



## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### My Current Temple Recommend— A Precious Possession

By Elder Ian S. Ardern  
Philippines Area Presidency

How very fortunate we are to have two temples in the Philippines and another announced for construction. To be so blessed is a mark of the growth of the Church in the Philippines, the Lord's love for the people and of the faith of many members. The Lord is establishing His Church on these Islands and yet there is still much to do.

Of course, to truly benefit from these temples we must use them. An increase in temple participation will allow us to make sacred covenants that will help us to stay strong in the face of adversity, help to build our personal testimony of Jesus Christ as our Savior, and make available the ordinances of salvation and exaltation to our deceased relatives and others.

Baptism and confirmation into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints brings some of the blessings of membership, but until we have entered the temple and have received all the blessings which await us there,

we have not obtained everything the Lord has to offer. The greatest blessings of Church membership are those blessings which we receive in the temples of God.

To be able to attend the temple you will need the precious gift of a current temple recommend. This gift should be sought whether you can attend the temple regularly or not. You will increase in spiritual power by giving an account of your worthiness to your priesthood leaders, obtaining a temple recommend and in carrying it with you. I know that as I open my wallet and see my temple recommend it reminds me of who I am and what the Lord expects of me.

LDS homes in the Philippines will be spiritually stronger as



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parents and youth qualify for a temple recommend; a full recommend for adults and a limited use recommend for young men, young women and young single adults. If you are of the age to qualify for a temple recommend but "something" is holding you back, determine now to resolve that "something" and qualify yourself to enter the temple.

What are the standards for recommend holders? The Psalmist reminds us:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." (Psalms 24:3-4)

Clean hands and a pure heart are determined by our belief in God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ and in the Holy Ghost and

the reality of the Atonement, our faithfulness to covenants and obedience to commandments and our willingness to serve and attend Church meetings. The standard is one the Lord has set and is not so high that it cannot be achieved. All of us can be current temple recommend holders.

In my teenage years I saw the financial sacrifices many Pacific Islanders made to travel from their Island homes to the temple in Hamilton, New Zealand, and I have seen some of that same sacrifice in the Philippines. It appears that there has almost

always been some degree of sacrifice associated with temple attendance. For some it is the struggle of finance and for others the struggle of becoming a full tithing payer or obedience to the Word of Wisdom or of making the time to attend. Whatever the struggle, overcoming it will be worth the rich reward of being worthy to hold a temple recommend and attending the temple as often as you can.

President Thomas S. Monson has reminded us that, “If you *have* not yet been to the temple or if you have been but currently do not qualify for a recommend,

there is no more important goal for you to work toward than being worthy to go to the temple” (“The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” *Liahona*, May 2011, 93).

The Area Presidency joins with President Monson in encouraging those with temple recommends to use them, for those who once held a recommend but no longer do, to qualify themselves once more and for those who have yet to receive their first recommend to prepare themselves for that important demonstration of their discipleship and conversion to Christ. ■



Photo by Noel Maglaque

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## Rescued

Written by Gelene Tobias Domagsang, as told by Baldwin R. Felipe

I was inactive for 22 years. But I have a strong testimony that, just like me, there is hope for those who go astray.

I was 15 when I was baptized on 30 January 1987. My friend, who was a member of another denomination, became interested in the Church and invited the missionaries to his home. He was the one who encouraged me to also investigate the Church. I was baptized in the Gubat Branch, Sorsogon.

I went to Manila in April 1988 to continue my schooling. I then experienced persecutions and discouragement from my relatives about the Church. Soon, I stopped going to

church. I started breaking some of the commandments. During this time I finished my school, got married and had three kids.

For 22 years, I was inactive—until one afternoon, two women came to my sari-sari store to buy ice cream. Little did I know that this would change everything.

The women seemed very happy and excited. I became curious and asked for whom were they buying the ice cream. They said that they were giving it to a missionary friend who was celebrating a birthday. They pointed across the street and I recognized two full-time missionaries wearing black nametags.

The two sisters introduced me to the missionaries and since then, these missionaries would come to our home two times a week to teach us about the gospel. At first I was asking myself if it would still be possible to come back to the Church. I have been inactive for many years. However, other members of the Church also started to visit us and through their help, I gained the courage to attend church again in August 2010.

I continued to attend Church until I was given a calling in the elders quorum. That same year, my wife and eldest son were baptized. My sister and nephew also joined the Church. When my daughter



Bishop Baldwin R. Felipe and his family are now very active members of Lagro Ward, Fairview Philippines Stake



Photo courtesy of Felipe Family

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turned eight she was also baptized.

I felt very happy and secure that my entire family partook of the gospel. With the help and support of leaders and Church members, my wife and I were endowed on 17 May 2012 and were sealed as a family in the temple. I will never forget the joy that I felt when I saw my children dressed in white like little angels.

I was called as a bishop in January 2013. As a product of reactivation, I have a really strong testimony of our area emphasis, “Rescue the One.” As we commit ourselves and double the efforts of each member of the Church, I know that we will be able to identify the needs of “returning members” and help them return to the fold.

Indeed, just like me— there is hope for those who go astray. ■

## Bringing Them Back to the Fold

By Roxanne J. Montojo

Priesthood holders play a vital role in our Sunday services, in the administration of the Church and in the performance of gospel ordinances necessary for our salvation and exaltation. With the introduction of the area goals to the Filipino Saints, “rescue” efforts by all members in the country

have been the focus in all our meetings, trainings and activities. Great is the emphasis given in the reactivation of priesthood holders.

Priesthood leaders from various stakes and districts in the country are engaged in the great effort to rescue as many less-active priesthood holders as they can. Some of them have shared insights to the steps they have taken in their stakes of Zion to rescue, and eventually be able to participate in temple activities.

What has worked in the Davao Stake was executing the basics that were taught in the past: first is knowing our brothers who have been lost; second is focusing on a few; third is reaching out to them and fourth is responding to their needs. Since the area emphasis is to “rescue,” all of their meetings have been aligned to that direction.

Our stake presidency regularly meets with the bishops to ask them to account for the people we are rescuing. Some of our bishops have achieved success in bringing back priesthood holders by focusing on only five at a time and ensuring that they are visited monthly by the assigned home teachers.



Being able to find out how the needs of those reactivated priesthood holders were met by the bishops and the quorum members play a critical role in bringing back and retaining them.

## Philip A. Tan

Counselor, Davao Philippines Stake

Brother Eugene Ferrer has served in the bishopric for a time and has recently been called to preside over Sta. Cruz Ward. He also shared his insight on the approach they made to rescue his brethren.

“The most effective approach to bring back less-active priesthood holders in our ward is to give them a responsibility. Responsibility is an impetus that impels a priesthood holder to be more committed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is motivated to work for the kingdom of God because he is inspired at the same time he inspires and motivates other priesthood holders because he works,” shared Brother Ferrer.

“We extended callings to those who are so-called ‘low hanging fruit’ or less-active priesthood holders who are ready to get into activity. Most accepted the call and are now very



diligent in magnifying their calling. We then recommit them to pay full tithes and give generous fast offerings. Obedience to these laws has developed selflessness in our newly activated priesthood holders. And lastly, we prepare them to renew or receive temple covenants. For the last few months, our ward has experienced an increase in temple activities especially from the newly activated priesthood holders such as sealing, renewal of temple recommend, personal endowment, and other temple activities," shared Brother Ferrer.

**Eugene G. Ferrer**  
*Bishop, Sta. Cruz Ward  
 Manila Philippines Stake*

The priesthood leaders in the Butuan stake have a personalized way of bringing a less-active priesthood holder back to activity. Vicente Pag-ong, second counselor in the stake presidency, shared that they try to build a strong relationship between a less-active and the assigned home teacher. This is done by their regular visits supported by their presiding priesthood leader. They are also particular with the time they set with their less-active priesthood



holder and make sure that they come on time. Building a relationship of trust has been a factor they realized to be effective in all their rescue efforts. They also show love and concern, letting the less active priesthood holder know how they are needed in the Church to help in the work of the Lord.

**Vicente Pag-ong**  
*Second Counselor  
 Butuan Philippines Stake*

In Bayugan Ward, Butuan Stake, Bishop Hector Macalalag sees to it that every member family has a home teacher. The members of the ward also practice ward monthly visits. Home teachers also have their monthly visits to their assigned families depending on the schedule they have set. He also said that their stake has this so-called **"every home should have a Liahona and a complete set of scriptures"** program which they have long adopted and practiced. Bayugan ward found this to be effective in retention since it is easy to commit them to family and personal scripture study. They also give the Church magazine as a gift and send out invitation cards and pay a visit to the less-active priesthood



holder in all their Church activities and firesides. Lastly, planned sacrament meetings will make a meaningful Sabbath. "I felt the Spirit, and am coming back next Sunday," shared one returning priesthood holder.

**Hector Macalalag**  
*Bishop, Bayugan Ward  
 Butuan Philippines Stake*

As priesthood brethren, we have special opportunities to serve our fellow priesthood holders and help them come back and stay active in the church. One example is the opportunity to show our love for them. In addition to helping them in time of need and communicating their needs to priesthood leaders so that they can be properly addressed, we can also show our love through the little things. As President Ezra Taft Benson taught, the little things can mean so much to a family. Being aware of their birthdays, the names of their family members and appropriately showing our support during important occasions in their lives can help them feel our love for them and make them want to go back and remain active in Church. When we show them



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we love them, they will feel our Heavenly Father's love for them through our efforts.

## **Matthew M. Obial**

*Elders Quorum President  
Quirino Second Ward, Quezon City  
South Philippines Stake*

In our ward, we have learned that if we want to bring back our less-active priesthood brethren, it takes the efforts of more than just the home teachers. Bringing our priesthood holders back requires the help of the entire ward council. We have found three ways that work well and have remarkable results.



As a ward council, we first identify the priesthood holders that we hope to reactivate according to priorities – those who have already gone to the temple, brethren who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and brethren who are potential Melchizedek Priesthood holders. Second, we assign them strong home teachers who know them personally. Third, as members of the ward council we make a commitment to consistently and religiously reach out to our less-active priesthood holders.

## **Febian Cacho**

*Bishop, Quezon City First Ward*

## *Quezon City Philippines Stake*

As ward missionaries, we can also do our part to help reactivate our priesthood brethren.



Reactivation plays a big part in missionary work, as missionaries can sometimes find people to teach among the families of less-active brethren. Also, it is sad to see recent converts become less active even before they have the opportunity to hold the priesthood and be blessed by it. In our ward, ward missionaries contribute to priesthood reactivation efforts in different ways.

During our coordination meetings, we make sure that our less-active brethren are given fellowshippers who are near their age or share their interests. For example, a less active young single adult (YSA) brother is assigned fellow YSAs to fellowship them in Church and during activities. We make sure that less-active young men are involved in activities that can help them associate with their peers who are active in the Church and have the opportunity to establish friendships with them. For example, we currently hold basketball games in our stake that provide the opportunity

for priesthood brethren to associate and strengthen each other. Aside from visiting our less-active brethren, we also invite them to join us in visiting other brethren like them. We have found that as they listen to the testimonies of those who are with them during these visits, they often find an opportunity to bear testimony as well. This strengthens those they are with, those they are visiting and also allows them to find the strength to be active themselves. ■

## **Arnold Fernandez**

*Assistant Ward Mission Leader  
Quirino First Ward, Quezon City  
South Philippines Stake*

## **Pateros 1<sup>st</sup> Ward Saints: To the Rescue**

By Ma. Teresa  
Canadalla- Pangilanin

Following the counsel of the Area Presidency, Pateros Ward, Pasig Philippines Stake selected 15 less-active families. Involving each auxiliary, each family was taught and visited weekly. Following this pattern they successfully increased their sacrament attendance in 2012.

## **PLAN TOGETHER**

The bishopric was organized. They worked and planned with the full-time sister missionaries. "We reviewed

the ward membership records, pondered carefully, and thoughtfully planned the best reactivation program the ward needed," shared Bishop Jay-R Sales.

Full-time missionaries and assigned members traced less-active members' addresses. Bishop Sales led the visit to the less-active with his wife. His prayers were granted when the Lord sent move-in members to assist.

### **FAST AND PRAY TOGETHER**

Bishop Sales also shared that he learned that success comes from much fasting and prayer. He took it as a challenge to fast each week and to pray daily. "I did see the results and shared it with the ward leaders then eventually with the ward members. Surprisingly, members became more mature in the gospel while we are at the peak of ward growth," Bishop Sales said.

### **ALL SHOULDERS TO THE WHEEL**

"Brethren, the world is in need of your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save." (Thomas S. Monson, "To the Rescue," *Ensign*, May 2001)

During each Sunday when reactivated members come, their visiting and home teachers take time to sit with them and fellowship them. They encourage these members



Photo courtesy of Sales Family

to hold family home evening each week.

"As a bishop, my personal goal is to fellowship each member by visiting them in their houses, particularly the newly baptized, transferees and inactive. There was one Sunday, after sacrament meeting, I approached a family that looked new to me. They said they have been inactive for about 20 years. When I visited them, I felt their excitement. They uttered that that was the very first time a bishop came to visit their family," said Bishop Sales.

Bishop Sales moved into Pateros 1<sup>st</sup> in July of 2010. He saw that the ward needed extra help in leadership, reactivation and retention. He prayed and asked the Lord what assistance

he could extend. The answer was clear – home teaching. It was also a blessing to have two American couple missionaries (temple workers) in the ward that greatly helped in taking care of the welfare of each ward member. By June 2012, average attendance was 133; by July - 140; August - 174; and September - 185. Based on past records, this was the highest attendance achieved by Pateros 1<sup>st</sup> ward. Pateros pioneers asked Bishop Sales how this positive change happened to which he simply answered – that's the power of home and visiting teaching. Members are moved as they see our ward growing and reaping blessings. Truly, numbers represent people – people who are precious in the eyes of God. ■

# “Arise and Shine Forth”

By Eliza Philline Tan

In a world of darkness,  
In a crowd of selfishness,  
Keep your standards all the way;  
Arise and shine forth, light the way.

In a time of confusion and destruction;  
The enemy seizing a losing generation;  
Don't give up, don't ever stop;  
Arise and shine forth; be at the top.

In a time when weakness blocks your way;  
And trials make hope seem far away;  
When all you can do is frown;  
Arise and shine forth, don't let them bring you down.

Arise! You are a child of God.  
Endure! Hold on to the rod.  
Shine through the starless night;  
Arise and shine forth; share your light.



Photo by Noel Maglaque

## Call for Submissions



The *Liahona* needs children's submissions for Our Page. Children ages 3 to 12 can submit drawings, photos, testimonies, and experiences. Drawings may be of their homes, families, the world around them, temples, scripture stories—almost any subject. However, no drawings of the Savior, please. Please include the child's name, age, and gender and ward and stake or branch and district name. Also, parental permission to publish the submission must be included (email is acceptable). Submissions may be made in any language, and can be made online at [liahona.lds.org](http://liahona.lds.org); by email to [liahona@ldschurch.org](mailto:liahona@ldschurch.org) with "Our Page" in the subject line; or by mail to:

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