

Place of Peace

BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
Church Magazines

Dilcia Soto, 16, still remembers the day the temple was dedicated in her hometown of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic: “I was only nine then, but I said, ‘Wow! A temple here!’ I was used to seeing people go to other countries to be sealed and to make covenants. I thought, ‘Now my family and I will not have to go to another country because we have our own temple nearby.’”

Today that temple stands majestic and tall in the capital city, so striking with its spire and well-kept grounds that

A large fan palm tree with a thick trunk and a wide, fan-shaped canopy of green fronds. The tree is set in a well-maintained park with a green lawn and other trees in the background. A building is visible in the distance under a blue sky with light clouds. The image is the background for the entire page.

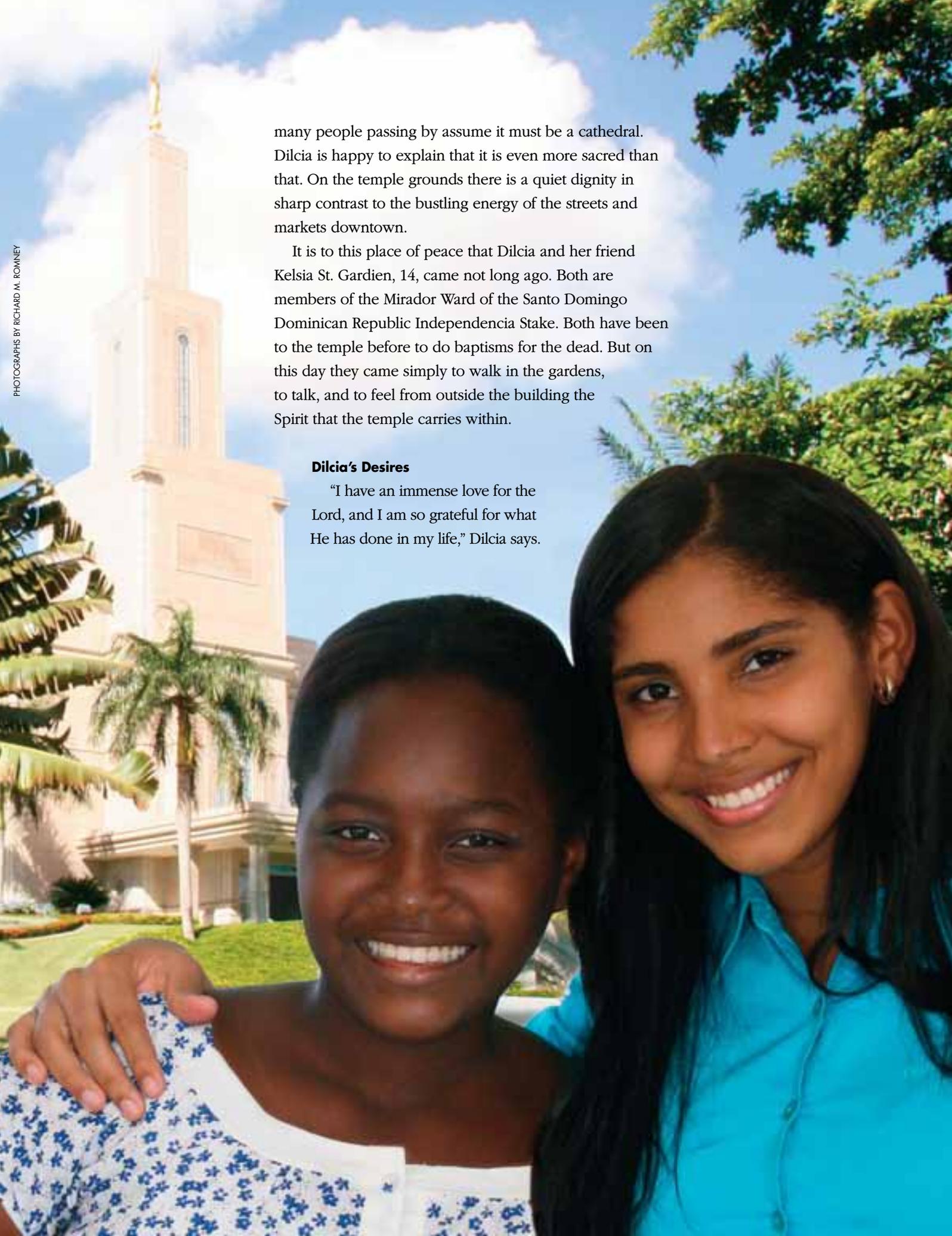
For these two young women in the Dominican Republic, the temple is far more than a beautiful building. It is also a vivid reminder of their fondest hopes and dreams.

many people passing by assume it must be a cathedral. Dilcia is happy to explain that it is even more sacred than that. On the temple grounds there is a quiet dignity in sharp contrast to the bustling energy of the streets and markets downtown.

It is to this place of peace that Dilcia and her friend Kelsia St. Gardien, 14, came not long ago. Both are members of the Mirador Ward of the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Independencia Stake. Both have been to the temple before to do baptisms for the dead. But on this day they came simply to walk in the gardens, to talk, and to feel from outside the building the Spirit that the temple carries within.

Dilcia's Desires

“I have an immense love for the Lord, and I am so grateful for what He has done in my life,” Dilcia says.





“My immediate family are members of the Church, but my aunts, uncles, and cousins are not. When they come to my house, I always have a Book of Mormon ready because there might be an opportunity to share the gospel with them.” She also shares the gospel with friends and “with any person I might meet who is truly interested.” And every time she does, she says, “I feel the Spirit so strongly. Every time I share my testimony, I feel the truthfulness of the Church all over again.”

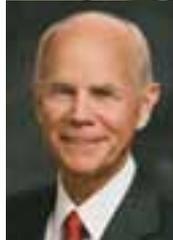
She remembers a seminary lesson about the plan of salvation. “Before this world was, we were in a great Council in Heaven, and we chose to follow our Heavenly Father and accept the sacrifice that Jesus Christ would make on our behalf,” she says. “Our teacher explained that we could tell we obeyed



Dilcia quotes 1 Corinthians 3:16: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

Heavenly Father *then* because we are here on earth *now* with bodies of flesh and bones. When he said that, I knew it was true. That night in my prayers, I cried and gave thanks to God for that knowledge.”

Dilcia quotes 1 Corinthians 3:16: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” “If I am also a temple,” she says, “I need to be as clean and beautiful as the temple. What a



THE TEMPLE IN US

“When we visit the temple as often as distance and individual circumstance permit, the temple will be in us. Then, despite the buffetings of life, we will always be in a holy place.”

Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy, “In a Holy Place,” *New Era*, Apr. 2005, 45.

marvelous blessing it is to be in this Church and to be a virtuous young woman!”

She says her greatest desire is to live with her Heavenly Father again someday. “I am so grateful that He has given us the temple so that we can do all we need to do to return to Him,” she says. “The best form of thanking Him is to live the way He asks us to live.”

Dilcia says, “The Lord wants us to enter His house, to learn about Him, and to work our way toward eternity with Him.” She says she enjoys participating in baptisms for the dead because “it is a way to help those who are waiting on the other side of the veil, to do something for them that they cannot do for themselves.”

Kelsia’s Commitments

Kelsia agrees. “Our ancestors need us to do the work, and I know they are going to be grateful to us,” she says. “In particular I am looking forward to seeing my grandmother whom I never got to know in this life. We are going to make sure all her temple work is done for her.”

Talking about the temple brings out strong emotions for Kelsia. "I am committed to making decisions that will help me to be sealed to my family," she says. "We have to respect the gospel and observe the commandments *al pie de la letra* [to the letter of the law]," she says. "We do it because we love our Heavenly Father, and obedience is how we show our gratitude to Him."

Her family joined the Church in December 2006, six years after her parents moved to the Dominican Republic from Haiti. "I'm so grateful for the missionaries who knocked on our door. It was great to feel the Spirit and to learn about Heavenly Father's plan for us. Since the gospel came into our lives, our family is much closer. I am grateful that He gave me a family that is so united, even in the most difficult moments. To think that we can have the privilege of being sealed eternally seems like one of the greatest blessings of all."

Her parents are taking a temple-preparation class right now, and that reminds her to prepare for the day when she will be married in the

temple. "That is my main goal, that my future husband and I will be worthy for each other and worthy to be an eternal family."

SANTIDAD AL SEÑOR
LA CASA DEL SEÑOR

Sharing Serenity

The two friends walk past the pole where the flag of their nation unfurls in a gusting breeze. "Even the flag at the temple reminds us to be faithful," Dilcia says. "It is more than just colors. It contains the motto *Dios, patria, libertad* [God, country, liberty] and shows a Christian cross and the Ten Commandments. It reminds us that our country was founded by people who believed in God and that God is still important here."

They also walk past the entrance to the temple, where the words *Santidad al Señor, la Casa del Señor* (Holiness to the Lord, the House of the Lord) are inscribed above the doorway, as they are at every temple.

"Whenever I read those words, I am filled with a powerful witness that they are true," Dilcia says. "I remember coming here with our Mutual group one evening, just to visit the grounds. After we were done, the bishop asked us what we felt here. We talked about it and came up with a one-word answer: peace."

And Kelsia and Dilcia walk away thinking of that perfect one-word answer . . . perfect because the temple is *the* place of peace. ■

For more about the youth of the Church in the Dominican Republic, see "Search and Rescue" in the March 2009 issue.

