

Franc's February Facts 2016 Newsletter



Dearest friends and family in the faith – Greetings in Christ Jesus!

Time sure flies fast. It seems like it was just yesterday that we were playing Christmas songs and having rehearsals. Now, already into February, we are getting ready to celebrate God's love toward His children. This is a good time to also remember those who sent us Christmas cards, photos and so much love. By the way, thank you for so much love and support in the ministry that God has called us to.

This is also a great time to share that Sarai continues to enjoy teaching 8th graders. Priscilla continues to work hard in administration of a growing wholesale cosmetics company. She has been approached about a promotion involving sales, which she is seriously considering. Sylvia is working hard as a freshman at Science Academy, where her two older sisters have also attended. Her pace is exhausting, sometimes staying up till midnight and sometimes even way beyond, to keep up with academic demands. At times I say that this is not a school; it is slavery. But then again, this is exactly what she wanted. Please continue to pray for her condition. My beloved Mary continues with home chores, as well as church secretary, leading Bible studies in a women's group, counseling, encouraging, praying, and of course, confronting and correcting her husband – me!



God's faithfulness in our ministry at Maranatha continues to be one of our greatest motivations to keep moving forward. This coming Sunday we will come to appreciate God's faithfulness once more at church, as we celebrate our 16th year since the dedication of our facilities. So many precious lives have "spiritual stocks" in this sanctuary, from our own congregation, as well as from people as far away as Canada and even Switzerland, come to think of it. In fact, a couple of European friends donated the very desk where I'm currently putting together this newsletter.

As to the actual Maranatha ministry, we've used many manners and methods through the years to reach out into our neighborhood with the Good News. We've held youth rallies, movies, children's programs, music concerts, Christmas programs, outdoor events, sports, door-to-door, social works, and



Our facilitators display the Bibles they will share with visitors attending their Life Groups.



After much personal and marriage suffering, Rufy turned her life to Christ. Here, with a wide smile on her face, she is joyfully getting baptized. She's such a trophy of God's grace.

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Please pray for my dear friend Rudy Padilla's marriage problems.

Maranatha, I'm glad to inform that I continue to make progress with Rudy and Rosie Padilla, but things are not well in their marriage. I listened, I spoke and I prayed with both of them, pleading with them to give God a chance. In the Life Group that meets at our

yet, our efforts seem to yield very little results. In spite of all this, we are not in any way discouraged; we just now know what doesn't work. This year, after a three-month long training, we have started a small group ministry. These Life Groups, as we call them, are geographically distributed small pockets of believers currently meeting in 10 different hosting homes in and around the McAllen area, including nearby cities. These groups represent locations where two primary objectives are set in motion: 1. To edify the believers, and 2. To evangelize the non-believers. My main participation in this operation is sharing the lesson plan every Monday

night with the facilitators and then them their exposition Tuesday-Saturdays. What an exciting and stretching time meeting with these facilitators every Monday night is for all of us. We openly discuss our disappointments, as well as our encouragements. I am so very happy that these facilitators are facing major challenges of their own and yet they are dealing with them all head on. We will continue our pilot program for three months and then pause to evaluate and implement needed adjustments. Then we will follow up with three additional months of ministry. After six months of this Life Groups project, we will have a better idea where we will go and what we will do. One thing is sure, our facilitators have never been so pumped up and yet so stretched out as they are right now. On other important matters at



Abisai, our beloved youth pastor/worship director, trains our next praise team. Connie, the girl in white sweater, is Rufy's girl. She's come a long way after her father separated from the family and then died in a tragic car accident on Christmas Day of 2012.

house, John Paul and Yvonne have started to come. Both of these individuals come from very broken pasts. John Paul is a 38-year-old man whom we've known since he was about 14, and for all these years I have hunted him down with the gospel. Now, broken and beaten, he is facing many consequences of his life-long disobedience. And yet, these two are the very reason why Jesus came to this planet and the reason why God placed them and us in this very neighborhood. I often like to challenge our church with the statement: Our Community is Our Commitment. In fact, just a few days ago I was called up by a good friend of John Paul's – Rocky Sanchez. This is a 42 year-old man who has also wasted many years of his life. Now, finding himself terribly discouraged about his past decisions and his present condition, he called me up and had a fantastic conversation, one where he opened up completely to me, confessing the mess he's made out of his life. With tears overflowing his eyes and running down his cheeks, Rocky shared how he has hit rock bottom. I spoke to him about my own woes in life, my bitterness and frustration, but also the difference that Jesus has made in my life. A few minutes later, Rocky was once more in tears, but this time they were tears of joy over his many forgiven sins. He has a long ways to go, but his eternity has been solved for now. Please continue to pray for Rudy and Rosie, for John Paul and Yvonne and now for Rocky. The Lord has given me a great sense of passion for these souls. In speaking to John Paul yesterday, he assured me that they would be coming to our Life Group Bible study tomorrow.



Rural Holguin, where my heart hangs, continues to have many pastors in desperate need of proper Bible training and ministry resources.

Another pastors' conference awaits me in the rural part of Holguin. These country pastors are such a great inspiration to my own heart. Their love and service for the Lord is so admirable and Christ-like that so often I am personally embarrassed at how little I am doing for the sake of the gospel. They do so much with so very little, that my heart is passionate about encouraging and further enabling them to continue in the ministry God has called them to in that country. Pastor Lorenzo (right) comes to mind.

He's a new pastor who graduated from Bible school about six years ago and, until last year, he had been preaching out of a borrowed Bible. How's that? A pastor

The Lord has graciously allowed me to learn and serve in Spain, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, in America and where my heart beats the hardest for – Cuba. Speaking of, Cuba is where I'm heading for on the 22nd of this month, along with a great friend Bill Marietta.



without a Bible of his own! I am so glad to inform you that last year I had the joy of giving him his very own Bible. I am very excited about meeting new pastors and reconnecting with very good ones I've known for some time. After the pastors' conference, we are moving westward, toward Havana to visit the church we've helped to build a couple of years ago. I am taking some teaching material, other resources and some much needed support for two pastors. I have also been commissioned to take some funds that a church has entrusted me with to help a few pastors who are deeply involved in building or expanding their churches in the rural areas of Holguin. Moreover, while in Havana, I will reconnect with two pastors whom we will do ministry in July, along with a group of Bible students from Wyoming. So, this year is looking very exciting, both at Maranatha and in Cuba.

Whether in McAllen or in Cuba, some of you folks have "held the rope" while we do ministry - and for that vital partnership, we will be eternally thankful. Of course, we are also very appreciative of TBM, our missionary agency overseeing our marriage and our ministry for so many years. The Lord has greatly used these godly people to encourage, enlighten and equip me to be in a better position to do my ministry in McAllen and in Cuba. I could not be happier to work under such an organization. They have been very supportive of our dual ministry efforts.

Lastly, thanks so much to those of you who have also partnered with us to reach places and people that you may never come or go to visit. Thank you so much for allowing us to be your eyes, mouth and feet in McAllen and in Cuba. We count it a great privilege to represent you wherever we go.

*By God's Grace;
For God's Glory.
Rom. 11:36*

Franc & Mary Ortega
Ps. 48:14