

– deFelice Italy Ministry Update May 5, 2009

---- Growth

Warm greetings in the name of our reigning Lord, Jesus Christ! I pray that you are knowing his power in your life, and recognizing his mercy and grace.

God is graciously growing us as a body, in various ways. We are back from the USA for about one month, and it has been an extremely rich and encouraging month as we see God at work.

I shared in early April the wonderful news that God has saved Mustafa. This past Sunday we rejoiced publicly as a church as Adriano baptized Mustafa in water at the beginning of our worship service. Right before the baptism, I asked Roberta if the fact that she and Adriano had hosted Mustafa almost every Saturday night for many, many months had been a sacrifice that she would do over. Obviously, it had taken much time from their family, time which is in very short supply. Her radiant face which beamed with joy gave the answer before she even spoke. She said it was a great privilege and an immense joy to have invested in this way and to have seen God work. How we thank God for believers who are willing to spend themselves and their time to promote the kingdom of God.

What joy to see Mustafa's joy and peace. He has had some ups and downs in his first few weeks of salvation, but his joy is growing and it is evident in his face. Pray that he would get well established, and pray for daily strength, as most of his week is spent with nonbelievers, including his living situation with his brother and his sister-in-law. I spent time with him on Saturday evening encouraging him to establish good time with the Lord daily. I shared that even though it

might be difficult to do all of this reading in the morning, it was very important that he started the day with biblical truth, which could stay with him throughout the day. Please join us in praying for Mustafa. Thank God with us for this eternal work of grace which he has begun in Mustafa's life.



----- Daniele e Petra

We thank you for your continued prayers for Daniele and Petra regarding the ongoing saga of his cancer. His chemotherapy makes him extremely tired, which obviously makes life difficult. He is working full-time, and they have had

many guests for the last four weeks in a row. This past Sunday, Petra shared during our worship time that a few days earlier, she had seen a specialist for what seemed very likely be a tumor in her. She said that she and Daniele had talked before she went to the doctor about what would happen if it was a tumor. Daniele's response was very simple: "God has been faithful in caring for us with my tumor, and therefore we can rest assured that if you have a tumor, he will continue to care for us with your tumor, too." As it turns out, it was not a tumor. But we rejoice in their faith in God and in the fact that they are resting in him, in whatever circumstances come their way. Pray that they would continue to find their peace in Christ alone, and know his power in walking daily by faith.

----- Evangelism:

If you've been following our updates over the years, you will know that about a year ago, God convicted us as a church of the grave sin of a massive failure to evangelize. God has commanded us to evangelize. We are the lights of the world, we are ambassadors for Jesus Christ, God has saved us that we proclaim his virtues. It is so extremely clear in Scripture that we are to all be active in proclaiming Jesus Christ, and it should be a primary role of every true church. We had been failing abysmally. We repented, and are seeking to grow in this service to God.

Our hearts abound in thanksgiving to God for the changes that he is bringing about in us as a church regarding evangelism. This past Saturday and Sunday, members of seven different families in the church were out publicly evangelizing. All of this has again reminded me how little faith I have. For example, my weak faith meant that I was convinced that Giovanni would never publicly evangelize. But for the last several weeks, Diego has been exhorting and encouraging Giovanni to evangelize together with Diego. This past Saturday, Diego drove to Giovanni's town, and the two of them went out into

the public streets and evangelized. In what was truly a mighty work of God, not only did Giovanni accompany Diego, but on various occasions Giovanni actually took the initiative and went up himself to talk to people about Jesus Christ. I thank God that he does infinitely more than our weak faith asks or imagines.

On Sunday, we went to Rovigo to evangelize. Ashley and Dorina and Martina were also there evangelizing. We also saw Fabio and Laura with their five children evangelizing. At another point, we were talking with a young woman about how we have seen God transform people, and in our mind we were thinking specifically of Roberta, and within literally seconds, Adriano and Roberta and their children walked up. I was able to point to Roberta and tell the young woman that this was one of the people we had seen God transform. Adriano and Roberta were also there to evangelize.

I would mention that although we are going out every week, and have done so for almost a year now, we must still pray every time, and throughout our time out, for boldness. Our flesh never does stop causing us problems, but we are finding the strength in God to overcome the flesh. We are specifically praying for more boldness to speak clearly to people who are under condemnation and impending judgment, warning them of the judgment, and proclaiming forgiveness in Jesus Christ alone.

Let me ask you to pray for a few of the people with whom we've shared. We stopped and talked to a 31-year-old single woman sitting alone on a park bench. We shared with her for 10 or 15 minutes about God, eternity, and that the reason for life is to know God personally through Jesus Christ, and forgiveness of our sins. It was evident that she was tracking us. Join us in praying for Eva.

Last September, we gave a tract to a young woman, Illaria, 20, who works at a hotel reception desk. She responded by writing to us and asking

for more material. We took some Bible studies to her home, but she was not there and we left them for her. That was the last we saw or heard of her. Then in December, as Denada and Dorina were out evangelizing, they ran into her and she shared that she was very interested but was almost never free because of her work schedule. She promised to get in touch with Dorina, but did not. Last week when we were out evangelizing, we stopped in the hotel but she was not working. This Sunday, we stopped again, and she was working. She remembered me immediately, and said that she was still very interested in knowing more. I said that I could send her some material, and she said it would actually be better to talk in person, clearly wanting to know more about God. I responded that we could easily organize either to visit her or that she could visit us to talk. Not knowing us, she was understandably somewhat hesitant, and asked me to please send some more material, which she would read and then get back in contact with us. An hour or so later, we saw Ashley and Dorina, told them about having seen Illaria, and so Dorina stopped and talked with Illaria for a few minutes. Illaria was very glad to see her, and said she very much wants to get in touch. Pray with us that God will draw her to Jesus Christ, and open her eyes to the truth.

When it was almost time for us to end our time and go home, we saw a husband and wife and little girl sitting on the pedestal of a large statue in one of the squares. We rode over and started talking with them about God, and ended up talking with them for well over an hour. It is obvious that they're both extremely frustrated because of their marriage, both wanting the other to change to make it better. There was much criticism of one another, but in the midst of all of that, they heard a lot of biblical truth. Pray with us for Flavio and Sonia. Sherrie gave Sonia a New Testament, who took it very willingly. We repeatedly encouraged them to come and visit us so that we could talk more. Sonia very much expressed a desire to do so, Flavio was open but

hesitant. Pray with us that God would also draw this couple. We ended up getting home at 9:30 p.m., and ate supper almost at 10:00 p.m. But, as usual, She had thought ahead, and had brought fruit and nuts as a snack while we were out! We ended the day tired, but greatly encouraged.

We had several other good conversations, and several of the other believers of the church also had good conversations. In addition, as a group we were able to give out a significant number of evangelistic tracts to people with whom we were not able to speak very much. Pray with us that God would work mightily to glorify himself by opening the eyes of the blind. At the same time, thank God with us for the changes that he is bringing about in our own lives and hearts. When we stopped to reflect, just over a year ago it would've been absolutely inconceivable to imagine the majority of our church out publicly and boldly evangelizing. My own faith was not great enough to even ask God for such a great work. I asked for crumbs, God has provided a banquet. We give praise to God who alone can do such work. At the same time, we recognize that we need to grow even more, and that our boldness in evangelism must be matched with a perseverance to continue to be faithful in this vital and primary responsibility for our time here on the earth. Pray also as we are evaluating various other methods to add to our public street evangelism, which can give us contact with even more people. Thank God with us for how this is giving the church more zeal for the kingdom of God! Martina especially, who has not been doing well, was greatly encouraged after her time evangelizing Sunday with Dorina and Ashley.

----- Pierluigi and Anna

About 10 days ago, we drove three hours to spend time with Pierluigi and Anna. It was a short but very rich visit. God brought to the surface a few key issues which have been keeping them from coming up for much fellowship. As a result of God doing much work in them, they

came up this past Wednesday and stayed until Sunday afternoon. The in-depth fellowship, seen other believers close up, and the many conversations regarding specific areas they've been struggling with, were all used of God to impact them greatly. This trip, they stayed with us, but had different meals with others. We thank God for the privilege of opening our home to be able to pour into lives. We thank God for the many people over the years who have opened their homes and their lives to us, and for the many who continue to do so. Pray for Pierluigi and Anna, as they get established in their new faith, and learn what it means to live it out in their daily relationship, thought process, and practices. They were greatly encouraged by the time they had with the body here.



----- mentoring ministry

Let me briefly mention that God continues to open doors with various men who are in various leadership roles throughout Italy. At having both e-mail and telephone contact with these men. Virtually all of them have contacted me after having read or listen to sermons from our website. What a privilege to seek to encourage and stimulate on these men. Many of them are having different struggles, and are thankful for the opportunity to share and receive counsel which is often difficult or even impossible to receive in their local setting. How I recognize my own need for wisdom and purity and humility and

strength from God, that I might have truth from God to offer them. Pray that this behind the scenes ministry with edified these men, and through their lives bring glory and growth to the kingdom of God. Pray for these men, that God would strengthen them in their own walks, in their marriages and homes, and in their ministries.

----- a personal note

Life is busy, extremely busy. There is never time to finish all which seems to be urgent. But God is doing a work in our lives, and generally, we have peace in the midst of the pressure and frequent tiredness. Our days by and large are very peaceful, and God has allowed us to be consistent in taking regular time each week to ride our bikes together as both a form of exercise, and of communion together as husband and wife. Pray that we would continue to keep our eyes upon Jesus Christ, and trust him for the strength to accomplish all that he intends for us to accomplish.

----- closing

thank you for taking the time to read this, and thank you for praying. We pray that what we have shared will encourage you in your own walks, and will cause you to give thanks to God for what he is doing here in the midst of us. It is always an encouragement to us to hear what he is doing elsewhere, and so for free to write to us if you would like to share. We live by grace, and find our strength in God. Our prayer is that he will be glorified in us and through us, as we await the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Rejoicing as we work and wait,

Marco and Sherrie (Serena) deFelice

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