



THE GIRARDS

ITALY

Preaching the Good News Of Jesus Christ

April 2011

Ciao tutti!

What a month we've had... last month seemed to come with unending surprises. The very first surprise was discovered on March 7th. Leia is pregnant with our 4th due in mid-November. We are happy, and the girls are ecstatic! About that same time, we noticed our Labrador retriever was getting rounder and rounder. We felt God led us to breed her in February, and He opened all the doors at the right time. After just one mating, we had her hormonal tests done, and we found that it was nearly impossible that she could have conceived. So we were a little upset wondering how we missed God's guidance on this breeding. Then all the sudden she's growing and acting pregnant. We had a sonogram and voilà, she was! Her litter of eight puppies was born last week! We bred her specifically to sell the puppies to have extra income this summer. So far, two are already sold before they were a week old!

Then we got a not-so-nice surprise. A letter in the mail saying we were missing a very important document (which we couldn't get) in order for Leia to be legal in the country. It was very intense at the immigration office, as the officer threatened to deport Leia and falsely accused me of making money illegally in Italy. But God was faithful, and I saw His favor with the immigration officer. One minute she would make false accusations about me, and the next minute she would tell me how good of a reputation evangelical pastors have! It was an odd conversation, but she gave me one more month to work out my paper work. That in itself was a miracle since she was ready to deport Leia immediately. So, long story short: they wanted a proof of Italian income in order to grant me that status. So I had to register as a self-employed teacher/translator/interpreter in order to get the residency and social health care. So just 2 days ago our file was complete, and we are OVER with paper work and now on with ministry!

We literally spent the entire month on the phone, filling out paper work, and in and out of offices each day to get the documents for Leia's legal permit. Each city has its own requirements, so each time we move we have to redo the process all over. For instance, in the South, you get what you want by hitting the table harder than the clerk you are talking to (this is not a joke!). Here, it is all "by the book." As a Swiss citizen, I am entitled to living with my family in any European country without a visa, as long as I can financially support my family. The other way around would have been to come as missionaries, but then I wouldn't be able to work legally, along with many other restrictions.

Due to all the urgent paperwork and the litter, ministry had to be a bit on hold this month. We know that some newsletters don't sound as "spiritual", but all these things are necessary in the lives of missionaries living abroad.

We meet each week with a few families and the last few services in our home have been particularly rich with a great sense that God was revealing His word to us. What a blessing! Leia has started teaching a Sunday school Bible lesson in the kitchen with all the children (7 total) while Nicolas or one of the other men preaches. These little ones learn valuable Bible lessons as the moms take turn teaching them.



We are currently working on getting the permission to set up a puppet and clown show in the local parks. Leia's clown and puppeteer skills have proven extremely useful to reach the families. Leia and Eva will start doing Christian/inspirational crafts using 'decollage' technique and giving them away in the nursing homes. This will take some time, but we hope to get going with it quickly.

Thanks again for all your support, prayers, messages and love. We are in this all together, and it means a lot to us to know that we have some exceptional people back in the U.S., who are backing us in prayer and supporting us financially.

With much love,

Nicolas, Leia, Eva, Elise, Sophie, and Baby....