

Brother Joseph Lovalvo

Personal Data *birth: 3/1/10; baptism: 7/16/33*
Ordinations *elder: 1936; evangelist: 1937; apostle: 1939*
Leadership *California District Mission Board Chairman: 1963-1983; California District President; Quorum of Twelve Apostles President: 1974-present*
Mission Work *Six Nations and Sarnia Indian Reservations, Canada; Mexico*

Joseph Lovalvo was born near Palermo, Sicily, on March 1, 1910. He was the seventh of nine children. His father came to this country ahead of them and worked for two years to earn enough money to bring the family here. He worked on the railroad, sleeping in railroad cars so that he could save more money. In 1914, just before the start of WWI, they finally embarked on their long-awaited and perilous voyage to America, which took 18 days in stormy weather.

Years later he became disenchanted with the church he had been attending since he was a boy. Having an inquiring mind, he would often ask questions of the parish priest regarding teachings that were troubling to him. However, his questions were lightly dismissed, as he was simply told to just accept it and was given no explanation from scripture. This did not satisfy him, and he eventually left that church.

Two of his mentors in his early days in the Church were Brothers Tony Pietrangelo and Ralph Frammolino. It wasn't long before his dedication led to active involvement in the Church.

"I Am Michael, the Archangel"

Brother Joe served the Windsor Branch for many years as presiding elder. In 1939, the Quorum of Twelve had a revelation at a June conference in Monongahela, PA to recommend Brother Joe to be ordained an apostle. When Brother Furnier laid hands upon him, the gift of tongues was spoken, with the interpretation being that God had called him as one of the apostles of old. However, at only 29 years of age, Brother Joe was beginning to feel the awesome weight of this office and began to wonder how he could carry this weight. The following day, after returning home from work, he went to his bedroom and began to ponder on how he could fulfill this great responsibility. What happened next is best described in Brother Joe's own words:

All of a sudden the Power of God came upon me and lifted me up from my bed and upon my feet in the middle of the room. A personage appeared to me, dressed all in white, with a sword in his hand. He spoke these words: "I am Michael, the archangel, and I have been sent to you by God, to teach you how to use this sword." He then proceeded to put the sword in my hand. It was about three feet long, two-edged, and the hilt was all engraved in gold. As I took the sword, he held his hand on mine and the Power of God came upon me, and the Glory of God filled my soul. The sword just came alive! It was as if I had just grabbed a 220-volt wire. All of a sudden, I found myself back in bed, wondering what was happening to me. Again the Power of God picked me up and stood me on my feet, and the same personage appeared. He repeated, "I am Michael, the archangel, God has sent me to you to teach you how to use this sword. Paul and Peter used this sword. Now you must use it." He put the sword in my hand and this time, he let me go. He didn't hold my hand. The Glory and the Power of God came upon me and once again, the sword became alive. All fear and every doubt left me. I knew now that God had called me as one of the twelve apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ.

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Brother Joe has had many outstanding experiences associated with his ministry, which now spans over 65 years. One of the gifts he received, in his ministry was the gift of healing, which has been a blessing to many over the years. It didn't take long for this gift to be made manifest as reflected in the following experience, which occurred in 1936. Brother Joe explains in his own words:

I was just a young elder at the time. It was 1 o'clock in the morning when I was suddenly awakened from my sleep. A voice spoke to me, "Get up and get dressed and go to Sister Marietta Ruzzi's house. Go there and anoint her because she's been sick, very sick." We were taught to prove the spirits, so I was wondering where this voice came from, when the voice spoke again. This time like a command: "Arise and go there. She's been very sick. Anoint her and I will heal her." Well, I didn't wait any more.

They lived about a mile from my house. Brother Tony, her husband, who was also a minister of the Church, answered the door. I told him that I had an experience to go there and apologized for the lateness of the hour. He said, "Brother Joe, if God gave you an experience, come on in." I asked, "Is your wife sick?" He said, "She's been very sick. She's been in a coma for two weeks."

In those days we didn't have any insurance, jobs were scarce, and we had no money for doctors. So he waited on the Lord. He took me into the bedroom and there she was lying on the bed in a coma. I got down on my knees and cried out to God with all the energy that was in me, with all faith that I could produce, and when I finished my prayer, tears were trickling down her face. She came out of the coma and started to praise God. She said, "Brother Joe, God has sent you to my home, because while you were here talking with my husband, I had a vision where I saw a light come from your house and land in my house." She wanted to get up and I suggested she just rest, to which she replied, "Oh no, I'm healed and I want to get up and fix you some coffee." When I got home that night I told my wife what happened and we glorified God together.

Another noteworthy experience happened around 1952. Brother Joe received a call one evening after work from Sister Elvira Maness, a Native American from the Sarnia Mission. According to Brother Joe:

She was crying on the phone, "Brother Joe, my husband had an accident. He was working on the railroad cars and they were moving steel bars from one car to another. The operator of the crane moved the crane the wrong way and the steel beam hit Brother Maness in the chest and knocked him off the car. He has eight broken ribs and a broken ankle. I'm sick in bed with the flu, with a high fever."

Brother Joe, another brother who was visiting their home, and his son Leonard responded to her appeal for help, and set out for the Sarnia Reservation. It was about a 75-mile drive, one-way. Brother Joe continues:

It was cold-close to zero degrees, so when Brother Maness saw me walk in, he started to cry. I knelt down and cried out to God. I reminded God that this was one of his covenant children, and that he had promised in the last days that he would minister to them. I asked God to send one of the Nephites mentioned in the Book of Mormon to minister to him. After I got off my knees and began to anoint him, a man walked in right through the door that was closed. I could see that he was a Native American. He had long black hair, with olive-colored skin. As he laid his hands on top of mine, the Power of God came upon me. I wasn't speaking anymore, but Christ was speaking through me. I said, "Brother Maness, in the Name of Jesus Christ, receive ye the strength of God and be made whole." And he jumped out of the chair and said, "Brother Joe, I'm

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healed. I'm healed. I have no more pain." He was touching his ribs, "The pain is gone," he said.

Brother Joe also anointed Sister Maness that night and she too was healed, but, as it turned out, the experience did not end there. He went to the Sarnia Mission on the following Sunday and was stunned to see that Brother Maness still had the cast on his foot. Brother Maness told him that for some reason his chest was healed but his ankle was not. Brother Joe felt very bad and couldn't understand why he was not completely healed. He prayed for understanding and it didn't take long before the Lord spoke again. Brother Joe received a call from Brother Maness. According to Brother Joe:

He said, "Brother Joe, I have a message for you from Jesus Christ." I said, "Wait a minute-from Jesus Christ? What are you talking about?" "Yesterday, when you left here, we saw how bad you felt and we prayed for you. Last night, after I went to bed, Christ appeared to me and He told me to tell you not to be discouraged; the reason he didn't heal my ankle was because He wanted me to stay home and study the Book of Mormon and learn about the covenants God has made with my forefathers." When I heard that, the Spirit of God came upon me and I praised God for answering my prayer.

As of this writing, Brother Joe is the senior member of the Quorum of Twelve, having served in that office for over 60 years, second in length of service only to the late Brother Alma Cadman. His contributions to the Church over that period of time cannot be overstated. His love for the "Seed of Joseph", referring to the descendants of the original inhabitants of the land of America - the "Native Americans" is well known throughout the Church, and, in fact, was the primary reason for his decision to move his family to California in 1953. His preaching and teaching have provided the members of the Church with inspiration and direction wherever he has gone. Brother Joe and his wife, Sister Virginia (Randazzo), had four children: Leonard, Rose, Sharon, and Faye.