

General Interest Interview
Zion Project Podcast
Meet Angela Ramirez

Josh Mangelson:

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Robin Linkhart:

The following interview was conducted in the native language of our special guest, Apostle Designate Angela Ramirez. An English transcript is available for download at projectzionpodcast.org just below the show notes for this episode.

Welcome, Angela. Please take a minute to introduce yourself to our listeners.

Angela Ramirez:

Blessings, it is a pleasure to share this time with you.

As you have already said, my name is Angela Ramirez. I live in Santo Domingo, capital of the Republic Dom. My family is big. We are 10 brothers. 2 males and 8 females, although (one girl died shortly after birth,) so we are 7 females. I am number 7 in order from oldest to youngest. My mother was one of the founders of the church in Santo Domingo. She guided us all on this path.

Now not all are active in the church, but we have many active members, brothers, nephews, cousins, etc. My mother passed away about 5 years ago, and my father is not a member of the church, but she has always supported the ministry and mission.

I have worked as a church employee since 1993. Let's say many years. I have held various roles within my time as an employee, of which I rejoice in thinking that these 29 years have passed quickly.

Robin Linkhart:

Tell us your story: from birth to high school graduation. Where you grew up? What was life like for you in your family and community? What were your interests and hobbies? Where was God and faith in the mix of all that?

Angela Ramirez:

I was born in a northern province of the Dom. Rep. in La Vega, a small town with many precarious conditions. Let's say a forced birth, because in the towns where nothing happens,

that day my mother told me, there was a big robbery at a store, and it happened that my mother had pain giving birth, and they couldn't go out to the city because everyone the roads were closed looking for thieves.

After a long time, they were able to take my mother to the hospital and at birth, I was swollen and a little different in color than a normal baby should have. But a few hours passed and I got better. And look at me here I am.

My family was of very limited resources. My father worked in the city while my mother and all my brothers lived in the country. Then my family migrated to the city, but I returned to the country with my grandparents because I didn't adapt to the city. My grandparents were very attached to their traditional faith, and I got involved in beliefs without much biblical foundation.

I spent about 5 years with my maternal grandparents, when I returned to the city to live with my parents and brothers, I felt that I did not fit in with my brothers. It was a difficult time for a teenager who didn't get much attention. She had many mixed feelings, and a great rebellion. She had nothing defined, at that time.

I started visiting the church with my mom, but it took me a long time to decide to get baptized and confirmed. I remember that she participated in many events with the young people, she attended all the congregational events, but she did not assume responsibility. Until November 30, 1983, I make the personal decision to faithfully approach God. And the 1st. May 1984, I was baptized and confirmed in this church.

Being a teenager with more questions than answers, I began to see light at the end of that endless tunnel. With the help of my pastors and youth leaders, I continued to advance in my preparation as a disciple, and to connect with God, in a very personal way.

Robin Linkhart:

You are ready for your next chapters in life. Tell us about college, the beginning of your professional career, marriage/family, and the expansion of your ministry [various roles in the church].

Angela Ramirez:

The truth is that one is never ready, life is constantly changing. You settle where you have to go and move forward with optimism.

I began my university studies at the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo. There I obtained a bachelor's degree in economics. When I was in the middle of my career, I met Andrés, he lived near my house and I had never seen him in my neighborhood. After finishing university, we got married.

Andrés is a civil engineer, and we have 3 children, 2 boys and a girl. My family is a great blessing and support in the ministry. Each one with different gifts, but trying to do the best possible with them the mission of Jesus.

I started in the church as a volunteer in charge of a pop-up group, and then I was ordained to the priesthood. Later this emerging group became a congregation and I served as a volunteer pastor.

Robin Linkhart:

What led you to enter full-time ministry with Community of Christ and what roles have you served in over the years?

Angela Ramirez:

There was a missionary need, and the position was mission coordinator for the national church.

In the church I have played various roles. I started with a job as a mission supervisor in the 1990s, and then I was ordained as an elder.

Years later I was a missionary coordinator for the Mission center. From there I went to Financial Officer. Then the role of president of the mission center was combined with that of financial officer and performing both roles for almost 6 years.

So, I was ordained as a high priest and my current responsibilities are field support minister for the Dom Rep. and Mexico Texas mission centers. I also serve as financial officer for the MXTX mission center.

Robin Linkhart:

Tell us about your call to the office of apostle.

Angela Ramirez:

The truth is that a call for this missionary opportunity had never crossed my mind.

When I received the email from brother Steve Veazey, telling me that he wanted to talk with me about a mission opportunity, my first impression was that the president's email account had been hacked. I stayed in the clouds. I thought for a few minutes and called my husband to tell him, then he told me, call the mediator between you and the president, who in this case was Apostle Smith, that's when I noticed that he was copied in the message.

That's when I called him and he answered me, "I don't think the account was hacked because the message also reached me. I think you should answer."

I responded and Brother Veazey claimed the email was from him and that's how he and I set up a virtual meeting. It was at that meeting that Brother Veazey gave me details of the call, and we began to pray.

In the process of prayer and discernment, many questions and concerns arose. I had many calls to my brother Art Smith, to whom I am so grateful for his patience throughout this process. Then I took some time to write Brother Veazey again, and my answer was Yes. My family has been there for me ever since I sat down to talk to them about it.

Then my wider family, and now the global community. They have been so kind, loving, and patient with me. I have received so many words of support, which I feel very blessed. I recognize that I am an imperfect human, but with a great desire to serve wherever I am assigned, and I recognize that we do not deserve so much, but divine grace reaches out to us, embraces us and above all guides us.

Robin Linkhart:

How has the unfolding of this new chapter changed things for you in your ongoing adventure with God?

Angela Ramirez:

I am in a learning process, adapting to new challenges. I have participated in a training meeting and also as a listener in the face-to-face meeting of the apostles. It is interesting to see and hear the diversity. So many places represented around a table. After being locked up for a while due to the pandemic, and now being in the Temple has been very uplifting. I feel very blessed.

Robin Linkhart:

What are your hopes for the future, and how do you see God moving in the world in ways that connect with Community of Christ and God's invitation to boldly follow the heart of God's vision for all creation?

Angela Ramirez:

When we talk about hopes we mean something we want to achieve. God has always moved in the life of humanity. We are humans who sometimes do not respond with the assignments that correspond to us.

We are given the opportunity to decide many things and our decisions are often contrary to God's will. Let's observe the nature that we were authorized to take care of and we have done

the opposite. Climate change is charging us. The global food shortage is another example of how badly we have treated the earth. We have been bad stewards. It's sad to say, but we are.

Even so, there is hope to continue proclaiming the kingdom of God on earth. We may not be able to transform the world, but we can continue giving back to our communities, taking care of our environment, and living a disciplined life.

Robin Linkhart:

How do you nurture your relationship with God?

Angela Ramirez:

I nurture my relationship with God in several ways:

First is when I do spiritual practices, among them my favorite is to dwell in the word. Through this encounter I have felt the scriptures more complete, and how I apply them in my life.

The second is when I share with other disciples in fellowship. Sharing is the secret of happiness. And especially when we do it in the brotherhood that Jesus taught us.

And finally, is when I get away from everyday life and focus on trying to hear the voice of God in silence. This is too nutritious.

Josh Mangelson:

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