



Бланценко, Karlštejn Castle, Wikimedia.

As the missionaries clustered on a wooded knoll near the Karlštejn Castle, the sun pierced the clouds as they sang “The Morning Breaks” and dedicated the land of Czechoslovakia for the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Praying a Mission into Existence: Frantiska “Mamousek” Vesela Brodilova

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After hearing about the death of Frantiska “Mamousek” Brodilova, President John A. Widtsoe of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Sister Brodil¹ was a really marvelous woman. Her story must be preserved in Church history.” This paper preserves the memory of a woman whose faith and devotion to the truth and whose love for the Lord opened the door for an entire nation to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. She was “a woman who prayed a mission into existence.”²

Childhood

Frantiska Vesela Brodilova was born 12 January 1881 to Klement Vesely and Frantiska Minerova in Pavlova, a little rural village in southern Bohemia (modern-day Czech Republic). She grew up as a miller’s daughter, the youngest of twelve children, though at the time of her birth only ten of her siblings had survived. Her parents were wed through an arranged marriage, and it was not a happy one. According to Frantiska’s grandson, Frank South, Frantiska’s mother had the disposition of a saint, and her faith and example made a

difference in the lives of her children, who loved and worshipped her.³ Her only joy in life was her children. Frantiska's father, Klement, "on the other hand, though very intelligent, was a licentious, carefree, brutal type of man" who caused the family much sorrow.⁴ South informs that Klement's bitterness was caused by extreme disappointment with his life circumstances. Klement's family had owned the mill in the tiny village of Pavlova, but Klement had never desired to be a miller, so he moved to Vienna to study law. In Vienna, Klement also became engaged to be married; however, his plans were abruptly changed when his father unexpectedly passed away, and Klement was forced to move back to Pavlova to run the family mill and enter into an arranged marriage with Frantiska Minerova. His life was completely different than the path he had desired, and his family became the scapegoat for his resulting anger, bitterness, and disappointment. Even on his wedding day, Klement was angry and "felt like he was forced into [the wedding] like a caged animal."⁵ Eventually, to drown out his misery he turned to alcohol, which exacerbated the situation.⁶ His brutality caused much sorrow for the entire family, especially Frantiska's mother, who on several occasions considered suicide. The only thing that prevented her from such an act was her faith in God and her children growing up in such adverse circumstances. Frantiska later wrote of her mother, "She bore trials and grief that we could not comprehend."⁷

Therefore, it was "a crushing blow" for Frantiska, who was sixteen at the time, on 29 March 1897, when Frantiska Minerova passed away.⁸ The values her mother instilled by her faith and righteous example would continue to shape her daughter's life and set her on a path to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. Shortly after Frantiska Minerova's death, Klement remarried but remained miserable, continued drinking, and became heavily involved in gambling. Eventually, he was forced to sell the mill to pay off his gambling debts.⁹ Frantiska later observed, "Father's negligence . . . ruined him, being forced to sell the mill. He died in poverty, alone and broken."¹⁰

Compounding the difficult relationship she had with her father, Frantiska did not get along with her father's new wife. Consequently, at the age of eighteen, she decided to leave her home in Czechoslovakia and move to Vienna to live with an older sister, Anna, who was working as the head servant of a wealthy household. Anna arranged for Frantiska to work for the same family as a cook. Anna, who was seventeen years older than Frantiska, became Frantiska's second mother, and the two sisters loved the time they were able to be together.¹¹

The Merkers, the family that the sisters worked for, were Protestant and very religious, and Frantiska became envious of the Merkers' family life. She observed “what a heaven home can be.” Frantiska, who had also been extremely religious from a young age, grew up as a Catholic. She recounted, “As the priest read Bible passages and delivered his sermons, I learned the passages by heart, and could tell, almost verbatim, what the sermons contained.”¹² In the Catholic Church, only the priest was allowed to read the Bible, written in Latin. Frantiska's life changed dramatically when the Merkers gave her a copy of the Bible translated into German. “Each day the Bible was read in this family. . . . She wondered why the Lord didn't send more prophets to guide His people as He did in ancient times.”¹³ After reading the Bible, “she found that the teachings and practices of her Catholic church were different from the true scriptures.”¹⁴ She found many passages made her wonder about things and have questions. She remembered:

From the lives of many of the supposed representatives of Jesus Christ with whom I was acquainted, I could perceive that there was a difference between Christ's teachings and their interpretations. They were using the teachings as a sham to carry out their own evil designs. These things disturbed me, and I began to wonder if God actually existed; and if so, where were His Prophets.¹⁵

After her “sincere study of the Gospels, [she] stopped going to church, but she didn't stop praying.”¹⁶ Her experience with the Bible would eventually lead to her conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was also in Vienna that Frantiska met Frantisek Alexim Brodil, who was living with his brother. The Brodil brothers were originally from a small town just north of Pavlova, where Frantiska was raised; however, because Frantisek was thirteen years older than Frantiska, the two never met in Bohemia. When Anna began to invite the Brodil brothers over for dinner, Frantiska found that Frantisek was a gentle, kind man who had a wonderful talent for music, and after dinner he would play his violin for the sisters. As Frantiska enjoyed sitting and listening to him play, the two of them were falling in love.¹⁷

Marriage

Frantisek and Frantiska were married on Valentine's Day, 14 February 1904, in Votiv Kirche, Vienna. When they were first married, Frantisek worked for the government each day until two o'clock in the afternoon. He would then teach violin lessons for extra income. Frantiska was determined to make her marriage different from her parents' marriage. As a result the Brodils had a

very loving marriage. Frantiska tried to be a good wife, and when Frantisek would come home at night she would always have a nice meal and his slippers waiting for him.¹⁸

Family

Frantiska continued to work as a domestic with her sister until Frantiska's first daughter, Frantiska Brodilova (Frances Brodil), was born on 22 December 1904. When Frances was born, Anna told Frantiska that she needed to spend her time being a mother, so Frantiska quit work. Less than two years later a second daughter, Janna Brodilova (Jane Brodil), was born on 16 April 1906.¹⁹ Jane wrote of her early years:

When I was born, my parents . . . were at that time orthodox Catholics. They also let us children be baptized in the Catholic way. When I was baptized as a baby, I got the name: Johanna (Janna) Alvisia (Louise). I disliked these two names and I often reproachingly asked my parents why they didn't give me pretty names. This dislike to my first names have almost disappeared today. I think the name Jane doesn't sound so bad. . . . My parents weren't very pleased when I was born because it was a disappointment for them not to have a boy. Being their second child, they longed for a boy.²⁰

Despite their desire for a son, Frantisek and Frantiska loved their daughters very much and created a loving, happy home. Jane was very sensitive and would cry anytime she got into any sort of trouble, but her father had a way of stopping the tears with his sense of humor. She recalled:

When I was a child, I was very sensitive (sentimental) and every smallest rebuke made me cry. If I did something wrong, I cried before the prospective spanking or complaint, already half an hour before and then I missed the spanking. If I was spanked because of something, right before sleeping, I would cry into the pillow so heart broken that my Father, (who would be sitting behind the table usually writing music notes) looked at me with his loving look and jokingly said, "Oh tomorrow we'll have noodles." . . . When he started to laugh, the crying was over.²¹

One example of Frantiska's loving and selfless nature took place when the Brodil girls were young. When Kathy, one of Frantiska's sisters, passed away, Frantiska took in Kathy's daughter, Sophie Kopecka, who was just nine months old, and raised her as a daughter. Jane said:

I wasn't even two years old, but I vaguely remember the fuss and commotion which was made when Aunt Kathy brought little Lofku (Sophie) to us [before she died]. All three of us grew up together without knowing we were not natural sisters. When Sophie was six years old my Mother's unmarried sister, Aunt Anna, came to pick

her up. Since that time, she stayed with Aunt Anna, I remember that really like yesterday. How sad I was when Aunt Anna took her away because I loved her very much and I couldn't understand that she wasn't really ours, but Kopeckychs [meaning a loving niece]. I remember how touchingly little Sophia loved our father and mother.²²

Because Anna Vesela never had children of her own, she asked the Brodils if they could take care of Sophie. Though not having this other sister was sad, the Brodil family still saw Sophie on a regular basis.

Frantisek and Frantiska's courtship had begun with him playing the violin, and music continued to be important to their family, as they passed a love for it down to their children. During these years, they lived in Vienna. Frantisek bought a harmonium (similar to a pump organ), and both sisters learned to play it. They also learned to play the piano and violin, although generally, Frances was the designated violinist and Jane was the designated pianist. The harmonium that Frantisek purchased became a treasured possession of the family, and it traveled with them everywhere they moved. Years later when Jane immigrated to the United States, she brought with her the beloved instrument. Today (2017), Frantiska's descendants still cherish the harmonium as the musical part of the family and for the importance that it holds.²³

Another component of the Brodil family was their faith in God. They attended the Catholic church near their home and where their daughters were baptized as infants. However, the more Frantiska read the Bible, the more questions she had and the more she believed that the Catholic Church was not true. At times she even questioned if there was a God. Her questions were intensified by the responsibility she felt to her children to raise them according to the “true scriptures.”²⁴ Eventually, Frantiska quit attending mass. She explains, “The responsibility of my children deepened this feeling; but the Lord willed that I should not be kept in ignorance much longer.”²⁵

Finding the Gospel of Jesus Christ

One day a young man came to the Brodil door and offered Frantiska a pamphlet that she accepted, although with some reluctance. After reading the pamphlet she found that the message it contained was wholesome; she became curious, and reading the pamphlet began to kindle a flame of faith. When the missionary returned with a second tract, she read with deeper interest. The missionaries then came to the Brodil home repeatedly and Frantiska “soon

discovered a large difference between the work of God and that of man.”²⁶ Most especially she received answers to her questions including, “Is there a Prophet of God upon the earth? Missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were quenching [her] thirst for [the] truth,”²⁷ and she began to attend their meetings. Jane recalls that by the time she was in the second grade, she was already going to meetings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with her mother.²⁸ Frantiska was baptized a member of the Church by Brother K. H. Bennion on 29 September 1913 in the Danube River on the very eve of World War I.²⁹ But being baptized was not an easy proposition in 1913. Frantiska explained:

We had to arrange a night the officers would not catch us. So we settled the event on that of a stormy night, hoping that the officers would not be on control duty. The plan worked out wonderfully even though I was indeed cold. What a glorious event happened that day in the Danube River, that would change my life! My heart swelled with a feeling of satisfaction and at my confirmation. I felt myself filled with a new power.³⁰

Frantisek was not baptized with his wife.

Keeping the Gospel Light Burning during War

With the advent of World War I, immediately things changed: missionaries were suddenly called home, many of the LDS brethren went to war, and the government quickly forbid any meeting.³¹ Yet Frantiska and a small handful of Viennese sisters continued to hold Bible classes to keep “the gospel light” burning there while all the local brothers were at war and the missionaries were called home.³² It was an extremely difficult time for the Brodil family, as it was for most everyone living in Vienna. Food was scarce, and bread, potatoes, and a few vegetables were doled out to the family. There was never enough for a healthy meal. In addition, during World War I, money was practically worthless. Jane wrote:

I remember my mother going to pick up money from the bank which she had saved before the war. The prices of food increased rapidly. Soon the food wasn’t sold for money. We were nourishing our bodies with substitutes and we were waking up early in the morning (all of us and also our Father) so we could stand in a line for potatoes. When it was finally our turn, we were frozen and hungry. The food was already sold out and again there was nothing for us. We were standing in a line the whole night and afternoon with our mother so that we could buy a little bit of coal, as there wasn’t any oil or milk, nor eggs, nor flour, nor bread. They were rationing to us only in small amounts for “so called”: chlebenky (or little rolls). But anyway, even though I was in that scarcity, I was very happy. . . . Our Father, who was employed

at that time by the government, did not need to go to war, so that horror we didn't have to know personally.³³

Despite the ravages of war, Frantiska continued to uplift and strengthen those around her. Her daughter Frances remembered, “Though trials of war were around us, yet in our home was peace. My mother made home our refuge and our strength. She made our humble home a heaven on earth.”³⁴

Returning to Czechoslovakia

After the war, governments all over Europe were in a state of upheaval, and “Czechoslovakia was . . . created from the Austro-Hungarian provinces of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia in the Versailles Treaty,” signed on 28 June 1919.³⁵ As a result of the formation of a new Czech republic, those of Czech birth working for the Austrian government were fired and told they needed to become Austrian citizens before they would be rehired. When Frantisek was let go, the Brodil family decided to be loyal to their nationality and return to the land of their birth.³⁶ The new Czech government had promised to transport all natural-born Czechs back to Czechoslovakia and give them work; but several months passed before the promise materialized. In the interim, Frantisek became frantic trying to provide for his family, and his health deteriorated.³⁷ Finally, in 1919, the family was able to move to Prague (in the newly formed Czechoslovakia), but the stress from their hardships was too much for Frantisek Brodil, and he passed away at the age of fifty on 19 August 1919, leaving Frantiska without a husband and Jane and Frances without a father.³⁸ Although Frantisek did not accept the gospel in this life, “he was always friendly toward the Church.” After his death Frantiska had “great hopes that salvation [would] come to him on the other side.”³⁹

After her husband's death, Frantiska and her daughters' lives were difficult. She recalled, “The next few years were indeed trying. I was alone in Prague, with no friends and two children of school age.” Frantiska worked hard and was able to keep her daughters in school with the help of her youngest brother, Karel, who sent money from his home in Chile.⁴⁰ Jane wrote:

When I was 15, I finished my business school with honors. It wasn't exactly the fulfillment of my dreams because I was always convinced that I would study for a long time. I probably would have if my father hadn't died. I liked to study and I had always been among the first in my class in school. . . . But it was necessary to become independent as soon as possible. I needed to make life easier for my mother and help her in daily sorrows because she had only a small retirement money after dad died. If our Uncle Karel hadn't been be [*sic*] so kind . . . we hardly would have finished

our studies at that business school. So, when I was 15 years old, I entered my life as a Czech/German stenography secretary.

At the age of sixteen, I belonged to the “best powers” in the lawyer office where I was employed. In my spare time I visited evening courses of sewing, calligraphy, English and later French. These were happy but sometimes also very difficult times which I went through. While I was employed, there were times that were so hard that I couldn’t eat my lunch because of crying. I went through it all because there was a loving and caring, kind mother waiting for me at home whose only wish was to secure the lives of her daughters. We lived happily, all three of us, not from luxury and riches but from the great mutual love which made everything easier for us.⁴¹

During this trying period, the family had little contact with the Church, yet they continued to live by its teachings. Finally, in 1921, the Brodils were visited by Swiss-German Mission president Serge F. Ballif and Elder Alfred Niederhauser, a missionary from Vienna.⁴² During their visit both Frances and Jane were baptized on 3 June 1921 in the Vltava (Moldau) River, becoming the first two members to be baptized on Czech soil.⁴³ President Ballif and Elder Niederhauser promised they would soon send missionaries to Prague, but none ever came.⁴⁴

Praying for Missionaries

For years, Frantiska did everything in her power to get missionaries to her homeland: she wrote to the Swiss-German Mission and the German-Austrian Mission, pleading for missionaries, but to no avail; she continued to pray and write to mission presidents and leaders in the surrounding areas; and she persisted in paying her tithing to the branch president in Vienna every six months. Occasionally, missionaries would stop to visit the family while traveling from Dresden to Vienna, but still the Church failed to heed her pleas to send missionaries to Czechoslovakia.⁴⁵ Historian Kahlile Mehr explained the Church’s reluctance to send missionaries:

The Church did not act for the same reasons which limited its expansion elsewhere in Slavic Europe. The few missionaries were concentrated in the most fruitful fields: the British Isles, Western Europe, and Germany. Slavic languages were perceived as difficult to learn, and Church leaders may have generalized Hungary’s pre-war indifference to other countries in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, Czech authorities were no more welcoming than they had been thirty years earlier. A Czech consul in Hamburg informed Apostle John A. Widtsoe in the early 1920s that “no Mormons are going to take Czech girls away.”⁴⁶

Throughout ten years of disappointment and “despite such isolation, so thoroughly did the gospel permeate the Brodil home that . . . Frances [always insisted] she was raised in the Church.”⁴⁷

Then Frantiska became seriously ill, suffering from a severe liver disease.⁴⁸ A Brother Sheets was called from Vienna to administer to her, but the illness continued to progress. Eventually, Elder John Wunderlich came from Dresden to also give her a blessing. During the administration, he promised Frantiska that she would get well and prophesied: “There was yet a great work for her to accomplish upon this earth.”⁴⁹ Shortly after the priesthood blessing, she recovered.

Another glimmer of hope came in February 1928, when Thomas Biesinger arrived in Prague. Forty years earlier he had served as a missionary in Czechoslovakia, where he had been thrown in jail for preaching the gospel. In 1902, several years after returning home from his first mission to Czechoslovakia, Thomas Biesinger met his former mission president, Elder John Henry Smith of the Quorum of the Twelve, on a street in Salt Lake City. Out of the blue, Elder Smith asked if Biesinger would want to return to his mission in Europe. Biesinger responded that he would. Elder Smith then promised, “You shall have the privilege.”⁵⁰ It would be another twenty-six years before that promise was fulfilled.

During those many years, Elder Smith’s statement stayed with Thomas Biesinger. Eventually, Biesinger requested that he be considered for another mission. However, when his doctor recommended otherwise, the First Presidency suggested that there was plenty of good for Biesinger to do at home. Still the promise weighed upon his mind. Biesinger then spoke with President Charles W. Nibley, second counselor in the First Presidency, who was a friend, and told him “that I [Biesinger] still felt that God had a work for me to do.” President Nibley suggested Biesinger take the request personally to President Grant, but Biesinger declined, replying that President Grant was too busy to see him. President Nibley then told him to “come up to the office tomorrow morning at 9 o’clock.”⁵¹ Biesinger remembered:

I did as I was told and found Pres. Heber J. Grant, Pres. Chas. W. Nibley and Elder George Albert Smith of the Council of the Twelve waiting for me.

We had a very pleasant conversation and I stated my feelings to the brethren and explained to them, why I felt that there was still some work for me to do, in that nation, where formerly I had been trying to declare unto the people, who were in darkness, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Living God.

The brethren were impressed with what I had to say and so it came that I was called to go upon this my last mission.⁵²

At the age of eighty-three, Biesinger was finally able to return to Czechoslovakia. Upon arriving in Prague on 2 February 1928, he was given a royal welcome by the Brodil family.⁵³ Biesinger soon received permission from the Czech government to preach the gospel, which thrilled the Brodils, and “finding no opposition, he reported that the way was open.”⁵⁴ However, Elder Biesinger’s stay was short lived, when after just two and a half months, the aging Thomas Biesinger was released. After his departure from Czechoslovakia no other elders came to replace him. In despair Frantiska wrote, “That was our darkest hour, knowing as we did that missionaries were privileged to come, yet none came.”⁵⁵ She also wrote, “Oh, how bitter and disappointed I felt. I was deeply unhappy about his going. If I had not had such a strong testimony, I would have surely apostatized. I realized how great Satan’s efforts were and how he did not hesitate to use any means to prevent the coming of the missionaries.”⁵⁶

An entire year passed as Frantiska struggled with discouragement. Then she had an idea: “The thought came to me that I should personally write to the First Presidency of the Church. This thought continually stayed with me. An unseen power seemed to be pushing me to do it. It was my last try in this matter. I thought the Lord would surely do the rest.”⁵⁷ Frances recalls that her mother told her daughters at the time, “I’m going to write to the President of the Church, and then I’ll give up because Satan is after me.”⁵⁸ Frantiska wrote two letters: one to the First Presidency and one to Elder John Wunderlich asking him to translate the first into English.

Then suddenly the way opened. Mehr elaborated, “This bold move from the humble sister in Prague turned the key, and the door creaked open. The First Presidency instructed newly appointed European Mission President John A. Widtsoe to investigate.”⁵⁹ The Brodils began writing letters back and forth to President Widtsoe concerning conditions in the country. Arthur Gaeth, future Czech missionary, remembered, “Her letter arrived at an opportune time. The First Presidency would be getting to expand their missionary areas. President Grant had recently agreed to send missionaries to South America. They must have now considered the Slovak land of Czechoslovakia as a prime place for spreading the Gospel.”⁶⁰

Soon President Widtsoe informed Frantiska that missionaries would be sent the following summer. By May 1929 the Brodil family was visited

by Arthur Hasler, president of the Vienna District, who brought the joyful news that missionary Arthur Gaeth from Chicago, who was serving in the German-Austrian Mission, had been called to open the Czechoslovak Mission immediately.⁶¹

Mission Mother

Two days later Arthur Gaeth “arrived at Prague’s Wilson Station . . . alone in the early morning hours” on 8 June 1929. Within a half hour, Gaeth roused the Brodil women from sleep and announced that he was the first full-time Czech missionary. “Frantiska’s stubborn vigil since her baptism sixteen years earlier had been rewarded.”⁶² President Widtsoe arrived about a month later in early July along with five missionaries from the Swiss-German and German-Austrian Missions: Willis H. Hayward, Alvin Carlson, Joseph I. Hart, Charles Josie, and Wallace F. Toronto.⁶³

On 24 July 1929, the new missionaries “awoke to thunder and rain but . . . headed resolutely for Karlstejn [Karl-shtine], a six-hundred-year-old castle built by Charles IV. . . . As they clustered on a wooded knoll near the castle, the sun pierced the clouds as they sang “The Morning Breaks” and dedicated the land of Czechoslovakia for the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁶⁴ Arthur Gaeth, who was officially appointed as the first mission president of Czechoslovakia that day, remembered, “Sixteen souls gathered that day, under the direction of Elder John A. Widtsoe, of the Council of the Twelve Apostles . . . to dedicate the land of the Czechs and the Slovaks to the preaching of the Gospel. All of the 16 bore testimony to the goodness of the Lord and expressed the desire that this be one of a number of missions soon to be opened so that all the Slavic nations might be given an opportunity to hear the Gospel.”⁶⁵ This dedication “would be commemorated in an annual pilgrimage by members and missionaries for . . . the next twenty years.”⁶⁶ Frantiska wrote of her feelings on that day:

It was hard to believe our eyes. . . .

Few people can realize the joy we experienced, we had been praying years for this day. There are thousands of our countrymen who are waiting for the Gospel. It is our prayer that the Lord will help our brethren to learn the language so that they can impart the message to them. We thank the Lord from the bottom of our hearts for His bounteous blessings.⁶⁷

After the dedication, Frantiska continued to work tirelessly to do all she could for the missionaries. The mission home was very close to the Brodil

home, and Frantiska and her daughters helped manage it. As the missionaries began teaching, learning the language, writing tracts, publishing newspaper articles, and holding meetings, Frantiska and her daughters helped enthusiastically.⁶⁸ President Arthur Gaeth recalled Frantiska's influence on him:

There was nothing she would not do for a missionary.

In those first trying days when I was alone in Prague, she would visit places with me and show me about the town. Almost every day I would spend several hours in her company. I learned many interesting things concerning the country from her, for she was well-read and had a keen political sense. I began to feel the sweetness of her spirit and her great love for the Gospel. There was nothing which she would not do to see it reach some of her countrymen.⁶⁹

Missionaries grew to love and appreciate Frantiska and gave her the name of "Mamousek," meaning, "Our Mission Mother."⁷⁰ Elder Joseph Toronto, a missionary serving in the Czechoslovak Mission, wrote about "Mamousek" in his mission journal on 29 November 1931 as follows: "I would like to go on and further touch your heart strings and tell you of the deeds of this select woman, who fasted and prayed and exerted untiringly every possible effort to have missionaries sent to her countrymen in this country of Czechoslovakia, where we are now working. If any Czech is saved by the gospel of Christ from condemnation, it will be through the effort of our [S]ister Brodilova. Dear family, she is like a mother to me."⁷¹

This term of endearment for Frantiska was significant in two ways. Not only did she become a motherly influence in the missionaries' lives, but she was also "the woman, who with her two daughters, was instrumental in the organization of the mission"; the mother of the Czechoslovak Mission.⁷² She cared for the missionaries like a mother would. Elder Charles D. Miller wrote of a dinner he had in the Brodil home: "It was the best meal since leaving home. Part of them ate on the bed; we ate on the wash stand. They only have one little room, the two beds and stove take most of the room. There were seven there for dinner. . . . Nevertheless, they treated us royal and the food tasted mighty good to me."⁷³

Despite having little, Frantiska and her daughters were willing to give whatever they could. While the Church was being established in Czechoslovakia, members met in the tiny Brodil home every Sunday morning to hold a short meeting and partake of the sacrament. The three Brodil women each taught Sunday School and gave Czech lessons to the missionaries. Frances and Jane also helped translate missionary literature, including the

Book of Mormon. Granddaughter Ruth McOmber Pratt stated, “The two sisters became professional translators, and worked long hours translating the Book of Mormon from German into Czech. That translation is still used today [2017], after an attempt to update it proved less accurate.”⁷⁴ Frances explains how the first translation came about:

[A] translation was done by a professional translator. President Gaeth . . . visited us one day and asked Jane and me to correct the translation. . . . We accepted our new calling with gratitude. . . . We were surprised at how many mistakes were made by mistranslating the correct meaning into words. Finally, the Czech Book of Mormon was printed and Jane and I had the great pleasure of receiving the first Books of Mormon in the Czech language.⁷⁵

Although Frances and Jane did much of the correction work, their mother was always there to help.⁷⁶ Frantiska wanted her fellow compatriots to have every opportunity to receive the gospel—including the ability to read the scriptures in their own language, a blessing that had completely changed her life. Frances stated, “My mother’s greatest wish and ambition was to see the Book of Mormon translated into the Czech language.”⁷⁷ That ambition was realized through the efforts of her two daughters.

In 1930, Frantiska returned to the communities where her ancestors had lived and gathered hundreds of names for temple work. She never stopped giving and spreading the gospel in any way she could. Arthur Gaeth said, “Our ‘Mamousek’ was a pioneer. She spent much of her life pioneering for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁷⁸

In April 1931, Frantiska was called to be the first Relief Society president in Prague.⁷⁹ However, just six months later, in November, Frantiska again became seriously ill. Remnants of her previous struggle with liver disease returned, and breast cancer suddenly overtook her. Jane Brodil wrote of her mother, “It seemed as though Heavenly Father wanted to use her as an instrument in his work. . . . She was able to dedicate her work which was connected with building the Czechoslovakian mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.” Jane explained that when the Czechoslovak Mission was stable, then her mother passed away. She described, “When the work was on the top, she passed away after a short sickness. It was not even fourteen days long so that she could, in her next life continue in work which was so special to her: sharing the Gospel.”⁸⁰ Frantiska Vesela Brodilova died on 26 November 1931. At her funeral President Gaeth eulogized, “Sister Brodil has departed from our midst, but her beautiful, Christ-like spirit will linger

among us. Only those who have a picture of the development of the work in this mission will be able to comprehend the loss we have suffered. She was a mother, counselor and an example to us. We mourn her loss, but in the assurance that there is One who governs all and who guides our work, our ‘Mamousek’ has gone to her reward.”⁸¹

Ruth McOmber Pratt wrote that “President Gaeth’s words proved to be prophetic. Frantiska’s motherly influence continued long after her death” through the work of her daughters.⁸² During World War II, Czechoslovakia came under communist control, and the mission was closed. In 1968, William South and his wife, Jane Brodil South, were asked to sustain the faith of the Czech members. In 1977, Calvin McOmber and his wife, Frances Brodil McOmber, were asked to assume the same responsibility. Ruth McOmber Pratt wrote, “They continued in this post until 1980, when President McOmber died. It took another decade before the Church received official recognition in Czechoslovakia again. But the faith and endurance so well exemplified by Frantiska Brodilova sustained the Saints and continues as a legacy for generations to come.”⁸³

The pioneer legacy that Frantiska Brodilova left behind should be remembered. Her faithful efforts blessed and uplifted many over the course of her lifetime. The hardships of her early childhood and the years of war and isolation from the Church did not deter her resolute faith. She was a wonderful mother and friend to her two daughters and to all in her association. Her diligent labors, along with those of her two daughters, aided in the translation of the Book of Mormon into the Czech language. Most significantly, her constant prayers and courage resulted in the establishment of a mission and the spreading of the gospel to countless Latter-day Saints. Frantiska Vesela Brodilova’s contributions continued to succor the Czech Saints for many years. She was a pioneer woman that prayed the Czechoslovak Mission into existence, nourished that mission during its formative years, and eternally blessed an entire nation. **RE**

Notes

1. Brodil is the American treatment of the name Brodilova. In Czech, women’s surnames are formed by the suffix *-ova*.

2. Arthur Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” *Millennial Star* 94, no. 13 (31 March 1932): 193.

3. Frank South, oral history interview by Tyler Smith, 25 March 2016, Provo, UT, transcription in author’s possession.

4. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 194.
5. Frank South, interview.
6. Frank South, interview.
7. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 194.
8. Ruth McOmber Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova,” http://www.johnpratt.com/gen/f.f_vesela.html.
9. Frank South, interview.
10. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 194.
11. Frank South, interview; Ruth McOmber Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova.”
12. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 194.
13. Ruth Pratt, “The Worth of Souls,” unpublished manuscript, transcription in author’s possession, 1.
14. Frances Brodil McOmber, “Memories,” unpublished letter, transcription in author’s possession, 2.
15. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 195.
16. McOmber, “Memories,” 2–3.
17. Frank South, interview; Ruth McOmber Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova.”
18. Ruth McOmber Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova”; Frank South, interview.
19. Frank South, interview; Jane Brodil South, “History of Jane Brodil South,” in author’s possession.
20. Jane Brodil South, “History of Jane Brodil South.”
21. Jane Brodil South, “History of Jane Brodil South.”
22. Jane Brodil South, “History of Jane Brodil South.”
23. Frank South, interview.
24. McOmber, “Memories,” 2.
25. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 195.
26. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 195.
27. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 195.
28. Jane Brodil South, “History of Jane Brodil South.”
29. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 195; McOmber, “Memories,” 3.
30. Ruth McOmber Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova.”
31. Ruth McOmber Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova.”
32. “Mother of Prague Mission Is Dead,” *Deseret News*, 13 February 1932, 2.
33. Jane Brodil South, “History of Jane Brodil South.”
34. Ruth McOmber Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova.”
35. Kahlile Mehr, “Enduring Believers: Czechoslovakia and the LDS Church, 1884–1990,” *Journal of Mormon History* 18, no. 2 (1992): 112.
36. Frank South, interview.
37. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 195.
38. Ruth McOmber Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova.”
39. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 195–96.
40. Ruth McOmber Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova.”
41. Jane Brodil South, “History of Jane Brodil South.”
42. “Frederick V. Niederhausern,” Early Mormon Missionaries accessed 21 November 2016, <https://history.lds.org/missionary/individual/frederick-v-niederhausern-1895?lang=eng>; Kahlile Mehr, “Enduring Believers,” 114; Ruth Pratt, “The Worth of Souls,” 1.

43. Kahlile Mehr, "Enduring Believers," 114. Thomas Biesinger baptized an Antonin Just when he was on his first mission in Prague. Just's fate is unrecorded in Church records. Frantiska was unaware of Just's baptism, which is why she stated that her daughters were the first two baptized on Czech soil.
44. Ruth McOmber Pratt, "Frantiska Vesela Brodilova."
45. Gaeth, "Praying a Mission into Existence," 196; Ruth McOmber Pratt, "Frantiska Vesela Brodilova."
46. Joseph Y. Toronto, interview by Kahlile Mehr, Provo, UT, 19 February 1990. Notes in author's possession as cited in Kahlile Mehr, "Enduring Believers," 114.
47. Ruth McOmber Pratt and Ann South Niendorf, "Her Mission Was Czechoslovakia," *Ensign*, August 1994, 53.
48. Ruth McOmber Pratt, "Frantiska Vesela Brodilova."
49. Gaeth, "Praying a Mission into Existence," 196; Ruth Pratt, "The Worth of Souls," 1.
50. Thomas Biesinger, quoted in Kahlile Mehr, "Enduring Believers," 113.
51. Thomas Biesinger, "Experiences of Missionary Life," 1929, Thomas Biesinger Papers, MS 424, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
52. Biesinger, "Experiences of Missionary Life."
53. Biesinger, "Experiences of Missionary Life."
54. Kahlile Mehr, "Czech Saints: A Brighter Day," *Liabona*, September 1997.
55. Gaeth, "Praying a Mission into Existence," 196.
56. Jane Brodil South and Blanch South Fox, "Praying A Mission Into Existence," *The Master's Touch*, comp. Dorothy South Hackworth (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1961), 275-77.
57. Ruth McOmber Pratt, "Frantiska Vesela Brodilova."
58. Mehr, "Enduring Believers," 115; McOmber, "Memories," 4.
59. Mehr, "Enduring Believers," 115.
60. Arthur Gaeth, oral history interview by Ronald G. Watts, 1976, OH 793, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
61. Gaeth, "Praying a Mission into Existence," 196-97.
62. Kahlile Mehr, "Enduring Believers," 115-16.
63. Arthur Gaeth, "Recalling How the Way Was Cleared for Formal Opening of Czech Mission," *Deseret News*, 29 February 1936, 8.
64. Mehr, "Enduring Believers," 117.
65. Arthur Gaeth, "What a Day to Open a Mission! But the Sun Broke through the Clouds," *Deseret News*, 7 March 1936, 8.
66. Mehr, "Enduring Believers," 117.
67. Gaeth, "Praying a Mission into Existence," 197.
68. Ruth McOmber Pratt, "Frantiska Vesela Brodilova"; Mehr, "Enduring Believers," 119.
69. Gaeth, "Praying a Mission into Existence," 193.
70. Ruth McOmber Pratt, "Frantiska Vesela Brodilova."
71. Joseph Y. Toronto, mission journal, quoted in Ruth McOmber Pratt, "Frantiska Vesela Brodilova."
72. "Mother of Prague Mission Is Dead," 2.
73. Charles D. Miller, journal, 19 October 1930, Charles D. Miller Journals, MS 12120, vol. 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
74. Ruth McOmber Pratt, "Frances Brodil McOmber," http://johnpratt.com/gen/7.f_brodil.html.

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75. Frances Brodil McOmer, quoted in Jared Pratt, “First Czech Book of Mormon Arthur Gaeth Sign,” *Ancestry*, <http://mv.ancestry.co.uk/viewer/ba80cb69-72ae-4724-8f35-2190cec2c142/86991047/44550809503>.
76. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 194.
77. McOmer, quoted in Jared Pratt, “First Czech Book of Mormon Arthur Gaeth Sign”; Frank South, interview.
78. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 194.
79. Mehr, “Enduring Believers,” 122; Ruth McOmer Pratt, “Frances Brodil McOmer.”
80. Jane Brodil South, “History of Jane Brodil South.”
81. Gaeth, “Praying a Mission into Existence,” 197.
82. Ruth McOmer Pratt and Ann South Niendorf, “Czechoslovakia Was Her Mission,” *Liabona*, September 1995.
83. Ruth McOmer Pratt and Niendorf, “Czechoslovakia Was Her Mission.”