

Narrator: Welcome to Mission Sonlight, reporting from the Inter-American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our report today focuses on the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Mission, located in the south-central portion of Mexico.

You will experience sights, which are rarely broadcast, as Mission Sonlight takes you inside Mexico City's National Cathedral, the Chapultepec Castle and the ancient Pyramids of the Sun and Moon. Our cameras through what was clearly divine intervention were allowed into these sites. Sites where admittance of professional video equipment requires a very difficult and almost impossible process. The cardinal of Mexico City allowed us into the National Cathedral expressing his desire to lessen the gap between our faiths. Because of secrecy we cannot tell you how the doors were opened for our crew in the other sites. More importantly than this, you'll witness an amazing scene as scores of people publicly proclaim their love for Jesus.

The United Mexican States, more commonly known as Mexico, is the largest country in Central America with a population of 108 million people. Mexico's rich history includes the establishment of highly developed civilizations, including the Aztecs.

Early civilizations built one of the ancient world's largest cities. As a tribute to the gods they worshipped, Aztecs revived the massive urban complex they eventually called Teotihuacán (Toh Teeh Wah kon). The city core alone covered an area of over 20 square kilometers. At the height of its glory, between 100,000 and 200,000 people inhabited the city.

The main avenue, named the Avenue of the Dead, runs north and south and is lined with the former palaces of the city's elite. It is on this avenue that the massive Pyramids of the Sun and Moon are located. The Pyramid of the Sun is the world's third

largest pyramid, reaching a height of 230 feet. To reach its peak, you must climb 248 steep steps. Little is known about the people who constructed these pyramids but their work still stands today as a reminder of their presence in this area.

In 1519, Hernan Cortes first encountered the residents of this empire. In just two short years they were conquered and the indigenous population began a rapid and fatal decline. Immigrants to Mexico, from the 16th to 19th centuries, began to acquire fortunes through mining, commerce, ranching and agriculture.

In 1573, construction began on what is now known as the National Cathedral. Two and a half centuries later it was completed. It sits atop the ruins of an ancient Aztec temple complex, in what is now Mexico City's Zocalo, the town square.

The struggle for rule in Mexico has been both from internal and external forces. During one 22-year period in the 1800's, 36 presidents ruled the country. Mexico struggled through an armed conflict with Spain for 11 years and finally gained independence in 1821.

Among a population that is predominantly Christian, superstitions still have a hold on people's lives. They fear evil spirits and worship the spirits of their dead loved ones. Telling the story of Jesus to others is a primary focus of the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mexico.

Pastor Cecera Gomes Jimenez, President of Inter-Oceanic Union Mission: We give thanks to God for this opportunity of being the recipients of the 13th Sabbath offerings for the 2nd Quarter, 2008. Our youth are full of energy and many talents. If they commit fully to the missionary cause they will carry out the will of God.

Narrator: With a median age in the population of 25.6 years, finding effective means of evangelism is critical. By training Seventh-day Adventist youth, they will take the story of Jesus to their friends and neighbors.

Carol Yanin Montejo Garcia: My name is Carol and I belong to the Olmeca Conference in Nanchital II. To belong to a Pathfinder group is a spiritual experience, which is very motivating. We learn to live with other acquaintances and friends in a social environment. I enjoy going to camporees, but we don't have a camp where we can go and have our own meetings.

Male Adventurer: I like to play and participate in the activities to learn more about Jesus.

Narrator: Pathfinder leaders, such as Juan Carlos Morales Santiago give of their time to instruct Seventh-day Adventist youth and others.

Juan Carlos Morales Santiago: It has been a rich and abundant blessing working with the children. From these children have come leaders, who are leading the church in several ministries. When the mother church has too many individuals we just move on to other churches. This way we can continue to expand our Pathfinder work.

Pastor Cecera Gomes Jimenez, President of Inter-Oceanic Union Mission: The 13th Sabbath offerings will help to build a youth camp in the state of Morelos where the youth will be able to get together and receive training and other activities.

We also have church building projects in areas where churches are needed in the states of Veracruz, Tabasco, Tlaxcala and Puebla.

Narrator: Pastors in Mexico are faced with the challenge of large districts with many churches. Some pastors have as many as 8 churches in their district. They depend heavily on trained lay-Bible workers to help with Bible studies and preaching.

Pastor Tito Montejo Jernandez: I pastor the [redacted] (the interview script didn't name the district) district, which is comprised of six churches. We have combined two districts in this city for a total of twelve churches. The members are organized by cells (groups?). The elders have the responsibility of visitation and training of these groups. We come together in homes to study the word of God and invite individuals to hear the message of God. The members are instrumental in this work and every six months we hold a huge evangelistic campaign. We normally have from 40-50 individuals ready to be baptized in each campaign,

Narrator: Church growth in this part of Mexico has been so rapid that local congregations have been unable to keep up with the needs for church buildings. Some of the locations have familiar names as favorite tourist destinations. But these same areas are poverty stricken and the local people often cannot even afford a home of their own. The dream of a church building seems too good to be true.

Ruben Quetz Delgado, President, South Veracruz Conference- There is joy in our hearts as more than 1,200 souls have been baptized in the month of January. These baptisms give motivation to laymen, disciples and everyone involved in this commission who have labored for 5 to 6 months planting the seeds.

We have many needs. But for us, our needs are also opportunities. Why? Because we have a problem. We have been growing so rapidly that we no longer have the necessary church capacity. We need churches where we can worship. But this issue

does not stop us; we meet under trees, in people's homes. However, what we yearn for, in our hearts, is to see our brethren worshiping in their own churches. And we have the hope that God will provide. If you are faithful, says the Lord, I will be with you.

Gedeon Mendoza Francisco (Naranjal Church of the district of Oteapan): We have more than 200 members in this church and the building needs expansion. With our growth, we have decided that we should split the church to form a new one. There are other churches that have not been completed. There are churches that don't even have bathrooms or Sabbath School rooms for the children. The children are taught outside without shelter. All those needs are urgent.

Narrator: Even though there is a lack of church buildings, this has not stopped church members from witnessing. Ismael has only been a Seventh-day Adventist for three years but today he believes nothing is more important than telling others about Jesus.

Ismael Bergara, Auga Fria: Last year, by the grace of God, we baptized 34 people by starting out with Bible studies. We pray for weeks about possible leads. Soon they begin to appear and then we give them Bible studies. Since my conversion, I have quit my job to work full time for the Lord.

Narrator: The work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will go forward in this part of the world because of dedicated lay-members who let nothing deter them. Recently, on a rainy weekend, church members gathered around an outdoor Olympic-sized pool to witness an amazing event. The word baptism was on the mind of those in attendance and what a baptism it was that weekend. There were children who were too short to reach the bottom of the pool and aged who had to be carefully lowered into the water with the help of others. In all during this one weekend 1,523 people were baptized into the Adventist

Hope. Can you imagine, standing for a sermon and baptism in the pouring rain after having made your way down muddy paths and roads? The business of heaven is the most important business to these church members. What motivates our brothers and sisters in this part of the world to be so single minded in telling the story of Jesus?

Ruben Quetz Delgado, President, South Veracruz Conference- The times we live in are peaceful, but it will not be like this forever. Let us give, act, praise, train, teach, and motivate our brethren to spread the gospel; Christ is coming soon!

Narrator: The story is told in Mexico of the Boy Heroes who defended the Chapultepec Castle, most famously known as the residence of Emperor Maximilian I. In September 1847, the castle was being used as a Military Academy during the Mexican-American war. As the conquering army approached, six young men, who had been ordered to retreat, stayed behind to defend their territory. They believed in a cause and were willing to give up their lives in that defense. For them there could be no backing down. The battle waged on and one by one the cadets were struck down. Finally, only one of the teenaged cadets remained. He was determined that the enemy would not take the flag, symbolizing victory. He wrapped himself in the flag and leapt to his death from the top of the castle.

This world is engaged in a war with eternal stakes. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have brothers and sisters who are in need to help win the war. They have wrapped themselves in the robe of Jesus' righteousness and want to share that robe with others. They need facilities to train and tell others about Jesus. This quarter, we are focusing our attention and our offerings on the Inter-American Division. What are you budgeting to

support our members in Inter-America? Plan now for the gift you will give on Sabbath,
June 28.

Reporting from the country of Mexico and the Inter-American Division, this is
Mission Sonlight.