



São Paulo Temple, Brazil

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The Lord, however, had more in mind for us. In the years following our conversion and preceding that remarkable June day in 1978, when the prophet Spencer W. Kimball announced that all worthy male members of the Church could hold the priesthood, we experienced remarkable premonitory spiritual manifestations of what was to come. Still, we could not bring ourselves to even hope that the priesthood would soon be ours. In retrospect, of course, it is obvious the Lord used those years to prepare us for the revelation, even granting us encouragement from the prophet himself on several occasions. But we were slow to believe.

Strong spiritual promptings began for us in 1973, when Rudá, Marcus, and I received extraordinary patriarchal blessings—extraordinary because they promised blessings that, at the time, seemed impossible for our family to fulfill. The patriarch informed me that I would be privileged to live on the earth in the joy of an eternal covenant. Rudá received the same assurance. But how? How could we enjoy an eternal covenant when, as blacks, we could not go through the temple to be sealed?

Just as unusual was Marcus's blessing. In it, he was promised that he would preach the gospel to righteous families. Other parts of the blessing led us to believe he would serve a full-time mission. Again, how could this happen without the priesthood? We left the home of the patriarch confused, later deciding not to dwell too much on what had been said. We carefully tried not to

let the promises in our blessings upset the tranquillity of our lives. Nevertheless, we couldn't ignore personal prophecy from God: we opened a mission savings account for Marcus Helvécio. Today, when I read my blessing, I shed tears at the significance and inspiration of the patriarch's words to my family that day.

Then, in 1975, spiritual experiences foreshadowing the priesthood revelation began occurring to us in earnest when President Spencer W. Kimball announced the construction of the São Paulo Temple. I was called to be a member of the public relations communications committee for the temple dedication and often attended meetings in São Paulo. One day, after one of these meetings, Rudá and I toured the construction site of the much anticipated temple, which we never expected to enter. As we walked on the uncompleted main floor, we both stopped at a certain place—a place which, we learned only later, was the very spot of the future celestial room. A powerful spirit touched our hearts as we stood there. We hugged each other and cried, not really understanding why.

Not knowing what to make of these unusual events, I simply went on with life, continuing to take care of my family, which grew to include two daughters, Marisa and Aline, and another son, Rafael. Meanwhile, my growing responsibilities with Petrobras included a significant amount of travel to all parts of Brazil. I always used my free time on these trips advantageously for Church public

relations. During this period, an article about the Church in Brazil appeared in the popular Brazilian magazine *Manchete*. It included a picture of stake presidents João Keminy and Valdemar Cury, mission president Hélio da Rocha Camargo, and me, mistakenly called a bishop. From that time on, everybody at Petrobras began calling me "Bishop." I tried to correct them, but they considered my denials a demonstration of humility. "We know you really are a bishop," they insisted so adamantly that eventually I stopped trying to convince them of their error.

In 1977, Rudá and I again met the prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball, who once again helped us to spiritually prepare for what was to come. On this particular occasion, the prophet had flown to São Paulo for the cornerstone-laying ceremony for the São Paulo Temple. He sat on a platform with his counselor President Marion G. Romney, Elder Faust, and other leaders. I was busily involved below with other members of the public relations committee. With the help of Douglas Borba of the Church's media company, Bonneville International, we assisted reporters from various newspapers, magazines, and television-radio stations.

Before the ceremony began, I glanced up at the stand and could see that President Kimball was looking in my direction. He motioned with his finger for me to come and speak to him. I turned away, not believing his gesture could be meant for me, and continued with my duties. Still, I couldn't help looking at him again. Smiling, the

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF  
ELDER HELVÉCIO MARTINS

HELVÉCIO MARTINS

WITH

MARK GROVER

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