2022 Conference Report

 **Young man, get up!**

The 2nd branch of Santa Cruz, Bolivia held a conference during the Carnival Festival (February 26th - March 1st). The theme was **“Young man, get up!”** (Luke 7:14b), and 27 people have attended. Five out of these participants were new sheep, and five others were old sheep who had left God for some time but have returned. The messages were prepared by the three shepherds who were filled with grace and authority.

The first message was served by Shepherd Milca. The title was “Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch” (Luke 5:1-11). Shepherd Milca grew up in a Christian home under the guidance of her parents helping out people that were in need. She lived like this even when she felt obligated to do so. Even after taking her oath as a shepherd, she had kept a philanthropist mind. As a result, she lost her job where she had been working for over two years, and in despair, she had come to an empty life of a shepherd. Nevertheless, she realized the importance of obeying the word of God. She repented for the philanthropist mind that kept her away from God’s revelations. After comparing herself with Peter, who was struggling in the seas of sin, death, and Satan, she made a new decision to live as a fisherman of people voluntarily, under no obligation, based on God’s grace and forgiveness of sin.

The second message was served by Shepherd Cristobal. His topic was “Young man, get up!” (Luke 7:11-17) Shepherd Cristobal had been deeply troubled by family problems and, he also had difficulty shutting down his brick company before the conference. However, while studying the message, he repented for not putting his hope in Jesus. He realized that his hopes were on becoming an excellent engineer, professor, businessman, husband, and father. After accomplishing all of them, he found no satisfaction and repented. Having that said, he testified boldly and powerfully of Jesus' message in the conference explaining about how people were in different spiritual coffins. He is currently a good co-worker in our family, and he was also one of the people who prepared and found the logistical place for the conference.

Sister Patricia was appointed to share her testimony for the 2nd lecture. She had been attending church for more than 6 years and studied the Bible. However, she was always sad and had darkness in her heart. She was very shy and afraid talk to others. If she did, her voice was so low like a mosquito people couldn’t hear her unless they listened closely. Regardless, as she was writing her testimonies, God opened her heart and gave her grace. She had an issue with her father who had committed adultery with her aunt. Seeing him live with her aunt imprisoned her spirit in the coffin of fatalism for a long time. But after confessing this with faith, she was able to come out of this coffin. Her face brightened and there was freedom. She opened the hearts of all those who attended, especially for those who attended for the first time.

The third message was served by Brother Jossep. The theme was about Jesus forgiving the paralytic's sins. (Luke 5:17-26) During the message training, he was held back for his desire on delivering the message too well, so there was no progress at all. However, a few days before the conference started, he put down this greed and humbly digested God’s word. He delivered during the Sunday worship service, testifying with grace and authority as well. He talked about the missing love of a father in a divorced family. He also shared about how he was spiritually paralytic suffering from the fatalism of protecting his mother from his stepfather and his half-brothers.

Brothers Luis, Fernando, Carlos, Josue, and Sister Rosy, who had left God for a while had a lot of awkward feelings on the first day of the retreat. Among them, Brother Fernando had a lot of sorrow and darkness as he had to take care of his mother, who is suffering from severe diabetes now for more than 10 years, and his father, who has recently suffered from severe prostate disease. He had to attend them and pay for hospitals, medicines and food. It was a blessing to see coffins being opened through the conference.

Brothers Cesar, Douglas, Elias and Vania and Wendy attended the conference for the first time. They realized that God's Word was very precious and learned the importance of studying the Word. Brother Douglas had a deep desire on the Sunday worship services and Bible studies, and Sister Vania attended the conference with a dark face due to deep spiritual wounds from her past, but her face became very bright as she was healed through the Word and kept faith for a new spiritual healthy and happy life.

On the third night, there was an acting performance prepared mainly by Missionary Ana's daughter, Sister Maria. It was based on the 2nd and 3rd messages which were about Jesus having mercy on the widow who loses her only son and on the paralytic’s friends who brought him down from the ceiling. The main leaders’ sense of ownership, the beautiful and spacious training center, the big grass field, and the swimming pool, along with the deep messages that were full of God’s grace, brought plain satisfaction for both new and existing sheep. It was a great conference.

Before, I thought that the coffin of fatalism that covered the youth of Bolivia was too thick. However, I repented and prayed to receive God’s powerful word. Well, I’m now also very grateful for all your prayers. We give thanks and praise God for blessing the conference with abundant grace.