

Finland

Conversion and Sacrifice in

By Melissa Zenteno

A few miles off the coast of Helsinki, Finland, is the sea fortress of Suomenlinna, built in the 18th century to fortify against invaders. Stretching across six islands, this stronghold represents the steadfast determination of the Finnish people.

But Finnish members visit a different building when they travel to their capital. The Helsinki Finland Temple is a physical symbol of their conversion and the protection they receive from living the gospel.

For Niilo Kervinen, a 24-year-old young adult from Rovaniemi, Finland, the 10-hour train ride to Helsinki is a small price to pay for the blessing of serving in the temple.

Before the dedication of the Helsinki Finland Temple in October 2006, Niilo and other members of his ward had to travel to the Stockholm Sweden Temple or to the Copenhagen Denmark Temple. “The trips would usually take a week during the summer vacation,” he remembers.

Traveling by bus and sleeping in tents on those trips are some of the best memories he has.

Yet having a temple in his native land is a wonderful blessing. “When they announced the Helsinki Temple, I was so happy,” Niilo says. “The dedicatory prayer still resonates in my heart each time I go inside.”

This love for the temple sets Niilo apart from his friends. “Finns work hard and enjoy being active but leave little time for spiritual things in their life,” he explains. Although Niilo says he has always been blessed with good friends, as he grew older the distinction between how his friends lived and how he was taught to live became clearer. It was this difference that caused Niilo to seek his own testimony when he was 17. “I had to make a decision of where to stand and who to be,” he says. “With the blessings of the Lord and with the guidance of family and good friends, I got a stronger testimony of the Church.”

What is it like to be a faithful young adult in Finland? One young man shares his culture and his faith.

In speaking of conversion, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “I promise that as we come to a knowledge of the truth and are converted unto the Lord, we will remain firm and steadfast and never fall away.”¹ Although traveling to Helsinki requires time and money, Niilo is committed to being a disciple of Christ. And for Niilo, that is no sacrifice at all. ■

NOTE

1. David A. Bednar, “Converted unto the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 109.



MORE ABOUT NIILLO

What do Finns typically eat?

Some of my favorite dishes include salmon soup and reindeer meat with mashed potatoes. We also eat a lot of rye bread.

What do you do for fun?

I like to snowboard, watch movies, or just enjoy a walk outside. I served my mission in Japan, so I study Japanese when I can.

What is dating like in Finland?

We don't have a strong culture of dating. People generally ask someone out only after they already have a considerable amount of interest for them. Here, dating isn't a mechanism to get to know someone. There are faithful young adults here, even if there aren't many members. Sometimes young adult members travel long distances to go on a date with a person they met at a young single adult dance.

THE CHURCH IN FINLAND

4,715 Latter-day Saints
 15 wards
 15 branches
 2 stakes
 1 mission
 1 temple,
 dedicated on
 October 22,
 2006

BY THE NUMBERS

5,250,000 people
 (as of January
 2012)
 187,888 lakes
 179,584 islands
 2.2 million saunas

FACTS

Capital:
 Helsinki
 Language:
 Finnish
 (Suomi)

