



December 2007

Marco and Simona Albanesi

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No, we didn't return to Abruzzo, that snow is original, made right here in Sicily! This is the second December that we're spending here and we're not surprised by the weather. When the sun shines, we'd like to take a bath in the awesome sea. As for Mt. Etna, the Mediterranean seems to challenge her (here they usually speak about the volcano as a noble and bold lady) with his beauty. It's hard to put together all the grace of creation with the hard hearts of the people here in Acireale.

Recently, an elder of a nearby church – he was born in Acireale – told me that this town is almost the most religious one in Sicily.

We started giving Biblical calendars to the people of Acireale—we gave one to a shop keeper and he wanted to give us a gift in return. The gift was a calendar of his store with the picture of Father Pio (on the calendar was written “saint Pio”). Another calendar we gave was to a flower vendor and he told us about the wonderful experience he's having with a group that he calls “Renewal”. He was excited by a “healing” meeting he attended the night before. “Every one fell down on the floor and then they got up... and they were fine!” was his comment.

For us, our slogan for 2008 will be what Joshua told to Israel: “How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?” (Joshua 18:3).

The Lord has given us great joy in the last two months. Two friends came to hear the Gospel and were born again—in our church! Eddie (his Albanian name is Ethem) is a man from Greece. He is married to Vasilika and they have a beautiful daughter, Magdalena. Eddie was born again at the beginning of October. Vasilika is a believer, but – and this is very normal in Albania - she was forced to marry a man chosen by his family, a Muslim.

God provided a man who loves her and allowed her to follow her faith in Jesus Christ. And His grace came to them both! Their situation is not very simple. He can't find a regular job, and he can't get a visa to stay in Italy beyond March of 2008 (that is the term of his visa at the moment). We're currently studying a Bible course with them. He is very careful and so interested in it that he always has the next lesson done in advance. We're satisfied with them; we are trying to teach them how to respect the roles God gave in the family especially now that he's a newborn in the faith.

Teti (I found that it's not a nickname, but the name of Achilles's mother in Greek literature) is our second newborn. She's about 60 and is separated from her husband. She is a woman with many deep scars in her life, but God already turned her tears into big smiles, showing her great joy. She started attending the women's meeting that Simona leads on Tuesday and we're hoping to start a time of personal discipleship with her soon. Also, please pray for Ester; she is not coming to the church's meetings, even though she promises that she will come every time we meet her. Salvatore came on Sunday the 9th.

The book table in the market is going very well. Almost every Saturday, Marco has a long conversation with a man named Enzo. He's a retired man, very devoted to Mary, but he listens to Marco and reads what God says about his condition in the Gospel. We asked the local government officials of Acì Sant'Antonio, where we live, for the permission to start a distribution at the weekly market on Monday mornings. If God wills we are going to start in January.



In November we had a concert by Amy Stephens. The church was full of many unbelievers. She sang in English, but we provided an explanation of the songs in Italian and concluded with the Gospel message.

We got the second "movie night" done. And we had the opportunity to speak with the people who came. We're just going to continue to plant seeds, aware that God is stronger than any religion.

This week we're having a Christmas dinner. Our goal is to use this particular season (that is an obligation to many) to explain the real meaning of Christmas—the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ. We're expecting nine unbelievers.

We told you that we would speak about the classes offered at the Academy from summer until now; we have more than 70 students and we already have some registrations for next year!

Marco is continuing to preach the Gospel of Luke on Sunday mornings. Next Thursday he will conclude the book of Haggai. He's working on a plan for his preaching ministry in 2008. He wants to encourage the church to have a deeper responsibility towards the study of the Word of God, including memorization of some passages, and having a common plan of daily devotions.

We have to stop here, but we also have to give information to everyone who sustains us financially and with prayers. Our bank changed our account codes—the new ones are on the bottom of this page.

We'll be spending two weeks with our children and our family starting on the 18th. It will be a time of great blessings.

We hope you were able to grasp our excitement about what God is doing here. We have in front of us a new year to "conquer" for our Lord, and we know that we're not alone. May God bless you greatly, as only He can do.

*Yours in Christ,
Marco and Simona*

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