

Guarding against Danger from Within

The Legend of Mixco Viejo

BY ADAM C. OLSON
Church Magazines

Taking a break from the welding work he is doing, Byron Iquic raises his visor and wipes the sweat from his brow. President Iquic, president of the San Juan Branch, Guatemala City Florida Stake, is building a new home for his wife, Etelvina, and their four children.

He loves his family and wants the house to be comfortable, but he also wants it to be safe and strong. Locks, lights, and a sturdy roof and walls are just some of the features meant to protect his family from man and nature.

As he talks about protecting his precious family, he pauses. Because President Iquic is familiar with the legend of Mixco Viejo, he understands that regardless of how well the house keeps things out, the greatest dangers to his family could come from what the family lets in.

The Fall of Mixco Viejo

Mixco Viejo, a ruined city near the Iquics' home, had its beginning as early as A.D. 900. Before its fall nearly 500 years ago, it must have been an impressive sight. The fortified city sat atop a series of high hills with steep approaches on all sides. Archaeologists estimate that at one time the city was home to more than 1,500 people, with another 7,000 in the surrounding valleys.



GUATEMALA
• Mixco Viejo

Parts of the history of Mixco's fall are uncertain, but the legend is instructive. In 1525 the Spanish conquistador Pedro Alvarado laid siege to Mixco Viejo. The Spanish and their indigenous allies tried for more than a month to take the city, suffering heavy losses. However, Mixco Viejo remained a seemingly impenetrable home for its people.

But legend says there was another way in—a secret passage that led into the city from a cave some distance away, a passage the people of Mixco Viejo may have seen no need to defend because it was small and so well hidden.

The Spanish found it. They took advantage of the small opening the people had left in their defenses, surprising the city's inhabitants from the inside and destroying Mixco Viejo.

Identifying Weaknesses

President Iquic believes homes and families are like Mixco Viejo—under a spiritual siege in which Satan “maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about” (D&C 76:29).

“The enemy is always searching for a way in,” says President Iquic. “We must not be caught sleeping.”

No physical or spiritual wall can keep out an enemy who finds a door unguarded. Prophets of God have warned of dangerous openings through which the enemy may enter no matter how strong the wall. Many of these

PROTECTING OUR HOMES



“We need to make our homes a place of refuge from the storm, which is increasing in intensity all about us. Even if the smallest openings are left unattended, negative influences can penetrate the very walls of our homes.”

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Importance of the Family,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2003, 40.



Above: Byron and Etelvina Iquic and their children (from left) Briseida, Byron, Glenda, and Nelson visit the ruins of Mixco Viejo in Guatemala. Legend says this well-fortified city was conquered only after the enemy found a secret way in.



Along with trying to protect their children from spiritual danger, Byron and Etelvina Iquic are teaching them about repentance in case the enemy slips past the family's defenses.

doors deal with what we watch, what we listen to, and how we spend our time. Still, after we hear prophetic warnings, it is up to us to decide what action to take.

Fortifying Our Families

The Holy Ghost is essential as we judge whether what we do strengthens us or weakens us.

“The way to judge is as plain . . . as the daylight is from the dark night,” Mormon taught. “For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil” (Moroni 7:15–16).

“We need the Holy Ghost as our guide,” President Iquic says. “We should include in our lives those things that invite the Holy Ghost and remove those things that offend Him.”

“The standard is clear,” taught Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “If something we think, see, hear, or do distances us from the Holy Ghost, then we should stop thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing that thing. . . . Taking ‘the Holy Spirit for [our] guide’ (D&C 45:57) is possible and is essential for our spiritual growth and survival in an increasingly wicked world.”¹

Rebuilding the Walls

Today, people are trying to preserve and rebuild the ruins of Mixco Viejo—a difficult task after 500 years.

President and Sister Iquic are trying to preserve their family and fortify it against the world, also a difficult task but possible through family prayer (see D&C 10:5), family scripture study (see 1 Nephi 15:23–24), family home evening (see 2 Nephi 25:26), and teaching the importance of obedience (see D&C 88:34).

President and Sister Iquic are also teaching repentance because they understand that even after all they and their family do to protect themselves, there may be more doors than can be guarded. And in a moment of weakness caused by distraction, someone might fall.

In preparation for those moments, President and Sister Iquic recognize that they must teach their children not just faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement but also repentance (see D&C 68:25) so that when their children make mistakes, they will recognize the breach in the wall and know how to fix it.

“Temptation will always be there,” President Iquic says. “We must recognize our mistakes and repent quickly, or they will impede our progress and keep us from the protection of the Spirit.”

With daylight fading and the legend of Mixco Viejo in mind, President Iquic puts his tools away and calls his family together for evening prayer against the gathering darkness. ■

NOTE

1. David A. Bednar, “That We May Always Have His Spirit to Be with Us,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 30.