

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE



His Only Begotten Son

As we celebrate this Christmas season we correctly focus our thoughts on the birth of the Savior Jesus Christ and His infinite Atonement that heals our souls and enables us to accomplish our divine purpose. The Savior's gift to us is remarkable and beyond comprehension.

My thoughts have turned this Christmas however, to an equally significant gift that was given by the Father as He willingly sacrificed His Only Begotten Son. John teaches us that this gift of sacrificing His Son was motivated by the love the Father has for us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Ponder for a moment the deep and incomprehensible love that the Father has for you that would cause Him to allow His Son to take upon Himself your sins and infirmities through the Atonement and then suffer the terrible Crucifixion.

The Savior Himself even asked the Father if there was any other way, when He said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." (Matthew 26:39) This tender exchange between the Father and the Son tugs at the heartstrings of every

parent. The Savior knew the plan; He knew He had agreed to come; but now that the moment had arrived, the Savior checks one last time with His Father, whom He trusts explicitly, to be sure this is the only way. Certainly the Father's heart was breaking as the Son made this final plea. The Father's silence leads the Savior to say, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke 22:42) Abinadi teaches us the significance of this moment when he describes the Savior's submission with the words, "the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father." (Mosiah 15:7)



Because of His love for us the Father stood by and watched His Son bleed from every pore in the Garden of Gethsemane; (see D&C 19:18) be scourged; (see Matthew 27:26) have a crown of thorns put into his head: (see Matthew 27:29; be spit upon; (see Matthew 27:30) and be crucified on the cross. (see Matthew 27:35) The Father and the Son could have stopped it at any time, but out of love for us, they allowed it to go forward, knowing that in order for mercy to satisfy justice, in order for our sins and infirmities to be covered, this needed to be a great and last sacrifice. (Alma 34:14-16) Imagine for a moment the indescribable relief of the Father when His Only Begotten Son finally utters the words,



Elder Brent H. Nielson
Philippines Area
Presidency

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"It is finished," "and bows His head and dies." (John 19:30)

My wife Marcia and I have six children. Our love for them grows with every passing day. We could not imagine before we had children that we could love them as much as we do. When our children are suffering it is almost more than we can bear as parents to stand by and watch.

As we left our four sons at the MTC to begin their missions, knowing how difficult this new assignment would be for them, we could barely contain our emotions. We wanted above all else for them to serve, but we knew they would be gone from us for two years and that they would struggle with new languages, new living conditions and the challenge of conversion.

As our two daughters went through the experience of childbirth and the pain and incumbent changes to their bodies and emotions, as parents we could hardly bear to watch. We knew in the eternal scheme of things it was the only way, but when it is your daughter, you somehow want it to be different.

It is interesting that the pioneers who sacrificed so much to establish the Church expressed that they "became acquainted with [God] in [their] extremities." (*Our Heritage*, page 78) When we can get a glimpse of suffering; when we experience heartache; when we feel sorrow for pain we may have caused; we begin to understand the priceless gift the Father gave when He offered up His Only Begotten Son.

What does the Father ask of us in return for this wonderful gift? King Benjamin answers that question when he says, "And behold, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments." (Mosiah 2:22) When asked what manner of men we ought to be, the Savior responded, "Verily I say unto you, even as I am." (3 Nephi 27:27) We become like They are when we understand that it is not about us. We become like They are when we give of ourselves to others. If we can understand the great gift of the Father and the great gift of the Son, we will know that, "because [we] have been given much, [we] too must give." ("Because I Have Been Given Much," *Hymns*, no. 219)



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("Because I Have Been Given Much," *Hymns*, no. 219)

This Christmas season, my thoughts will be on three gifts. The first is the gift of the Son in giving His life that we may live again, and performing the Atonement that we may be forgiven. The second is the incredible gift of the Father as He gave His Son to pay an infinite price for sins He did not commit and bear the burden of sorrows He did not cause. (see I Corinthians 7:23) The third gift is the one I must give in return as I follow Their divine example.

May our thoughts this Christmas season be turned to Them and may we follow Them as we focus on what They gave, and therefore, turn our thoughts to what we will give for Christmas this year.

"What will you give for Christmas?"



General Authorities Visit the Philippines

Elders David A. Bednar and Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Tad R. Callister of the Presidency of the Seventy, and Bishop Dean M. Davies of the Presiding Bishopric together with their wives visited the Philippines from 24 August to 02 September 2012. The Brethren visited different parts of the Philippines and conducted priesthood leadership training, young single adult devotionals and missionary meetings. A special devotional for temple workers was also conducted. Elder Cook also visited with two Philippine senators, Vicente R. Sotto III and Gregorio Honasan.

LAGUNA

The Saints living in the province of Laguna and its neighboring areas were delighted when Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Sister Bednar visited and conducted trainings and meetings.

Elder and Sister Bednar, accompanied by Elder Michael John U. Teh, Philippines Area President, and Sister Teh, presided over a special young single adult meeting on the 24th of August at the San Pablo Stake Center. The meeting was not the usual devotional most Filipinos are accustomed to. The young single adults from many stakes and districts were given the opportunity to ask questions. The questions were as varied as the members in attendance. Some were doctrinal and some were of a more personal nature.

Elder Bednar explained the purpose of the meeting and why he wanted them to ask questions. He taught through this pattern, we learn that we can get answers from the Holy Ghost for individual concerns in our lives. We need to be agents who act and not objects who are acted upon. He said: "You don't have to be with a General Authority or in a gathering like this to experience what just happened."

Many young members of the Church were touched by Elder Bednar's simple yet powerful lesson. Moselle Tobias, a college student who also attends the Los Baños Institute of Religion said: "I came to the meeting with a question. Although I did not get an



opportunity to ask it, I still received an answer from the Holy Ghost."

Kelly Ann Balane found lessons which she can also apply in her studies. "In academics, just like in real life, we learn things step by step, precept upon precept," she said.

"I understood more clearly that I need to improve spiritually every day," Ian Reyes, a returned missionary from Lipa Stake said.

On the morning of Saturday, August 25, Elder Bednar presided over a Priesthood Leadership Conference for stake, mission, and district presidencies, bishops and branch presidents under the San Pablo Mission. He was joined by Bishop Dean M. Davis of the Presiding Bishopric, Elder Michael



Teh, Elder Miguel R. Valdez an area seventy, and President George E. Peterson of the San Pablo Mission.

After the conference, Bishop Rhodell Agustin of Santa Rosa 2nd Ward, Cabuyao Stake, said, "I feel motivated, rejuvenated and spiritually uplifted."

"The Spirit was amazing and was truly felt," President Roland Garcia of the Santa Cruz Philippines Stake added. "The counsels really pierced our hearts even if some of us cannot understand English very well."

Elder Bednar and his companions also met with the San Pablo full-time missionaries on the same day. Here are some comments from the missionaries:

“I learned that great faith should start with us missionaries.” —Elder Illustrisimo

“We need to treat our investigators as agents who have the ability to act and not as objects which are acted upon.” —Sister Carmichael

“He is so awesome and spiritual. We are so blessed.” —Sister Macariola

“Elder Bednar carries such a great countenance. I need to be more obedient to mission rules if I want to have the same countenance.” —Elder Pablico

On Sunday, August 26, Elder Bednar and his companions visited the Latter-day Saints of Cabuyao Philippines Stake, and a special stake conference was held.

LEGAZPI CITY

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Tad R. Callister of the Presidency of the Seventy, met with priesthood leaders from four stakes and eight districts in the Naga Mission in a regional priesthood leadership conference held at the Legazpi Stake Center last August 25, 2012. They were accompanied by Elder Ian Ardern, Second Counselor in the Area Presidency and Elder Abenir Pajaro, Area Seventy.

The stake and district presidents and bishops and branch presidents



who attended the leadership conference came from the Daet, Goa, Legazpi and Naga stakes and the Bulan, Catanduanes, Iriga, Ligao, Masbate, Pamplona, Sorsogon and Tabaco districts. The priesthood leaders came by land and sea and some travelled for up to four hours each way to meet with the Apostle of the Lord and hear his message.

Priesthood leaders received instruction and participated in a question-and-answer session during the four-hour meeting. “I know that his [Elder Cook] message is really from God. I felt the Spirit and I have learned many things that I can bring home and share with the leaders in our branch, especially what was taught on how we should love and reach out to those members who are struggling in their faith,” said President Dante Osila of the Bololo Branch. According to Bishop Cristito Pacunza of the Naga 1st Ward, his attendance in the conference has helped him gain additional knowledge on how to go about his duties and he has received inspiration on how he can help people in his branch in a way that he had not previously thought. Following the priesthood leadership conference, the General Authorities and their wives met with full-time missionaries in a meeting with President Bliesner, Naga Mission President and

his wife, Sister Bliesner. Each missionary had the opportunity to shake hands with the General Authorities before the start of the meeting. Sister Mayores, a missionary who attended the meeting, shared her experience: “I felt the Lord’s love for me and my family when Elder Cook left his apostolic blessing on those of us who were there. I felt motivated to improve myself as Elder Callister encouraged us to be consecrated missionaries.”

Elder Cook presided over the special stake meeting in Legazpi the following Sunday, August 26, 2012. The sacrament and cultural halls of the Legazpi Stake Center were packed with members, including two overflow rooms, which had video feed. Elder Cook taught about how we should always seek to build faith in the Lord Jesus Christ whenever we teach and speak in the Church. He spoke of the importance of the words of the prophets such as President Heber J. Grant’s emphasis on living the Word of Wisdom at a time when the effects of cigarettes and alcohol were not yet understood. He emphasized the importance of husbands and wives being equal partners in marriage as taught by the family proclamation released during the time of President Gordon B. Hinckley. He cited President Thomas S. Monson’s teachings about gratitude. He

counseled the youth and young single adults: "Do not let your doubts disturb your faith." He taught that faith in Jesus Christ allows what can be accomplished. He testified that living the commandments will bring peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come, that in keeping the commandments, we will prosper in the land. He said that prosperity may be temporal, in part, but that we also prosper because we have the Holy Ghost and have the guidance of heaven to have eternal families.

Elder Cook concluded his message by leaving his apostolic blessing upon those who were gathered. He bore his testimony, as a special witness of Jesus Christ, of the divinity of the Savior and that He lives. At the conclusion of the meeting, Elder Cook personally greeted the members who waited for him on his way out.

ILOILO

SPECIAL MISSIONARY MEETING

Over 100 full-time missionaries travelled across Panay Island to attend the special devotional with an Apostle of the Lord. Elder Bednar was accompanied by his wife, Susan, together with Elder and Sister Arden and Bishop and Sister Davies.

Elder Bednar encouraged the missionaries to write down things

spoken by the Spirit and not the things they literally hear with their ears.

He taught what effective teaching really is. He emphasized that talking is not teaching. Listening, observing, discerning what to say and then talking are teaching. He taught that learning and teaching by the Spirit are necessary for missionaries and investigators to be edified. He explained how the gospel pattern should not be allowed to get in the way of effective teaching, and that each must focus on teaching by the spirit. He went on to say that the gospel is not spoon-feeding someone with knowledge of the gospel but rather it is about motivating someone to act on that true knowledge. He let missionaries read scriptures and asked them what stood out to them while they read. Volunteers raised their hands with unique answers.

Elder Bednar taught that faith is a principle of action and that power only comes when people



act on their faith. When we pray we must ask for the power to act in order to gain spiritual power. He emphasized how we don't have to be on common ground with other Christians and, in fact that we must stand out by placing ourselves on higher ground.

YOUNG SINGLE ADULT DEVOTIONAL

Hundreds of young single adults from Panay and Guimaras Islands gathered to enjoy a "once-in-a-lifetime" experience with Elder Bednar. He emphasized the importance of revelatory experiences and said that he can only teach us what we have planned to receive. He repeatedly said that agency is the capacity to act and not to be acted upon. He emphasized that "faith is not merely hoping and wishing but it is acting on something".

Elder Bednar engaged the young single adults by inviting them to write down and present questions about various gospel topics. He provided valued counsel through his responses to the questions. Elder Bednar stressed how this was the Spirit of the Lord providing their answers.

The young single adults had travelled far and wide to be a part of this important time with Elder Bednar. Some travelled as much as five hours by jeepney and bus. Other travelled by pump boat and trisikad. Most travelled within frugal means. All travelled with a full heart and excitement to be a part of this significant event. Many stayed at homes of members who live in the Iloilo area.

FEEDBACK FROM ATTENDEES

There was a surge of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the chapel. I envisioned flashes of inspiration from the Spirit that would not only help the people we teach but also help me personally. As Elder Bednar talked, I pondered what God has revealed to Abraham about the "many of the noble and great ones" (Abraham 3:22) before the world was and I testify that



Elder Bednar is one of them, handpicked by God to become a prophet, seer and revelator.

Elder Jarmillos

Tigbauan Branch, Iloilo Mission

When Elder Bednar spoke, the Spirit was there in quantities I had never before felt in my life. The Spirit testified of the truthfulness of the gospel to me personally and also testified of many things, which I needed at that time.

When he spoke, I know that every missionary present was edified and learned different things. I know that Elder Bednar is an Apostle of the Lord and I have been inspired to act more in my life, and to embrace the gospel more fully.

There was a higher power in that room beyond words and man understands. The Spirit attended to all, teaching that which we were seeking or needed at that time.

Elder Whiting

Pototan Branch, Iloilo Mission

As a full-time missionary, we are called to proclaim the gospel. The power of heaven is on our side. We are here to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ but we should always remember that the true teacher is the Holy Ghost, who through proper invitation can dwell in every house we teach. So teach with clarity, conviction, power and love. Help our investigators and less active members to act and not to be acted upon. Help them exercise their faith by doing all these things, giving all our best as stated in Alma 26:27. The Lord will give unto us success.

Sister Manguil

Philippines Iloilo Mission

Elder Bednar taught us how we need to act if we expect to grow closer to God and to receive answers to our prayers.

Elder Ligth

Mandurriao Ward, Iloilo Mission

What a tremendous blessing being with an Apostle and some leaders of the Church in a

devotional, knowing these persons are friends to God.

As we sang the hymn, my heart cried with joy. The Spirit was strong. I am grateful to receive him here in Iloilo. Doctrine and Covenants 84:36 states: "For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me (Jesus Christ)."

Sister Gazelem Ann Torres

Arevalo Ward, Iloilo Philippines Stake

I was really filled with the Spirit as we listened to Elder Bednar's wonderful counsels for us single adults. My testimony was more strengthened. I learned many important things that really helped me to be more prepared as I am about to serve in the Lord's vineyard. I am more inspired to preach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Heavenly Father loves us all. He continues to show His love through his prophet and apostles.

Julius Defacto

Passi Branch, Iloilo Philippines North Stake

When Elder Bednar spoke, the Spirit of the Lord affirmed to me, through my feelings, that He sends once again prophets, seers and revelators to walk upon the face of the earth. He led me to a point that I felt more attentive to my thoughts and feelings, while he speaks. His visit to Iloilo is a landmark to my heart. I testify that God loves me and He sent him to personally instruct me.

Rhen Poll Tome Potato

Nueva Valencia Guimaras Branch Iloilo Philippines Stake

The devotional taught me a lot of things. It reminded me that I still have a lot of things to learn. I love the leaders and their counsels. I know I am nothing as to my strength and talents. But I know that I have wonderful leaders and a loving Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

I testify that Elder Bednar is a true Apostle of God. I felt the Spirit and it taught me a lot of things especially when it comes to my personal perspective. I will do the

things that the Lord desires for me. I will earnestly seek Him in my life and follow His will. I don't know all things but He does and He works in me according to His will.

Brenda Gadingan

Roxas, Capiz Philippine Stake

An overwhelming peace and happiness overthrew my troubles. Answers were given through the Holy Ghost. A strong certainty testified to me that the Church is true. I am so happy everyone will be blessed. The gospel was made crystal clear.

Arflor Blancaver

Iloilo City Ward, Iloilo Philippines Stake

The feeling of seeing an Apostle of the Lord is very overwhelming. I have learned a lot about preparing myself to go on a mission and choosing a good eternal companion. This is a very special day to treasure and remember.

Brandon Kyle Sorilla

Mandurriao Ward, Iloilo Philippines Stake

When I found out that Elder Bednar would be meeting the single adults of Panay Island, I immediately booked a flight for home. The messages I heard were exactly what I needed. Revelations and inspirations just freely came into my thoughts and my heart, during the entire fireside. It was worth the time and the effort I spent to hear from one of the Lord's prophets.

Camela Ann Londres

Pina Ward, Manila Philippines Stake

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will help us use our agency wisely. Studying the scriptures and acting in accordance to His teachings will decrease our fear. Everything that we need in this life, especially our unanswered questions will be answered by the gospel. Happiness can be found by helping others find their happiness.

Cyrelle Gomez Constantino

Molo 2nd Ward

OLONGAPO

“Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have



spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege.” (D&C 88:122).

This scripture was read at the beginning of the missionary meeting with Elder David A. Bednar last August 29. Elder Bednar was accompanied by Elder Ardern of the Philippines Area Presidency, Bishop Davies and their wives. They were welcomed by Mission President Robert Querido and Sister Elsie Querido and District President Geraldo Angel.

President Querido, who conducted the meeting, counseled all the missionaries to encourage the young men to serve missions. After the hymn and prayer, Sister Bednar spoke of what an “awesome sight” it was to have all of them in one place. “Thank you for who you are, who you represent, and what you are,” she added. She recalled being in Colombia with Elder Bednar at one time and found that all the missionaries were native Colombians. She went on to speak of a “unique perspective” and addressed the missionaries about her hope for the Philippines. “As each of you teach, testify and

put your arm around a young man, tell him how good it is to be a missionary; Filipinos will be flooding the congregation,” she shared. Hope that by this gesture, we may have enough Filipino missionaries to serve in the



Philippines. Elder and Sister Bednar have three sons who have served as missionaries. She continued by sharing an experience she had as one of their sons was about to leave for his mission. Together, mother and son read Doctrine and Covenants 84:87-88. And this gave them a strong assurance that the Spirit would be in [their] hearts, and His angels round about [them], to bear [them] up. We are never alone.

The meeting was, as Elder Bednar had said earlier, different from what everyone was expecting. After Doctrine and Covenants 88:122 was read, he directed a question to the missionaries. “What do you learn from that verse and what stands out to you?” Four missionaries, one at a time, stood up and replied. And though they each answered differently, what they said was in effect what Elder Bednar had hoped to achieve, that all would stand and speak, upon his invitation, of their thoughts and learning. That through this pattern, all present would be edified, rejoice and understand each other.

Elder Bednar had requested that

they read and review, beforehand, two messages he had provided. And so he went on to inquire what they have learned from them. Though different and personal, what the four missionaries shared seemed to have provided answers to questions in the minds and hearts of those who heard.

They may act on faith, and not only express it. Be agents, teaching people by the power of the Holy Ghost. Sister Gabelo, who had just arrived from the MTC and assigned to the Lubao 1st Branch, had this to say: “I learned how powerful faith can be if you put it in action. Faith requires action for you to accomplish your purpose as servants of the Lord.” She now has an even greater desire to help investigators and the less-active “come unto Christ.”

To build upon the pattern of which they had been taught. Sister Pavino, senior companion to Sister Gabelo, learned of the pattern used in the meeting. “This is the Lord’s pattern that He wants us to use, especially as missionaries.” She recalls what she read from one of the messages they read in which Elder Bednar said, “An instructor’s faith is strengthened as he helps others seek learning by faith.” There have been times when her faith was strengthened by those they teach, and today she has learned to act upon that faith because faith is not simply believing, but doing something about it. She felt enlightened as she listened to all who spoke, and that all that were present were edified as she was. Truly the Holy Spirit silenced her wonderings through those who spoke.

Sister Cedenio, one of the sisters serving in the Olongapo 1st Branch, has also learned much from this pattern used by Elder Bednar. “It says to make sure that when we preach the gospel, those we teach are also edified, that they too impart knowledge to us through their experiences,” she shared. She went on to say that “the pattern has taught us that the true teacher is the Holy Ghost, and for us to be hearers and doers, seek for increased faith and to act upon it.”

She felt honored to have been able to learn from Elder Bednar, Elder Ardern, Bishop Davies and their wives as well. She was grateful that she has gained wisdom and knows that all this can help each of those listening to become a successful missionary as they touch the hearts of the people.

To come unto Christ by “turning in and facing Him” and not looking back. Elder Howes of the Calapacuan Branch says that what he has heard has taught him that the best way to feel the Spirit in missionary work is by faith that the Spirit is there. “We must become obedient, which means turning towards the Savior, overcoming the natural man and becoming selfless,” imparts Elder Howes. He learned to always be petitioning to God that He would help with the plans we have mapped out with the help of the Spirit. Also, that we need not compromise unity and obedience in our companionships, and to love and correct each other. He felt the Spirit in great abundance answering the questions of his soul, even if he stood up and inquired but once. He is amazed with the pattern of God and how it allows us to use our agency and faith by honestly seeking to satisfy our wonderings.

To be patient because not everyone does things the way you would. To be lovingly bold because when we fail to give needed correction, it is because we think only of ourselves and fear hate. Not to do it is not to love.

Strengthen our brethren. That consistency and steadiness over time is true conversion. Elder Rosales stood up not just once during the meeting, sharing his thoughts as well as the things left unanswered in his mind. He also learned much from the pattern taught. He says, “Each of us has a privilege to learn if we ask Him and ask in faith. I learned to offer myself to the Savior.” At a certain point during the evening, he was struck most when Elder Bednar asked them to focus more outwardly by helping others more than themselves. He was overwhelmed by the Spirit of the Lord and bore

witness that Elder David Bednar is an Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. He compares his emotions to being stabbed in the heart with a javelin that brought a burning feeling for every answer he received.

That listening and observing are key and critical elements in helping those whose testimonies have weakened. To teach with listening ears and hearts and with love, that they would feel the love of our Father in Heaven and the Savior. Companion to Elder Rosales, assigned to the Olongapo 2nd Branch, Elder Carrol has learned too many things to list down. There is however, one lesson that prevailed, according to him, and that is that “true faith is accompanied by action, and that action can take many forms. We are bearers of that faith in Jesus Christ and we must continue to exhibit that faith as we serve a full-time mission and our lifelong mission.” He felt a confirmation of what Sister Bednar said at the beginning—that the Holy Ghost would bear witness that Elder Bednar truly is an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He says, “Every fiber in my body desires to continue in the service of Jesus Christ, that one day, I may help others understand the gospel as I do.” Uplifted, his confidence has waxed stronger in the presence of God as in Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.

That if we truly understand what it is to take upon us the name of Christ; we do not have the option to be disobedient and elect not to violate any commandment. We are to pray carefully and not casually, to do it with real intent and sincerity.

At the close of the meeting,

Elder Bednar asked each one to give thought to these questions as they left, “Based upon what I have learned, observed and felt today, what will I do? What will we do?” Saying amen is saying “we’re going to begin.”

CAGAYAN DE ORO

Elder Cook Tells Young Single Adults to Push Doubts Aside and Increase Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

On Friday, August 31, 2012, Elder Cook with his wife, along with Bishop Davies and Sister Darla Davies, Elder Teh of the Area Presidency and Sister Teh, Elder Remigio Meim, Area Seventy, and Sister Meim, met and had a devotional with the young single adults in Cagayan de Oro City.



Elder Cook shared his message with two scriptural thoughts about the accounts of the Savior. The first account is in Mark; it is about a father who has a son who has a spirit that needs to be cured. The father's faith enabled the son to be healed by the Savior, and the words of the father to the Savior were, "Lord I believe; help thou my unbelief." (Mark 9:22) With all the many challenges that the young single adults of the Church are facing now, Elder Cook says "push your doubts out to the corners, don't let your doubts rule your life, don't let your doubts be the things that you make your decisions on, whether it's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and worshipping Him, or whether it is do I have the courage to get married, or do I have the courage to be righteous all the time. Push your doubts to the side and emphasize faith on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Another account of the Savior was in Luke. It was about the woman who was healed by touching the hem of the Savior's garment. When we exercise faith in our Savior we can realize the power of righteous desires in our lives by praying and believing that it all will be accomplished.

Emerson Sojor from Iligan Philippines Stake said, "I know that my perspective in life will change as I make important decisions in my life and go on a mission." Referring to the Savior's account, Elder Cook says, "The Savior's Atonement overcomes all the unfairness in life." When we look on the Atonement of the Savior, we will be able surpass all the challenges we are facing right now.

Joshua Crisanto of Iligan Philippines Stake said, "I learned the principle that we shouldn't let our doubts rule our life, and we should let our faith keep pressing forward, and that we should trust in the Lord always and rely on His timetable."

Somie Sanchez Jr. from Cagayan de Oro Stake said, "I liked what Elder and Sister Teh shared—that in order for us to have a strong foundation of love in marriage, we need to have a strong testimony about the Savior, as well as looking

for the qualities in our eternal companion such as having a strong testimony and love for our Savior Jesus Christ. I also learned from the message of Elder Cook that we should replace doubt with faith."

Jeafha Torres from Malaybalay Philippines District said, "I learned a lot from the devotional, especially about the things that we as young single adults would face just like in making decisions in going on a mission, acquiring work, achieving eternal marriage and the importance of being patient in all we do. Also I learned from the other leaders who were present in the devotional who shared about the importance of looking for the qualities that our eternal companion possesses, just like taking into account the importance of their love for our Savior."

"You're a great generation. You're a group that is going to mean so much in the Lord's kingdom. Your righteousness is needed and this nation needs to be stronger. There will be an impact as a result of the Church's strength in the Philippines that will bless people all over Asia," said Elder Cook. To accomplish that, we need to get our priorities right, get our doubts out of the way, exercise our faith, and move forward in marriage and the things that will help us do that.

PRIESTHOOD LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The priesthood leaders were

empowered in their callings when they came out after the training. Many of them felt blessed because their testimonies grew stronger and their desire to continue to serve the Lord with all their hearts increased. President Enguito of Oroquieta Stake expressed the added knowledge he gained in the training: "I learned that as leaders, we should be part in building the faith of the members of the Church. Moreover, I learned that the home is truly the primary place for organizing and saving the rising generation."

President Ang, 1st Counselor of Philippines Cagayan de Oro Mission also shared his insights: "We received very good instructions from the leaders—we were asked to focus on our families. As leaders, we have lots of responsibilities and priorities, in which all of these things should lead us in building our families and not leaving them. In addition, I learned more about the importance of visiting teaching in which it helps priesthood holders bless families. It is such a blessing to hear these from the visiting authorities."

The priesthood leaders felt good after the training and their minds were opened to what more is expected in their callings. President Crisanto of Iligan Philippines Stake spoke of his feelings: "I really looked forward to this visit and I felt very good in the training. Truly it is a big blessing to have Elder Cook and the other leaders with us. The timing of



the teachings of the principles and scripture thoughts they shared was of most importance; surely those principles are what we need today. In speaking about homes, Bishop Davies said that of all the callings we have, the most important is in the family.”

DAVAO

A Visit to the Saints in Davao

Focus on the pearl not the box.

A man who owned a large pearl wanted to show the priceless gem to his friends. He had a box custom made. The box was so beautifully crafted that people who came to see the display admired the box and not the pearl.

It was in reference to this allegory that Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled Church leaders in Davao and Butuan Missions to save the pearl (member) and not focus on the box (programs) when ministering to their members. He urged them to invite members to live specific principles of the gospel and rely on the Holy Ghost as they go about fulfilling their responsibilities. He emphasized that it isn't sufficient to just counsel, but it is essential to invite individuals to live what they learn as they come unto Christ.

District and stake presidents as well as bishops from these missions gathered at the Claveria Chapel on Saturday, September 1, 2012 to receive counsel from Elder Bednar. At the conclusion of the training one priesthood leader remarked that living the gospel should start with him and his family in order for him to have the moral authority to minister. Many shared the conviction that they need to rely on the promptings of the Holy Spirit as they go about magnifying their responsibilities.

Excitement and hope filled the hearts of those present. They couldn't wait to put these counsels to a test and see the promises of the Lord's Apostle be fulfilled in each of their areas of assignment.

On a similar note, inviting investigators to keep their commitments for them to have a

testimony was what Elder Nadado and Elder Hallig came away with in the meeting Elder Bednar held with the Davao Mission missionaries. They both noted that missionaries will be able to help their investigators better if they invite them to decide to keep their commitments so they will develop their own testimony.

Elder Hallig emphasized the importance of obeying mission rules so that blessings will come, while Elder Nadado felt the Spirit so strongly he resolved to forget himself and focus on the will of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

At the conclusion of the meeting, they were left to ponder on a stirring question, almost an invitation: “Based upon what I have observed, learned and felt, what would I do?”

PASAY CITY

Having served the Filipino people from August 1996 to August 1998 as a member of the Philippines Area Presidency, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles remembered with fondness the nation that he loved as he addressed the Pasay Philippines Stake members in a special Sunday meeting held on September 2, 2012.

“I love the Filipino people. This is a great nation, which has a rich history of loving the Savior,” he said.

Elder Cook organized and created Pasay Philippines Stake from Parañaque Philippines Stake in 1998 with only five wards. In his talk, he emphasized the importance of families, of husband and wife being equal partners, and of the Church coming out of obscurity these days. He also strongly admonished the members to support the rescue effort of the Philippines Area Presidency—in reaching out to the less active and making them feel welcome again to the fold.

Gabriel Tongco, a 14-year-old young boy from Manila First Ward, shares his feelings about the apostolic visit: “It is my first time to shake hands with and hear an Apostle speak in person. I felt the Spirit as Elder Cook was speaking. I could tell that he is a good man based on the way he carried himself.



I felt the truthfulness of what he was saying. I love that he talked about being equal partners, because I see that being practiced by my parents in our home.”

Elder Cook especially addressed the young single adults in his talk. He counseled them to empower their faith and push their doubts aside. He said that if they stayed faithful in the Church and acted on their faith, they would resolve and reduce any doubts they may have.

Pasay First Ward librarian Gretel Alcaraz related that she felt happy when Elder Cook gave counsel specifically addressed to the young single members of the congregation. She said, “Now I know that I should exercise faith and not lose hope on the things that I am aspiring for.”

Philippines Manila Mission president Lyle Jay Stucki, who attended the special conference with his wife, said: “I just thought it was important that Elder Cook would come back after being here many years ago to organize the stake. He gave a powerful message to the young people, and reminded us that as we follow the prophets, our lives are absolutely blessed. That was a powerful blessing that he gave, and I am grateful to be here today.”

Elder Cook was accompanied by his wife, Mary Cook, Elder Ian S. Ardern, Second Counselor in the Area Presidency, and his wife, Paula Ardern.

ELDER BEDNAR MEETS WITH MANILA TEMPLE ORDINANCE WORKERS

The Quezon City South Stake Center was filled with Manila Temple ordinance workers for a special meeting with Elder Bednar last August 26, 2012. An hour before the meeting, the chapel was already filled with temple ordinance workers, all eager to be instructed by the voice of an Apostle.

Also present during the meeting were Elder Bednar's wife, Susan Bednar, Elder Michael John Teh of the Area Presidency and his wife, Grace Teh, Bishop Dean Davies of the Presiding Bishopric, and his wife, Darla Davies and the Manila Temple presidency headed by President Reynaldo Cuyong.

The Manila Temple workers left the meeting greatly edified and with a deeper sense of commitment to their callings as temple ordinance workers.

PHILIPPINE SENATORS SOTTO AND HONASAN MEET WITH MORMON LEADERS

Elder Quentin L. Cook, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder Michael John



U. Teh, Philippines Area President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, met with Senator Tito Sotto III and Senator Gregorio Honasan on Wednesday, August 29, at the Philippine Senate (GSIS Building). The purpose of the courtesy visit was to discuss topics of mutual interest and to strengthen the common bridge of friendship between the Church and the esteemed senators.

Elder Cook expressed

appreciation for Senator Sotto's advocacy on strengthening the Filipino family and upholding family values. He also highlighted the senator's advocacy on helping the youth fight against drug abuse. Elder Teh also expressed appreciation for his leadership in the Senate. Sotto responded, "Your kind words to my advocacy on strengthening families inspire me and those from the Senate to do more." He talked of the need to strengthen families and to respect the sanctity of life, both of which are values shared by the LDS Church.

Elder Cook mentioned that the Church is politically neutral. Although the Church counsels its members to be politically dynamic and active in their communities, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is neutral in matters of party politics. This applies in all of the many nations in which it is established. The Church's mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Elder Cook expressed his love for the Filipinos, having served in the Philippines Area Presidency from 1996-1998. He also views the Filipinos as one of the happiest people in the world despite the different challenges they encounter like natural and manmade disasters.

The meeting with Senator Honasan followed thereafter. Elder Cook highlighted the recent Jubilee celebration of the Church and its milestones during the last 50 years. He emphasized the full name of the Church; why we are commonly known as Mormons, and that, as Christians, we follow the teaching and example of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Senator Honasan recognized the Church's stand on strengthening the Filipino family, promoting good values, and for preparing bright futures for our children. He said, "We thank good citizens, like you (your members), who are supporting good causes. We want a promising future for our children, thus the need to work together for a common good."

Honasan also mentioned that "it

is a constitutional principle that the sanctity of life takes precedence over everything else. This core principle is what we stand for."

When Elder Cook referred to the Church's close friendship and association with the Catholic church, Senator Honasan encouraged us to join a multi-cultural dialogue to address the needs of people from different faith-based organizations. He said that issues on preserving marriage, challenges confronting husbands and wives, poverty, education, and productivity are issues that we can talk with and unitedly take a stand with other faiths.

As the meeting progressed, the conversation naturally turned to children and grandchildren. They lovingly talked of how children brought happiness to their lives and their homes.



The Church presented the two senators with tokens: the *Christus*, which is a replica of the statue in the Church Visitor's Center in Salt Lake, a framed copy of "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" and a 100 anniversary celebration CD of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

After the meeting with both senators, Elder Cook and Elder Teh briefly attended and were acknowledged during the session

of the senate. They were also able to visit briefly with the Senate President, Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, before the start of the session.

PHILIPPINE YOUTH PERFORM FOR ELDERS BEDNAR AND COOK AND THEIR WIVES

The visiting General Authorities, led by Elder Bednar, were treated to a night of song and dance celebrating Philippine culture on August 29. He was accompanied by Elder Cook, Elder Callister and Bishop Davies with their wives, together with the members of the Philippine Area Presidency, Elders Michael John U. Teh, Brent H. Nielson and Ian S. Ardern and their wives.

The special cultural celebration was reminiscent of the Jubilee Cultural Celebration held last April 30, 2011. Young men and young women from various stakes in Metro Manila performed some of the dances from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Three song numbers were also rendered, one by a single adult choir who sang a medley of Filipino songs, another by a Primary choir who sang "I Am a Child of God" in four languages, and the other by a group of male singers who gave a rendition of the Jubilee theme song, "United."

"That was just magnificent," Elder Cook remarked after the performances. In his message he also said that it was a beautiful cultural celebration and that he is grateful for what he has seen. He shared a story about his brother who was then a navy doctor assigned in the Philippines, serving as district president during the time when the country was opened for missionary labors. He emphasized what then-Elder Hinckley directed his brother to do. First, he wanted the members of the Church to learn the scriptures. He said that before certificates were issued to those who were able to memorize 10-25 scripture passages.

Second was to start a heritage of missionary service. And lastly was to make sacrifices for the kingdom.



He recounted the sacrifice made by members of the Church when the Buendia chapel was being built. He closed his message by sharing that both he and Elder Bednar are witnesses of Jesus Christ and His divinity.

Elder Bednar then shared his observation about how he thought Elder Cook would join the youth in dances as they were sitting next to each other. He said that the costumes were colorful, the dances beautiful and the smiles bright. He further shared how he thought that Filipinos have the brightest, happiest smiles in the world, to which the crowd cheered.

Elder Bednar said that the greatest spirit comes when people are united, and that there is one culture that is stronger and more powerful than any other—the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He emphasized to the youth that much is required of them. They have been called to be different from other young men and women. They are to be examples of the power and strength that comes from the gospel. They are encouraged to contribute to the growth of the gospel in the country by living and praying for that opportunity now.

He concluded his message by expressing appreciation for their time and all that they've done to make the cultural celebration possible. He gave his testimony that



Jesus Christ lives and directs the affairs of the Church. He said that as we honor our covenants we will be guided and protected, and we will be strong and able to build our families and this nation.

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