



AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

The Traditions of Our Fathers

By Elder Brent H. Nielson
First Counselor in the Area Presidency

During the past four years, my wife Marcia and I have had the opportunity to visit many different lands with many different cultures. Our travels have taken us from the United States to New Zealand, Australia, Tahiti, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and now the Philippines. As we have met the wonderful Saints in all these nations, a pattern described in the Book of Mormon has become clearer to us. According to my count, the phrase, “traditions of our fathers,” is used in the Book of Mormon 20 times. On some occasions the phrase is used to describe the good traditions of their fathers that led them to have faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ (see Alma 30:13–14). However, many of the references point to “wicked traditions of our fathers,” that led the people away from the teachings of God (see Alma 23:3).

For each of us, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we must analyze those traditions that we

find in our families and in our culture and determine whether those traditions lead us towards God’s teachings or away from them. The culture we are striving to develop is the culture of Jesus Christ.

Because the “traditions of our fathers” can have such a powerful influence on future generations, we must develop traditions in our families, wards and branches that will help our children and grandchildren see the path that leads to eternal life and stay on that path.

The 2013 Philippines Area Goals help us understand the need to “Save the Rising Generation.” We do that as we teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ in our homes and in our wards and branches. However, one of the most effective ways



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to teach them is to establish righteous traditions that will allow them to develop a culture of righteousness. Those traditions include tithing, daily prayer and scripture study and family home evening. It also includes a family tradition that we always attend our meetings on Sunday as we keep the Sabbath day holy.

There are other family and ward or branch traditions that we can develop that will lead our rising generation into safe and peaceful paths. One of those is a tradition of full-time missionary service. Marcia and I have found many families in our travels that

have a tradition of missionary service in their family. The grandparents served missions, the parents served missions and now, because of the “righteous traditions of their fathers,” the children are serving missions.

In our family home evenings we can develop a tradition when our children are still very young, that “in our family, we all serve full-time missions.” This righteous tradition will lead to unimagined blessings. When families have a tradition of serving missions, the heavens open up to them and the Lord showers His goodness upon the children and grandchildren. If your family does not have this tradition, today is the day to start. Set a goal in your next family home evening that all family members will serve full-time missions. It will bless your children and your children’s children for generations to come.

Wards and branches can also develop a tradition of full time missionary service. Many years ago Marcia and I moved to a stake where there were very few young men serving full-time missions. When we arrived there were 12 serving from the entire stake. As time went by, we watched good stake presidents develop a tradition in the stake that every, worthy, able young man would serve a full-time mission. This tradition led to a surprising increase in those who were serving. Over a period of about 15 years, this stake went from 12 full-time missionaries serving to over 60. If you asked me how it was done, my answer would be that they developed a righteous tradition that in that stake, everyone served. This righteous tradition changed the Stake for good and it changed



families for eternity.

There is another righteous tradition that we must develop in our families, wards and branches and that is the tradition of marriage. Marriage is ordained of God (see “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129). Marriage brings more joy and happiness to our lives than anything else we can do. However, in every culture there are wicked traditions of our fathers that keep us from getting married. Those traditions include parents who expect their adult children to support them, instead of marrying; traditions that dictate that a young person can’t marry until he or she is set for life with employment; traditions that supporting younger brothers or sisters is more important than establishing an eternal marriage relationship. All of these traditions of our fathers are keeping our rising generation from fulfilling the measure of their creation and finding joy here in this life.

Therefore, just as we establish righteous traditions for prayer,



Photos courtesy of Daniel Beritong

scripture study, and missions, we must also establish righteous traditions in our families, wards and branches to marry. We encourage temple marriage and we establish traditions in our families that after serving a full-time mission our next goal is to marry the right person, in the right place, with the right authority. We establish traditions in our wards and branches that we honor those young men and young women who return from missionary service and seek to be married in the temple. We encourage them to find a spouse and then we work to help them make their marriages be successful. It must become a righteous tradition for our rising generation here in the Philippines.

Because traditions can influence generations for hundreds and even thousands of years, it is critical that we establish traditions of righteousness. A decision you make today to establish a righteous family tradition can have lasting effects on generations to come. ■

The Hearts of the Children are Turning

By Deo M. Divinagracia

Inside an Internet café, a group of teenagers are glued to their computer monitors as they type and click away. They are unusually quiet, unlike the typical rowdy group of youngsters hooked on the latest online game. In a meetinghouse, young men

2012 total of names added to the FamilyTree by Filipino LDS youth is 13 times higher than the Church average. A total of 114, 924 ordinances were submitted by 56,592 young men and young women from the Philippines Area. That breaks down to roughly two

youth and inspired by them to do more to help further the work of family history here in the Philippines," he added.

Truly inspiring and equally impressive are the following words from our young family history enthusiasts:

"I am glad that now I understand how important Family History work is. Now, instead of just browsing around the Internet or playing online games, I spend time doing family history research online. Also, every time we visit the temple, I feel happy knowing that I have submitted the names of my dead ancestors and I am performing the ordinances of proxy baptism for them. It feels good to know that I am doing my part in saving them."



Lowell Robert S.
Cagayan de Oro Philippines Stake

"It is sometimes hard to look for the names of my ancestors but it is also quite exciting, and I find it challenging. We are lucky because nowadays it is easier to do research because of the Internet. The Church gives us so many resources to help us do the work. We just need to do our part: manage our time and strike a balance between doing genealogy and playing computer games or visiting social networking sites. It



PHOTO BY MYCO CONCEPCION

and young women gather around a microfilm reader as they are shown how to manually search for information on their departed ancestors. In other areas, members and leaders visit the homes of Latter-day Saint youth, bringing laptops and portable broadband WiFi to teach them how to log on to <https://new.familysearch.org> and create their own accounts.

These and similar scenes have been happening all over the country, and as a result the

ordinances submitted by each Filipino LDS youth as compared to other areas where there was only one ordinance submitted between three LDS youth.

Our youth have truly been touched by the Spirit of Elijah, and their hearts are being turned to their fathers in such an amazing way. Manolito Baul, area director for family history, said he didn't believe the news when he first heard of it. "But after I confirmed it, I was so impressed by our



is a nice feeling when you know you are helping your family.”

Anne'I Faith Barola F.
Novaliches Philippines Stake



“It’s empowering to be the one who will create files for my ancestors and later on perform ordinances for them. It is important to personally keep track of the achievements I have made for them. They are my family. This is MY family history.”

Kariza Mae B.
Cauayan Philippines District



“Doing family history work not only helps me learn about my ancestors, it also strengthens my relationship with my parents. They encouraged me to engage in this work. It was very interesting when we discovered that my great-grandparents were tribal leaders here in Mindanao.”



John Kirby P.
Davao City Philippines Stake

“Of course I know what family history is but it was not until I started rolling my own microfilm (the ones I ordered myself) that I began to really understand. The most rewarding experience of it all was when I performed the ordinance of baptism by proxy in the temple for all the names I personally submitted. As I heard their names called, a warm feeling came over me. I know that my ancestors were all happy... and I’m glad I was able to do my part. Today I am not only excited with working on my own family history, I am also active as an Indexer, and I enjoy what I’m doing.”

Ronnel Reduca R.
Cagayan de Oro Philippines Stake



To what do we attribute this astonishing success? Brother Baul credits the persistent hard work of the priesthood leaders, Young Men and Young Women presidencies and family

history workers serving in the 85 stakes and 84 districts of the archipelago.

“The teamwork between the family history center director, the stake Young Men and Young Women presidencies and the high council youth adviser is our secret formula to the success of the work here in our stake. They are very coordinated as they hold various activities that inspire our youth to do family history.”



President Jose L. Plaza
Bacolod Philippines South Stake

“Since the temple is so far from our place, being able to go is a precious gift and is considered an achievement by many. We teach our youth that every activity they participate in should prepare them for the temple. We encourage the youth to be worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost, to be current limited temple recommend holders, to register for an LDS/ FamilySearch account, to have at least 10 to 40 ancestor names submitted for temple ordinances, to be indexers and arbitrators, and to make themselves available for the temple trip schedule so they can perform the ordinances themselves.

“We are grateful to branch and district leaders for monitoring the performance of the youth: keeping track of their attendance in Sunday services, seminary classes, Mutual and other activities.”



Grace M. Castillo
*Family History Director
Cauayan Philippines District*

“The strong leadership of our stake president got us all working on family history. He challenged us and gave us specific assignments. A family history consultant was called for each unit and training seminars were held. He encouraged the bishops to call more consultants to assist in the work. Once the workers were in place, we focused on the youth and conducted workshops for them.

“Success was not immediate, but we held more workshops, included family history in the youth conference programs, and never gave up on them. We did not jump to the conclusion that young people would not be interested. We had faith in them: in their skills and their testimony of the Church. We knew they would feel the Spirit if we kept on teaching and guiding them.”



Ronelldino Frio
Family History High Council Adviser
Novaliches Philippines Stake

“Because we did not have enough computers, we took our youth to internet shops to give them the chance to do Family History work online. Later on, I was surprised to learn that some of them would take their parents to the internet shops to teach them about Family Search.”



Adrian Quitola
Young Men President
Cauayan Philippines District

“Most of the youth did not see how important family history work was at first. In fact, for many, it was more of a ‘requirement’, a burden. Most preferred to play

online games and spend time on social networking sites. But just like the testimony of many other family history workers, once they had a personal experience about the work, once they saw a name ... then another one...and then another one, their feelings began to change. When that happened, everything just began to fall into place ... and the excitement and enthusiasm started the ‘ball rolling’, and there was no turning back.

“Working as a group, as a class (for the YW), or as a quorum (for the YM) also helped a lot. In this sense, positive peer pressure worked! Because many were doing family history and were enjoying it, the ‘fire started to spread’ and soon enough, most of them were ‘anxiously engaged!’”



Maria Christina Itchon-Concepcion
Former Family History Director
Cagayan de Oro Philippines Stake

Truly the Filipino Latter-day Saint youth are heeding the counsel that Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave in the October 2011 general conference:

“I now invite the attention of the young women, young men, and children of the rising generation as I emphasize the importance of the Spirit of Elijah in your lives today.... Your fingers have been trained to text and tweet to accelerate and advance the work of the Lord—not just to communicate quickly with your friends. The skills and aptitude evident among many young people today are a preparation to contribute to the work of salvation.

“I invite the young people of the Church to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. I encourage you to study, to search out your ancestors, and to prepare yourselves to perform proxy baptisms in the house of the Lord for your kindred dead (see D&C 124:28–36).” ■



PHOTO BY DEO DIVINAGRACIA

TRYING TO BE LIKE JESUS

“I love going to Primary because we learn new songs, we have fun activities, and we gain friends. It helps me to be confident, know more about Jesus Christ, the prophets, and the Church. The lessons taught help me to choose the right and gain a testimony of gospel truths.”



Dominique Danielle Therese B., 6 years old
Makati Philippines Stake

“I love going to Primary because every time I attend my class, I learn more about Heavenly Father’s plan for us and how we can come back to Him. I learn more about Jesus Christ and His gospel. I also love to sing Primary songs, play with other children, and listen to my Primary teachers.”



Jasmine M. O., 7 years old
Malolos Philippines Stake

“I attend the Primary class because I know I will learn good things, especially about how to share with others. I also learn that the scriptures are true and are the words of God. By attending primary I will gain a testimony of Jesus Christ, that He truly is our friend and He died for us so we could go back to our Father in Heaven...AND I love the prizes I get every time I give the correct



answer to my teacher’s questions!”

Esther Kairra C. N., 8 years old
Bacolod Philippines Stake

“I love going to Primary because I learn many things from it. I learn about Jesus Christ and the things that He did. I am happy to be in Primary because I see my friends there. We sing songs and play games. We also have a kind teacher.”



Sherlaine S. J., 7 years old
Novaliches Philippines Stake

“I love going to Primary because I always see the picture of Jesus Christ when we enter the classroom. Sister Neneng always places the picture of Jesus Christ on top of the table. My teacher always gives good lessons, like telling the truth and being patient. I also get to read the scriptures in front of the class.”



Jared Ramyll D. C., 6 years old
Makati Philippines Stake

“I love going to Primary to know more about my Savior Jesus Christ.”

Daniela Laurice F., 6 years old
Gapan Philippines Stake



“I love going to Primary because I love my class, my friends, and I love my teacher telling us stories about Jesus Christ. We also enjoy drawing and coloring pictures from the scripture stories.”



Eve Jordin B., 5 yrs old
Fairview Philippines Stake

“I love going to Primary because I am with my Primary teacher and church mates, which makes me feel good and feel the love of the Savior. I’m also happy because I learn more about our Savior, Jesus Christ. Attending primary is very useful in my personal life. I really love going to Primary!”



Joash Allen L. C., 8 years old
Marikina Philippines Stake

“I love going to Primary because I learn many things about Jesus Christ.”



Gian A., 11 years old
Parañaque Philippines Stake

Heading His Counsel Without Delay

By Deo M. Divinagracia

Young single adults all over the country were abuzz with excitement after they attended the area broadcast last January 12. The presentation of the 2013 Area Goals proved to be a turning point for a lot of those who attended.

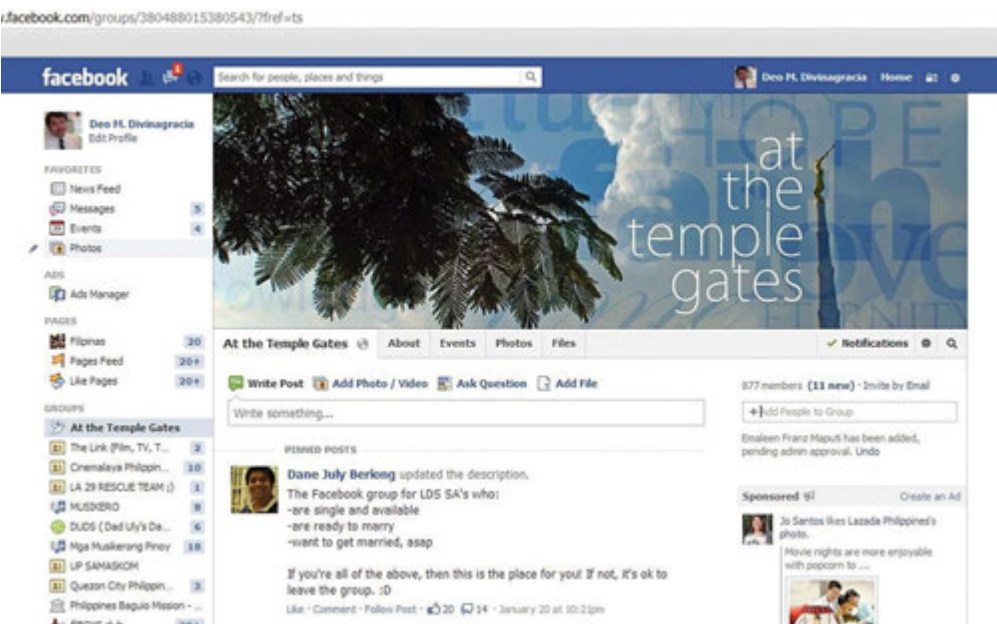
Of particular interest is the goal to “Save the Rising Generation” with emphasis on temple marriage. The counsel to prioritize marriage in the temple without delay was truly inspired. It struck a responsive chord in a lot of young people and set a lot of things in motion.

marry can meet others who share the same goal. “I was touched by the area goal to “Increase the Number of Young Single Adults Marrying in the Temple,” and the Church leaders’ untiring efforts to remind the YSA of this goal,” explains Dane.

Other YSA responded to Dane’s initiative. They were thrilled and many commented that the timing of the group’s creation couldn’t have been better. They were excited, expressed hope, and said that it might just be the thing they need—another venue for meeting a potential eternal companion.

forum posts and other discussions, leading to private conversations and hopefully dates and other getting-to-know activities. Plans are afoot for a meet and mingle service activity in Metro Manila, and those in other areas are expected to follow suit.

While some members admit that being in the group is a bit intimidating because of the obvious purpose of its existence, it is still wonderful to see the faith and righteousness expressed by everyone in the group. Aside from inspiring each other in finding an eternal companion, their diligence in keeping God’s commandments, optimism and determination are evident in their discussions. This has made social networking a useful tool in the path to perfection and eternal glory.



ONLINE ADVOCACY

Among those who felt the urgency of the message was Dane July Beriong, a 24-year old returned missionary from Quezon City. It prompted him to create At the Temple Gates, a Facebook group where young single adults who are ready and willing to

Membership has reached almost 900 in just two months, with members coming from all over the archipelago.

There is word of a brother and a sister who met each other in the group and are currently dating. Several others continue to interact and meet new people through



Photo by Noel Maglaque



Photo by Noel Maglaque

Ammon and Cielo had the best Valentine date when they got married at the Manila Temple last February 14.

REAL TIME COMPLIANCE

Like Dane Beriong, Ammon Guanzon also felt like the Lord was speaking to him directly during the area broadcast. The counsel of the Area Presidency inspired him to ask Cielo Aquino to forego her call to serve a full-time mission in Hongkong and instead get married in the temple as soon as possible.

Cielo, who grew up wanting to serve a mission, fasted and prayed about the offer. She was answered with the prompting to accept Ammon's proposal. "Choosing between two good things was definitely tough, but I chose to follow the promptings of the Spirit. As a result, a miracle happened: the Lord softened the heart of my parents and they gave us their blessing. It was indeed the hardest, the bravest, yet, the

best decision I have made in my life," she declares with a smile.

Their families joined in council and February 14 was set as the wedding date. With barely three weeks to prepare, family and friends rolled up their sleeves and helped put together a wedding they didn't think was possible. Through all the unconditional love and overwhelming support they received, Ammon and Cielo felt Heavenly Father's hand preparing the way for them.

More than the logistics of a temple wedding and the subsequent reception program, it was overcoming the challenge of wrong traditions that was difficult for both Ammon and Cielo. They were too young... Cielo should serve her mission and Ammon should go work abroad first. "We had to defy them bravely and

have faith that keeping God's commandment at the soonest possible time was the right thing to do. Yes, we will get married eventually, grow old together and eventually have a family, so why delay? I cannot afford to have these blessings taken away from me just because I continually put off God's commandment to get sealed in the temple," shares Ammon.

The newlyweds express their undying gratitude to their parents for raising them in the gospel and empowering them to make the right decisions.

They advise other young single adults to foster the attitude of unquestioning obedience. "You will stand worthy to receive the blessings of heaven if you do. If you obey right away, you will receive blessings right away!" ■