



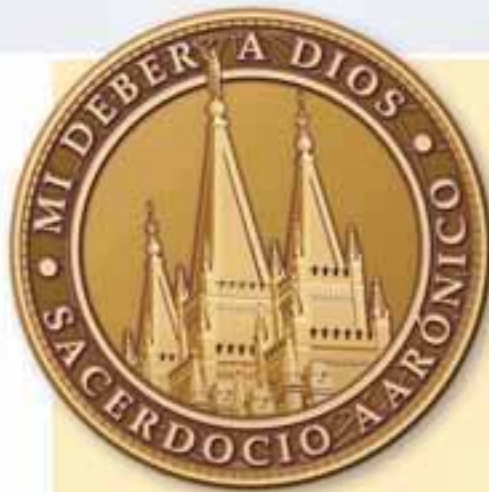
BEAUTIFUL THINGS AHEAD

By Lia McClanahan

Is anyone still awake?" The first time I asked, I had received two whispered responses in the affirmative. Now, hours later, the silence answered that I was the last one in the room who couldn't get to sleep.

It was my first night in the Missionary Training Center (MTC). That day, I had said good-bye to my parents, met my companion and the other new missionaries going to Italy, and been to the first set of classes. I was exhausted, but my mind was spinning with anxiety. "What have I gotten myself into?" I asked myself over and over. I didn't know if I could really learn to be a missionary. Would I have the courage to fly to a foreign country and talk to strangers about the gospel? Maybe I wasn't supposed to be here. Tears started to roll down my cheeks.

Then I remembered something my mom had told me about her brother Larry. Uncle Larry served his mission in Uruguay and Paraguay in the 1970s. At first he had spent sleepless nights worrying about his inadequacies. When he felt like he couldn't bear it anymore, he would get out of his bed, go into the bathroom, and kneel down to plead with Heavenly Father for peace. Somehow, with the Lord's help, Uncle Larry made it through



and served a faithful mission.

I felt some hope at this thought and crept down the hall to the bathroom. In the dim light, I knelt on the cold tile floor and sobbed. I begged Heavenly Father to grant me a feeling of peace so that I could have the courage to move forward.

I waited. Nothing happened. I waited some more, hearing only the sound of my crying. Finally, there was nothing to do but go back to bed.

In the moment before I fell asleep, the answer came. The Spirit filled my mind with a bright, warm impression of a beautiful place. Suddenly I knew that although I might have a hard time with fear in the beginning, if I pressed forward, I would get to where the Lord meant me to be. The thought filled me with peace, and I fell asleep.

The Spirit had hinted of beautiful things ahead. In hard moments during my stay at the MTC, I closed my eyes and remembered what I had felt. With prayer and hard work, I outlasted my fears.

It wasn't long before I found myself in Genoa, Italy, with my new companion. In the kitchen of our apartment was a glass door that led to a balcony. I stepped out on the balcony and gazed at the city. I already knew and loved this city. This was the place I had seen in my mind's eye that night at the MTC. I knew the Lord had led me to this moment, and I was right where I belonged. ■

A CHANCE TO CHANGE

By Angel Luis Sanches Notario

I have been a member of the Church for seven years. During that time, I have always known that this is the only true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, but at one time in my life, I wasn't very active.

The problem started when our family moved to a new town. It took us a few months to identify the location of the meetinghouse we were supposed to go to and a few more weeks to start attending. I wasn't very excited about the change, and after a few weeks, I stopped attending.

One day I received an unexpected but welcome visit from my bishop. He invited me to come back to church on Sundays and to attend seminary. I decided to accept these invitations.

A few weeks after I started going back to church, the bishop introduced the Duty to God program to me. He explained what it consisted of, and I became interested in starting on it.

I started filling out and completing the goals in the pamphlets. I began to realize that the Duty to God program

was helping me change my life for the better. I became more active in the Church and loved going to seminary. I am trying to live the standards of the Church better, and I love to read the scriptures and the *Liahona*.

When I started the Duty to God program, I set goals such as going on a mission and attending the Latter-day Saint preparatory school Benemérito de las Américas, along with many other goals. Last fall, I received the Duty to God Award and the Melchizedek Priesthood, and I'll be going on a mission soon.

I thank my Heavenly Father each day for giving me the chance to change and become a worthy member of His Church. I am grateful for the programs and leaders of the Church that helped me change. ■

