

The following account comes from missionaries, Mario and Rose Bruno, whom we help to support in their ministry in Rome. It reminds us just how much it means to victims when God's people reach out practically and in prayer in times of disaster:

Our church has an evangelistic campaign every October. For the past two years Giorgio De Angelis, the pastor of the church in L'Aquila (about 150 km east of Rome) has been our speaker. You may know that L'Aquila was hit by a devastating earthquake of 5.8 on the Richter scale. The 30 to 40 seconds that the ground shook caused about 300 deaths and destroyed about 80% of the city. Below is my translation of parts of the letter we received from Giorgio.

“Normally when asked what you would like as a gift you may respond: a new cellular phone, an Ipod or a book. After the earthquake I have been asking for a pair of underwear and pants. The earthquake hit at 3:32 am and we fled our apartment in our pajamas. How fast your life can change. At times, God puts us in circumstances where the real values of life again take on meaning—having your loved ones near, something warm to eat, someone to hold your hand and encourage you in the Lord.

I thank the Lord my family was not hurt. A doctor lost his wife and children. He was the only one to escape with his life. I went around for 2 days trying to help those I could. It was dangerous because the buildings had cracks in the walls and could fall at any moment. I cried almost the whole time.

My only thought was the verse Psalm 34:18 “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” This verse consoled me greatly to know that the Lord is close to me. I was also consoled remembering that Jesus had suffered more than me. “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering” (Isa.53:3). Only He and the God of all consolation could console our broken hearts. While Jesus was on the earth He had compassion on the crowds, on the widow who had lost her son.

The Sunday after the earthquake we met in a tent for our worship service. We remembered that there was an earthquake at both the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We thank the Lord that brothers from Italy and Europe sent aid and tents immediately. Many took holidays to come and help us. We received thousands of phone calls from those praying for us. We have experienced first-hand what it is to be part of the Body of Christ, the Church. We would like you to pray for the two tent cities that have been established and for our work of evangelism among them.”

Thank you for your partnership with us in the cause of Christ. May God's grace be upon you.

Mario and Rose