

Measuring Blessings in Madagascar

By Mindy Anne Selu
Church Magazines

After his wife suffered a heartbreaking miscarriage during their first pregnancy, Solofo Ravelojaona felt that their prayers were answered a year later with their second pregnancy. He and his wife, Hary Martine, consider the birth of their daughter to be one of their greatest blessings. Solofo explains, “Because we asked God and He gave her to us, we gave her a name that, in Malagasy, means ‘God’s answer.’”

Solofo, a young adult from Madagascar, holds to the knowledge that God answers prayers and in time blesses the faithful. “Life is hard,” says Solofo, “and when people don’t get what they want, some start asking, ‘Why did this happen to me?’ They might leave the Church or question their belief in God. But when we live the gospel and read the scriptures, it’s easier. When you really live the gospel, you can really see the blessings.”

Living in a country with serious challenges, such as extreme poverty, instability within the government, a weak infrastructure, and natural disasters, it’s clear why Solofo says life is hard. But for him, the blessings that living the gospel brings outweigh any hardships. “I cannot even count the blessings I receive, as long as I live the gospel,” he says.

Because the Church is relatively new in Madagascar (the first branch was organized in 1990), Solofo says the hardest part about being a member is the rumors and misconceptions about the Church. Solofo comments that, just as in Lehi’s vision of the tree of life, “people may not fully embrace the gospel because they feel ashamed in front of their friends and scared that they’ll be rejected by their family.” What makes Solofo different, he suggests, is that “I have never been ashamed. I live the gospel, and I always want to share it with my colleagues, even though some of them aren’t really interested.”

Despite the political upheaval and economic hardships in his country, Solofo relies on the blessings that come from living the gospel.

He often shares his simple testimony, so much so that his co-workers nicknamed him “pastor.”

In the midst of economic and political turmoil, Solofo and Hary Martine rely on the blessings of their temple covenants (they were married in the Johannesburg South Africa Temple one year after their missions—his in Uganda, hers in Madagascar), as well as their trust in the Lord. “I have the gospel, and I just put my life in God’s hands,” Solofo explains. He can rely on his solid testimony because he already has faith in “God’s answers.” ■



MORE ABOUT SOLOFO

What foods do you like to eat?

The food we eat is rice—a lot of rice. One of the things I like is called *ravtoto*. We use a special tool to pound cassava leaves into small pieces and serve it with rice and pork.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to play the keyboard, sing, and read. Because the branch president knew that I loved singing and could play the keyboard, when I came into the branch, he said, “Ah, we have someone to lead the choir,” and I offered my time. They didn’t have a choir before, but I started to teach them, and now they enjoy it.

FACTS ABOUT MADAGASCAR

Languages: French, Malagasy
Capital: Antananarivo

BY THE NUMBERS

22,005,222 people (estimate as of 2012)

80 percent of the animals found in Madagascar do not exist anywhere else on earth

4th largest island in the world
60 percent of the world’s vanilla is exported from Madagascar

THE CHURCH IN MADAGASCAR

9,190 Latter-day Saints
37 wards and branches
2 stakes
1 mission

