



PHOTOGRAPHS OF FAMILY BY MICHAEL R. MORRIS

THE HARVEST WILL COME

By Michael R. Morris

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For Oscar Filippini and his family, making a living off the land has never been easy. Wind, drought, equipment breakdown, slow markets, and other challenges seem at times to conspire against the family's best efforts.

"Every day here in the *chacra*—on our land—we must seek inspiration and revelation to be able to live off what the land gives us," says Oscar, who farms 100 acres (40 ha) in the Lower Chubut River Valley, located in southern Argentina's Chubut Province. "Every day brings challenges."

One of the Filippini family's biggest challenges is that they don't always know when their tireless efforts will bear fruit. They have learned, however, that hard work and perseverance eventually pay off.

"Working the land doesn't reward your efforts on a daily or weekly basis," Oscar explains. "We work every day but Sunday—every week, every month—without necessarily seeing any monetary return, so we have to have economic plans in place. Sometimes it takes months or even a year to enjoy the fruits of our labors. We must always remember that the work we do now will yield a harvest later."

The Filippini family has learned that the law of the harvest—both physical and spiritual—requires persistence, patience, and prayer.



Oscar Filipponi and his family don't always know when their tireless efforts will bear fruit. But they have learned that hard work and perseverance eventually pay off.

With his wife, Liliana, and two of their children, Daniel and María Céleste, Oscar grows alfalfa and raises livestock.

"Sometimes we have money, and sometimes we don't because it all goes to the cost of running the farm," he says. "Sometimes our machines break down. Sometimes we can't sell our animals when they're ready to be sold. But if we ponder and pray, remain patient, and hold on to hope, within a day or two a solution will present itself. Someone will come by and say, 'Che,¹ do you have any animals for sale?' Things work out, and we move forward. Working the land is difficult, but we have been sustained through our daily efforts."

Reference Points

Daniel says that working the land gives him opportunities each day to reflect on blessings and challenges from a gospel perspective. "It's a blessing to speak with the Lord and be attentive to the influence of the Spirit without distractions from noise or music or advertising," he says of working the land.

"It's easy to be a member of the Church living in a place like this surrounded by loved ones and by nature," adds Liliana. "It helps me remember that we depend on the Lord and that all we have comes thanks to Him. Almost everything we do here reflects some principle of the gospel. Oscar is always coming in the house with a reflection from farming or working with the animals."

When Oscar is plowing a field, for example, he selects a reference point such as a tree or a rock in the distance that will help him plow a straight row. "It doesn't matter if there are obstructions in his way," Liliana says. "He can't deviate from



WHEN THE LORD BALANCES HIS BOOKS

"There were two farmers once who had adjoining fields. The one never worked

in his field on Sunday, and his neighbor used to chide him about it. He said, 'Your crops aren't doing as well as mine are. Why don't you work on Sunday?'

"The other farmer said, 'Well, I want to do what the Lord said. I want to gain the blessings of the Lord.'

"Then one October day they stood at a fence line. The [neighbor] said, 'Just look at it. Look at my field. It is beautiful, the grain is tall, the heads are full of wheat, and your field shows little signs of neglect. You haven't tended yours as well as I've tended mine. Look at my harvest compared to yours. What do you say now about the blessings you thought you were earning?'

"The [Sabbath-keeping] farmer thought for a few minutes and said, 'The Lord doesn't balance his books in October.' "

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *Mine Errand from the Lord* (2008), 193.

his course because he wants the rows to be straight.”

Oscar adds, “If I look behind me to see how my row is coming, I get off course. So I concentrate on my reference point and move forward.”

As in the *chacra*, he says, so in the Church. “To stay on course in our lives, we must look to the Lord, read the scriptures, and keep the commandments. If we allow ourselves to be distracted, we lose our reference points and our paths become crooked.”

A Spiritual Harvest

The Filipponis attend a branch of the Church in nearby Gaiman. In this town of 6,000, settled by Welsh immigrants in the 1870s, branch members have ample opportunities to hold up their light. “We have to be the best we can be each day because people are always watching,” says Liliana.

Getting people interested in the gospel can be a slow process. Like the physical law of the harvest, the spiritual law of the harvest requires patience. But because of the family’s consistency in living gospel principles, people have come to know and respect their Latter-day Saint standards.

Earlier, when Oscar worked for the government, he constantly turned down offers of coffee, tea, and alcohol. “After a few years,” he says, “fellow workers became considerate and supportive and would ask, ‘What kind of soda do you want?’ Sometimes they would even become interested in the Church. That is the harvest.”

Where the spiritual harvest of learning and living gospel principles has been particularly bountiful is within the family itself.

The harvest has come through blessings from Oscar’s service as patriarch of the Trelew Argentina North Stake, from Liliana’s service as branch Relief Society president, and from additional service rendered in a host of other callings family members have fulfilled throughout the years.

The harvest has come from keeping the Sabbath day holy and through living the law of tithing. “The windows



of heaven really do open—if not immediately, then through a process of continuing obedience,” Oscar says.

The harvest has come with the graduation of all the Filipponi children from high school and with all four sons having served full-time missions. Their education and missionary service have provided them with employment and leadership opportunities they likely would not have had otherwise.

The harvest has come in the queries María Céleste has received from peers who want to know about her brothers’ full-time missionary service, her religious beliefs, and why she avoids parties that begin late Saturday night.

And the harvest has come from the whisperings and calming influence of the Holy Ghost, which helped the family avert tragedy late one night when they thought their home was being burglarized. Daniel woke up when he heard a sound and prepared to defend the home, but the supposed intruder turned out to be a neighbor who had come looking for help after his car had broken down.

“I realized that the Spirit had calmed me down so that we could resolve the situation by not overreacting,” Daniel says. “Afterward we prayed and thanked Heavenly Father that nothing bad had happened.”

When we truly give ourselves to God, members of the Filipponi family say, He blesses us with our needs and we become instruments in His hands. It is a process that requires persistence, patience, and prayer. It also requires a lot of faith and work. But in the Lord’s due time, the harvest will come. ■

NOTE

1. An expression commonly used in Argentina that means “friend,” “pal,” or “mate.”