

I NEED TO GO TO THE Temple

An accident, days and nights on a bus, long boat rides, and high travel costs haven't kept this Brazilian brother from attending the temple.

By Michael R. Morris

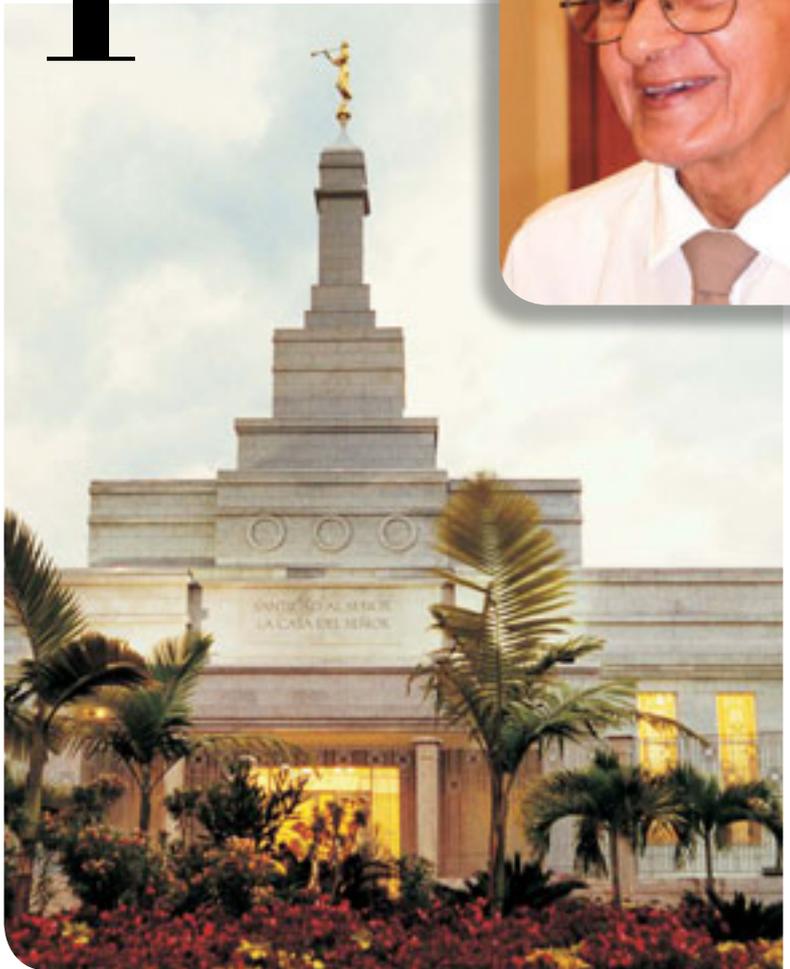
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José Gonçalves da Silva suddenly awoke to people calling his name. It was dark, and he had no idea where he was.

"I was asleep when the bus rolled," José recalls of the early-morning accident in January 2008. "Nobody could find me because I was in the back of the bus covered with luggage. Some of the brethren finally located me as they began to gather up the suitcases."

When the bus driver lost control on a narrow stretch of winding road in southern Venezuela's dense rain forest, José and other Latter-day Saints from Manaus, Brazil, were approximately halfway through their three-day trip to the Caracas Venezuela Temple. José suffered only minor injuries, but several brothers and sisters had to be hospitalized.

"It's time you quit going to the temple," concerned family members told José, who was 80 when the accident occurred. Undeterred, however, he declared: "I need to go to the temple. If the Lord allows it, I will return."



The Caracas Venezuela Temple.

He immediately began saving money for his fourth trip to Caracas, which he made in early 2009. For Brother Gonçalves da Silva, the 40-hour bus ride is easy compared to the three trips he previously made to the São Paulo Brazil Temple. For many years, the São Paulo Temple, located thousands of miles southeast of Manaus, was the

closest temple to this city of two million people in the northern state of Amazonas. Then, in 2005, Manaus became part of the Caracas Venezuela Temple District.

During those years of traveling to São Paulo, “we would take a boat here in Manaus and spend four days getting to Pôrto Velho,” the capital of Rondônia State, José says. “Then we would take a four-day bus ride to São Paulo. My wife is not a member of the Church, and when I went to the temple for the first time in 1985, I went alone. I spent the night at the bus terminal in Pôrto Velho because I arrived late and there was no bus. The next morning I headed for São Paulo. It was a nice experience, but I arrived a little tired.”

He then spent three full days serving in the temple before making the eight-day return trip home. It takes him a year to save enough from his pension to cover the costs of traveling to the temple.

“It is a sacrifice to go, but it is worth it,” says Brother Gonçalves da Silva, who has done much vicarious work for his family. “I felt a special joy the day I was baptized for my father, when someone was baptized for my mother, and when



Above: The Rio Negro, where José Gonçalves da Silva would begin his eight-day trip to the São Paulo Brazil Temple.

Below: Brother Gonçalves da Silva on the 40-hour bus ride to the Caracas Venezuela Temple. He says serving in the house of the Lord is worth the sacrifice it takes to attend.

I represented my father as my parents were sealed. It was a wonderful opportunity. All my brothers and sisters are gone now, but I have done the work for them during my temple trips.”

José believes that the sacrifice inherent in traveling so far to the temple will help Latter-day Saints in Manaus be grateful for the day a temple is dedicated there. “I am excited for that day,” he says.

Manaus had one small branch with 20 members when José joined the Church in 1980. Since then he has seen the Church blossom there to nearly 50,000 members living in eight stakes.

“When the announcement came in 2007 that a temple would be built in Manaus,” José says, “I wept for the great joy I felt, and I prayed that the Lord would allow me to live long enough to see the groundbreaking,” which occurred a year later. Now he prays that he will live to see the temple completed and his wife baptized so that they can be sealed.

“We don’t know when we will die, but we should be prepared and happy when that time comes,” Brother Gonçalves da Silva says. “I’m looking forward to returning to the presence of my Father in Heaven and my Savior, Jesus Christ. Being in the temple helps me prepare for that day.” ■

