

All Clean

BY DARLENE YOUNG
(Based on a true story)

With hands now pledged to do thy work, we take the sacrament (Hymns, no. 169).

James carefully straightened his tie as he rode to the stake center. Today was his little sister Angie's baptism, and he knew he needed to look as nice as he could. He looked over at Angie. She was sitting very quietly, looking out the window. He wondered if she was scared or excited.

James remembered his own baptism day. He had been so excited to finally step into the font. He remembered how warm the water felt, and especially how warm he felt inside. He was happy for Angie.

But he was also a little bit jealous.

Wouldn't it be nice if people could be baptized more than once? What if he could ask his father to let him put on some white clothes too, go down into the water, and be washed clean?

James thought about the promises he had made when he was baptized. He knew that he hadn't been as good as he had planned to be. Sometimes he was mean to Angie. He had told a few lies. Last week he even took his friend's Frisbee without asking and hadn't returned it yet.

James began to feel sad. If only he could get baptized again so that he could start over! He would do better this time; he knew it.

At the stake center, James sat next to his mother and watched his father help Angie into the water. She looked happy. James remembered that feeling. Maybe if he told his father about the things he had done wrong, he could get baptized again. But he didn't dare ask.

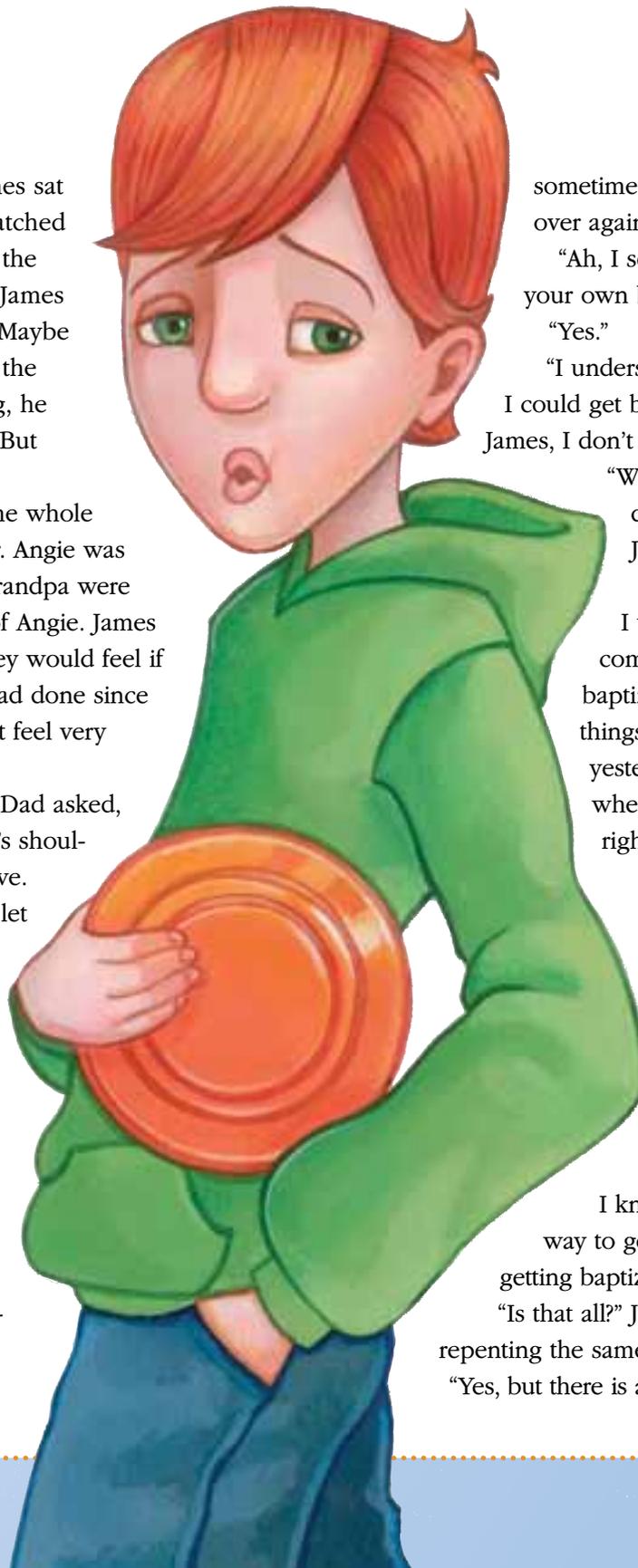
After Angie's baptism, the whole family had dinner together. Angie was beaming. Grandma and Grandpa were there too, looking proud of Angie. James thought about how sad they would feel if they knew the things he had done since his own baptism. He didn't feel very hungry.

"What's wrong, James?" Dad asked, putting his hand on James's shoulder. His face was full of love. Would he understand and let James get baptized again? Or would he be disappointed in his son?

James leaned over so no one else could hear him. "Dad, can I get baptized again?"

Dad looked closely at James. "Well, that's not exactly how things work, James. Is something bothering you?"

"Well, it's just that



sometimes I want a chance to start over again."

"Ah, I see. Are you remembering your own baptism day?"

"Yes."

"I understand that. Sometimes I wish I could get baptized again. But you see, James, I don't have to."

"Why? Because you haven't done anything wrong?" James asked.

Dad smiled. "Like you, I wanted to keep all the commandments when I was baptized. But I have done many things wrong since then. Just yesterday I lost my patience when you didn't do your chores right away, remember?"

"Yes."

"I really wanted to erase my mistake as if it had never happened."

"So you wanted to get baptized again?" James asked.

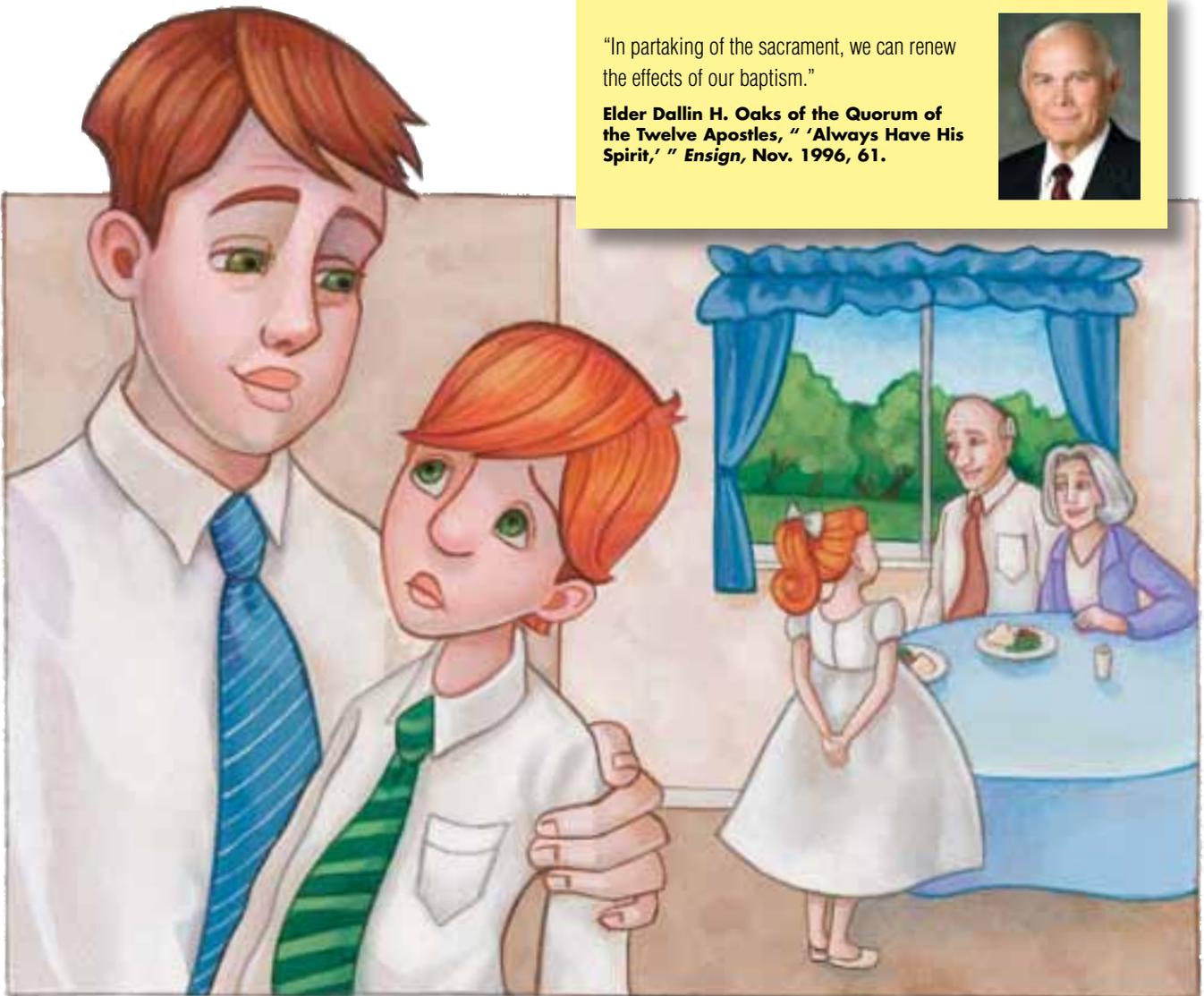
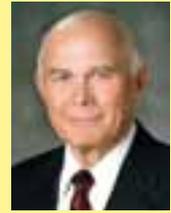
"Well, I did want to be clean again," Dad said. "But I knew that there was another way to get clean again besides getting baptized. I could repent."

"Is that all?" James asked. "I mean, is repenting the same as getting baptized again?"

"Yes, but there is another part too. Being

"In partaking of the sacrament, we can renew the effects of our baptism."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, " 'Always Have His Spirit,' " *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 61.



baptized when you're eight is something that you do to show obedience and make a covenant to keep the commandments. After that, when you sin, you need to repent and show you really mean to do better."

James smiled. "You mean by taking the sacrament?"

Dad nodded. "When you take the sacrament you are showing Jesus that you have repented of the things you did wrong that week. And then, as you eat the bread and drink the water, you become clean, and you are ready to start over."

James remembered the words of the sacrament prayer. Each week he promised to take Jesus Christ's name upon him—just like when he was baptized. "So

I am clean if I repent and then take the sacrament?" he asked.

"That's exactly right," Dad said.

"Wow." James was quiet for a minute. Tomorrow was Sunday. He could take the sacrament then! But he had some work to do first. He wondered if Mom would let him take the Frisbee over to his friend Mark's house after they got home.

"Dad?"

"Yes, Son?"

"I'm sorry for not doing my chores yesterday. Will you forgive me?"

Dad smiled and hugged James. "Of course I will." ●