

# WASHED CLEAN



*By President  
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**Acting President  
of the Quorum  
of the  
Twelve Apostles**

**M**ore than fifty years ago, during World War II, our bomber crew was ordered to the West Coast. We were transported on a freight train. There were no dining cars. Instead, camp kitchens were set up in boxcars with dirt floors.

The baggage car got sidetracked, so we had no change of clothing during the six-day trip. It was very hot crossing Texas and Arizona. Smoke and cinders from the engine made it very uncomfortable. There was no way to wash our uniforms or bathe. We rolled into Los Angeles one morning, a grubby-looking outfit.

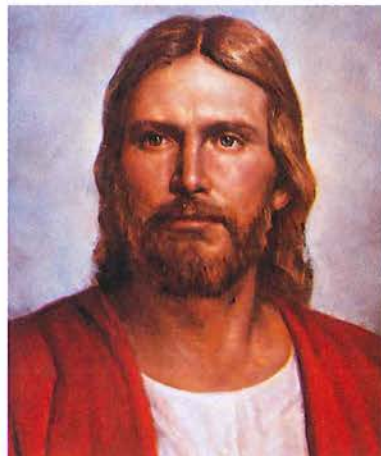
We thought first of food. The ten of us in our crew pooled our money and headed for the best restaurant we could find. It was crowded, so we joined a long line waiting to be seated. I was first, just behind a stately, well-dressed woman. She turned and looked me over from head to toe. There I stood in that sweaty, dirty, sooty, wrinkled uniform. She said in a tone of disgust, "My, what untidy men!" All eyes turned to us. I felt dirty, uncomfortable, and ashamed.

Later, when I began a serious study of the scriptures, I noticed references to being spiritually unclean. One verse says, "Ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell" (Mormon 9:4). I could understand that. I remembered how I felt that day in Los Angeles.

As part of the great plan of happiness, we are on earth to be tested, and we all sin. Fortunately the Savior made it possible for us to be clean again. As the Apostle John taught, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The ordinance of baptism washes our sins away if we repent. Some wonder if they were baptized too soon. If only they could be baptized now and have a clean start. But that is not necessary! Through the ordinance of the sacrament you renew the covenants made at baptism.

Can you imagine how I felt when I finally saw that if I followed whatever conditions the Redeemer had set, I need never endure the agony of being spiritually



*The blood of  
Jesus Christ  
his Son  
cleanseth us  
from all sin  
(1 John 1:7).*

unclean? Imagine the comforting, liberating, exalting feeling that will come to you when you see the reality of the Atonement.

I give you my testimony that the Atonement of Christ can bless your life. I once tried to express in writing what it means to me:

If we could only understand  
All we have heard and seen,  
We'd know there is no greater gift  
Than those two words—"Washed clean!"

**(Adapted from an April 1997 conference address.  
See *Ensign*, May 1997, pages 9–11.)**

