

Arnaldo Uchoa Cavalcante

### **Grace and Truth Came to Me by Jesus Christ**

I will try to summarize the forty years which led up to my conversion. I entered the seminary of my own free will, desiring to serve God as a priest. My family did not possess the financial resources to bear the cost of my studies, but fortunately a good friend kindly paid my expenses.

My twelve years of study included philosophy, theology and languages. I applied myself in a special way to a knowledge of philosophy and the Bible.

Finally on 15. August 1945, in the metropolitan cathedral of Maceió, Brazil, I received ordination to the priesthood by the hands of the archbishop. However, I did not receive what I really needed, the grace that comes from above, the divine power to preach the Word of God with authority! I was still like Thomas who, not believing in the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus, needed to touch the body of his Master to believe. In the same way I could not believe in the Word that I had read and studied. I needed a special revelation of the Lord Jesus.



### **A Priest, but with No Assurance of Salvation**

For nine years, from 1945 to 1954, I exercised the ministry of a priest in the cities of Maceió and Recife, administering the 'sacraments' and preaching, still without peace, without conviction, and without feeling salvation in things in which I could not believe. My heart was aspiring for something greater and better. During this time I held several high academic and ecclesiastical positions. Meanwhile, at altars, in the pulpit and in the cathedral, I could not find what I was looking for. I resolved to leave the cassock in 1954 and set out in search of spiritual peace, the certainty of salvation for my soul, faith in the sacrifice of Christ and in the teaching of the Bible. Divine Providence is marvellous and prepared me for coming down to the valley of blessings, peace and salvation. My God proved that I was, to him, of more value than the birds and the lilies of the countryside.

## **How I Left My Parish**

On the day of my liberation from black vestments, I was performing the rôle of factory chaplain in the city of Maceió. After having planned everything that my conscience advised me, I left for Recife by plane. I had bought some clothes that I needed in place of my cassock. I wanted to change my clothes in a hurry before looking for a hotel. I took a taxi and told the driver that I wanted to go to a particular district of the city. I warned him that during the journey I would change my clothes. When I got out of the car I was different and free. I found a hotel and spent the night there. On the following morning, I passed the superior from the Carmelite monastery on the street. I managed to escape him.

I left immediately for the city of Natal and from there for other cities. I would soon have to find the better way that I yearned for, but unfortunately I lived dominated by an unrestrained feeling of intolerance for the evangelicals that I called Protestants. I was like Saul of Tarsus, religious but a persecutor of evangelical Christians. I was certainly not converted to Christ inside, and, in contrast to Paul, it was only after some delay that I arrived at my conversion. Three years later I was married, on 10. May 1958, and in the following year our first son was born.

In the years that passed up to 1960, my search took me to Brazilian spiritists and other groups, always avoiding evangelical churches. However, I continued to feel the Same emptiness in my soul and a burning thirst for salvation and peace.

## **God's Providence and Grace**

In 1960 I went to Belo Horizonte and on to Aguai. In September I headed for Campinas to look for a better job and, walking in the streets of the centre, I came across a building labelled 'The Church of the Nazarene'. I looked for the entrance, and peeped inside. At that moment I was surprised by the pastor of the church. It was precisely 12 o'clock. The pastor received me as if he had expected me. And now I understand: he was led by divine Providence.

That meeting resulted in precious blessings for my soul and was decisive, in that I took a new and surprising path. Days after my family was brought to Campinas, I got to know how true the evangelical faith was. I heard the sermons of Pastor Mosteller. On 18 September 1960 I fully accepted the genuine gospel of Christ publicly. On this date I really passed from death unto life - the real Christian life, having the divine Spirit and the peace of Christ in my soul.

Today I praise God, I bless Jesus, I preach the message of the gospel and, although working hard, I have joy, peace and happiness serving my Saviour, 'being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever' (J Pet. 1:23).