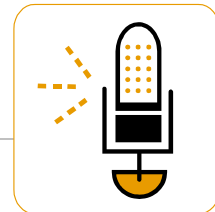


# Mission Maceió



May 2009

During the profession of faith service I preached on Romans 6:4...for Fernando and Laodicea and Thallys, this was a special moment: they would live a new life with Christ.



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## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It's time to write another Mission Maceió Newsletter, so I have settled myself in front of my computer, having a relatively good moment. The last four days I suffered from an attack of the flu with a high fever, shivering, sweating, pain in my body, and for the last two days, a searing headache. If I didn't know better I would think that the "Mexican-flu" had got me. Everybody is talking about that flu right now, and all of Brazil is at alert level 4. I haven't seen face masks, but that doesn't mean anything because I haven't been out for four days.

I probably got it from an adolescent that visited our place last week. She is a member of church and we heard that she was ill. Her mother gave Célia a call and told her that her daughter hadn't eaten for three days, and asked Célia if she could take her to the first aid clinic. Célia did so, and there they diagnosed her as suffering from the flu and dehydration. They gave her some medication, and Célia invited her to stay at our place for a few days so she would be sure to get some food too. We have known this family for many years, and we also know that their life is chaotic. They were all members of our church, but the father left to live with another woman and her three children. The mother stayed with the children, but she doesn't know how to raise them. All the missionaries spent a lot of time trying to help this family, but it didn't work. The deaconry tried to help as well, but while the mother was willing to receive money, she was not willing to receive good advice. Since she would not follow the advice we gave her we finally we stopped helping her. However, we still have contact with the children, who are baptized members of our church. We have a responsibility for these children and therefore we help them as much as we can.

(Since I started writing, I have been to bed and stayed there for the rest of the day. It was impossible for me to sit for one hour in front of the computer!)

I still owe you a report about the profession of faith of Fernando and Laodicea, and the baptism of their son Thallys. Fernando and Laodicea live in Salvador Lira where we have our preaching point and where Pastor Flávio works. They have studied the catechism for some time already. Fernando is very clever – he loves to read and to study and picks things up very easily. We sometimes consider him a walking encyclopedia. You can bring up almost any topic and Fernando will have some knowledge about it. It was a pity that no one from his family attended his profession of faith service. There were a lot of members of Laodicea's family, but none from his side. We could see that he was really sad because of that.

Fernando has always been interested in religion, while his wife Laodicea came from a non-religious background. It was a big surprise for the people in the neighborhood when Laodicea started to attend our church. Nobody had ever expected that she would do such a thing. But she did, and in conversation with her, we can notice that she has made a choice in her life. The Holy Spirit changed her life. Before that she loved to go to parties, dance and drink. But that is over now.

Thallys is their youngest son. He is fifteen years old, but has never been baptized. At such an age you can ask yourself what would be the best: baptize the child, because the parents confessed their faith in Jesus Christ, or wait with baptism until the boy himself will do profession of faith. We had dealt with that question one year ago when Graciana and her four children became members of the church. She had four children that were not baptized, the youngest five and the oldest fourteen. At that time, we also asked ourselves what was best. I preached on 1 Corinthians 7:14, which tells us that the children are holy, and therefore they have to be baptized. That's why we baptized all her children and that's why we also baptized Thallys.

It may be true that he is already 15 years old, but he still has some years to go before

he will do his profession of faith. The fact that his parents did their profession of faith sets him apart from the world around him. He belongs to Christ, because his parents want to follow Christ. The baptism makes that very clear to him.

There are more children in our church who were never baptized and they are sometimes really preoccupied about their salvation. I know that somewhere in the background you can hear the Roman Catholic superstition that tells them that if the child is not baptized it will go to hell if it dies. I explained to some adolescents that they don't have to fear that if they believe in Jesus Christ. Our salvation does not depend on our baptism. If that was the case then the murderer at the cross could not be saved, because he was not baptized, but still Jesus told him: *Today you will be with me in paradise.*

Still, you can notice that it is not without reason that Jesus has given us the sacrament of baptism. It serves to strengthen our faith and that is what these adolescents miss. They would love to be baptized too, because it is the mark of Christ that shows them that they also belong to Jesus.

During the service I preached on Romans 6:4: *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the Glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.* The text was chosen for two reasons. The first reason was that it was Easter Sunday on which we commemorate the resurrection of Christ and what that means for us. The second reason was the fact that for Fernando and Laodicea and Thallys, this was a special moment: they would live a new life with Christ. After the sermon Fernando and Laodicea did their profession of faith and then answered the questions of the Form of Baptism. After that their son Thallys was baptized.

I have said it before: such services are always special services. The whole congregation is involved in it, and they really enjoy the service. You can feel it, you can see it, and you can hear it. They sing with more passion, because they feel that it is a special moment.

The next profession of faith is planned for the day of Pentecost. On that day Aninha Roseane Oliveira de Amorim will do her profession of faith. But that will wait for next time.

### Rev. Abram de Graaf

