

Missionary Profile: Danilo and Emily Aguilar

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Danilo and Emily Aguilar are missionaries serving in Ponta Delgada, the Azores Islands, Portugal since September 2014. They are supporting the local church after their pastor of 20 years retired, and are also working to establish creative forms of ministry in the community, and rehabilitate a Nazarene campground.

This is their first assignment as global missionaries. They have a 1-year-old child, Sohvi Selah Aguilar.

Engage: How did you first recognize God's call to be involved in missions?

Danilo: We both were called to missions during our teenage years. I was called in a youth camp in Southern California and Emily was called at youth event in Costa Rica. God brought us together and although we didn't pursue our calling to missions right away, we knew God's calling was evident in both of our lives. It was until after losing our first born, Giosue, hours after he was born, that the Lord showed us that the greatest value in life comes from serving Him, which led us to wholeheartedly pursue our calling to missions.

Engage: What is your favorite aspect of what you do in your present assignment?

Aguilars: We are very much still in the "honeymoon" stage of our assignment. It's hard to pick one favorite thing about where we are right now and how we are serving. But if we had to narrow it to a couple of favorites these would be it: Hope and discovery.

Since we live in an Island, people here tend to feel isolated and forgotten. Even our own local church many times feels lonely, sort of distant from the rest of our denomination. Upon our arrival and as we start to renovate the buildings, we have noticed that people are hopeful -- hopeful of the future as a church and hopeful as individuals and church members, who can do something for the Lord.



We have also loved to witness the self-awareness church members are experiencing. After working closely with some of them and general leadership training, we have discovered very talented people who are eager to learn and grow in the knowledge of the gospel. We love to witness how they discover their own gifts and talents as they develop a ministry within the local church. Others are regaining confidence and self-worth as they acquire life skills that will help them provide for their families.

To bring Jesus' hope, in the midst of an economic and spiritual crisis, and the discovery of talents and future leaders who will one day lead the way, are our favorite aspects of what we do.

Engage: What are some of the challenges that you face in carrying out your work?

Danilo: I would say the greatest challenge is to serve in the midst of an economic crisis. There is a high unemployment rate in the island and this creates great instability for families. There is a lot of migration to Canada, United States and other European countries, leaving families without husbands, fathers, sisters, brothers, and in some cases even mothers. When it comes to ministry, it's hard to overlook the need and it's even harder not to fall into the temptation to provide for everyone who is in need. We have had to find creative ways to minister to fulfill both, physical and spiritual needs.

Engage: Please share a story of a significant event or moment that has happened in your current assignment.

Aguilars: We have been giving rides to a lady from our church since January. We didn't know much about her since she barely speaks in church. However, while she is in the car with us she has been slowly sharing her story with us. Among the many difficulties and struggles she has faced in life, this lady didn't know how to read or write. The combination of this and other factors have kept her shy and distant from the rest. After facilitating reading classes and encouragement to participate more in church events, we are seeing her blossom! She is part of the women's small group we lead in our house and has started to participate more and lead prayer (if you knew her, you would understand how huge that is for her). Others have noticed her change by making comments like: "I didn't know she was that funny." One person even mentioned that they thought she had mental problems because she would never talk or seem to be engaged, to which we replied: "... nobody has ever asked for her opinion." With her we witness the truth that with patience, consistency and lots of love, people blossom. They have a story to tell. They are also carriers of God's grace and oh, how much we have learned from her. No wonder why the Lord encourages us to take care of "the least of these."

Engage: How do you maintain a close relationship with God and your family in the midst of the demands of missionary service?

Aguilars: It's hard to imagine missionary service without a close relationship with God. Both definitely go hand in hand. Each day when we wake up and realize that we are in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, thousands of miles away from family, struggling to learn the language to be able to communicate with those who we work with, and learning how to unconditionally love complete strangers, are a reminder of how much we need Jesus' love, how much we need our Father's grace and how desperately we need the Holy Spirit's guidance. The demands of missionary service is how we maintain a close relationship with God. It is that constant reminder of inadequacy that leads us to the gospel each day to seek wisdom to carry out this precious labor the Lord has entrusted to do.

Engage: What are the rewards of what you do?

Danilo: I believe many would agree that in ministry the greatest reward is to see lives changed. We are in the early stage of our assignment and we know that it may be years before we see the changes we wish for, however it is the small things that bring us great satisfaction: like a lady leading prayer, or a Sunday school teacher who is learning to take charge and beautifully organizes a Father's Day celebration. Sometimes it's just the flowing of ideas and requests that come from our church members that lets us know how willing they are to work and to seek a deeper relationship with their Savior.

In a more practical way, being a missionary family and a pastoral family also has its perks 😊. We constantly receive "goodies" from our church members. Like traditional bread or a special dish. Each

demonstrates their gratitude and expresses their love the best way they know how, and it's wonderful! We don't take any of these gestures for granted.

Engage: What are some aspects of the culture where you live that you have come to love or embrace?

Danilo: Azoreans remind us so much about Latinos. They are hospitable, friendly and definitely love to chat. We love their culture of the afternoon coffee and coffee bread, pastries, or whatever you have available. It doesn't matter. It's just about spending time together. Unexpected visits are common so we have learned to have bread in our house and coffee ready to be brewed. Emily didn't drink that much coffee when we got here; she can't live without it now.



Engage: What do you like to do for fun?

Danilo: We live in paradise. This island is stunning. So as a family we love to take walks along the beach and occasionally let Sohvi play in the sand. We also love taking joy rides to the mountains and taking a break at a local coffee shop. Since we haven't experienced summer here, we are looking forward to see what we can do once the weather is nicer.

I love to read, draw, and listen to a broad variety of music. Emily loves to cook, read and craft. Of course, now she loves playing dress-up with Sohvi.

Engage: What is something people would be surprised to learn about you?

Danilo: I think people will be surprised to know that I am an introvert trapped in an extrovert's body. My wife can tell you that I love hanging out with people and I try to be the life of the party, but I am equally pleased to be home, alone, in a corner of our living room reading a book for hours.

Many people would be surprised to know that Emily loves "wearing many hats." After high school she became a wedding planner, then graduated from beauty school, to then finally attend college. She graduated and now she would love to attend cooking school. Who knows what would be next after that!

Engage: What advice would you have for others exploring a possible call to missions, or embarking on their first missionary assignment?

Danilo: For those exploring their calling to missions, our advice will be to be patient. We know the wait is excruciating, but who you become while you wait is equally important as what you wait for. So while you wait for an assignment or for the opportunity to go to the nations, prepare yourself with knowledge and experience. Grow your relationship with God and dig deep into your local ministry. Those will be the foundation you will build on in the mission field.

For those embarking on their first missionary assignment, set realistic expectations of missionary life by talking to experienced missionaries and other mentors. This will help you avoid disappointment and discouragement once you arrive in the mission field and realize that maybe it wasn't what you expected. And be flexible! Like any other work, things change constantly, so learn how to readjust without losing enthusiasm.

For both, PRAY, PRAY, PRAY! Pour your heart out in prayer. He will be faithful to place you in a field that may not be where you had in mind, but it's exactly what you need.

Engage: Other comments?

Aguilars: Thank you for taking the time to read about us and our ministry. Please keep us in your prayers. Also, we are always looking for volunteers and [Work & Witness](#) groups. If you are interested in being part of our ministry or would like to stay connected with us, you can visit our ministry page: www.DaniloEmily.com Muito Obrigado!