

Hello my wonderful, incredible friends! Happy Winter Olympics 🏅! I hope you are all having an incredible week wherever you are in the world.

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This was one of the longest weeks ever, it has felt. It included: President Interviews, a total of 4 two-hour bus rides to and from the Mission Office, a lot of noite familiares (Family Home Evenings), a lot of anxiety, and finally, to wrap it up: A Baptism!

Notable Events (sort of, we're formatting a little differently this week because I feel like it):

- The baptism really tested all of my patience and anxieties, but it all worked out! I was super worried at making sure Aline and Wesley and all the kids had everything they needed. Two lessons this week got canceled (one because we were stuck in traffic at the mission office and didn't get home until 10pm, the other one was because we had like 45 minutes laid out on Friday for a lesson and they weren't home and wouldn't be home for over an hour), one of the kids drank some coffee earlier this week on accident, and a bunch of other things.

On Saturday, it was all clear that it would happen, and it was up to us to make sure it actually happened. We had already made our program, and then decided to ask the members if anyone would like to help, and like 10 members volunteered to do something. Also, until the day of, we hadn't been able to get into the closet to look at the jumpsuits. Luckily (it wasn't luck, definitely a miracle), there were jumpsuits that fit them all, even though one of the kids had to roll up the pants like 4 times.

Elder Alves got to baptize Aline and the daughter, Yohanna. Our Bishop got to baptize Wesley and one of the sons, Lucas, and I got to baptize the other son, Benjamin. It was a pretty neat experience.

They're truly an incredible family, and all the kids want to serve missions like us one day which is really really sweet. I'm gonna make sure Aline and Wesley are able to go to temple before the end of the month, in case I leave this area before then. I'd be incredibly blessed to see them there in the temple.

- Sadly, all this good news can't come without some bad news. My companion, Elder Alves, had a really bad toothache on Tuesday. The office Elders scheduled him an appointment at a dentist there in Santo Amaro (a two hour bus ride) on Wednesday. The dentist took a look at it, sent us to an X-Ray appointment down the street, then told us to come back tomorrow. We go to the X-Ray place, and they tell us, "Oh you don't have all the right stuff blah blah blah I'm Brazilian and I speak Portuguese that Elder Gee doesn't understand, please come back tomorrow morning" or something like that.

On Thursday, we go back to the X-Ray place in the morning, but our Dentist appointment was at 3pm, so we had to stay at the Mission Office for 5 hours. Long story short, Elder Alves has an infection in his tooth, and he has to go home for a few weeks for the treatment. He leaves tomorrow. I'm actually pretty sad to be seeing him go.

What does this mean for me? I don't know. I don't know if I'm getting a new companion, or if I'm gonna be here in a trio with the other Parelheiros Elders, or anything. It's pretty rough, but we're chilling. It'll all work out according to the plan. Not my plan, but our Heavenly Father's plan.

Spiritual Thought:

This week, I've studied in the book of Helaman in the Book of Mormon. There's a great story in which the prophet of this time, Nephi is basically preaching about how wicked the people in the city are, and then the people ask for a sign that he's really a prophet of God. He says, "Go to the house of the Chief Judge, and you'll find he's dead" and these messengers go to his house, and he's dead, and they get thrown in jail.

Nephi, because of his involvement in all of this, is condemned and accused of sedition. The multitude is talking about all the ways they want to kill Nephi. Miraculously, the truth is made known, and he is released, and he begins to go home and reflect on what has just happened. As he does so, he hears a voice which says (Helaman 10:4-5),

4 Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unweariness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.

5 And now, because thou hast done this with such unweariness, behold, I will bless thee forever..

Nephi could've done a lot of things, he could've worried about his life, he could've avoided this entire situation if he wanted to, but he didn't. He had sought the will of the Father in every single thing he has done, no matter if it will kill him, no matter the consequences. He had everlasting trust in God's plan for him, and because of that, he is blessed eternally.

We can become like Nephi too. As we keep the Commandments and be patient in our trials with humility and long-suffering, the Lord will bless us. It may be a long time that we go through the trials, but know

that our Heavenly Father and our Savior trust in us. They know we can overcome these trials, and if we endure with faith and trust in them, we will find the blessings that we are promised.

There's a beautiful hymn entitled, "When Faith Endures", which reads,

*I will not doubt, I will not fear;
God's love and strength are always near.
His promised gift helps me to find
An inner strength and peace of mind.
I give the Father willingly
My trust, my prayers, humility.
His Spirit guides; his love assures
That fear departs when faith endures.*

I love you all so much, and I hope you have a lot of adventure ahead of you for the next week! Let me know how the Super Bowl was, especially the Bad Bunny halftime show (I've heard good things). Thank you for the kind words you guys send, I am eternally grateful 🙏. Love you guys!! ❤️

- Elder John Randall Gee 🇧🇷

Pics this week include:

- Everyone involved with the baptism yesterday (all 6 Elders in the ward, Bishop, the family, Aline's mom, and Jefferson, who is their family friend who is actually a member)
- Family Home Evening with Aline and Wesley (they're finally members 💪)
- A nice sky photo (I fear I have too many of those)
- Elder Alves and I getting to work!
- Elder Alves sitting in the dentist chair...









