



**THE GIRARDS**

# ITALY

**Preaching the Good News Of Jesus Christ**

Dear Family and Friends,

March 2013

## **A New Pope: big changes in the country and worldwide**

First of all, most of you know that a new pope has been elected. We want to help you understand the spiritual climate of this season. As you can imagine things were electric here the week the conclave of cardinals started. We respect the pope, but you must understand that he is only a man as we are, not a direct line to God as Catholics believe. We watched on TV when he was announced as the new pope, and the journalist made sure to say these words: "This pope coming from South America was a good choice, currently South America is being lead astray by sects such as the protestant and evangelical church, so he will be a good choice for South America to stop those sects from growing." This was an all too clear reminder for us what everyday, ordinary families are being taught here. That we are the sect and the Catholic Church is the only true church and "salvation is only within the Catholic Church". This obviously brings great oppression against us and our work here. Remember, Italians didn't have the Bible in print until 1973. That's right! Bibles were not allowed and Catholics today are still taught to not read them. This is a great problem on a personal level with the people, because it allows many false teachings to continue to prevail in this country.

## **New converts and upcoming conference**

Despite the oppression against us, two girls came to the Lord in our midst the last two weeks. One is named Marianna and she is a real testimony. She considered herself catholic (as do most Italians) all her life, but admits she was empty and didn't find what she was looking for in mass or the pope. She has been battling depression for years. At one point, she became a Tarot card reader and joined a local occult group that worships a false god and offers sacrifices to her. She left the occult saying that "It was too dark. I felt it was a dark power. and I saw it was against God". She prayed last week to receive Jesus. We are meeting with her each week to disciple her, and this is the first time in her life she opens a Bible and reads it. She is starting to know God's infinite love for the first time, and it's so beautiful to see. She told me, "I can see you all are different, I can see it in your eyes." It is for stories like this that we thank YOU for your relentless financial support and prayers for our ministry here. Your support is what makes the difference and keeps us here, and we rejoice with the angels for today is the day of salvation here in Arezzo!

Another girl who came to the Lord is called Lidia. We have not met her yet, as a brother from our church has been meeting with her in his shop. Soon we will meet with her and are also so happy to hear of the radical change in her life.

Nicolas and I are in the midst of preparing for an important conference about human trafficking within Italy and Europe at the end of April. We have many non-believers who are very interested in our conference and said they will come. Many of these people have not set foot in a church ever or at least in many years. We are asking God to give us wisdom and power to preach the Gospel in this conference, as well as present the problem of human trafficking. We will have an influential police officer who used to work on the Human Trafficking and Prostitution Task Force in Rome speak at the conference.

He told us last week in his own words "It's a real problem in Italy and an abomination, and unfortunately only getting worse". The main speaker will be Gregg Montella, from One Heart Mission [www.oneheartmissions.com](http://www.oneheartmissions.com), who fights trafficking in Moldova. We had the pleasure of ministering with him last fall. We will put out thousands of flyers and posters to advertise this event publicly. Pray, pray, pray for God's blessing in this event! If you remember, we are raising funds to buy sound equipment for our events and our regular church services. We thank those of you who have helped, though not enough money has come in to purchase it yet. So if you feel led to help with this purchase please send in your donation and mark in the memo "Zoe Center - sound equipment".

### **New house and new opportunities**

We have found a house to move into. For almost three years we have lived in a small, 1,000-ft<sup>2</sup> apartment, with one bathroom. Besides the fact it's just too small for us, we also love to be hospitable (as most missionaries do!) and have people continually in and out. We are getting very crowded to say the least! This new house is 1,600 ft<sup>2</sup>, and has a 3,200 ft<sup>2</sup> fenced-in yard, which we really needed! The unfortunate thing is that we don't want to lose this house because they came down a bit on the price for us and we must start paying rent by June 1st. This will force us to pay double rent for June and July. Our current landlord will not release us early from our 'six-month notice' we gave in February (which he initially said he would then went back on his word). Please remember us in prayer this time for financial blessing and a smooth transition into our new place.

In April, Nicolas will be very busy as an interpreter for a few ministries coming to Tuscany. He will be translating for a team coming from Bethel Church (Redding, CA) in Viareggio (about 2 hours from Arezzo), and the following two weeks he will be translating in a local church in Florence as Trevor Baker and Jeff Jansen are coming to minister there. What a joy to serve the local community this way!

We hope you all have a Happy Easter! May you and your families be blessed this weekend celebrating the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! This is my (Leia) favorite holiday. Even more so, I love being able to talk about Easter with the children and each year see them better comprehend the sacrifice Jesus did for us and His power to raise from the dead.

Hearts are OPEN here in Arezzo. Nicolas has had the opportunity to evangelize his students in a very straightforward way, and they have shown interest to know more! Pray for the work here! God is hovering over this city and we believe that He will continue to bring change and love in hearts that are thirsty.

We love and appreciate tremendously all your faithful support! We are in this together for His Kingdom! God bless you all!

*Nicolas, Leia, Eva, Elise, Sophie, and Isaiah*

\*\*If you wish to support us, please send in your tax-deductible donations to World Outreach Center, PO Box 3478. Fort Mill, SC 29708. Please write your checks out to WOC and write "Girards" in the memo to support the family, or "Zoe Center" to support the ministry in Italy. To donate online, go to [www.worldoutreachcommunity.org](http://www.worldoutreachcommunity.org), access our page under Missionaries and then click on Donate. Our new blog site is: [zoecenter.wordpress.com](http://zoecenter.wordpress.com)