

FINDING FAITH

at the Ends of the Earth

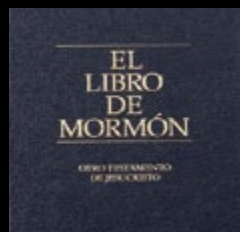
By Michael R. Morris

Church Magazines

Les Éclaireurs Lighthouse rises like a sentinel from its islet perch in the chilly Beagle Channel. French for “the Scouts” or “the Enlighteners,” Les Éclaireurs emits a flash of light every 10 seconds from its isolated post.

Five nautical miles (9 km) to the north is Argentina’s southernmost city, Ushuaia, located on the tip of the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego. Ninety miles (145 km) to the south is Cape Horn and beyond that, the frozen Antarctic.

For those who have embraced The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here at what locals call “the end of the earth,” Les Éclaireurs serves as a metaphor for the restored gospel. Like a lighthouse, the gospel is a beacon that has brought them from the spiritual darkness of the world and landed them safely on the shores of faith and fellowship.



Through the Book of Mormon, God “answered the most important prayer I ever said,” says Guillermo Leiva (above, center), who serves as a branch president in Ushuaia. Above right: Les Éclaireurs Lighthouse and photos of Ushuaia.

I Found Answers

Guillermo Javier Leiva remembers the pain of his divorce in 2007. He had to find his own apartment and was no longer able to return home every evening to his young son, Julian. He felt empty and alone.

“I was very unhappy,” he says, “and in moments of anguish, I looked for God.”

Guillermo began praying for answers and help. “I said, ‘Father, I’m not worthy for Thee to enter my house, but a word from Thee will be enough to heal me.’”

The answer to that prayer came a short while later when two young men in white shirts and ties stopped to talk with him while he was playing with his son outside his new apartment.

“One of them greeted me and asked if I had faith,” he recalls. “I told him yes but that I wasn’t the best Christian. He then asked if I would



read a book if he left it with me. I told him yes.”

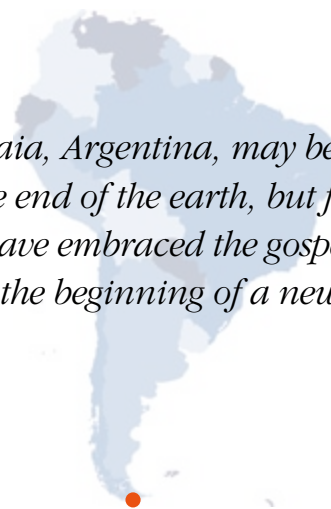
As Guillermo began reading the verses in Alma 32 that the missionaries had marked for him, he says, “I immediately felt a great joy in my soul that I hadn’t felt in a long time. The book touched my heart. I couldn’t stop reading.”

Guillermo no longer attended his previous church, but he told the missionaries that he had no intention of being baptized again. Nevertheless, he welcomed their visits and their reading assignments in the Book of Mormon.

As he read, his soul grieved with Nephi when he learned how that prophet had sorrowed “because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me” (2 Nephi 4:18). “I knew that I too had sinned,” Guillermo says, “and I felt bad about it.”

As he read, he felt that he was being rescued from darkness and despair and brought into “the light of the glory of God” (Alma 19:6).

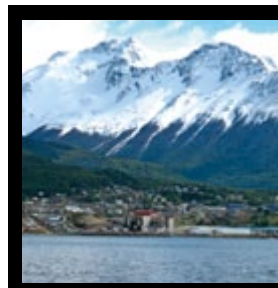
Ushuaia, Argentina, may be located at the end of the earth, but for those who have embraced the gospel here, it is the beginning of a new life.



And as he read of the baptismal covenant set forth at the Waters of Mormon, he realized the importance of baptism by proper priesthood authority. “If I recognized that the seed was good, what *did* I ‘have . . . against being baptized in the name of the Lord?” (Mosiah 18:10), he asked himself.

“Every time I read, I felt peace and I found answers,” Guillermo says. “I realized that the Book of Mormon was the word of God I had asked for in my prayers.”

When he was baptized in March 2009, he experienced a spiritual rebirth and a renewed hope for the future.



Right: For Amanda and Ricardo Robledo (with daughters Bárbara and Irene), learning that their family could be together forever was the crowning doctrine that helped them accept the restored gospel.



“Baptism was a chance to start over,” Guillermo says. “I have changed my life. I am very happy now. I know that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ and that God answers prayers because He answered the most important prayer I ever said.”

We Needed a Church

As a child, Amanda Robledo had no spiritual remedy for the physical pain she suffered after her mother died. And her husband, Ricardo, could find no answers to his heartfelt religious questions following the death of his brother.

One of those questions was, Is there a church on earth that follows the teachings of Jesus Christ? Their search for that church and for answers to their questions ultimately prepared them to accept the restored gospel.

As they searched, they attended different denominations and investigated various religious beliefs. They looked for a church that not only conformed to Christ’s teachings but would also strengthen their family.

“This was a difficult time for our family,” recalls

Amanda, “and we knew we needed a church to help us.”

In the early 1990s the Robledos moved with their four children from Mendoza, in northwest Argentina, to Ushuaia. When they were introduced to the Church two years later, they perceived immediately that there was something different about both the spirit and the teachings of the full-time missionaries.

Amanda knew little of Latter-day Saints. “And what I had heard wasn’t good,” she says. But she, Ricardo, and their children resonated to what they were learning.

“I felt the Spirit when the missionaries taught us,” says

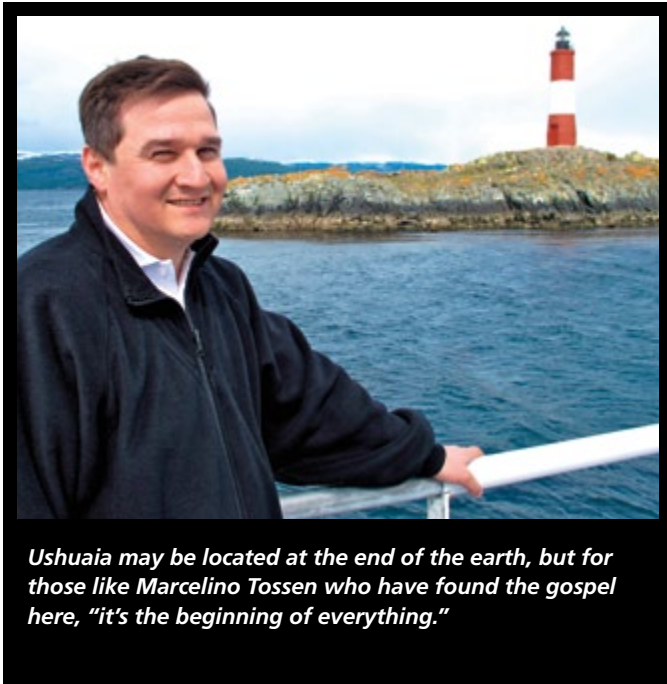
their daughter Bárbara, who was 11 at the time. “And I liked it when they taught us that we could pray as a family.”

Taking the missionary discussions, reading the Book of Mormon, and attending church, Ricardo says, “gave us all the answers we were seeking—answers about baptism, pre-earth life, the divinity of Christ, the immortality of man, gospel ordinances, marriage, and the eternal nature of the family.”

For the Robledos, learning that their family could be together forever was the crowning doctrine of the restored gospel.

“My conversion came at that moment,” says Ricardo, who was baptized less than three weeks after the first discussion and now serves as second counselor in the district presidency. “I suffered when I lost a brother at age 49, but I understood that I could reclaim him by doing his temple work. This assurance gave me peace and happiness.”

Amanda, baptized a short while later with one of their sons, says, “I haven’t had my mother since I was very young. I always thought I had lost her, and this caused



Ushuaia may be located at the end of the earth, but for those like Marcelino Tossen who have found the gospel here, "it's the beginning of everything."

me a lot of pain. But when the missionaries told us that a family can be together forever, it really touched my heart. It is wonderful to think that I will see her again."

After Ricardo and Amanda were married for eternity in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple, their children were sealed to them. Being sealed as a family, completing ordinance work for many deceased family members, and sending three of their children on full-time missions have brought Ricardo and Amanda great joy.

"One of the greatest blessings we have received as members of the Church," Amanda says, "is that our children obey God."

The Beginning of Everything

Marcelino Tossen believed in God, read the Bible, and enjoyed talking about religion, so when the full-time missionaries knocked on his apartment door one warm January day in 1992, he invited them in. That decision changed his life.

"Elder Zanni and Elder Halls worked under the impressions of the Spirit," recalls Marcelino. Before that first discussion had even ended, the elders told him that he would be baptized into the Church, even telling him the exact day he would be baptized.

"I'm not going to get baptized," Marcelino countered. "I want only to talk to you."

The missionaries gave him a Book of Mormon and

asked him to read several verses and pray that night about their message. He did so but felt nothing.

During a subsequent discussion, however, Elder Zanni asked him, "Would it be all right if we prayed so you can ask Heavenly Father if what we have been teaching you is true?"

As he prayed, Marcelino says, "my heart began to burn fervently within me. Nothing like that had ever happened to me before. I couldn't even finish my prayer, and I arose from my knees."

Elder Zanni asked Marcelino if he had felt anything during his prayer. When Marcelino told him no, the missionary said, "I felt the Spirit very strong. It's strange that you didn't feel anything."

When he admitted what he had felt, Marcelino says, "the elders read from the Doctrine and Covenants, telling me that when the Lord wants us to know if something is right, He will send His peace or make our heart burn within us [see D&C 6:23; 9:8]. That day was a turning point for me."

From then on, the Spirit labored with him and testified of the truth through numerous spiritual experiences. "I'd feel the burning again while I was alone in my apartment," Marcelino says. "When I would open the window, I'd see the elders nearby on a corner teaching people about the Church. I could feel when they were close, and I began to take seriously what they were teaching me."

Marcelino received a warm welcome when he began attending church. He was baptized a short while later on April 22—the exact day the missionaries had named three months earlier. Today, after serving nine years as president of the Ushuaia district, he serves as the second counselor in the presidency of the Buenos Aires north mission.

"When we read that the Lord will 'send forth [His] word unto the ends of the earth' [D&C 112:4], that's Ushuaia," says President Tossen. "Ushuaia *is* the end of the earth. But for those like me who found the gospel here, it's the beginning of everything. Here you'll find the lighthouse at the end of the world. But here is where I found faith and the lighthouse of the Lord." ■