



AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Prove Me Now Herewith

By Elder Michael John U. Teh
Philippines Area President

In 1990, soon after we got married, Sister Teh became pregnant with our first child. When she was about 7 months in the family way, I began to worry about how I would pay for the hospital bill when she delivered our baby. At that time, both of us were working but our combined income was small. It did not help our finances one bit that I was still putting myself through school. We always paid tithing and it always came first. After paying tithing, giving fast offerings, and donating to the ward missionary fund, the money left over was barely enough for food, apartment rental, transportation, and my school tuition fees. We did not have any savings because there was no money to spare. Although I remember some days when there was no money for food, there was always money for tithing.

During this time, the coming birth of our first child had been the cause of much anxiety and the subject of most of my prayers. It was obvious that I needed to find an additional

source of income so that I could pay for the hospital bill. There were no immediate prospects on the horizon but we continued to exercise faith in the Lord's promises.

One day, I received a phone call from an uncle who resides in Davao. He informed me that he had business arrangements with several farmers and would soon start shipping fresh fruit to Manila. He said that he needed a representative in Manila who could look after his interests. When I heard this I immediately seized upon the opportunity and told him that I would do it. I also assured him that I had the time - even though I was working full-time, had many work-related travel, going to school at night, and serving in the bishopric.

So, after work from Monday to Friday I would go to school from 6:00-9:30 in the evening. From school I would go directly to the Divisoria market and



look after my uncle's produce which were sold through one of the fruit stand owners along the street. Business is often brisk during the hours of 10:00 pm to 12:00 midnight.

Then, there is a lull between midnight until 2:00 in the morning. I took advantage of this lull by renting a native recliner seat and getting a little sleep or doing some homework. Selling would then pick up again from 2:00 am to 5:00 am.

At 5:00 am, I would sit down with the stall owner and compute the income derived from the sale of my uncle's produce. The stall owner would then give me the money less his commission. I would then go home, shower and leave for work. During my lunch break, I would go to the bank and deposit my uncle's money. Then in the evening after school, the process would begin all over again.

This went on for almost two months and it allowed

When we do not pay tithing, it is an indication that our money is becoming our god. This is alarming in light of the fact that God has said – “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”



Photo courtesy of Church Media Library

me to save up some money. I know that because of our faithful payment of tithes, God sustained me through the 2 months of a grueling schedule and lack of sleep. However, the most obvious blessing during this entire experience was the amount of money that I was able to save. It was exactly the same amount I needed to pay the hospital after Sister Teh gave birth to our son. This experience has been a testimony to us of how God keeps His promise. It certainly was, for us, a literal opening of the windows of heaven to allow us to take care of our needs.

God often tests His people. He wants to find out if we will put him first in our lives. Letting go of money and other material things in exchange for intangible spiritual or temporal promises is often difficult. It is a good test whether our loyalty is to God or to material things. When we do not pay tithing, it is an indication that our money is becoming our god. This is alarming in light of the fact that God has said – “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

When we obey the law of tithing, we also should not give

the Lord a deadline. There is a tendency for some to expect the material blessings to come at a certain time of their own estimation. This is how most lose their confidence in His promises. They are faithful in the beginning but then cease to obey after some time when their expectations are not met. We need to recognize that all things are done according to the Lord’s will and timetable and not ours.

“Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled? I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing. Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above.” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:31-33)

A story was once told of how men sometimes approach the payment of tithes. Using ten apples as an example, we sometimes will immediately eat nine apples and then slice the tenth in half. We will then eat one of the halves and then raise the other half and ask the Lord to take a bite. Remember, tithing

means one-tenth. Anything that is less than a tenth of our increase is not tithing and is not acceptable to God.

One of the purposes of mortality is for us to gain physical bodies. At the same time, however, we are expected to overcome the natural tendencies of the flesh or the “natural man” that come with it. A couple of the descriptions of the “natural man” used in the scriptures are greed and rebellion. The law of tithing will help us overcome these tendencies so we can “put off the natural man and become a saint – willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him,…” (Mosiah 3:19)

As we overcome the natural man, our faith in Jesus Christ increases. As individual members increase in faith, families are strengthened. When families are strengthened, the stakes of Zion will likewise be enlarged and strengthened.

God is constantly calling out – “prove me now herewith; prove me now herewith.” It is my prayer that we will listen and give heed. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Why do we pay tithing?

“I follow the law of tithing because I know it is a commandment of the Lord. My wife and I have been paying it weekly since we became members about 30 years ago. As a result, my children and even my grandchildren have served missions and they were protected... all their needs were provided. I am still strong at the age of 80 and I feel that this is because of my obedience to the law of tithing.”



Benito Pangilinan
Gapan Philippines Stake

“I am paying my tithes to express my love to our Heavenly Father and to show obedience to His commandments. I know I can serve God through paying my tithes. I can help build His Kingdom here on earth. My tithes will also be of help to full-time missionaries. When I pay my tithes, I feel the love of my Savior and Heavenly Father in return.”



Myrna Montilla
Puerto Princesa Philippines District

“We express our Faith, Obedience, and Love for the Savior as we pay our Tithing. We show to the Lord that we put Him first in our life regardless of our circumstances. We help in building God’s kingdom when we pay a full and honest tithe. The Lord then gives His promised blessings as we sincerely and faithfully keep this commandment.”



Dee Franklin Sanchez
Angeles Philippines Stake

“We pay tithing because we know the Lord wants to bless us. He wants us to experience and see the very windows of heaven open before us to pour out blessings without measure. He wants us to experience how our faith can bless our lives immensely and strengthen the desire of our hearts to further live and obey the commandments. Ultimately, we pay tithing because we love the Lord with all our hearts and with all of our lives.”



Jonathan Briones
Angeles Philippines Stake

“We pay tithing to show our obedience to God and in return He blesses us spiritually and temporally. We pay tithing to help build chapels and temples so that sacred ordinances can be performed by members of the church. We pay tithing to support church activities that strengthen the faith of the members. It also helps support youth programs such as campings, mutuals and Youth Conferences that allow us to build our testimony and develop friendship among fellow youth.”



Keziah Murielle P.
Iloilo Philippines Stake

“Life is hard enough as it is, but paying my tithes strengthens my faith and assures us that my Savior will help me through thick and thin.”



Roehl M. Abonado
Cabuyao Philippines Stake

WE WILL BE BLESSED

“I show my love to Heavenly Father by paying a full tithe. He didn’t give this commandment for nothing. Honestly, I do not come from a well-off family. When I was preparing to serve a full-time mission, I was so worried due to the lack of financial means. But because of paying tithing, I was so surprised with the overwhelming help that I got from many members of the Church. I was able to finish the application process smoothly and after a month I got my mission call. If we really pay our tithes, we will be blessed.”



Elder Mortera

Full-time Missionary, Cagayan de Oro Mission

A TEST OF FAITH

“Paying tithing is really a test of faith. We should understand that everything we have belongs to Him. We give back the 10%, yet, the 90% that’s left is actually more than what we need. Personally, I always strive to live within my means—within this 90% that I have. But because of paying tithing, I am blessed more than that in return.



Before I came on my mission, I worked and supported my family financially. Three years ago, my mother suffered a stroke. I resigned from work to serve a full-time mission so I had to stop sending financial aid to them. Yet, God still provides. He keeps my mom strong and our family in good shape. Now, as a full-time missionary, I still enjoy the blessings of paying a full tithe.”

Sister Canimo

Full-time Missionary, Philippines Bacolod Mission

THE LORD KEPT HIS PROMISE

“As a single mother raising three children in the late 70’s, it was a constant struggle to make both ends meet. My meager salary as a public school teacher was hardly ever enough, and we were often in debt.



When challenged by the missionaries to accept baptism, I did not hesitate to say yes despite the prospect of further belt-tightening in order to pay my tithing. How will I manage with ten percent taken from a monthly income that never seemed to cover the necessities? “We will see if the Lord will keep His promise,” I remember telling myself. One Sunday at Church, I realized that if I paid my tithing we wouldn’t have enough money for our jeepney fare going home. With a prayer in my heart, I paid my tithing in full and considered the possibility of walking the several kilometers it would take us to get home.

Out of the blue, a well-off ward member offered us a ride in her car! We gratefully accepted and were able to get home in no time. We also survived the rest of the month and had enough food on our table until my next paycheck arrived. More than three decades later, paying our tithing has become a deeply-instilled practice in our family. My heart swells with joy whenever I think about the countless blessings we have received, both temporally and spiritually. More than anything else, I am grateful that being a full tithe-payer allows me to hold a temple recommend and serve in the house of the Lord.”

Guia M. Divinagracia

Quezon City Philippines Stake



Photo by Noel Maglaque

Tithing and my Family

By Junicel Balledos Perez

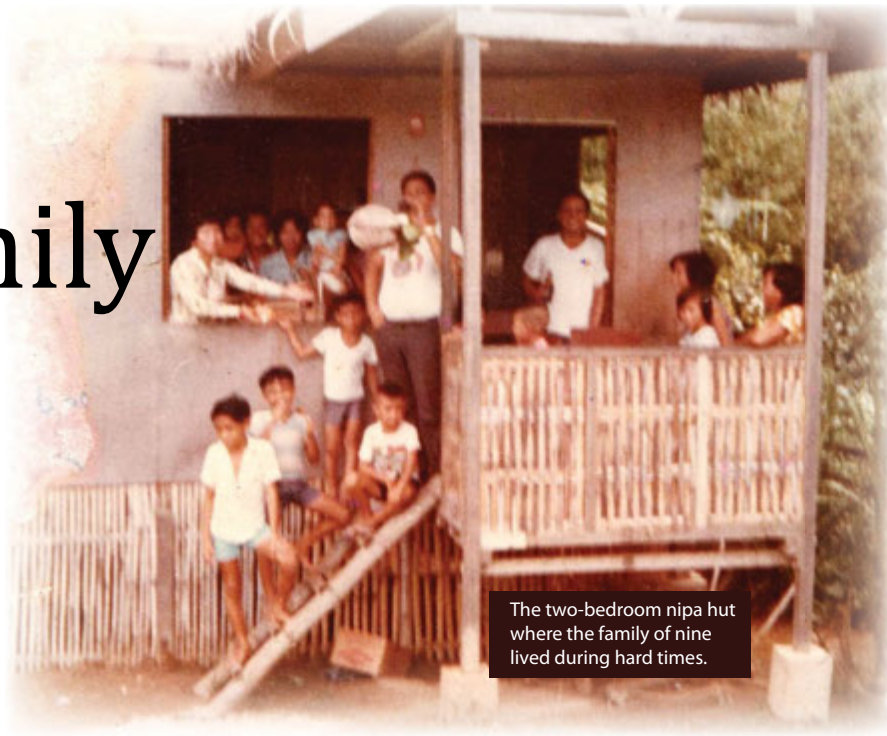
My father met the missionaries in 1969, a time when Mormonism was never heard of in Iloilo. He was baptised immediately, and my mother followed in 1970 after listening to the presentation of the missionaries. My brother and I were baptised in January 1971.

We attended church in a rented facility, a two-storey house with the missionaries using one of the rooms as their living quarters. Our Primary class was held in the garage. We celebrated Valentine's Day with a gold and green ball. The missionaries were frequent visitors at our home. It was a wonderful branch.

Shortly after baptism, we went through difficult times. We experienced a lot of persecution. My father lost his job. We had to transfer to a non-sectarian school. It came to a point where my parents felt it was time to move.

So a day short of my 12th birthday, we packed our things and boarded a boat to Cebu. My father got a job at a shipping company with my uncle's help. We stopped going to church because we did not know where it was.

Our parents sold our house and bought a property about 13 kilometres from Cebu City. They sold my piano and used it to build a two-bedroom nipa hut. My parents used one



The two-bedroom nipa hut where the family of nine lived during hard times.

Photo courtesy of Junicel Perez

bedroom and all of us seven children were cramped in the second bedroom.

It was a tremendous transition for all of us. From a comfortable home, we were living in a nipa hut. My father's income barely covered our needs. My school uniforms were hand-me-downs from my cousin who was a year older. Our shoes, because they were of low quality, easily broke apart. We had wonderful memories of walking in the rain with our 'smiling' shoes (unglued soles in the front flapped with each step we took).

My brother and I studied in my mother's alma mater where we enjoyed a substantial discount. Even with that privilege, it was still a challenge paying our tuition. Because of delayed payments, we sometimes couldn't take crucial exams. I remember visiting the principal's office to ask for a temporary permit to take graded tests. I did that four times a year so I became quite a familiar face in his office.

Owing to the distance from

the city, we lived with our aunt who had a tailoring shop. We worked in the shop in exchange for board and lodging. My younger brothers who were in elementary school had to be transferred from a private school to a public school which was a walking distance from our home. My brother and I walked to and from school. We barely had money for snacks. Our favourite lunch was 'pancit' and 'adobong talong'.

Despite the tight situation, we plowed through and I graduated from high school in 1977 wearing the graduation dress my cousin wore the year before. My parents bought me my first high heeled sandals and it was an exciting moment for me to wear one. Owning something brand new and bought just for me was a rare treat!

College life continued despite the stringent lifestyle because our parents were very keen to send us to school. They firmly believed that education was the only way out of poverty, so we went to school.

The author (third from left) enjoying the blessings of tithing with her family



Photo courtesy of Junicel Perez

Tithing is truly the Lord's way of blessing his children. He is not taking 10%, He is giving us the opportunity to receive the 90%.

serve the Lord. She continued to work hard while we were away.

That was the kind of life we had from 1973 to 1980. We were going through seven years of famine. Imagine owning just one towel for all nine members of the family! The older members who used the towel last had to wring water out of it so they can 'dry' themselves after taking a shower. Water had to be fetched out of the community water well.

In 1980, my youngest brother brought home two missionaries who happened to be walking down the road to visit my grandmother's house. The elders met my mother, who told them that we were members of the church.

That turning point proved to be a wonderful blessing to our lives. Soon after we met the elders, my three youngest siblings were taught and baptized. In December of 1980, we went to the newly built chapel in Mandaue and attended church for the first time in seven years.

In March of 1981, my father died. Mother had no job. She was a full time housewife, taking care of our two youngest siblings. I was a semester short of finishing college while my brother had an entire year left. The next two brothers were in high school. The second girl in the family was only nine years old while the last two siblings

were aged five and three.

That was the toughest time for the family. How were we going to survive without my father? He was the bread winner. Hard as it was, our mother squared her shoulders and stepped in to fill my father's shoes. She found work as an insurance agent, made and sold peanut butter, created and sold handicrafts and did her very best to put food on the table, clothes on our back and send us to school.

In the middle of life's struggles, we continued going to church and actively participated in church programs. From the time we went back, my mother decided it was time to pay tithing. When my father was alive and working, we were in deep debt. His salary barely paid for the groceries we owed from our neighbor's store.

Soon after she started paying tithing, things began to change. While my mother worked very hard, food was not as scarce as before. We could even bring food to church when the bishop called for ward potluck activities. My mother was able to buy shoes and clothes whenever we needed them.

One by one, we went on missions. Our mother supported all seven of us and sent us to

One by one, we finished college. As each sibling graduated and found a job, he or she would help send the others to school. Soon, all of us graduated from college, found jobs and started to raise our individual families.

Looking back after 33 years, we love to reminisce and marvel at how merciful the Lord had been for us. He helped us get back to church. He guided our mother in her struggle to provide for her children. He sustained our mother while we were on missions and in school. He is still sustaining our family. As the well-loved hymn goes: "I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me."

All of these blessings came about because our mother believed and paid a full and honest tithing.

The gospel is true. The Church is true. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are alive and they love us. Tithing is truly the Lord's way of blessing his children. He is not taking 10%, He is giving us the opportunity to receive the 90%. He keeps His word. He invites the saints to prove Him, and He truly is bound to keep His promise when we do as He says. ■

The Windows of Heaven

by Sariah Guanzon-Ordinario

Three years ago, I suffered from a medical condition that almost cost me my life. I underwent a major surgery which required at least five doctors to try and save me from bleeding to death.

TWO MIRACLES HAPPENED THAT DAY.

The first miracle was when, after 3 hours of surgery, the doctors declared that I was already stable and safe. According to them, this was a miracle since I had already lost so much blood. They almost ran out of ways to stop the bleeding it and they thought I was not going to make it.

The second miracle happened while I was recovering in the hospital room and the discharge order and hospital bill arrived. My husband took a look at it, and upon seeing the sudden expression of shock on his face, I knew it wasn't good news.

Neither of us had health insurance since I was unemployed and my husband worked as a contractor without any benefits. Our savings had already been used up since I had undergone two other surgeries in the past three months prior to that, including a C-section when I gave birth to our youngest son who was then only three months old. Both our parents had also used up all their resources in

helping us with my previous surgeries.

"How are we going to pay for this?" I worriedly asked my husband, who sat by my bedside while in deep thought. He didn't answer. He just invited me to pray with him.

After our prayer, his expression had changed and he said "I know the Lord will provide a way. We have been paying our tithes faithfully." I was surprised at his sudden calmness but I also felt the same comfort and assurance that everything would be alright and there was no need to worry.

A few hours later, while my husband was emailing relatives and friends for possible assistance, one of his clients chatted with him and asked how he was. He relayed to his client what

happened to me and his client replied that he just came home from a temple session where he suddenly had a clear and distinct feeling that the Lord was mindful of my husband,

that He loves him and his family and that the Lord has a blessing in store for us. He then asked how much we still needed to complete the bill. He was very willing to loan us the amount that we still needed.

My husband was amazed at the quick and unexpected answer to our prayers. He didn't know what to say. He thought it was too much of an imposition and did not feel comfortable accepting such a huge amount. His client said it would make him feel better if he would just accept it. He thanked his client and accepted the offer and they made arrangements on how the money would be wired.

Before their conversation ended, his client told him to remember the scripture in D&C 84:88 which says, "...for I will go

before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up." My husband then told me about



Photo courtesy of Felvir Ordinario

what had just happened. To my amazement, all I could say was "that man is indeed an angel."

With tears of joy in our eyes, we again offered a prayer of thanks. We knew that this was Heavenly Father's answer to our prayer and we knew it was one of the blessings of being full tithe-payers.

I was discharged from the hospital that same day and have been healthy ever since. I always thank Heavenly Father for inspiring that man in the temple three years ago to become an instrument in answering our prayers.

I know Heavenly Father is really mindful of us. I know,

without a shadow of doubt, that if we follow the law of tithing, we will receive the blessings contained in Malachi 3:10 - "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." ■

TRYING TO BE LIKE JESUS

"Tithing is for the Lord's church. When I hear about tithing, I think of our Savior Jesus Christ. Our tithing is for Him."



Celestina Alodia A., 3 years old
Legazpi Phils Stake

"Tithing is the money we give to the bishop. It is used to build chapels and temples."



Gwyneth Bautista D. M., 11 years old
Makati Philippines Stake

"Tithing is a commandment from God. When we pay our tithing, Heavenly Father will help provide for us when we need Him to."



Lika Rozene C., 4 years old
Iloilo North Stake

"Tithing is a commandment of God. He is testing us to see if we have faith in Him."



Rhonda Mari Antonette G., 8 years old
Makati Philippines Stake

"Tithing is 10% of what we earn. It's Heavenly Father's and we give it to our bishop. It is used to build our chapels and temples."



J-Laneah S., 5 years old
Pasig Philippines Stake

"Tithing is what we give so we will be blessed. When we pay our tithing we are safe from harm, and we feel the Holy Ghost."



Ranjake G., 11 years old
Makati Philippines Stake