

Episode 3

Into All The World PRESIDENT MIGUEL TENORIO, BOLIVIA

REED NIELSEN: Hello, my name is Reed Nielsen and I am a professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah where I teach on the international Church. Today I am interviewing President Miguel Angel Tenorio of the Bolivia Cochabamba Mission. President Tenorio, it's a pleasure to be visiting with you today.

MIGUEL TENORIO: It is a pleasure for me to visit with you brother.

REED NIELSEN: What I'd like to begin with is just some personal questions about your background. Tell us about your experiences in the Church before being called as President of the Cochabamba Mission.

MIGUEL TENORIO: Well, my parents and my older brothers were baptized in Northern Mexico in 1958, so my family has now 50 years as a member of the Church basically. I was raised as a Church member. I was two years old when that happened. And all my time is spent as a member of the Church. I served my mission in the Mexico, Hermisillo Mission from 1977 to 1979. I have been two times Bishop one in Mexico City and one in Lima Peru. I've been also two times a member of the Stake Presidency. And I've lived the last seven years of my life in Lima, Peru working for the Presiding Bishopric office in Lima and I was there when I received this calling as well. It was a total surprise for me, but we are very grateful to serve now in Cochabamba.

REED NIELSEN: Well, it sounds like you've had some real Church experience both in Mexico then in Peru and now in Bolivia. That's quite remarkable. Well, tell us about Bolivia, for our listeners, where is it located in South America, what are the neighboring countries, what is it like...what's the culture like in Bolivia?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Bolivia is neighboring with Peru, Chile, Argentina and Brazil. The major religion is Catholic and Spanish is the official language but also there are two main languages spoken here in Bolivia. There's Aymara who is spoken predominately in La Paz and in areas surrounding Lake Titicaca. But in this mission, the native language is Quechua. And we have several wards and branches where the majority of the members speak that language. On those areas my missionaries learn some basic expressions and they teach many lessons through a member translator.

REED NIELSEN: So the missionaries come, are those languages taught in the Missionary Training Center or do they just learn them on the streets there?

MIGUEL TENORIO: No, they're just learning with the members.

REED NIELSEN: I see. Wonderful. Well, a little bit of background on the Church in Bolivia. I know the first missionaries came from the Andes Mission in 1964 and within two years, there were several branches there in the area. Another milestone in 1977, President Spencer W. Kimball came to Bolivia for an area conference there in La Paz. The first stake was

created in Bolivia in 1979 and I know that by the year 2000 there were over 100,000 members and about 21 stakes and 230 wards and branches scattered throughout Bolivia. Of course another major milestone was President Hinckley dedicated the Cochabamba Bolivia temple in 2000. So what I'm curious about is: are there other missions there in Bolivia?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Yes, there are another two, two missions in Bolivia. The La Paz nation who has three of the nine departments or stakes in the country. There's the Santa Cruz Mission who has two of the stakes and then there's the Cochabamba Mission who has four of the stakes in the middle part of the country. We would have the stake of Cochabamba, the stake of **Chukisaka, Potosi, Tariha**. And there are 3 missions currently in Bolivia.

REED NIELSEN: And where is the mission home there in Cochabamba? Is it, is it there in a major city, is it more in a rural area, tell us what the mission home itself.

MIGUEL TENORIO: In Cochabamba it is the third largest city in Bolivia.

REED NIELSEN: Ah Ha.

MIGUEL TENORIO: After La Paz and Santa Cruz. And I have been blessed, to live in the mission home that is in the streetbacked of the temple. So when I open the window every morning, I see the temple right there.

REED NIELSEN: So the temple is right next to the mission home.

MIGUEL TENORIO: That's right.

REED NIELSEN: And what difference has the temple made in the lives of the Bolivian Saints?

MIGUEL TENORIO: It has been a blessing for the members in Bolivia of course, our mission takes good advantage to have it in Cochabamba because the temple itself, it's a great missionary. I know of a member here in Cochabamba who drive a taxi cab. He told me that on one occasion he was taking some Argentine tourists to the airport. And they said "we still have some time and we see all the attractions in Cochabamba, do you think is there anything left to see?" And he said "Yes, you cannot leave before you see this." And he drove them to the temple.

REED NIELSEN: Really?

MIGUEL TENORIO: And being a former missionary in Peru, he had the chance to explain about temples, families, the plan of salvation. Of course he got the name and addresses and after they left, they said to him, "Thank you very much to make this stop. This stop was really the cherry on the cake, and it was a great, great experience." So, so really the temple itself, you can see it's on a hill, beginning on a hill, it is magnificent. It really takes the attention of everybody who passes by.

REED NIELSEN: Are your missionaries able to go to the temple while they are there on their missions?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Yes, since we have it here, we got the permission and everytime that we have a transfer time, we go once every six weeks with the missionaries serving in Cochabamba.

REED NIELSEN: I bet they love coming to the mission home and being close to the temple.

MIGUEL TENORIO: That's right, yes, yes it is a blessing and we are really blessed to have it here in Cochabamba.

REED NIELSEN: Well, before they dedicated the Cochabamba temple with President Hinckley, where did the saints in Bolivia go to the temple?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Well, the closest temples were in Buenos Aires, for the ones who live in the South part of Bolivia, and then the ones who live close to Lake Titicaca, they go to Peru and then the ones who live close to Brazil went to Sao Paulo. So basically, those are the three temples that were visited before: Buenos Aires, Lima, and Sao Paulo.

REED NIELSEN: And so for the members in say La Paz, how many hours would it take them to get to the closest temple?

MIGUEL TENORIO: About two to three days.

REED NIELSEN: So it was a major sacrifice to go to the temple before the temple was dedicated there in Bolivia.

MIGUEL TENORIO: It is a great sacrifice to save money to take all the family. So for some of them took awhile to have enough funds to travel to those places. Now there is still there are some who need to travel about 18 hours to come here. But 18 hours is nothing compared with the sacrifices they did before.

REED NIELSEN: And what tremendous blessings for not only for your mission, but for the country as a whole to have a temple there.

MIGUEL TENORIO: Yes, it is. Indeed

REED NIELSEN: Do the Bolivian Latter-day Saints, do they get involved with family history research or is there a genealogical program there that they really have embraced and have caught ahold of with the temple in their midst?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Yes, we have or every stake has a family history center now in every stake center and full equipped with all the things that the Church has to offer. In the temple, inside the temple, in the temple grounds there's a big family history center that serves all the people who come and to the temple and they can work down there and prepare their names for the ordinances. So yes, the family history program is working well and I think in the years to come it will be better and better.

REED NIELSEN: Well tell us more about the mission itself, the Cochabamba mission. How many missionaries do you have, how many are elders, how many sisters, do you have senior missionaries, are the missionaries mostly Bolivian, are they North American, what is the mission like?

MIGUEL TENORIO: I have 126 missionaries right now. My North American missionaries had to leave the country in September 2008. At that time, I had 140 missionaries, but my numbers were reduced to 79 after they left. And, um, 49 of my missionaries received temporary

assignments in several Peruvian missions. And now it has been approved for their return and we expect to reach about 150 missionaries when all of them return. And I have missionaries from several countries. I have, the majority are Bolivians right now, I have about 40 of them. The next country with more missionaries is Peru, then we have from Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile and Guatemala. I have 1 sister from Guatemala. And of course after my missionaries, North American missionaries return, I will have 40 missionaries. I have 18 sister missionaries, and the remainder are elders. And I'm going to receive another 6 to 8 sister missionaries that are serving right now in Peru on a temporary assignment. So in the end, I will have about 24 sisters and the rest will be elders. And I have a couple, a North American couple who had to leave the mission, but they will return again. And they will help us with the two districts that we have in our mission.

REED NIELSEN: Well, it sounds like a great group of missionaries. Now the missionaries from Latin America, um, before they come to into your mission, what missionary training center do they go to?

MIGUEL TENORIO: They go to the Lima, Peru training center. All my missionaries assigned, or the missionaries assigned to Cochabamba are going to the Lima Peru training center.

REED NIELSEN: And because of your experience in Peru, with the Presiding Bishoprics office, you're probably very familiar with the MTC there.

MIGUEL TENORIO: Yes, I am familiar and I was participating in the construction of several adjacent buildings to the structure and I believe they have space for two other buildings in case in the future they will need to expand. And they will reach to expand and to house 450 missionaries, right now they can house 150 missionaries.

REED NIELSEN: Wow! What about the North American missionaries? Do they go to the MTC in Provo, or do they go straight to Peru as well?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Well, they go three weeks to the MTC in Provo and then they arrive in Lima for six weeks. So after they spend nine weeks in those two MTC's.

REED NIELSEN: And is that mostly for language training or culture training or, or um, and how...

MIGUEL TENORIO: Language.

REED NIELSEN: Language training. What is the, the fluency of missionaries from North America in Spanish when they arrive in your mission?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Well, they have a very basic understanding but it is incredible to see how they learn so fast. I'm amazed to see and it's really the gift of tongues. It is really in this mission. They learn very, very fast.

REED NIELSEN: Well, tell us about the daily life of the missionaries there in Bolivia. What is their schedule? How do they do their missionary work? Is it street contacting, are they visiting homes? Are they getting member referrals? How does missionary work actually happen there in Bolivia?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Well, we basically comply with the mission schedule as it is in the “white bible” as it is known.

REED NIELSEN: Right, the handbook.

MIGUEL TENORIO: And, we are working very hard for more member participation. And I believe that we will succeed, but in the meantime, we still do a lot of tracting. Ah, mornings are kind of difficult because fathers and a good percentage of mothers are working. So we do a lot of service during morning hours. And the best time to find and teach is during afternoons and evenings. And, um, we receive in the, in our mission training as mission presidents, President Monson taught us that there is no substitute for a member-oriented proselyting program. He said it is the key to success and we are trying to honor his promise. We are trying to work hard, with the members for more participation. And, ah, and it’s coming. I believe that it will come and in the end we will get more references from the members.

REED NIELSEN: That’s great. I know it’s a challenge all over the world, the ideal is for the members to find and the missionaries to teach, but, ah, sometimes it’s a challenge to say the least, it is a challenge. You mentioned service that your missionaries do in the mornings. What type of service opportunities do they have?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Well, There’s a lot of service opportunities that we are allowed to – for every missionary to have four hours of service every week. So we can service the members, the nonmembers, our investigators, and even we sometimes with a stake, ah, the stake has a plan to perform service for a school, or a government building or something, we can – we can join forces with the members and we can participate in those kinds of services.

REED NIELSEN: I imagine having your missionaries out both teaching and also serving the people raises the profile and gives the Church a good name there in the area.

MIGUEL TENORIO: Elder Christopherson came to Bolivia in February and he had the chance to spend a lot of time with the members and some time visiting with some governmental officers. And I think, I can say that the image of the Church which is very strong and they have a lot of respect for the Church and the program and also the humanitarian effort that the Church has been doing here in Bolivia.

REED NIELSEN: Well, President Tenorio, tell me about some of the successes, the conversions, ah, public affairs, good things that have been happening in your mission.

MIGUEL TENORIO: Central America and South America are the lands of the Book of Mormon. It has been prophesied that the Church will flourish here. And of course we have a challenge. The challenge is basically growth. We are growing very rapidly and to keep the members within the Church has been a challenge. So our goals in our mission it that, ah, all the baptisms we have to work very hard to keep them in the Church and have a full retention of them. So, but we have a lot of success and I know that the three missions here in Bolivia, likewise the mission in Peru, are successful missions. And, ah, as you asking me to share one story of conversion, I remind one very recently story. I had the opportunity to interview a sister for her baptism. And also, I also interviewed her husband, who was

with her. And they told me that his older son, who was about 15 or 16 years old, heard about the Church in La Paz. And he asked permission for the parents to go to the Church and after several weeks he decide to baptize in the Church and he got the permission of the parents and he was baptized. Only him in the family. And this brother told me in the interview that one day he was trying to speak over the telephone in a cabin. And he heard of a lady who was speaking to other people about the Mormons. And she said, "My son became part of that religion and I don't know about him." "He left for a mission and never came back." "So I believe that they take this young man and prepare for I don't know what, (LAUGHING) and then, they disappear."

REED NIELSEN: Oh, wow!

MIGUEL TENORIO: So, he said that he became very, very concerned about his son thinking that because he heard his son talking about mission.

REED NIELSEN: He was afraid he would never come back.

MIGUEL TENORIO: (LAUGHING) That's right! So when he came back to his home, he told to his wife, about all that conversation that he heard and, ah, they decided to tell his son not to go to the Church anymore, but they said, no he was really very faithful. So on one occasion, I lost my job in La Paz, we decided to came to Cochabamba and we decided that this was a very good opportunity to say to my son there's no Church in Cochabamba, so forget about that Church.

REED NIELSEN: (LAUGHING)

MIGUEL TENORIO: And they did.

REED NIELSEN: Ah huh.

MIGUEL TENORIO: They did. They told to his son don't look for your Church because there's no Church in Cochabamba. So he became inactive. And he said that in very recently, they have a daughter who was having, um, she was very sick. And no medical treatment was working with her. So they began to try everything, their neighbors and their acquaintances said, "go to this, and go to that." And one time he said, "my son came and he said to them, um, "I found my Church. I know the missionaries who have the priesthood. So if you can agree, if you agree they can come and bless my sister."

REED NIELSEN: Um hum.

MIGUEL TENORIO: So they agreed, the missionaries came, blessed his sister, and his sister became well almost immediately. So they become very interested in the Church. They received the lessons, they began to go to Church and then finally they, they were baptized, all the family. Um, four sisters, the parents and it was a very, very good time. We, my wife and I, went to the baptismal service, and it was a great, great experience. And this young, ah, this young man is now preparing to go to the mission. And he is helps the missionaries a lot. They can, he can go and work with them. It was a great day.

REED NIELSEN: What a remarkable story all because of the faith of a young son. Now generations and family members are in the Church. What a beautiful story! Thank you for sharing that. Well, you mentioned earlier about, about Latin America being part of the Book of Mormon lands. We know President Kimball and other prophets have told the Latter-day Saints that, ah, that many of the peoples in Latin America are the decedents of, of Lehi; the children of Lehi. Ah, what impact does that have on your missionary work? Do the members in Bolivia feel that connection? Do they feel that identity as, as children of the promise? The blessings are coming to them because of covenants made anciently with Lehi and his children.

MIGUEL TENORIO: Yes, they did. And basically, one of the pillars in our mission is to work with the Book of Mormon, because the Book of Mormon has a story of these ancient people who lived somewhere here in America. And when we teach and we are working very hard with the missionaries. They...I was telling them recently, that no investigator can progress without reading the Book of Mormon and asking God about the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. But if you can persuade them to read about this people who basically are their ancestors, they will feel that the Book of Mormon is filled of stories and the prophecies of this book coming in this time to help this people to progress again. There, there is a lot of poverty here. And I think that the Church will have the power to change their minds and they will progress and will be prosperous and so this is the great power that the Book of Mormon has when the people read them and follow all the lessons there are for us.

REED NIELSEN: Well, thank you. I appreciate your testimony on the Book of Mormon. You mentioned, President Tenorio about the temporal blessings that the saints will receive as they join the Church. That they will be able to enjoy a better standard of living as they live gospel principles. Do they have the perpetual education fund there in Bolivia yet?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Yes, yes they have. And it is working very, very good. Um, as I mentioned, since I was working in the Bishopric office down there in Peru, I know that all of the good progress that the program has....I know that this is the third largest program in the world, only behind Brazil and Mexico.

REED NIELSEN: For the perpetual education fund?

MIGUEL TENORIO: Yes. For Peru and Bolivia.

REED NIELSEN: Um hum.

MIGUEL TENORIO: Um, so there are a lot of people taking advantage of this.

REED NIELSEN: So you have actually seen the fruits of the program. You've seen people's lives change there in Bolivia and Peru.

MIGUEL TENORIO: That's right.

REED NIELSEN: Great. Well, I think our time is about over. It's sure been a pleasure for me to hear about how the Church is going forward in Bolivia, to hear about the temple, missionary work, the members there. I sure appreciate your time. I'd like to conclude if it's alright with

your testimony, would you mind sharing your testimony in English and then your testimony in Spanish for us President Tenorio.

MIGUEL TENORIO: Thank you Brother Nielsen. I will try to do my testimony in English. I have a testimony, As President Monson said in this DVD that was released when he became the prophet of the Church, I can say that I don't know exactly how I gained my testimony, but I gained my testimony when I was a child, the Doctrine and Covenants says that there's a gift to believe in the words of the ones who know and I think that at the beginning that was the case, I believed in the testimony of fathers when I was a child. But now I know for myself through the Spirit of the Lord. I don't have any doubt that this is the work of God. That he lives, that Jesus lives, that He provide us with the, the atonement to give the opportunity to every one of us to go back to our Father in Heaven. That is my, my testimony. Now in....Ahora in Espanol. Como menciono in Ingles, no se exacatamente como llego el testimonio fue paso a paso, creyendo como dice Doctrina y Convenios primero con, con el don de creer y despues obteniendo atraves de Espiritu. El testimonio de esta gran obra, se sin ninguna duda en me Corazon que Dios vive, que Jesucristo vive y que esta es su iglesia restrauada sobre la tierra y que atraves de su sacrificio, tenemos la oportunidad de arrepentirnos y bautisarnos y ser parte de sue iglesia y tal como el Libro de Mormon mencion esta es la doctrina de Cristo, el evangelio de Cristo, el arrepentimiento y el bautismo y ahora que estoy en la mision, estoy disfrutando mucho de esa testimonio de saber que estamos, mis misionarios y yo, completamentepredicando la doctrina y evangelio de Cristodel arrepentimiento y el bautismo.. Y este testimonio, lo digo en el nombre de JesuCristo, Amen.

REED NIELSEN: Amen. Well, thank you President Tenorio. It sounds like the Church in Bolivia is in good hands. The missionaries are doing well, and the work continues to go forward. So thank you and good luck with your continued missionary work.

MIGUEL TENORIO: Thank you very much.

(END MUSIC)

Narrator: You have been listening to "Into All The World".