says: “She is the true hero and

inspiration in our family. She’s loving, kind, and patient with everybody. She unites our family, and she sees good in everyone. She has contributed enormously to what has happened in my life. Of my calling to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, I jokingly told her, ‘I blame you for this because you have magnified so very much the power of the gospel in my life.’”

### A Big Heart

Gustavo, the Soareses’ oldest child, remembers the night when, as a boy, he disobeyed his parents and slipped away to check out an annual celebration in their São Paulo neighborhood known as Festa Junina.

“I was in the middle of a large crowd having a good time when I heard an announcer call me up to the front,” he says. “That’s when I saw my dad.”

His parents had been worried sick, but rather than scold Gustavo, Ulisses hugged him tight.

“We had a serious conversation about me getting lost, but my parents treated me with respect,” Gustavo recalls. “I felt protected, and I knew that they really loved me.”

Ulisses is devoted to his family. Despite his busy work and travel schedule over the years, he made time to build relationships with his children.

When Elder Soares was sustained to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on March 31, 2018, perhaps no one was more surprised than Gustavo and his two sisters, Lethicia Caravello and Nathalia Soares Avila. But if love, hard work, empathy, and humility qualify a person for the apostleship, they say, they can understand why the Lord called their father.

“When Jesus called His Apostles, He didn’t pick the most knowledgeable Pharisees, He picked fishermen,” says Lethicia. “My father and mother are like that. They totally trust the Lord, and He uses them to fulfill His works because He knows they are selfless, willing to work hard, and humble enough to accept correction.”

Their father’s “big heart” will help him as he goes forward as one of the Savior’s special witnesses, adds Nathalia. “He





has the heart for it,” she says. “He feels heaven’s influence, and he loves everybody and wants to do what’s right.”

### “Everything Will Work Out”

When Elder Soares served as president of the Portugal Porto Mission from 2000 to 2003, he became well known for using the Portuguese phrase “Tudo vai dar certo”—everything will work out.

“He taught it to us,” recalls Ty Bennett, one of his missionaries. “He lives his life with faith and optimism that if we do what the Lord wants us to do, everything will work out.”

He also taught his missionaries not to use the words *difficult* or *impossible*, says Richard Shields, another of his missionaries. “We referred to things as ‘challenges.’ That advice helped shape my life as I have looked at things as ‘challenges’ to be overcome rather than as ‘difficult’ or ‘impossible.’”

Such faith and optimism haven’t come from an easy life. Elder and Sister Soares know well the disappointment of going without, the weariness of long days of work and study, the challenges of ill health, and the heartache of miscarriage, stillbirth, and loss of siblings and parents.

But through life’s journey, they have put their faith in the words of Elder Soares’s favorite scripture: “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.”<sup>4</sup>

“Challenges are part of our progress,” Elder Soares says. “But when we are patient in suffering, when we learn to survive life’s challenges, when we remain faithful, the Lord keeps us in high regard and blesses us with the blessings He has promised.”

And when we hold tight to the iron rod, he adds, the Lord will not leave us alone.

“Consistency in holding tight to the commandments, to the gospel, to the scriptures, and to the Lord Jesus Christ helps us overcome life’s challenges,” Elder Soares testifies. “When we kneel down to pray, He will be with us and He will guide us. He will inspire us where to go and what to do. When we are obedient and humble ourselves, the Lord answers our prayers.”

### Devoted Disciple

Ulisses Soares is a man of ability and preparation. His education, including a master of business administration degree, prepared him to work as an accountant and auditor for multinational corporations in Brazil. That experience prepared him to work in the Church’s finance department, which in turn prepared him at age 31 to become one of the Church’s youngest directors of temporal affairs. That preparation served him well as a mission president and in his calling as a General Authority Seventy on April 2, 2005.

Before being called to the Presidency of the Seventy on January 6, 2013, Elder Soares served as a counselor in

and then as President of the Brazil Area Presidency and as a counselor in the Africa Southeast Area. There, he served as a counselor to Elder Dale G. Renlund, then a General



Authority Seventy. Elder Renlund, now a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, relishes their time together.

“Elder Soares is an exuberant, committed, devoted disciple of Jesus Christ,” says Elder Renlund. “I don’t know anyone who feels more keenly that he’s on the Lord’s errand. If he’s asked to do something, he does it with all his might.”

He said Elder Soares quickly “fell in love” with the Saints in Africa. One of his first assignments in the area was to preside over a stake

Whether among the Saints of Peru (left), Ghana (below), or other nations where he has served and ministered, Elder Soares “easily loves people,” says Elder Claudio R. M. Costa.



conference in Kananga, Democratic Republic of Congo. “When he returned, he couldn’t stop talking about the goodness and devotion of the people he met,” Elder Renlund says.

Elder L. Whitney Clayton, who served with Elder Soares for five and a half years in the Presidency of the Seventy, calls Elder Soares a consensus builder. “He listens and measures his thoughts. He is careful in the way he conducts himself in meetings so that our voices form a chorus, rather than that of competing soloists.”

Elder Soares is modest about his ability to

Despite his busy work and travel schedule over the years, Elder Soares has always put his wife, children, and grandchildren (lower left) first in his life. He has also made time, with his wife, to become an accomplished chef (far left).

communicate in Portuguese, English, Spanish, and French. But that gift, which requires constant attention, is a blessing to the Church, says Elder Clayton. Elder Soares can speak to the vast majority of Church members in their own language.

“Ulisses has been a leader since he was a boy,” observes Elder Claudio Costa of his brother-in-law. “He is very intelligent and very capable, and he feels the responsibility to always give his best. He easily loves those around him. He has the heart of a true disciple of the Savior, and he has the sure witness that Jesus is the Christ. I love him and am grateful to sustain him as an Apostle of the Lord.”

And Elder David A. Bednar, speaking for the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, adds: “Elder Soares is a pure, guileless, and innocent disciple of the Savior. Through the light in his countenance, his warm smile, and his gracious manner, countless individuals and families have been, are, and will be inspired with a greater desire to follow the Savior and live the precepts of His gospel.”

In our dispensation, the Lord said of Edward Partridge, “His heart is pure before me, for he is like unto Nathanael of old, in whom there is no guile.”<sup>5</sup> Of Hyrum Smith, the Lord said, “I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me.”<sup>6</sup>

Of Ulisses Soares, the Lord would say the same. ■

#### NOTES

1. John 1:47.
2. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (1916), 217–18, 222.
3. “Prophets Speak by the Power of the Holy Spirit,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 98.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 41:11.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 124:15.