



Corato, Italy
December, 2018

Stevanus News

Dear Praying Friends,

Warmest holiday greetings from our side of the world. At the end of our summer letter, we mentioned Domenico, a private student of Mark's who Denise felt led to invite to church in August. Well, he came for two weeks, then three and to be quite honest he hasn't stopped coming! He has thoroughly enjoyed the worship and our pastor's preaching. In addition, the benefits of our *Life Group* ministry have manifested as two young men, his age, invited him to a meeting near his home. He was soon a regular member and even celebrated together with their four October birthdays. He had a main part in our church's Christmas play and is bringing his aunt on a regular basis. At our fall baptism he told us, "I'll be one of the first ones next year."



"So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."

Acts 2:41



Speaking of *baptisms*, in essence we have only profound gratitude to our Lord for 13 individuals ages—20 to 57—who decided to make a public decision to follow Christ. We both had the privilege of preparing them with classes prior to this very special event. It was the first baptism service in our new building where we had over 200 visitors, most of whom had never been in an evangelical church. Each person gave a clear testimony of where he or she was at before finding



“This Jesus is the stone ... which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:11-12



In His Service,

Mark & Denise

the Lord, how He saved them and how they desire to serve Him. It was a very special day for the church as well as us since six of them are being consolidated in their walk by way of our Life Group ministry.



One young man, named *Felice*, was actually a visitor at our baptisms held in September, 2017. He admitted he came skeptically and merely out of respect to a friend but when he heard the testimonies and sensed the presence of the Lord, his heart slowly began to melt. Soon after, he began attending the group that meets in our home in December and has been faithfully attending ever since, hence giving his heart to the Lord. It is such a blessing to see him grow in the faith, along with the others this past year, learning to trust God. His parents and older brothers chose not to attend his baptism even though they live in walking distance to the church. He is a special young man and we are trusting the Lord to do great things in his life and that of his fiancée's who was also baptized the same day.

We rejoice in the growth our church in Italy has experienced in 2018, which also marked a few milestones for us personally. Firstly, we are celebrating our 30th year of service in Italy, having arrived in 1988 and given birth soon after to our son, Christopher. Moreover, in June, he arrived with his precious family to Thailand where they are currently studying the language in preparation for full-time service. It was a special blessing to be able to visit them before the Christmas holidays. Our other three children, Dena, Daniel and Dimitri are stateside faithfully serving in their local churches. Despite the many miles that separate us, we are so very thankful for each member of our family and the moments we cherish when we are able to get together.

We thank your dearly for your prayers and support and wish you a wonderful Christmas season with your family, friends and church.