

# Brazil News

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Editorial

## **On Abduction and Adoption**

Most reputable newspapers reserve full spread front page features for only the most sensational news. Our Goiânia daily paper, *O Popular*, is no exception. Thus it seemed a bit incongruous when in a recent edition, a middle-aged couple and an adolescent were splashed across the entire front page, under bold headlines which read: *Happiness and Pain Mark Encounter After Sixteen Years*.

On the morning of January 21, 1986, Pedro, son of Jairo & Maria Tapajós B. Pinto, was born in a maternity hospital in Brasília. That afternoon, 13 hours later, a lady who identified herself as a social worker, entered room no. 10 and asked to see the newborn child. Permission was granted and the lady left with Pedro.

When the “social worker” didn’t return, the police were called. Soon they had to face the hard reality that Pedrinho (little Pedro) had been abducted by a pseudo-social worker.

The police kept the case open and each time a child turned up that could possibly fit the profile of Pedrinho, Jairo and Maria were contacted. Five times they got their hopes up. Five times they had their hopes dashed.

Thus, when they were once again contacted by the police several weeks ago, Maria didn’t feel up to yet another letdown. She went to stay with a friend. Jairo, however, was more optimistic. So were the police. The lead they received this time seemed quite solid. An anonymous caller, who it turned out was the granddaughter of the abductor’s second husband, told them where Pedro, now nearly 17, could be found in Goiânia.

Investigators were sent to the address given. They were met by Vilma Martins Costa, 47, recently widowed.

Did she have a son, now 16 years old?

Yes. Absolutely!

What was his name?

Oswaldo Júnior Martins Borges.

Where was he born?

In a hospital in Goiânia.

When called to police headquarters for further questioning, Vilma had a different story. Someone in the town of Mara Rosa, 360 km. from Goiânia, had given her the child at birth.

In another interview with the police, when confronted with the results of an investigation in Mara Rosa, showing there were no records of such a child, nor of an adoption, she presented yet another version. Her deceased husband had four daughters from a previous marriage, but always wanted a son. One day he showed up with a newborn baby, asking if she would be willing to raise it without ever revealing where he got the child.

Finally, her lawyer came up with a fourth version. A woman who swept streets in Brasília gave the child to Vilma's husband, who brought it home, a version vehemently contested by his biological daughters.

Since Vilma and her lawyer were obviously not in the mood to tell the story straight, there was but one solution: a DNA test.

In the meantime, both the police and the biological parents were convinced they were onto something solid. After all, Pedro is light skinned with a striking resemblance to Jairo, while on the other hand, he shows no resemblance to his "adoptive" mother, who is much darker than he.

It was arranged that Jairo & Maria would speak to Pedro by telephone. The conversation was cordial, albeit somewhat tense. One of the things Jairo wanted to discuss with his prospective son was the DNA test, which needed his approval. Pedro was reluctant. After all, he said, he didn't want to make trouble for his mother, whom he loved very much.

Both Jairo and Maria were most understanding. Jairo explained that even though the results should be positive, proving he was their son, he would nevertheless have the full right to decide with which family he would live. Reluctantly Pedro agreed to the test.

The results were positive. Jairo & Maria are the biological parents of Pedro.

Arrangements were made for Jairo & Maria to meet their son. The spot chosen was a lawyer's office in Goiânia. Those present were Pedro, his biological parents and some of their children, Vilma, the "adoptive" mother, her lawyer, some of her children, as well as some of the agents involved in the case.

Jairo & Maria were ecstatic, hardly able to contain themselves.

Pedro was at ease, seemingly happy to meet his biological parents, yet showing an acute concern for his "adoptive" mother.

Vilma, the "adoptive" mother, was ill at ease. When she met Maria, her first words were, "I'm not to blame! I'm not to blame." Anxiously she asked, "Do I look like the woman who kidnapped your son?"

Magnanimously, Jairo and Maria assured her they were only interested in knowing their son, not in revenge nor launching an investigation. Maria thanked her for having taken good care of her son.

While the encounter apparently was a success, there was yet a subtle element of sadness. Pedro made it plain he was Osvaldo and that his first allegiance was to his “adoptive” mother. His message was: I am Osvaldo. Vilma is my mother. Jairo & Maria will be my good friends.

In spite of all the magnanimity and good will shown, we are aghast at the brazenness of the abductor. How could she, who deprived a couple of their child for nearly 17 years, face television cameras and in a positive, defensive tone, declare, “He is now an adult. He is free to decide his own future. But I know I won’t lose his love.” In other words, “He will, of his own free will, continue to be mine.”

Down deep we are disappointed with Pedro for his less than enthusiastic reception of his biological parents, for his statement that “Our mother is she who raises us.”

When mankind was abducted in the Garden, shortly “after birth,” it was a consensual abduction, that is, man voluntarily, against better knowledge, surrendered to the tempter. This fact is of great significance.

Adam and Eve had no last names. But let’s assume they did. Adam and Eve Holy. Had they been abducted against their will (an impossibility), we believe that God would have immediately sent ten thousand legions of angels to rescue them. Adam and Eve would have been rescued with their last names intact.

But that wasn’t the case (nor, as we have said, could it have been). Since they of their own freewill followed their abductor, he was able to change their last name from Holy to Sinful: Adam and Eve Sinful. Thus they took on their captor’s last name, and for legal purposes, became his legitimate children. Their very DNA was corrupted, so that all posterity would be born with a corrupted nature.

Pedro has bonded with his abductor and considers her his rightful genitor; he plans on living with her and using her last name. He hopes to be friends with his biological parents, but has no intentions of living with them, nor of using their last name. He plans on being Osvaldo, not Pedro.

Never once did God consider leaving man to his deserved fate. Indeed, before Genesis, there existed plans for a rescue mission, a plan He knew full well couldn’t be a commando operation, an Entebbe type rescue, in which enemy territory is invaded and all the hostages forcefully evacuated.

The rescue plan set in order by God is beautiful.

Adam & Eve were consensually abducted; of their own free will they allowed themselves to believe a lie. This, however, would not be the situation of the billions of children to come into this world in subsequent millennia, who, by virtue of birth, would bear the last name, Sinful. God’s holy and eternal justice refused to see children, forcefully abducted, condemned without a chance to make a conscious choice.

Thus the plan of salvation began with a choice. God, the Almighty God of heaven and earth, *chose* to rescue those who had no choice. He *chose* to stipulate the price of the ransom—a price which the abductor believed could not be paid.

The plan: God sent His only Son to earth, where He was immaculately conceived,

and in the fullness of time, born sinless, with full right to the name Holy. The abductor attempted to physically destroy the Child, but failed. That Child grew in grace and in knowledge, always worthy of the name Holy. He grew to manhood, lived with His family and worked as a carpenter, always worthy of the name Holy.

At approximately 30 years of age, He prepared to tell the world about His mission. He began by fasting in the desert for 30 days. Once again the abductor attempted to destroy the Son of God, this time spiritually. The Rescuer did not yield in one single point, proving Himself worthy of the name Holy.

As the Son of God went about teaching and doing good, the abductor's ire was constantly fanned, for the Rescuer's message was joyfully received by many, including harlots, who openly flaunted their last name Sinful. His days were stressful, as the masses crowded upon Him. Never once, even when reviled and criticized, did He become impatient. In daily life He proved Himself worthy of the name Holy.

At each turn of the road, the abductor was defeated, but he believed he still had a chance. A good chance. He, the father of death, would defeat the Rescuer with the instrument he best knew: death.

After Judas rose from the table and headed out into the darkness, there was a rapid sequence of events. On the cross Jesus was mocked. "If you are whom you say you are, prove it by freeing yourself and coming down."

The abductor must have been wild with joy as he saw that the Rescuer would perform no miracle on the cross. Nor would the Father send ten legions of angels to rescue the Son. We see the abductor ringing his hands in utter ecstasy. When the Son of God finally bowed His head in death, the victory was his...

Or so he thought...until he heard footsteps. Sure, measured footsteps. The one who shortly before had cried out, "It is finished!" was now approaching his stronghold in the bowels of the earth.

We can but imagine what happened as the Eternal Light approached the prison house of Satan, steeped in greasy darkness, and like Samson, wrenched the heavy prison doors off their hinges, carried them up Calvary's mountain and tossed them down for all to see, then and now. We hear Him proclaiming in deep, victorious tones: "Come forth! THE RANSOM IS PAID! Henceforth no one need perish. I will stand at the heart's door and knock. Those who open and welcome me in, I will adopt as sons and daughters. I shall give you a new name. Holy."

In a last-ditch stand, the abductor hoped to keep the Rescuer in the realms of death. Impossible! On the morning of the third day, the Rescuer, the one whose name is Holy, came forth from the grave.

So overwhelming was this victory, that it was retroactive. It reached back to the Garden itself, when God promised Adam and Eve a Redeemer. We believe this first couple accepted God's offer and were adopted. In the Holy Register, the names Adam Sinful and Eve Sinful were blotted out and in their place there was written: Adam Holy, Eve Holy.

The millions and millions of children who through the ages have died before

reaching the age of choice are now waiting under the Altar. But for those who reached the age of choice, a choice had to be made.

Pedro has come to the legal age of choice. He has chosen to remain with his abductor. He wants to be friends with his biological parents. That so accurately describes the larger part of mankind today. They chose to remain with Satan, but want to be friends of God. Because of this friendship, they may go to church on Sunday, be involved in religious activities, maybe even be missionaries or preach the gospel. But when “off duty” they live with their abductor and use his name.

It should be pointed out, that when God adopts a sinner and changes his name from Sinful to Holy, that soul is pure before God. Yet, because his spiritual DNA remains corrupt, salvation is conditional, that is, dependant upon obedience. Only on the final day, when the saved will resurrect incorruptible, with a new body, will the corrupt DNA be cast off and salvation lose its conditionality.

An adoption is a thrilling experience. Sometimes, when parents have yearned for a child for many years, the emotions of an adoption can be greater than a biological birth. (In fact, if worldwide waning enthusiasm for bearing children, and outright rejection, were taken into consideration, most adoptions would surely be a more joyous occasion than a natural birth.) We are, of course, speaking about the adoption of infants.

When an infant is adopted, in most cases the bonding is similar to that of biological parents with their own child. The parents, biological or adoptive, accept the child as their own, whereas the child is totally unaware of what is taking place, thus making it initially a unilateral bonding.

The adoption of an adolescent or preadolescent falls into an entirely different ballpark because, legally, the prospective adoptee must judicially concur with the proceedings. The bonding must be bilateral, that is, the prospective parents must extend their hands to the child and the child must extend his hands to the parents. Thus it isn't enough for prospective parents to select a child and say, “I want to adopt this child.”

Nor, we hasten to add, is it sufficient for a child who has reached the age of choice, to declare, “I am going to be adopted by so and so.” In all adoptions, the prospective parents are the active party and the adoptee the passive party. When one calls, the other must accept. Only then can there be an adoption.

*To whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*

The Savior, the Good Shepherd, desires to save every single living soul. We believe that every soul who has reached the age of choice, in some way, sometime in life, sees this arm. Some see, stop briefly, and go their way. Others see the arm revealed and believe they have learned to know the Master. There are those who actually take His hand and promise, “I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,” but when they see where He goes, they soon begin hanging back. The price of following is too great.

So accustomed are we to this strange situation, that we hardly think it strange anymore. Men, women, teenagers, and younger, have been abducted and now live in darkness and despair. Yet when the Rescuer appears to offer love, light and liberty,

many coldly turn their backs. Others, like Pedro, smile, give Him a hug and say, “Thanks, but I’m fine where I’m at; we’ll be friends.” And the Rescuer goes away sorrowful, for He forces no one.

We speak about dreadful sins (some we don’t even speak about). We consider patricide and matricide (the killing of one’s father or mother) as heinous crimes, as abominable sins. And surely they are.

I remember the preaching when I was a child (Frank Haynes, Frank Wenger, Glenn Litwiller, et al.), and now ask myself, have we lost the vision of the gravity of having been responsible for the death of the Savior? Do we think about the price of our salvation? Do we look to Calvary and see the cross? Do we see the prison doors lying on top of the mount? And do we realize the supreme effort it took to carry them there? Do we ever think about this? Do our children?

When our children come to the age of choice, all too often they can tell their conversion experience in less than 60 seconds. We say it’s because they are young and didn’t travel far on the way of sin. That, truly, is wonderful. But how do we show them—and ourselves—that the lie they told to the school teacher and that being disobedient to mother, were only tiny spots of a far greater leprous malignancy?

Brazil is indignant, incensed with the brazenness of Vilma, Pedro’s abductor (and especially so, now that it appears that another daughter was also abducted at birth). A popular magazine shows her photo on the cover, with bold headlines: THE WICKED ONE. People are perplexed. Why would Pedro reject his rightful parents and cast his lot with a kidnapper?

We too are perplexed. We are disappointed in Pedro. Why is it that Pedro leaves us perplexed and disappointed, while we so easily explain our children’s shallow conversion experiences? There are those who ask, “What’s the problem?”

Is it possible that they are going as deep in their conversion experiences as we are in our Christian life? If it is, we are in deep trouble.

Should this be the case, at least two things must happen for the problem to be remedied.

First of all, there will have to be a revival in which parents reconsecrate their lives.

Secondly, which depends on the first, our children’s experiences would not be considered complete until there was a definite conviction of the cost of personal salvation; a conviction of the gravity of the sin of having—even if only once—told the Rescuer, “Not today.” We need to ask our converts, “Do you understand Isaiah chapter 53?”

*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

*Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

*He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

(Conclusion to this editorial at the end of the next article.) ▲

## A Brazilian Story

*by Jorge José da Silva  
Boa Esperança Cong.*

## A Story of Love

This story is so full of happiness that we feel to share it with our brethren in the precious Faith of Christ.

One day in November of the year 2000, I went to the town of Sorriso to do some shopping...

Later my wife told me that when I left she prayed to the Lord to put it in my heart to also desire to adopt a little girl. This was her dream, as apparently we wouldn't be able to have any more children of our own. And even if we should have another child, it could easily be a boy, so she felt to pray for a girl.

Shortly before this, another couple, Antônio & Mercês, gave their name to a social worker, indicating their desire to also adopt a child. Coincidentally, on this very day they had to go in for an interview with a psychologist at the social service, so I went with them.

It also happened that there was an adoption campaign on in Sorriso, and the town was full of signs that said: *Adopt a Child this Christmas*. I was impressed by all this, and then Antônio said to me, "Why don't you sign up for a baby too?" Just as he said this, a social worker came by where we were and Mercês told her I might be interested in adopting a child too. She encouraged me to do so, and then took me to the office where I could sign up for a child. The only problem was that my wife wasn't with me; she needed to sign too. But even that ended up not being a problem. They told me I could take the papers to her, she could sign, and then I should bring them back, which I did.

In a matter of a few days, the social service lady was out to our place to look things over and ask us questions. One of the things she asked us was if we would be willing for an older child. We told her that if it was a girl, up to four years of age would be okay. She then asked if the girl had a little brother, would we take him too? She explained that the judge didn't permit that siblings be sent to different homes. We told the lady we would accept a little girl and her brother.

After the lady left, we were hopeful that something would work out. Time went

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by and one day bro. Antônio Carlos gave us a message. We were supposed to get in contact with the people from the adoption agency. As it turned out, they wanted more information. Once again time went by. We began to wonder if we would ever get our little girl.

In the meantime, my wife decided she didn't want a little girl if it was over two years old, so I sent word to the social worker about our decision. Once again nothing happened.

Finally I decided to call again and ask why everything was at a standstill. The lady said, "Jorge, we have a bunch of children just waiting to be adopted by someone, but everyone wants a newborn. There is a long waiting line for this kind of children."

I then asked if we were willing to adopt an older child if we would have a better chance. She said our chances would increase a hundred percent. I asked her how old such a child would be and she said up to five years of age. I told the lady I would talk to my wife and children about this and then get back with her.

At home we thought about this, how that everyone only wants a newborn child. We began to feel a deep compassion for children whom no one wants because they are too old. We decided that we would take this to the Lord in prayer. After all, even though we wanted so much to adopt a little girl, we wanted to make sure this was the Lord's will.

As we prayed, our compassion for older children kept growing, even for children older than five years. We decided we would accept a child up to six years old.

Then one day my son Hígor and I went to Glenn Hibner's place to use his phone to call my brother-in-law Luis Duarte in Rio Verde. When we got there, they had a houseful of company, so I decided to not call that day. As we were leaving, Hígor said, "Dad, aren't you going to call the social worker and tell her that we have decided to take a child up to six years old?"

I tried to explain to him that Glenn's house was full and we would leave it for another day. And besides, I told him, we could pray about it some more. He answered me that we *had* already prayed and that we *had* made a decision to tell the social worker about the age change. He spoke with such conviction that I turned around and went back to call.

Sandra, the social worker, answered the phone. I told her I was the person who had spoken with her some time back. She asked in what she could help me and I told her about our decision to take a child up to six years old.

She asked, "Would you like to have three children?!"

Astonished, I asked, "What do you mean?"

"I mean, do you want to adopt three children?"

"What ages are they?"

"The little girl is four, the little boy is two, and then there is an eight-month old girl."

"I'll take the two girls."

"No you won't! It's all or none!"

I hesitated for several moments and then made my decision. "We'll take all three!"



Márcia, another lady came on the line and when she found out that we would take all three children, told us that that very same day she would give us the final word.

Hígor and I stayed right by the phone, waiting for it to ring. Finally, my son said, “Dad, why don’t you call again?”

That is what I did. I asked for Sandra and was told that she had already left. Since Márcia was on the line, I told her that I was supposed to get an answer that same day. She said, “Jorge, your paperwork has to go to the judge. Doubtlessly you will get the children, but even so the judge has to look things over. At this point there are some things pending and we can’t legally let the children out yet.” She said it would take between 30 and 60 days until the judge would hand down a decision.

This was a letdown, as we had hoped to go in and pick up the children the following day. I tried once more to see if things couldn’t work out faster, but Márcia patiently repeated that this was impossible. So I asked, “Is there anything I can do?”

She replied, “The only thing you can do is wait until everything is through.” We ended our conversation and then my son began to bombard me with questions. I told him everything that Márcia had told me, and then when we got home, I repeated everything to my family. All were wild with joy when they heard the good news. We settled down to wait for the paperwork to go through.

Several nights later we heard our youngest boy sobbing in bed. I went to his bedroom and asked what the problem was; he said he didn’t know. We had a prayer together and then I went back to bed.

My wife and I were worried about what the problem might be, so the next day we had a talk with him. We told him that if it was the Lord’s will that these children become part of our family, things would work out and that in the meantime we would have to patiently wait.

I went out to work and my oldest son followed me. He said, “Dad, Filipe told me why he was crying last night. He was worried about the three little children, wondering if they had a place to stay and if they were hungry. Dad, he’s feeling so sorry for the children.”

As I was able to feel what the rest of my family was thinking about all this, it came to me so clearly, “The thing proceedeth from the Lord,” and I took new courage that everything would work out.

Another 30 days went by, then another 30 days. During this period we spent some time on the Colony at Rio Verde. I decided to call the social worker and find out what was going on. Márcia answered the phone and I asked to speak to Sandra. She asked me, “Haven’t you given up yet?”

I told her of course not, that we had discussed our plans with different ones and they all supported us if we felt this was God’s will. She then said that actually it was Márcia who was looking after this, so she would put her on the line again.

Márcia told me that there was a couple of foreigners who were interested in these children, but that we had first choice. I told her that we were still interested, that nothing had changed. When she heard what I had to say, she opened up and told me

what was holding things up. She said the workers in the courthouse were all on strike and the judge couldn't do anything until they went back to work.

Possibly because of all the questions I was asking and the anxiety she sensed in me, she decided to give the telephone number of the judge's secretary, and of the judge herself. She thought that if I waited until the strike was over, which it appeared would be the case within a week, that if I called the judge personally, maybe it would help.

We waited in the spirit of prayer, taking close notice of the presence of God in all this. Finally it seemed I just couldn't wait anymore, so I called the judge's secretary, who immediately transferred me to the judge. She explained to me what was taking place and said that I would have to be patient until the paperwork was done and the children could be legally adopted.

The following week I called Márcia again and she told me that the paperwork was almost through, that possibly within two weeks we would be able to claim our children. She asked me to call again in a week.

My wife told me she had prayed to God, asking for a sign that this was really His will. The sign would be this: If it was His will, then we would be able to change the children's names and give them the name we chose.

About the same time I decided to present this whole situation to my congregation and see if they could support us in our desire to adopt three children. If they would support us, then to me it would be a sign that this thing was proceeding from the Lord.

The congregation supported us, which was the first sign. The second would be if we could change the children's names. I called the social worker and she said yes, we could change their names. Then she began to ask me if I knew anything about these children's past, if I knew what the mother had done to these children. I told her I didn't. The story is so heartrending that I don't feel to relate it.

I then told the lady that this story only increased my conviction that the Lord was giving us these children as a special mission. I then told her we would like to speak to the judge. She told me to wait and she would call back. By six o'clock she hadn't called, so I called. Márcia answered the phone and said Melinda—that's the woman's name—was in a meeting. So I gave them Glenn Hibner's phone number and told her that if they had any news, they should call this number. What I didn't know was that Glenn & Elizabeth were going to Goiás that very night and would be gone for a while, so there would be no one to take a message.

We had just gotten home, when Glenn drove up. He said they had called and said all the paperwork was through; if we were still interested, we could go to the town of Sorriso the next day and pick up the papers at the courthouse. We were supposed to ask for a lady by the name of Mirela. She would give us the papers, which we then had to take to the courthouse in the city of Sinop and give them to Clarice, who is the judge's secretary. The secretary would introduce us to the judge, who would then give us authorization to see the children. If we liked them, they would be ours. On the other had, if we didn't like them, we would have full right to not take them.

The message we received was big and I wasn't sure I was understanding everything.

Glenn said that if we wanted to call back and make sure we were understanding things, we could do so. We decided to wait until the following day. They repeated what they had told Glenn.

Even before this, two different brethren had offered to take us in their vehicle wherever we needed to go to work the papers out and to get the children. So on a Friday, Dave & Marta Kramer took us in their car. By phone we had asked Melinda to tell the judge we would be coming out. By then there was no doubt: This thing was proceeding from the Lord.

We left at six o'clock in the morning so that we could do some business before the courthouse opened at 1:00 pm.

At one o'clock Dave & Marta left us off at the door of the courthouse and they went on to the post office, that was on the next corner. If everything worked out, we wanted to get back to Sinop that evening, where the children were.

When we got to the courthouse door, we were informed everything was closed down as one of the judges from a higher court had died. That shook us up somewhat, but we remembered that the Lord is able to open closed doors. So we spoke to the guard and explained why we were there. He let us in and had us talk with a woman, to whom we again explained why we were there. She had her secretary call a certain Eliana, who almost immediately came out to talk to us. She said that Mirela wasn't in, but that she would call her on her cell phone.

Once she had Mirela on the phone, she explained exactly what needed to be done. Within a matter of minutes we had in our hands the documents needed to see the children. We knew that once we got to Sinop, the courthouse would be closed too on account of the death of the judge. We voiced our fears to Eliana and she said that if we had any kind of problem, we should call her and she would do whatever she could for us.

We went out to the car and told Dave & Marta what we had found out. They said, "Surely this thing proceedeth from the Lord. Even though the courthouse doors were closed, you got the necessary documents. So now let's go on to Sinop."

When we got to the courthouse in Sinop, like before, we spoke to the guard at the door, who told us about the judge who had died and for that reason they were closed. When he finished, I told him our story and showed him the documents we had. He immediately invited us in and asked us to sit down while he spoke with Clarice, the judge's secretary.

All this was so interesting. It seemed to me we were putting a puzzle together, with all the pieces just falling into place, and as this happened, a beautiful picture was emerging.

When Clarice showed up, I introduced myself by saying, "I am Jorge."

She asked, "Did you bring the documents?"

"Yes. Here they are."

"Please give them to me and wait for just a moment." Then she seemed to change her mind and said, "Come with me to the judge's chambers."

We had to go to another building. We were introduced to Dr. Maria das Graças [Remember that judges in Brazil are respectfully referred to as Dr.] Once in her office, she began by saying, “These children are the apple of my eye. You are going to take good care of them, right?”

She then went on to say that God had prepared us for this mission. “Take very good care of them. They have suffered so much. Help them erase this past out of their lives.”

Once again we promised we would do all we could. The judge then embraced us and we all wept. It was evident that she had total confidence in us. She told her secretary that she could get the names we had chosen for the children and get the paperwork moving to conclude the adoption proceedings. We were supposed to come back in a week to pick up the guardianship papers, but she said we could take the children and the papers would be sent in the mail.

We went to the corner to the social worker’s office, which was also closed. Once again we were taken care of as if it were a normal workday. As we were going through this, I prayed in my spirit, “Lord, give us the love that these children are going to need.” At this point I wasn’t the least bit concerned about their color, for we knew nothing about them. So far as I was concerned, they could be so black they were purple, and that would make me no difference, I would still love them with all my might.

When our documents had been examined and everything was ready, one of the workers went after the children and brought them to us right in the front of the building. It was an unforgettable scene...

There was that sweet baby girl, now Lóri Alessandra; a blond little girl, now Lorrane Antônia; and a sullen little boy that only knew how to say NO, now Hugo Benedito.

My wife picked up little Lóri, Marta picked up Lorrane, and I tried to take Huguinho [little Hugo], but he said NO! I said a quick prayer, asking the Lord what I should do, and just that quick the answer came. Ask him if he likes popsicles. Now he said YES and I was able to hug my son for the first time.

We all got into the car and from this day forth, our life has changed.

So ends our little story. I ask for your prayers so that we can be faithful in the enormous responsibility we have received.

Jorge & Dalva  
Hígor José  
Werner Jorge  
Warlan Filipe  
Lorrane Antônia  
Hugo Benedito  
Lóri Alessandra

### **Conclusion of editorial**

Jorge sent me the first several pages of this story a few weeks ago. Now, just as I was finishing this editorial, the rest came in the mail. Call it coincidence if you like...

More graphically than I could ever describe, our brother Jorge tells us what adoption

is all about. The love which he, his wife and children felt for these three mistreated children didn't depend on color, IQ, looks or personality. Indeed, they were part of the family, *with a new name*, before they ever laid eyes on them.

They as a family have taken these children knowing that retrieving them from their torturous past won't be a bed of roses. When the sullen little Hugo said NO, a quick prayer changed that answer to YES.

When the Lord adopts us, we're in a lot worse shape than we believe. It seems like one lifetime is hardly enough to get us to quit saying NO and learn to say YES. He knows that when He adopts us.

Not all adoptive children, both naturally and spiritually, are grateful for what their parents have done for them. How sad when the Rescuer's children can walk right past Calvary and unemotionally gaze at the cross and the prison gates. He who despises the one who carried the heavy gates up Calvary's mountain, will find no one to open the gate when seeking entrance into the eternal home. ▲

## Thinking Out Loud

### **The Thanksgiving That Wasn't—Nor Will Be**

Here in Brazil Thanksgiving comes around while we are in planting season. Until several years ago, we set our Thanksgiving ahead (or backward?) exactly six months, to come after harvest. Now we observe this holiday on the traditional date and every other year at the Monte Alegre Congregation we have a carry-in dinner.

In the sermon we were encouraged to remember and be thankful for the many painful and sinful things we avoid by being Christians. Then came time for testimonies. Several of our Brazilian brethren encouraged us to not keep silent on larger blessings. If the Lord has prospered us to where we could buy a farm or build a new house, we should give Him the honor and express our thankfulness. The fact that not everyone purchased a tract of land or built a house doesn't mean we can't be thankful for ours.

While all this was taking place, I began to envision a different kind of Thanksgiving service, which has never taken place, nor ever will.

The church is full. On Thanksgiving Day it isn't proper to come late, or not at all. It would be a sign of disrespect and ingratitude. And, last but not least, it would sort of splotch one's reputation to not give the day due recognition. A quick look over the crowd would indicate that everyone is in a thankful frame of mind. After all, that's what Thanksgiving is all about, isn't it?

The song leader arises and calls out the number of a Thanksgiving song. Several more hymns are sung, all with the appropriate enthusiasm. Then comes the opening in which everyone is encouraged to be truly thankful. After the prayer, there is another song, and then the preacher gets up to preach.

But he doesn't preach. He says, "As we have already heard, this is Thanksgiving Day.

We all know what that means and I believe everyone here feels he/she is thankful. So instead of telling you what you already know, you brothers and sisters are going to tell us what you know. That's right, each one of you will give a testimony..."

The preacher stops for what seems like a long time. Some of the parishioners sort of hunker down in their seats. Really, this isn't going to be a traditional Thanksgiving service.

The preacher continues: "I think it's only fair that I warn you. Your testimony cannot be something you just now "remembered." It must express the gratitude you actually felt in your heart during this past year.

"To begin with, this will be voluntary, but if things get slow, then I will randomly choose a bench and one by one you may speak. When those have finished, I'll choose another bench. Remember, *everyone* must speak."

The first one to get up is an elderly sister, in her eighties. She tells how glad she is that the Lord has given her life and reasonable health. She goes on to tell how precious the church is to her...

Toward the back of the sanctuary, one of the brethren, better known for his material than spiritual zeal, suddenly begins coughing. He strains to arise and exit at this opportune moment, but he finds his knees have lost their strength. He strains until he is red as a beet, he even forgets to cough, but out he will not go.

A brother arises who has been on dialysis for several years and tells how he has enjoyed his Christian life and the opportunity to witness that his sickness affords him...

Different ones talk, both brothers and sisters. Then sis. Jemima stands to her feet. She is a widow whose home is always open to visitors. She has taught Sunday School for as long as many can remember. In spite of her many virtues, she frequently sighs and piously laments the fact that not all the sisters do their part in entertaining strangers.

Jemima begins. "I am so thankful to be here today... You will all remember the surgery I had several months ago to have a tumor removed. According to the doctors, the operation was a complete success; I am so thankful for this. Also, I am thankful for all my brothers and sis..."

That's all she can say. The words just won't come out. People wonder if she is having some sort of a spell. No, she's not having a spell. So she sits down.

Sister Jemima's debacle hasn't gone unnoticed. Different ones look about uneasily, and then attempt to quietly get up. But they can't. Their knees have lost all their strength.

The preacher: "Okay, now we'll ask bro. Tristan to speak. When he is finished, the rest of you on his bench may speak."

It happens that bro. Tristan is one of those who developed knee trouble earlier in the meeting. So now he believes he will remain seated and say, "My knees have given out on me, so I'll pass."

Tristan doesn't pass. Now his knees unbuckle and raise him to his feet, against his will. All eyes are on him and he must give his testimony...

Have you ever seen fish in a pond that's low on oxygen? Have you seen how they come to the surface and open and close their mouth, how their eyes bulge? Well, that's just how bro. Tristan looks. No matter how many times he opens and closes his mouth, not a single word comes out. That is his testimony. The preacher says, "You may be seated, bro. Tristan." His knees permit him to sit down, but not to walk out.

As the preacher calls out the benches, some have beautiful testimonies; some say a few words and lose their gift of speech. And some...well, some turn into fish.

Finally every single member has spoken...well no, not really. Every single member had risen to his/her feet. Those who were weighed and found wanting, can only think of one thing. The benediction. Come on, pray, so we can get out of here. But the worst is yet to come.

The preacher says, "I notice that not everyone had something to say, so now we're going to give everyone another chance to speak. This time you will tell us what you *weren't* thankful for this past year. We'll follow the exact sequence of the first time around. Sister..."

The elderly sister arises, she smiles sweetly, but no words come out of her mouth. The preacher says, "You may be seated, sister."

Next Sis. Jemima arises. She doesn't want to say anything, but the words begin to spill out. "I don't know why I have to do all the work around here. Why can't sister...?" She places her hand over her mouth, but the words keep right on coming. It isn't until she has aired all her gripes, that she can sit down.

And so it goes. Many arise and have nothing to say. The preacher sees the smile on their faces and asks them to sit down.

But others...oh my, oh my! How they struggle, how they cringe, but the words keep coming. The harder they try to press their hands over their mouths, the louder their voice becomes.

Finally the last one has spoken. A closing hymn is sung. Not everyone sings. The preacher asks everyone to stand for the benediction. In his prayer he says, "...Oh Mighty God, we today have gotten just a glimpse of the final judgment. We thank you that we are still in the land of the living and that those of us who are unthankful can yet repent..."

Brasília

## The Dragon

After several decades of high inflation, the dragon came to symbolize this terrible beast that erodes the poor people's buying power and pads the pockets of the rich. For a number of years we have had "civilized" inflation, that is, ranging from four to six percent. It was believed that the dragon had been mortally wounded. Now, however, with Lula elected as our next president, the dragon is raising its head. Instead of 4-5%

inflation for 2002, it will probably be in the neighborhood of ten percent. The exchange rate, that had come down to where one US dollar bought 3.5 reals, but is now up to 3.7 again.

So far, most of the smoke signals Lula is sending up are encouraging. But, as he is rapidly finding out, it's a lot easier to *become* president than it is to *be* president. Political commentators continue to be very guarded in their prognoses of what will happen after Jan. 1.

Lula is scheduled to meet President Bush before his inauguration on Jan. 1. ▲

## This & That

On Oct. 1, the Rio Verdinho Cong. had a farewell for the Anthony Koehn family that moved to the new settlement in Tocantins.

Oct. 4, Ben & Laura Koehn had a girl, Camilla.

Lester & Sharon Holdeman, arrived, hoping to adopt Tonya Joan, born on Oct. 8.

On Oct. 19, Dan & Clara Coblentz arrived. They hope to spend several months here.

They are some of the original pioneers and thus know their way around here. They are living in the house you read about in last month's editorial.

Yvonne, dau. of Daniel & Betty Martin, has left for the Rochester unit, where she will be putting in some time.

Daniel & Linda Holdeman and children Wes & Quinda, spent a short time visiting the Colony. Nancy Schultz came with them.

On Oct. 27, Fernando, son of Jerônimo & Maria Barros, married Teresa, dau. of Arlo & Priscilla Hibner.

Mark & Glenda Loewen took Patrícia Miranda, from the Pirenópolis Cong., to Curitiba, where she will be helping the missionaries, Nelson & Ruth Unruh.

Nov. 1, Duane & Frances Holdeman celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary.

Some of the N American visitors present were: Glen & Letha Peters; Milford & Anita Holdeman and dau. Darla; Jason Holdeman; Staven & Adeline Schmidt and dau.; Lester & Sharon Holdeman and the Caleb Holdeman family.