

Elder Massimo De Feo: ‘Welcome to the Lord’s Temple in Rome’



Elder Massimo De Feo and his wife, Loredana Galeandro, pose for photos at the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City Monday, April 4, 2016.

April 3, 2016, will forever be a historic day for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Italy. For the first time, one of their own was called to be a senior Church leader.

While Elder Massimo De Feo’s recent assignment as a General Authority Seventy signaled a key moment in Church history, his own introduction to the Church was far more commonplace. When missionaries knocked on the De Feo family’s door in Taranto in 1970, 9-year-old Massimo and his older brother Alberto were taught the gospel and were later baptized. While Massimo and Alberto’s parents never joined the Church, they were supportive of their sons as they became active in their new faith.

“Our parents never accepted the gospel, but they felt it was good and they felt good about their two children growing up in the gospel with good principles,” Elder De Feo said.

Alberto and Massimo’s beliefs were challenged outside the home. They were the only members in their school in a community with deep Catholic roots and centuries-old traditions. The brothers made it a point to avoid contention and looked for opportunities to explain The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with others.

Although the Church in Taranto was small, Massimo said leaders, teachers and youth advisers always made him feel he belonged. “I found the right people at the right time; the Lord has always protected me.”

As Massimo matured through his teenaged years, he became friends with several Latter-day Saint youth. Counted among his friends was Loredana Galeandro, a fellow convert. She was baptized at 14 following a long period of personal prayer and study. Once converted, she said, “my greatest desire was to serve the Lord.”

Whenever she attended Sabbath meetings, she noticed the couples who were raising their children in the Church. She wanted the same. “I had a desire to have an eternal family,” she said. “I made a decision that I would only marry a man who loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him.”

When Massimo graduated from high school, he had a strong desire to serve a full-time mission for the Church, which would mean two years away from his family. He knew that a mission would place considerable strain on his family’s limited financial resources. “Do you really want to do this?” Vittorio De Feo asked his son. “With all my heart I want to serve the Lord,” Massimo told his father. Vittorio promised to help fund his mission. “I considered that money to be sacred,” Massimo later said. “It was the fruit of great sacrifice from a man who did not believe in the Church.”

Loredana wrote Massimo throughout his mission, and when he returned to Taranto they began dating and were married in the Bern Switzerland Temple in August of 1984. Elder and Sister De Feo are now the parents of three children.

Elder De Feo said he has been able to trace the Lord’s hand throughout his life. He worked at the American Embassy in Rome for more than 30 years prior to his most recent Church calling. He felt his professional duties put him in a position to help the Church grow in Italy.

One of his greatest experiences was being president of the Rome Italy Stake, which is similar to a diocese, when ground was broken for the construction of his country’s first temple in Rome on October 23, 2010. Now, almost a decade later, he will welcome his fellow countrymen to the holy temple.

Elder De Feo has a personal testimony of this sacred building, “With its focus on eternity and not just on this life, the temple helped me understand what is really important in this life. Knowing that through the ordinances of the temple, I can live with my family for eternity, changed my mind, changed my vision for life, and changed my heart forever. In the temple I realized that the most important ties we have with our families, do not end when life ends, but continue. This knowledge has brought the greatest joy I could possibly feel in this life and changed forever the way I now see and do things.”

He went on to say, “The temple is the only place on earth that links our present with our past and with our future. Therefore, if the only way to be recognized as families after this life, is to seal them here through the ordinances of the temple, then everything that we do in this life must be focused on how we make and faithfully keep our covenants. As we become more and more focused on the covenants we make with the Lord in the temple, and stay on the covenant path, we see, feel and experience all the blessings of the House of the Lord, and this life becomes worthy to be lived for the purpose it was given. The covenants we make in the temple win over death and give us hope to be reunited with the ones we love and be one with past and future generations.”