

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

The Best Is Yet to Come

Elder Michael John U. Teh

Delivered during the Philippines Area Broadcast - 14 January 2012

Most of us are still enjoying the marvelous experience we had in celebrating our Jubilee last year. It was truly a grand experience. As we reviewed the phenomenal membership growth of the Church in this land, we learned that ours was the fastest one experienced by any area during its first 50 years anywhere in the Church. We are now 659,000 strong.

It is now time to leave the first 50 years behind and set our course for the next 50. Grand as it was, I would like to repeat what I said in my remarks during the area conference more than eight months ago, “We

have not seen anything yet and the best is yet to come.” What we have seen is a pattern for things yet to come.

Most of you are familiar with the Filipino saying: “Ningas-cogon”. As you know, Cogon is a tall grass that burns easily when dry. When exposed to open flame, it quickly catches fire. It burns intensely but is consumed in a matter of seconds. After that, the fire is extinguished and



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all that is left is ash. That is why this saying has a negative connotation. It is often applied to someone who gets very excited about a project or undertaking at the start but often does not see it through to the end. Well, that attitude will never sit well with the Lord’s admonition for us to endure to the end. According to President

Monson, the Lord has always called for “finishers” and not “starters.”

The Jubilee year celebration was intended to be more lasting than the burning of cogon grass.



Illustration by Emerson Abraham

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In fact, we had hoped that it will be a catalyst for more and better things to come. Now that we have seen what we are capable of achieving together, it should propel us into the future. It is our intention to share with you a “better way” of facing that future.

Tonight we would like to share our vision as an Area Presidency as we all work together to establish the Church. In addition to your eyes and ears, we ask that you open your minds and your hearts. We are confident that the Holy Ghost will speak to us tonight as individuals and as councils.

CONCLUDING MESSAGE

When our children were growing up, we measured their height against one of the door posts in our home. Each line was labeled with a date and their name. These lines represented their growth rings. They were always excited to know how much they have

grown so the door post would be filled with lines. As parents, I guess we were also excited to know if their growth is equal to the food they were eating. We wanted our money’s worth.

Similarly, when we set out to change our course to accomplish better results, we need to sit down, set goals, and make a plan. As we then move forward, we periodically review the direction we’re going and measure the improvement we are making. Doing so will allow us to make necessary course adjustments.

Another important reason for measuring and reporting is summarized clearly by President Monson: “When performance is measured, performance improves. When performance is measured and reported, the rate of improvement accelerates.”

We intend to follow President Monson’s counsel as we embark on this journey into the next 50 years. As Elder Nielson

said, we believe that it will increase our improvement exponentially. We ask that you report your progress each quarter. This is important so that as an Area Presidency, we can see how we are doing as one body. The real benefit, however, will be realized in your own presidencies, bishoprics, and councils. As you monitor progress you will receive revelation regarding the “next steps.” We believe that measuring and reporting are principles of righteousness. If we are diligent in this exercise, we will be entitled to receive help from heaven.

Imagine a high jumper who wants to do the very best he can. His goal is to be able to clear the highest bar that he is capable of reaching. It would be very difficult for him to know if there is no actual tangible bar to be cleared. He cannot measure his progress, neither can he improve his performance.

As leaders, the Lord has set us

up as watchmen upon a tower. We read in Isaiah 21:6, "For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth." We need to lead the way, warn others and take them with us or God will hold us accountable.

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

"When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

"Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

"Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

"Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul" (Ezekiel 3:17-21).

In a recent meeting, after the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminded the Seventies that they are to "build up the Church",

our senior president, Elder Ronald Rasband, suggested that we consider the following penetrating questions: "If not now, when? If not us, who?" We would like to pass on that similar challenge to you tonight as you consider what needs to be done. Brothers and sisters we need to build up the Church, "If not now, when? If not us, who?"

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave a similar charge to a group

those who grow up in the Church remain active and faithful, being endowed in the temple at maturity, with young men being ordained at appropriate ages and serving missions."

"Real growth means that those who are converts to the Church are retained, maturing spiritually through participation in the saving ordinances of the gospel and keeping the associated covenants culminating in the House of the Lord."

"Real growth means retaining



of stake and district presidencies as he met with them in San Fernando, La Union three months ago. He said: "Brethren, take control of the kingdom."

The Brethren further taught: "For the Church to be built up we must have real growth." Allow me to share with you some of the definitions of REAL growth that they gave:

"Real growth means that

the spiritual change of heart Alma challenged his people to retain: 'And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?'" (Alma 5:26)

"Real growth means to move toward fulfilling the vision and challenge that 'Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her

borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments” (D&C 82:14).

In summary, real growth means that we not only ENLARGE the borders of Zion, we also need to STRENGTHEN her stakes.

When Elder Nielson and Elder Ardern arrived in the Philippines, they always mentioned how grateful they were to have someone like me in the Area Presidency who is a local and who knows the people.

As the days passed however, the Lord taught me very important lessons. (1) What appears to be my strength (as a local) can also become my greatest weakness if I am

not careful. (2) My counselors come in with new eyes and will likely see things “as they really are” and not “as they appear to be.” (3) There is wisdom in the Brethren moving the Seventies around the world.

I am used to doing things as I have seen them done over the last few years. It is easier to keep everything the way they are instead of changing. The temptation to stay inside my comfort zone is great. But, if I give in, I will be insensitive to the Spirit and resistant to change under the premise that I know these people better than my counselors do.

The reality is – If we want to get better results, we need to change the way some things are done. Benjamin Franklin defined insanity as “doing the same thing over and over and

expecting different results.”

And so tonight we end where we began: “We have not seen anything yet and the best is yet to come.” But the Spirit whispers that I add an appendage to that statement: “But the BEST will not come unless we anticipate it, prepare for it, and make it happen by changing the way some things are done.”

Brothers and sisters we do love you and have great respect for you. Thank you for who you are and what you are willing to do to help establish the Church. We will do this together. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

TRYING TO BE LIKE JESUS



“My favorite part of family home evening is when we sing Primary songs and hymns. I feel close to Heavenly Father when we sing.”

Mae Kyla C., 8 years old
Legazpi Philippines Stake



“I love to pray in family home evening. My sister and I take turns to pray. I pray to Heavenly Father that we will always have family home evening.”

Maryleigh N., 8 years old
Legazpi Stake



“I love the games we play during family home evening. We play after Mama or Papa teaches the lesson. We always have fun at family home evening.”

Jan Zipporah N., 6 years old
Legazpi Stake

LOCAL LDS VOICES

FHE: Small Size, Fits All Family Home Evening for Families with Little Ones

By Ma. Teresa C. Pangilinan

Angelo, my 10-year-old son, has loved family home evening since he was small. I often arrived home on a weekly basis so we would be doing our family home evening on weekends. It's been a challenge for me and my husband making it enjoyable and spiritually effective for our child.

We, in our family, often ask Angelo how he wants to do our FHE each coming week. We sometimes invite my parents-in-law and other relatives who also have little children.

But I am wondering what other parents do, especially those who have more than one child (ages 0 to 11).

In 1915, President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency began a Church-wide effort to strengthen the family. They called on parents in the

Vicente family



Escalona family



Church to gather their children once each week for a "Home Evening." Families were to take time to pray and sing together, read scriptures, teach the gospel to one another and participate in other activities. ■

HERE ARE SOME PERSONAL PRACTICES OF PARENTS WHICH COULD BE OF HELP TO YOU AND ME:

"We use lessons that fit the needs of our children and we level our presentation to their ages. At times also, we use scripture stories where they are being captivated by the pictures therein."

Raymond R. Vicente – with 5 children
Las Piñas Philippines Stake

"Daddy would play action songs on the piano to gather the children. Lesson time is a little challenging. Since they love to sing, we teach principles with singing from the children's songbook. Most of the time, we just sing all throughout our family home evening."

S. Venus Villasis – mother of 3 girls
Antipolo Philippines Stake

"We let our children prepare the program during our family home evening so that they may feel that they have important roles in the activity. By doing this, we have observed that they're always excited and enjoy having a regular FHE."

Gil Escalona – with 4 children
Balanga Philippines Stake

As we diligently participate in this program and make it a part of our lives we are promised that it will not only help protect our families against the evils of our time but it will also bring our families closer. ■

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT FAMILY HOME EVENING?

Two things I love about family home evening is the new set of knowledge I learn and the way it strengthens my testimony. I stay in a dormitory near my school from Monday until Saturday afternoons and because of that, I am not able to be with my family for Monday night home evenings. But even if I am away from home six days a week because of school, I always make an effort to attend family home evenings at the Manila Philippines Institute of Religion with my wonderful friends there. They are my family in Manila. Through the lessons from home evening, I acquire knowledge and I am enlightened. My testimony is also strengthened. I just love how we hold family home evening because other than being empowered spiritually, I get a bonus by meeting and knowing other single adults and experience bonding with them. All these things make me look forward to this activity even if I am away from home. ■

Jeramie Saguinsin
Malolos Philippines Stake

I have often read from the *Family Guidebook* that “everyone, regardless of circumstances will be blessed by holding family home evening.” I am the only member of the Church in the family and I live

away from home because of my studies. How grateful I am that we have a single members’ home evening in our ward, which I diligently attend. We hold it in the chapel once a week, just like a regular family home evening, and many young single adults (YSA) attend the activity. There are also times when the full-time missionaries come and bring investigators with them. The bishopric often joins us and they sometimes bring along their families. I have gained a lot spending Tuesday evenings with the YSA’s.

Aside from Sunday meetings and Institute classes, the single members’ home evening is something I look forward to every week because through it I am spiritually strengthened. I now have a lot of church friends with whom I share the same eternal goals. I have learned to love the single members more and have developed great respect for them. More importantly, I can always feel the love and care of our Heavenly

Father every time a member of the bishopric gives his closing remarks. Indeed, despite my circumstances, I am enjoying the blessings of holding family home evening. ■

Kimber Bulaitan
Manila Philippines Stake



Family Home

By Minnie Advincula

A typical family home evening would have all the four Coronel children doing a dance routine and singing their school hymn, much to the laughter of parents Dindo and Winnie. There would be refreshment and a lesson—everything pretty much by the book. But these days, things are no longer typical for the Coronel family of Las Piñas 1st Ward.

Three of the children have entered college, while the youngest will graduate from high school this summer. Family home evening is no more simply gathering the children of three boys and one girl and telling them to sing or dance like when they were young. Like many other families, their biggest challenge has become how to find the time to hold family home evening.

Things began to change when the children started high school. There were clubs and rehearsals that brought them home later than usual. In college, it was even worse. The eldest child, Arion Joseph Dallin, now 22, was studying Conservatory Music at the University of Sto. Tomas before he served his mission in 2009. Dallin would often have rehearsals with the UST Symphony Orchestra until midnight.

Instead of waiting for an opportunity to hold family home evening, the Coronels looked for that opportunity. Winnie said they decided to haul the rest of the children to Dallin’s practices, an entirely

Evening in a Week

new experience for the family but which afforded them the chance to still be together.

As more changes came to the children's schedules, Dindo and Winnie made more adjustments to their family home evening. For example, Winnie explained, they can hold what she calls as "home evening in a week."

"What we do is to divide our time. We can hold the lesson and family council on a Sunday but serve the refreshment on Monday and then the family participation (where the children perform or share their talent) on another day," she says. The number of days they hold a staggered family home evening depends on the family schedule but they make sure that they finish everything before the next Sunday comes. It doesn't even have to be at night.

It sounds more difficult than holding it in just one night. "Not really," Winnie counters,

"there are really times when we could not hold it on certain days or weeks when the schedule is tight. Therefore, we have to be creative." Holding family home evening in just one night takes them an average of two-and-a-half hours. If they divide the time to a few days more, it becomes less stressful.

Dindo, who runs his own business, and Winnie, who works as a teacher, also serve as stake Young Men and Young Women presidents. They are understandably always busy but they are not about to shortchange their children on holding family home evening, hence their decision to constantly adjust their family home evening without taking out the essential elements that would spell its success. "It should always be a treat," they say, otherwise it becomes just another day and might lose its attraction to children. Food can be a treat

but so can other features of the activity like the games and the talent participation. The key, as far as Dindo and Winnie are concerned, is to prepare, make the sacrifice and adjust. "And then you get something beautiful in return," Winnie says, which is the way the children always look forward to it and the strengthened relationship in the family.

Renz Marion, 16, the youngest child, is the most eager to share his talent. He says he too prepares well for the family home evening by making sure that he finishes all his school works early. Dallin and Wildon Siegfried, 18, both say they never get bored with family home evening because it always feels like they were hanging out with their friends. Patricia Bernice, 20, is away from home as she is studying at Brigham Young University in Hawaii.

Dindo jokes that the children have grown old enough to want to preside over family home evening themselves. They now give the lesson and are in charge of almost everything. "They should have stewardship and responsibility," he says.

If there's anything that remained the same in their family home evening throughout the years, it is that they never run out of things to do. "It has really strengthened us; we have our challenges but because we have open lines of communication, we are able to resolve things," Winnie says. ■



Coronel family

2012 Philippines Area Goals



Strengthen Families

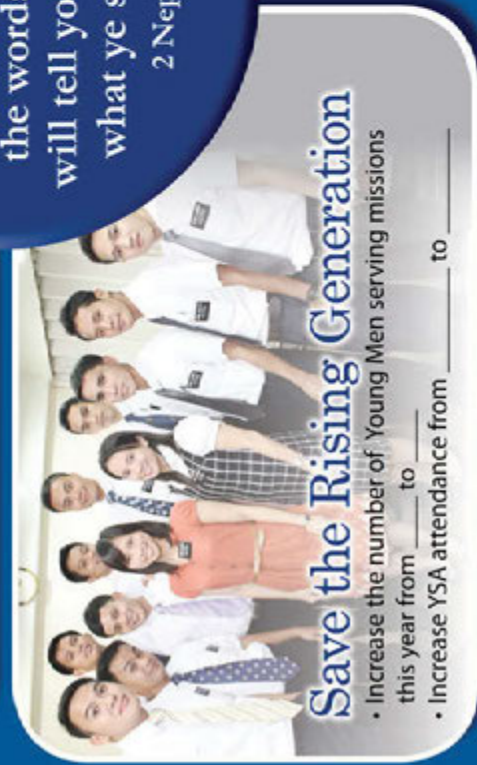
- Every family has daily prayer, scripture study, and weekly family home evening.
- Each member has his/her own scriptures.
- Increase number of temple recommend holders from _____ to _____

FEAST' upon the WORDS of CHRIST,
for behold,
the words of Christ
will tell you all things
what ye should do.
2 Nephi 32:3



Establish the Church

- Increase the number of active Melchizedek Priesthood Holders from _____ to _____
- Increase Sacrament Meeting attendance from _____ to _____



Save the Rising Generation

- Increase the number of Young Men serving missions this year from _____ to _____
- Increase YSA attendance from _____ to _____



Rescue the One

- Each member rescues someone this year.
- Every ward council prepares and maintains 15 names for activation for members and missionaries to teach.