

INTERNATIONAL REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

TEACHING REFORMED THEOLOGY ONLINE
TO PORTUGUESE SPEAKERS WORLDWIDE

Newsletter

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Bristol, VA – January/2016

“... Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”
Matthew 25:21 (ESV)

Sebastião Guimarães Costa Filho (1945-2015)

Rev. Ulisses Horta Simões

Born on March 28, 1945, he grew up in Garanhuns, in the state of Pernambuco



Brazil. In his youth, he became a professional musician, as well as a radio announcer.

His talents as a poet, composer, singer and choir conductor moved beyond the period of youth and came to serve the Lord in the Christian life. From a life away from the ways of the Gospel and while still young, God brought him back to Himself and the home in which he had been raised. God called him to the sacred ministry and he did his theological studies at the Presbyterian Seminary of the North in Recife.

He married Arminé Fermanian Guimarães and had four children – Levon, Maritza, Lavínia and Lídia Carolina. Besides his ministry in the Northeast of Brazil, he was also a pastor in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Minas Gerais. It is in this last Brazilian state that he spent most of his ministerial life. Along with two other Presbyterians, also already transferred to their “Paternal Home”, he played a special roll in the committee that produced the Hymnal “Novo Cântico” (“New Song”), between 1978 and 1982. His presence in the National hymnology committee always made significant contributions. As a preacher, he was recognized for his homiletical quality and versatility in communication.

He belonged to the pioneering faculty of the institute that preceded the Presbyterian Seminary of Belo Horizonte at its inauguration in 1976. He continued teaching there until late 1981, when he moved to the state of Bahia. He resumed his teaching activities in the same seminary in Belo Horizonte in 2000. From then until 2014, he added fifteen more years to his

teaching services, and also enriched the worship services with his gift at the piano or with his much appreciated sermons.

His contributions to the IRTC as an instructor began in 2007. He was recognized as a good teacher among all students who knew him. At the end of the day on the 23rd of November, God took him to Himself, ending the journey here to the beginning of the step that will lead to the eternal journey.

Below is the translation of two beautiful hymns composed by Rev. Sebastião Guimarães:

Infant Baptism



Our children belong to you,
O eternal God of love!
They are heirs of the covenant
Which proclaims your love,
And we brought them here today
To dedicate them to you.

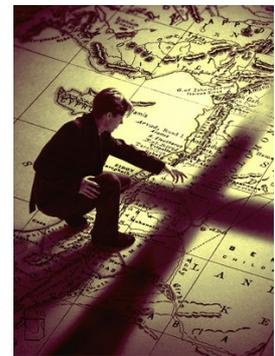
Since the earliest days,
Since the time of Abraham,
From the Old Testament,
The time of circumcision,
He who is born in this faith
Is the Lord's sheep.

As we bring them for baptism,
Here we are to witness
That they belong to the Church,
Where we saw them enrolled:
They belong to the Lord
Their friend and Savior.

In this solemn hour,
When the baptismal water
Is poured out on the infants
With sacramental value,
We ask you, great God,
Bless them from heaven. Amen.

Note: The hymn "Infant Baptism" can be found in the Hymnal "Novo Cântico" ("New Song").

Our Mission



It was here in the midst of this evil world that Jesus placed us
And gave us a charge – a noble commission – He summoned us to fight
He expects us to fulfill the duty for which he rescued us
To show the people of this generation that He really loved the world!

*In this struggle we are never alone:
Christ will lead us
Let us, through Jesus, by faith and with the cross
Conquer this world!*

Sin advances threatening, the corruption is unparalleled,
Atheism, filthy vices, vile acts – all emerge in confusion
Virtues are treated with disdain, and their ways are wicked
But to this world Christ commanded us to proclaim redemption.

The Lord has called us to this hour;
we can not fail
To make the people of today understand that He really wants to save them
To those who live in emptiness and frustration let us now proclaim
That Jesus wants to ease the burden for the weary and oppressed!

First Graduation in the History of the IRTC

In this article we bring an interview with Arthur Emmanuel Pascoal Costa, the first student in the history of the IRTC to be eligible to receive a diploma. As our students normally study from 4 to 8 courses per year, the time it takes to complete the 40 courses of the program becomes long. Arthur, 34, resident of Coronel Fabriciano, Minas Gerais, Brazil, concluded his studies for the Bachelor of Christian Studies (BCS) degree.

1) How did you hear about the IRTC? *Professor Ulisses [Horta Simões].*

2) How did the interest for studying theology start? *When I became an elder at my church, in Montes Claros, Minas Gerais, I perceived that I needed better theological education. Up to that moment my studies had consisted only of random reading of some books. When I discovered the IRTC, five years ago, I saw that I could get better trained.*

3) In your opinion, what are the benefits of distance education? *In my case, it was the opportunity to study and continue to pastor a congregation. It was very helpful to quickly and directly apply the teachings learned in the IRTC. Another important thing is that this virtual education enabled me to study with great teachers, which would have been almost impossible to do in some other way.*

4) How do you intend to use the knowledge you've acquired? *By improving my preaching and teaching at my church.*

5) What was your favorite course during your Bachelor program? Could you tell us a little bit about it? *Church History. Professor Frans Leonard [Schalkwijk] was brilliant in his classes and a saint in expounding his subjects. I learned not only about history, but about how to use it for not making the same mistakes.*

6) How do you feel about being the first student of the IRTC to be eligible to receive a diploma? *It was a pleasant surprise, since the title is of great importance to me, and I know the weight it brings to the IRTC for it gives to it a great credibility.*

7) Would you like to leave a word of encouragement to the other students? *There is no excuse for not serving the Lord in the best way possible. He owns everything involved in our lives, including our intellect. Be disciplined, because the*

program is not easy, but it is very valuable for those who want to give themselves to the Lord Jesus.

Is the IRTC a seminary?

Ralph Boersema, president

"And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus." – Acts 5:42 (ESV)

Our College begins 2016 filled with the hope of Christ and with encouraging expectations for this new year. It looks like this year more persons will share in our ministry activities and, consequently, greater progress in building a strong school can be expected. Let me take this opportunity to ask an interesting question, "Is the IRTC a seminary"?

Although a distance education school, we offer a full program of graduate studies, equal to Master of Divinity programs at North American theological seminaries. At the same time, we are more than a seminary in that we also provide a full program of Bachelor's degree studies.

There is, on the other hand, an important sense in which we are not a seminary. The meaning of the word comes from the idea of a seedbed, that is, a protected place in which seedlings can be sheltered from severe weather and attackers that can destroy the little plants before they can gain more strength.

IRTC students are not brought together and sheltered from the world. They usually are men and women that are mature and actively fulfilling their vocations in the world. Spread out in many locations, they study at our College while already witnessing and teaching the Word and making disciples for the Lord.

Why and How to Support the IRTC

"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

(2 Timothy 2:1-2 – ESV)

January is a month to do planning. The Board is working hard to reverse a difficult setting. In 2015 the College adopted the goal of raising USD\$92,000.00. This would meet our expenses for 2015 as well as the implementation of the need to engage a person full time in administration in 2016. However, our revenue from all sources reached only about USD\$ 36,000.00, which means that we were far from achieving the goal for 2015. The Board is making plans to redouble efforts to find solutions for the financial difficulties, as well as other needs. Meetings are to be held in Bristol, VA (the headquarters of the IRTC) on the 10th and 11th of March, precisely to adopt wise plans to change this alarming situation. We ask your prayers for the Board and for these meetings.

We invite you to join us in honoring and preparing those who are striving to serve the Lord in teaching, preaching and sharing of the Word for the advancement of the Kingdom of God on earth. You can contribute financially, in prayer, and also in promoting our educational ministry to Portuguese-speaking people. If you would like to make a donation, visit the "Donations" page on our website (www.pro-rege.net/ds14.htm). There you will find all the information necessary for making your contribution in the USA. Canadian donors, please make your donations at www.irtsociety.ca. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

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