

PURE RELIGION

From Corn to Computers

As Raquel sat down in front of a computer and touched the keys, her first impulse was to run away. It was too hard. Why did she think she could learn to use something as complex as this machine? She wanted so badly to learn, but how could she? When she went home that evening, she wept bitter tears.

She was so far away from the simple life she had known. Raquel had grown up working alongside other members of her family, tending the soil underneath a hot, Mexican sun. Her father owned a little plot of ground, and they did the best they could to grow corn and beans. But life was difficult. They barely had the means to sustain life, let alone afford any of the conveniences life has to offer.

The little school in her village had just three rooms and offered only the first three grades. Raquel attended school and learned to read and write, but there was little opportunity to learn much else.

Now, she sat in front of a computer, wondering how she would ever learn what was required. She had come to Utah to be with her husband, who had been injured in a work-related accident and needed to convalesce. When Raquel arrived with her four children, she didn't know a word of English. She had no job skills, and she wondered how she could ever support a family.

Someone recommended she visit the LDS Humanitarian Center. After interviewing, she accepted a position sorting clothing. She was delighted to discover that the entire plant closed at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays so that every person in training could attend a self-improvement class. Classes in keyboarding, English as a second language, forklift operation,

literacy, and basic computer were offered, but Raquel knew what she needed most was to learn English. And so, a young woman with only a third-grade education began her schooling all over again.

She launched into her studies with fervor and practiced English, both on the job and at home. Wanting to learn even faster, she took advantage of the English classes offered by Salt Lake Community College. These classes were held at the LDS Humanitarian Center, and students could receive college credit for successfully completing them.

Her courage and determination to learn overcame her fear and doubt. As she became more proficient in English, she decided her next step would be to learn about computers. She had never touched one, and the very thought of doing so terrified her. But once again, her courage and determination triumphed over her fear. A "Back to Work" course offered by the community college seemed to provide just the thing she needed—experience with keyboarding, word processing, and spreadsheets—so she enrolled.

Raquel passed the course and received 13 college credit hours in the process. "When I learn something new," she says, "I feel excited because I know I can do it!"

Although she has been employed at the LDS Humanitarian Center only two years, Raquel already speaks English well enough to work as a receptionist. Her goal is to find a position as an administrative assistant. With hard work and determination and with the help of the LDS Humanitarian Center, that will someday be a reality.

