

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Marriage Is Ordained of God

PHOTO BY NOEL MAGLAQUE

Shortly after a Saturday Leadership Training, I sat around a dining table with two recently returned missionaries and a currently serving mission president. I began to question the first young man about his plans, as any leader should. He proceeded to tell me about his plans to teach at the Missionary Training Center, his desire to finish his studies, find work, and other things he wanted to do. I was not getting the answer I was looking for, so I kept prodding by saying, "Okay, and then...what else?" Finally, he got my cue and with a sheepish smile said: "And get married." I replied: "Great! I was wondering when you would say that."

I then proceeded to tell him that he had his priorities in the wrong order. Instead of prioritizing all the other things and thinking, "Okay now, let's see if we can fit marriage in there somewhere," he should have said, "I will get married and then fit all the other things I want to accomplish around it." The young man nodded his head. Hopefully, it was an indication that he understood what I taught. Deep in my

heart though, I was praying that the nod signified more than just understanding but a desire to do.

I then turned to the other young man who just returned during the past month and asked him the same question. To my surprise, he answered exactly the same way as the first returned missionary did! I looked him straight in the eye and said: "Brother, didn't you listen to what I just taught?" Suddenly, and as if a light bulb had been turned on, he smiled and said, "Oh that's right—marriage." I felt impressed to repeat the same lesson again. Finally, I turned to the mission president and said, "President, please continue to teach missionaries who are returning home that their next and most important responsibility is to get married."

I have thought much about that encounter. It made me realize that as parents and leaders, we need to do a lot of teaching about the eternal significance of marriage. It also helped me to understand that there is a growing tendency to postpone or delay marriage until after careers and other worldly pursuits are



Elder Michael John U. Teh
Philippines Area Presidency

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achieved. I have also learned in my travels all over the country that because of false traditions, parents sometimes stand in the way of their children's desire to get married. Some even place undue financial demands upon them, causing them to delay marriage significantly.

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared: "Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children."¹ If this statement is properly understood, parents and leaders will be more diligent in helping young single adults achieve eternal marriage. Young single adults will approach marriage with a greater sense of urgency.

I would like to share my thoughts on some of the most common reasons why young single adults are postponing or delaying marriage in the hope that it will help them move forward with faith and trust the Lord more.

LACK OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

To parents and young single adults I say—exercise faith. God will help you provide for your family if you are faithful and work hard. We need to remember Nephi's declaration to go and do because the Lord prepares a way for us to accomplish what He commands.² I have also observed from my experience that the Lord was careful not to give me too much in terms of resources as a single person because I did not need them and because I may not have been able to handle them appropriately.

EDUCATION

In my conversations with returned missionaries, I am often asked the question: "What should I do, finish my education first or get married?" Instead of giving the obvious answer (which is marriage), I would ask a question in return. "Do you know that you can get married and get an education at the same time?" The usual answer, spoken or unspoken is, "You mean I can do that?"

At one point in my life when Sister Teh and I were raising our children, I had a full-time job that required a lot of traveling. I was going to school at night, and I was serving as a bishop of our ward. When I graduated from college we had two children and Sister Teh was five months pregnant with our third child. You may ask, If I had to do it all over again what would I change? My immediate answer is—nothing. I would not change a thing. I



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PHOTO BY EDWIN REDRINO

would do it exactly the same way because of what I learned, how my faith has increased in God's promises, and how it brought my wife and me closer to each other.

EMPLOYMENT

Do not be picky in finding employment. As you are starting off, do not immediately expect to land jobs with lucrative pay. The important thing is to have a steady source of income while you are upgrading your resume or acquiring additional skills. When we (Sister Teh and I) got married, I was working as a messenger and putting myself through college.

Live within your means. I heard a wise widow who raised eight children on her own give this counsel: "Huwag mong bilhin ang hindi mo kailangan at huwag mong kakailanganin ang hindi mo kayang bilhin." (Do not buy the things that you do not need and do not begin to need the things that you cannot afford.) President Thomas S. Monson also said: "I assure you that there is no shame in a couple having to scrimp and save."³ You will have the means to sustain your family as you pay a full tithe and work together as husband and wife.

FALSE TRADITIONS

You do not need to spend for a reception.

If you have to have one, it should not be extravagant. Focus on the ordinance and not on pleasing yourself or meeting the expectations of others. One of the worst ways to start a marriage is by going into debt. During our wedding reception held in a chapel cultural hall, Sister Teh and I just served juice, cookies, and salad.

Parents, we should not turn over to our older children the responsibility of raising and providing for the needs of their siblings. You should not even overburden them with financial demands that make them postpone or delay marriage. Of course, disability or death may necessitate individual adaptation.

IS HE/SHE THE RIGHT ONE?

President Monson said: "Perhaps you are afraid of making the wrong choice. To this I say that you need to exercise faith. Find someone with whom you can be compatible. Realize that you will not be able to anticipate every challenge which may arise, but be assured that almost anything can be worked out if you are resourceful and if you are committed to making your marriage work."⁴ After a few months of our marriage, I learned the secret to our wonderful companionship. Sister Teh and I love the Lord more than we love each other. Because we love the Lord first,

we are able to love each other beyond our capacity to love as individuals. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."⁵

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "For divine purposes, male and female spirits are different, distinctive, and complementary. . . . Alone, neither the man nor the woman could fulfill the purposes of his or her creation. . . . The man and the woman contribute differently but equally to a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way. The man completes and perfects the woman and the woman completes and perfects the man as they learn from and mutually strengthen and bless each other."⁶ "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."⁷ I invite leaders, parents, and young single adults to study and gain an understanding of the doctrinal foundation and the central role of marriage in God's plan for the eternal destiny of His children. Doing so will help us change our views, discard false traditions, and develop faith to enter into a marriage covenant without delay. ■

Notes:

1. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liahona* Nov. 2010, 129.
2. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "Priesthood Power," *Liahona* May 2011, 67.
4. Thomas S. Monson, "Priesthood Power," *Liahona*, 67.
5. Moses 3:24
6. David A. Bednar, "Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan," Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, Feb. 2006; in *Liahona*, June 2006, 50.
7. 1 Corinthians 11:11



PHOTOS BY NOEL MAGLAQUE



The man and the woman contribute differently but equally to a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way.



PHOTO BY EDWIN REDRINO

LOCAL LDS VOICES

A MOTHER'S PRAYER

I have three wonderful children, and being wonderful does not mean that they are perfect, neither does it mean I did not have challenges in raising them.

Their teenage years were especially challenging. They only had one mother (that was me), but each is an individual spirit with a unique personality.

When I was left alone at home, I would pour out my heart to Heavenly Father in prayer. I would tell Him how much I loved my children and how thankful I was, to be their mother. I would acknowledge that I had done all I could but I still could not touch their hearts. I would ask Heavenly Father to soften the hearts of my children whenever I counseled them.

When I dealt with my parenting challenges this way, my prayer has always been answered. I would be calm and know what to say when I talked to them. The earlier issues of the day would be settled peacefully.

My children are now grown. The boys have served missions and graduated from college. My only girl is now serving a mission. She too has graduated from college.

We still have things to discuss—employment and romantic relationships. Sometimes our discussions turn passionate. No matter what the topic or how different our perspectives might be, peace comes when our discussions end with a prayer.

Parenting challenges will always exist. Mistakes are likely. Prayer is a powerful resource in raising children. ■

Ann Campbell

Tarlac Philippines Stake

FAMILY PRAYER MAKES BETTER PARENTS

With children in their teens and busy with school work, we sometimes find it a challenge to have family prayer. However, we have found that if we set a time for family prayer and make it a point to drop everything we are doing when that time comes, it can be done. Constant reminders and encouragement are also helpful. For us parents, regular family prayer is a way for us to teach our children to put God first even if we are busy, to prioritize communicating with Him, and to remember Him in our lives. Family goals are also easier to achieve when we pray



PHOTO BY NOEL MAGLAQUE

No matter what the topic or how different our perspectives might be, peace comes when discussions end with a prayer.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANCISCO FAMILY



for them as a family. As mortal parents, we know that the principle of family prayer is a blessing to us, weak and imperfect parents as we are, to be able to have the Lord, who is perfect, give our family perfect guidance. Family prayer helps us become better parents to the children He has entrusted to us. ■

Rodel and Herculine Francisco,

*parents of Brent(16), Kerin(15) and Dallin(12)
Legazpi Philippines Stake*

A SECRET TO FAMILY HAPPINESS

Our parents became members of the Church when we were very young. We used to live in a small shack in a place called Pinagdamayán, in a remote barangay in our municipality. We now live much closer to the town and all but one of us siblings are grown—four young single adults, a young man and a little Primary boy. We didn't have much in terms of material possessions—we still don't—but we have a happy family because of the gospel. One of the things that our father says contributes to our happy home is family prayer. He says that family prayer helps us to always remember the Lord and our need to talk with Him. Our mother says that family prayer is a way for us children to be regularly gathered, even if we are grown.

She says that it brings her great joy when we gather to pray as a family and that this gives peace to her heart. We always seem to sleep more peacefully and wake up happily when we have family prayer. With three grown girls, we sometimes have disagreements but when we have family prayer, we find it easier to forgive and be friends again, especially when we hear one

of us praying for the other. Family prayer unites us and makes us feel the Spirit in our home. It really is the secret to happiness in the family. ■

Paterno and Francia Palma,

Analyn (20) and Analiza (18) Palma, Patricia (24), Gilbert (21), John Mark (12) and Bert Dave (9)



PHOTO COURTESY OF VILLANUEVA FAMILY

BENEFITS OF FAMILY PRAYER

Through family prayer people become spiritually stronger. A family prayer day and night helps comfort each family member and brings them a step closer to God’s kingdom. It can help the family experience heaven while on earth as they work out how to become an eternal family. It can save a person’s life, the marriage of parents, solve family problems and strengthen one’s faith towards God. It also makes other family members understand one’s desire and problem. ■

Chris T. M., 14 years old

Davao Philippines Stake

FAMILIES: DID YOU THINK TO PRAY?

By Ma. Teresa C. Pangilinan

“Perhaps there has never been a time when we had greater need to pray and to teach our family members to pray. Prayer is a defense against temptation. It is through earnest and heartfelt prayer that we can receive the needed blessings and the support required to make our way in this sometimes difficult and challenging journey we call mortality.” (Thomas S. Monson, “Three Goals to Guide You,” *Liahona*, November 2007, 119.)

Family prayer is one counsel our prophets have asked us to do to strengthen our family. Aside from wanting to obey this counsel, we do family prayer to teach our children how to pray to Heavenly Father and to promote family unity and harmony in our home.

We started having family prayer even before we had kids. We knew its importance and we wanted our kids to develop their own testimony of it. We do our family prayer before breakfast. We did our best to do it every day until it just became a part of our day.

We know that Heavenly Father loves us very much and that He continuously guides us through our Church leaders.

We know that having family prayer is a commandment from our Father in Heaven. Doing it will have a far better effect in our children’s lives than we can think of. We know that if we are obedient to the counsels of our leaders, our family will be happier and will be more prepared to face life’s challenges. ■

David and May Villanueva

Angeles Philippines Stake

Children: Jesse Ray, 8; Jared Raynard, 5; John Raphael, 3; Josiah Reuben, 5 months old



A family prayer day and night helps comfort each family member and brings them a step closer to God’s kingdom.

It is our time together for a quiet bonding with the Lord. We have clearly identified already the occasions to express gratitude for all the blessing which we receive as a family. This is our source of strength and health, and solitary trust for a peaceful life despite the turmoil in our surroundings.

Our prayers are always answered. Every day, we know that the Lord is always close to us. He provides what is necessary for us, even those things that we did not ask for! That is how great and wonderful He is! ■

Dixie L. Colibao

Pasig 2nd, Pasig Philippines Stake

Children: Riley Penn, 10; Datherine Li, 9



PHOTO COURTESY OF DIXIE COLIBAO



Family prayer is a good thing. It prevents disagreements in the family. It gives me an assurance that Heavenly Father is watching over my loved ones wherever they are.

Technically, family prayer is simply kneeling in prayer with your family, and meaningful prayer adds depth to family prayer. It is the time you thank God for all the things you have been blessed with and have accomplished and ask Heavenly Father for good things, guidance and protection for each and every member of your family.

We try to make it a habit especially before going to bed, just before one of us leaves the house, like when my husband leaves for work. Sometimes my husband reminds me, sometimes I remind him, but if it's time for him to go to work it is automatic, we look at each other and we both understand that it's time to pray. Our baby is only nine months old but we never leave him out of the prayer circle when we pray.

Family prayer is a good thing. It prevents disagreements in the family. It gives me an assurance that Heavenly Father is watching over my loved ones wherever they are. It makes me feel loved by my earthly family, as well as by my Father in Heaven when I pray with my family. ■

Edellen and Jacob Paul R. Reyes

Angeles Philippines Stake

Child: Isaac Eliezer N. Reyes - 9 months old

Family prayer is one of our children's most anticipated gatherings every night. It is when we get to express our hearts to Heavenly Father as a family.

We try our hardest to pray before anyone gets sleepy. We, as parents want to let our children know at their early age that communication with our Father in Heaven can keep them away from the dangers of the world.

My husband and I are blessed and so thankful for our Almighty God for entrusting us with four of His children.



Family prayer is as important as the other commandments. I know that doing this daily will keep our family united and will lead our children to stay close to the Church and to always be in tune with the Holy Ghost. I know these things to be true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Arlan and Marilyn Ong

Angeles Philippines Stake

Children: Angel Heart, 7; Amber Pyss, 4; Arvex Donry, 3

Prayer for me is very important, as it is our way to communicate to our Heavenly Father. Through it, we are able to express our gratitude and need for help.

Having family prayer consistently can be challenging especially when a family has small children. In addition to praying together at mealtimes, we have found that the best time for family prayer when everyone can join is at night before going to bed. We take turns in saying the prayer, giving everyone including the little ones a chance to pray. My husband and I consider this a good opportunity to teach our children how to pray and what to pray for. Through this, we are able to help develop their faith in the living God who hears and answers prayers.

Because of this, our children learned to pray at a very young age. Even before they can say the words, they fold their arms, bow their heads and close their eyes when we say it's time for family prayer. And as soon as they can speak, they always volunteer to pray. Seeing and hearing my children pray give me joy and bright hope for their future. Family prayer strengthens our family and helps us feel closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. ■

Ruth Del Mundo

Makati Philippines Stake

Children: Harold, 12; Gwyneth, 11; Howard, 5; Charlize, 4; Rachel, 1

Family prayer is being together as a family in supplication to the Almighty God for thanksgiving and seeking of blessings.

We see to it that we do it every day. Almost every morning we do it before our children go to school at 7:00 a.m.

In the evening, my wife lets the children say their prayers before going to bed. In our morning ritual, we start by singing a hymn followed a prayer then a spiritual thought. We assign who will conduct, taking turns every day.

The seed of faith is planted in the hearts of our children. One evening, it was raining so hard, and winds blowing so strong, one of our children commented, "Mama lets pray to Heavenly Father to stop the rain." We know that when we do our morning family prayer, we feel that our day is complete and we draw peace and strength from it. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARBELLA FAMILY

Pablo and Karolyne Marbella-III
Angeles Philippines Stake
Children: Juan Karlo, 9; Lorenzo, 8; Sophia, 5

Are you always watching your children?
 Are you present during your family prayer?
 Are you confident enough that they say their prayers too, as they have seen you do?

Prayer is a great shield from any harm and temptation that may come to your children. According to President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency: "Parents should teach their children to pray. The child learns both from what the parents do and what they say. The child who sees a mother or a father pass through the trials of life with fervent prayer to God and then hears a sincere testimony that God answered in kindness will remember what he or she saw and heard. When trials come, that individual will be prepared." ("That He May Write upon Our Hearts," *Liahona*, August 2009, 3-7.)

There is no harm in starting your family prayer again—tonight. ■



PHOTO BY NOEL MAGLAQUE

Prayer is a great shield from any harm and temptation that may come to your children.

TRYING TO BE LIKE JESUS

WHAT DO YOU PRAY FOR?

"I always ask Heavenly Father in my prayers to protect our country from calamities. I also ask the Father to keep my family and friends away from accidents and evil influences. I love them and I want to be with them always." ■



Kyla Eryn D., 8 years old
Davao Philippines Stake

"My mom works abroad to help provide for the needs at home. I miss her badly; that's

why I'm praying to Heavenly Father that she will come home so that we can be together again." ■



David Shaun D., 10 years old
Ozamiz Philippines District

"I always ask the Lord to bless me and my family with good health so that we can take care of each other." ■



Milan Kaye L., 8 years old
Ozamiz Philippines District

"I always pray for good health so that I can help my parents with the chores at home." ■



Mhia D., 10 years old
Ozamiz Philippines District

PHILIPPINES AREA GOALS

Strengthening Families

Bringing Families Together

By Minnie Advincula

When Sister Leilani Macaranas left her hometown in Malasiqui, Pangasinan, on May 7, 2011, she had to muster enough courage to stop herself from crying. The eldest of eight children, her family had expected her to work after graduating from college. Instead, she said, she chose to do something that could bring far greater blessings to her family—serve a full-time mission.

She travelled to Manila to enter the Missionary Training Center with people from her ward. No one from her family accompanied her; her parents still hurting from her decision to leave. “I hugged my father but he did not seem to care. I tried not to cry and told myself that someday, things will change,” she said.

She was the only active member in the family apart from her mother and a younger brother. She was also the first to join the Church. From the mission field, she wrote to her family often telling them of her many spiritual experiences.

“I was not preachy to them. I always say in my letter that I love them and want to be with them eternally. I also shared the miracles that happened to those families that we teach here in the mission,” she said in a letter to Philippines Quezon City Mission President David Wills DeLa Mare. She also kept on fasting and praying for her family.

“Through sharing my experiences here on the mission with them, my family became motivated to return back to the Church,” she added.

When she called her family last Mother’s Day, she was elated when she was told that her father has started going to church again and has in fact been called as first counselor in the elders quorum.

“You were right. I’m proud of you being on the mission (field),” Sister Macaranas’ father told her during their telephone conversation. “Miracles have happened to my family. I can’t count the many blessings that my family has today,” Sister Macaranas said.

Last June 9, her mother and father were sealed in the temple. “It’s overwhelming, the blessings have come too fast,” she said. Her family has come a long way since the day her father barely acknowledged her as she bid him goodbye for her full-time mission.

Even her extended family has been blessed, with her maternal grandfather and a few cousins being baptized. An uncle and his sons have also been reactivated. “I am so grateful for this mission because my family is being blessed,” she said. ■

“Through sharing my experiences here on the mission with them, my family became motivated to return back to the Church,”