



AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE



Overcoming Tragedy

When super typhoon Yolanda struck the Philippines with the resultant loss of thousands of homes and lives many had cause to reflect on the tragedies we experience. The loss of employment, the death of a loved one or the missing out on a job opportunity; in their own way they are ‘typhoons’ that cause some pain and anguish.

We came into mortality knowing we would be tested and cheered at the chance. There has never been a people that have been spared from adversity which are the tests of mortality. Scripture is replete with examples of great men and women who have faced adversity. Abraham was called upon to sacrifice his son and Sariah left her urban home to dwell in a tent in the wilderness. The Lord reminded Moses that the trial of his desert wandering was for a purpose, “And thou shalt remember all the way

which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and prove [test] thee, to know what was in thine heart (Deut. 8:2). Some trials are particularly challenging in their physical and emotional demands and on such occasions we can take strength by remembering that others have successfully completed the path of adversity you may be traveling.

With the sting of adversity, some throw up their hands in despair and turn from God and yet others, with faithful resilience, turn to God to be sustained by His healing hand and the helping hands of His servants. I know of few examples where the Lord takes adversity from us. He knows that personal growth comes through overcoming tribulation and His loves is such that we are not abandoned but on asking Him on high in faith are given the power to overcome adversity



By Elder
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and consequently to become what Christ would have us become.

How we respond to adversity shows what is in our hearts. Joseph Smith was wrongfully imprisoned in Liberty Jail and the Lord told him that his afflictions “shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7). The Lord reminded the Prophet Joseph that when endured; glory and blessings follow tribulation (see D&C 58:3-4). In the midst of affliction we may wish to do without the trial but my experience has been that as I have stayed close to God my trials have ultimately been for my good.

Modern prophets have also spoken of the tribulation we face in mortality. President Ezra Taft Benson said, “No cross, no crown. No gall, no glory. No thorns, no throne.” President David O McKay added that “There is no development of character without resistance; there is no growth of spirituality without overcoming.” [Conference Report October, 1945] President Monson has taught that “faith forged in the furnace of trials and tears is marked by trust and testimony.” [Conference Report, 1987] When endured well, suffering brings saintliness.

The Lord does not expect us to bear our burdens alone. He pleaded with us to

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee” (Psalms 55:22) and Alma the Younger taught his son Helaman that “whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles and their afflictions” and finally the Lord said to Joseph Smith, “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” (D&C 121:7-10).

When the ‘typhoons’ of life make land fall, and they will, accept them for what they are, turn and face God so He may help to lighten the load and with all the determination you can muster hold your head high and move onward and forward with faith and courage. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught, “The Lord knows our bearing capacity, both to coping and to comprehending and He will not give us more to bear than we can manage at that moment; though to us it may seem otherwise.” [Conference Report, October 1982]

I have learned that Filipinos are a faithful, courageous and resilient people and that the promise that the Messiah will come with ‘healing in His wings’ (Malachi 4:2) is a promise for each of you in your moments of greatest despair. ■

General Authorities Visit the Philippines

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy together with his wife Kathy visited the Philippines from 25 October – 04 November 2013. The brethren visited different parts of the Philippines and conducted priesthood leadership trainings, young single adult devotionals and missionary meetings. They also presided over the mission presidents' seminar. A special trip was made to the island of Bohol where Elders Andersen and Clayton met with Governor Edgardo Chatto and Bishop Leonardo Medroso.

CEBU

Elder Neil Andersen visited Cebu accompanied by Elder Abenir Pajaro, Area Seventy, conducted a leadership conference, missionary and young single adult devotionals. Elder Andersen spoke words of comfort and assurance as he met members who had been recently struck with a 7.2 magnitude earthquake that left widespread devastation not only in Cebu but more so in the nearby island of Bohol. Elder Andersen first met with the stake presidencies and bishops belonging within the mission jurisdiction of Cebu and Cebu East missions and gave specific instructions to prioritize the giving of relief operations to members who had lost loved ones and homes due to the strong earthquake. He gathered the leaders from Bohol and extended to them the love of President Thomas Monson and told them that his direct order from the prophet is to make sure that the members are well cared for and loved during this difficult time.



FULL-TIME MISSIONARY FIRESIDE

“Time goes through, time flies, time marches on,” were the first words that Elder Andersen spoke to more than 300 full-time missionaries of the combined Cebu and Cebu East Philippines Missions during the special fireside with them. In his address, Elder Andersen asked the missionaries to love the people that they teach and to make sure that they create opportunities to meet them, serve them and teach them the doctrines of Jesus Christ. “Has your understanding of the Savior increased your love for others?” asked Elder Andersen as he looked each missionary in the eye. He further expounded on the message “the merits, mercy and grace of Christ” which he emphasized should be the central focus of missionary teaching among the investigators and those who had been recently baptized. “Don’t you ever be afraid to say to the people that you teach that there is no other way except through Christ,” emphasized Elder Andersen. He further declared “As missionaries

you experience challenges, lived a life you are not used to, required to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ as a young person – only through the grace of Christ you will be able to do all of them.” Elder Andersen concluded by challenging the full-time missionaries to work hard to “see the unseen” referring to the potentials of every person they come across with in their mission. “Investigators can only see what can be seen, but with your help they could see way past what they are not to what they could become when they receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Elder Vusoniceva, assistant to the mission president of Cebu Philippines mission said that after hearing the words of Elder Andersen, “I feel more motivated to become the missionary that Jesus Christ wants me to be. His message made me see the unseen and I am excited to share this with the people I share the gospel with.”

Young Single Adults Devotional
“Don’t be afraid to get married.” were the bold words that Elder



Andersen spoke to the young single adult audience. “Don’t be afraid of the future because the future is bright. Don’t be afraid to venture out. Don’t be afraid to fall in love,” continued Elder Andersen in his remarks. In this special meeting Elder Andersen took time to encourage those who are preparing themselves to marry in the temple of God to continue to believe in the promise that as sons and daughters of God we are entitled to His unlimited blessings.

“Do not undercut the love of God for His children. He knows you and He knows who you could become. Do not think of yourself less.” He also encouraged everyone to engage into worthwhile causes bigger than themselves. As the fireside continues, Elder Andersen also addressed the economic aspect of the group. “Do not be afraid of work. Be willing to work and learn how to work. Make yourself learn how to do something very well. By doing this you will not be afraid of becoming poor.” He concluded by saying, “Believe in the Savior Jesus Christ. Believe that He lives because He does.”

Mandaue Stake Special Members Meeting

As members of Mandaue stake prepare to meet Elder Andersen during a special Sunday meeting, everyone was also busy preparing to pack the rest of the 4000 relief goods that will be distributed to the earthquake victims of Bohol. Elder Andersen focused his message in the principle of discipleship which meant that everyone deserves to receive help from others especially in times of great need. “We all deserve to know that as members of the true church, there is always

an individual or family that will be there when we need them.” He further declared that every member deserves to have food on the table, roof over their head and clothes on their back. To achieve this Elder Andersen emphasized obedience to the law of tithing and in the giving of generous fast offering. “Saints in Cebu must also be heavily engaged in temple work. Four generations of your dead relatives must receive their temple ordinances now that the Cebu Temple is just around the corner.” Towards the end of his message, Elder Andersen left a powerful challenge to the saints. “Think of Christ. Make your prayers more contemplative. Kneel down and pray like Enos.” Elder Andersen then proceeded to oversee the repacking of the relief goods which will be shipped to Bohol the same day.

BOHOL

Special Members’ Meeting

Members of Calape and Tagbilaran districts were gathered for a special member meeting where the general authorities shared messages of faith and hope amidst this challenging time of their lives.

Elder Andersen expressed his love and care to the Saints and extends the love of President Thomas S. Monson, his counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Andersen emphasized that we cannot eliminate difficulty in our lives, that the challenges we experience is a part of our mortality. He quoted one of President’s Monson’s message on how difficulties in life should be faced, “Whenever we are inclined to feel burdened, down with the

blows of life let us remember that others have passed the same way, have endured and then have overcome.”

He said that their most important visit is right now. He said that: “We are here to reassure you and bring you the Lord’s love, to let you know that He knows you and He is watching over you.” He further encouraged the Saints in Bohol to put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and on those things that last beyond this life.

He concluded by expressing his respect and admiration to the people in Bohol for their faith and goodness. He gave a blessing that they may have roofs over their heads, food on their table and clothes on their back. He also blessed them that they will not want for the necessities of life and that they will find optimism and happiness.

Elder Clayton reminded the Saints that Heavenly Father does not promise that we will be spared from disasters. He shared the story of King Benjamin that when there were problems he didn’t seat back and thought that another person will do it. He got up and walked and headed the army. “We are expected to do things of our volition and with our own strength. Heaven expects us to do our part. To help other people as you help yourselves,” concluded Elder Clayton.

Elder Nielson expressed gratefulness to the members who have been mindful of their brothers and sisters and have gone out of their way to help those who like them were victims of the earthquake. He shared a message that when you have faith there is no fear. He admonished them



to move forward with faith. He reminded the members that when we reach out to our Savior Jesus Christ he takes hold of us. Elder Andersen's message and blessing inspired the following members to continue being faithful:

"For me I am happy that the apostle is here. I am thankful for the message he shared to the members of the Church. He gave a very nice message and we were able to understand that we need to continue to be faithful and remain worthy."

Malou Lorzano
Calape Philippines District

"We are happy that we heard the Apostle speak who came here in our place in Bohol and we know that he was sent to comfort those who were affected in the tragedy and we are very thankful that they strengthen us in our situation now and to our Heavenly Father who always gives us guidance in our everyday tasks. I know that this is being done in order to strengthen the Calape Saints who suffered the tragedy."

Brother Saputon
Calape Philippines District

"I was touched by their testimonies. We are so grateful that Tagbilaran was spared. We are inspired to help more and be able to give hope to those who were affected. Although we already participated in a community service in the town of Buenavista yesterday I felt that it was not enough. We have to help more so we are joining the community service projects tomorrow. Although we

are blessed that we were spared but we feel the sorrow of our brothers and sisters in other places and their talks and messages inspired us to help more."

Brother del Pilar
Tagbilaran Philippines District

"I felt comforted by his message about the earthquake. I liked what he said that we cannot predict the negative things that will happen in our lives but still there is hope because we know as what the scripture say that no matter what will happen to us whether we are awake or sleeping I know we will be with God. I am thankful that he is visiting us. I feel the love of our Savior for us."

Maryjane Adlaon
Tagbilaran Philippines District

Meeting with Local Leaders
Elder Andersen met with Bohol Governor Edgardo Chatto after the special members meeting and the governor and two of his council members welcomed him. Elder Andersen expressed his sadness over the destruction that happened to the beautiful island of Bohol. However, he noted the optimism that radiated in the eyes of the people of the island. Governor Chatto expressed the same optimism that the province



will eventually be back on its feet. Elder Andersen informed the governor of the humanitarian help extended by the NGO arm of the church, LDS Charities. He presented to the governor samples of food and hygiene kits, which were distributed, as well as made a donation of 40 water purification bottles, which can be used by the governor's staff.

Elder Andersen also met with Bishop Leonardo Medroso of the Diocese of Tagbilaran. Both Church leaders expressed the need to be shepherds of the temporal and spiritual needs of the people. Elder Andersen and Elder Clayton shared the good partnership of the Church with the Catholic Church. Elder Clayton also shared his experience of working and interacting with Cardinal Francis then. The meeting concluded with both leaders offering a word of prayer for the province of Bohol.

Helping Hands

Close to a thousand volunteers gathered at the Tagbilaran district center where they were divided into seven groups that were dispatched in the areas of Loon, Maribojoc, Antequera and Sagbayan (the towns which suffered the most devastation). All of the volunteers had to cross the Abatan River through "dragon boats" because the earthquake destroyed the bridge.





The Helping Hands volunteers were prominent in their yellow vests as they helped clean schools and market places as well as distributed food and hygiene kits.

One group of volunteers was assigned to help clear Ricardo Saballa's (District President of Calape Philippines District) home, which was completely destroyed by the earthquake. After a horrifying experience that almost took the lives of his wife and son when the roof of their house collapsed, President Saballa went on and ministered to the members of his district, 52 of which lost their homes as well.

President Saballa temporarily lives in a tent in one of the Church's meetinghouses together with other families from his district.

MANILA

Elder Andersen and Elder Clayton conducted two separate young single adult devotionals in Quezon City and Makati City. Both devotionals were attended by hundreds of YSAs.

Elder Andersen visited the YSAs in the Philippines Quezon City and Philippines Quezon City North missions last 31 October 2013 at the Aurora Chapel in Quezon City.

Elder Andersen addressed those who attended by reminding them that the Lord loves them. "Every righteous Latter-day Saint deserves to know that they are not alone," he said. The visiting apostle also taught the Saints that they should always aim for excellence and not settle for mediocrity.

But what touched the YSAs was Elder Andersen's remarks that reminded them at we must always see ourselves as sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father

whatever our circumstances in life are.

"We are all meant to fly because we are children of God. Sometimes we are too comfortable with mediocrity and don't believe in ourselves. But we can do things well and we can do things better than other people's expectations because there is a divine potential within us," remarked Chesca Laguna of Quezon City Stake when she was asked what did she learned at the devotional. "This applies in all areas of our lives, from sharing the gospel to the quality of our work and the way we deal with other people," she added.

"Despite differences, it is a perfect creation God hath made to fly united in Christ," Faith Oren of Fairview Stake said as she commented on what she likes most in Elder Andersen's message. "I learned that all of us should be continually striving to become Christlike," added Reinallen Galanta of Caloocan Stake.

Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy addressed some 200 young single adults at the Buendia Chapel in Makati City last October 31, 2013. Elder Clayton was accompanied by his wife Kathy and Elder Larry Echo Hawk, Second Counselor in the Philippines Area Presidency, and his wife Terry.

Speaking to young single adults from stakes in the surrounding area, Elder Clayton began the meeting by teaching about the difference between good and better questions and questions that had greater spiritual impact. He then invited the single adults to participate in the meeting by asking questions.

The questions ranged from why some returned missionaries

or members sometimes fail to live the way they should, how to help those who struggle to repent and change, how to help a loved one whose testimony has faltered and has begun associating with another faith, if personal revelation can come in dreams, how to go about making decisions, how to live the gospel in a workplace where violations to the law of chastity and the word of wisdom are rampant and how to go about getting an education, marriage and raising a family after serving a mission.

In answer to the question about members failing to live the way they should, Elder Clayton quoted several scriptures on the subject of conversion. He discussed the difference of being converted into the Church (seeing how good it is and all the good the Church does) as compared to being converted unto the Lord (wanting to do things His way and according to His will). He cited the account of the converted Lamanites who buried their weapons of rebellion when they were converted. He said that just as Enoch's Zion in the Old Testament was taken up "in process of time", conversion takes time. He counseled the young single adults to read the scriptures, pray, fast and be the best they could be.

Elder Clayton, teaching about helping a loved one who has begun associating with another faith, likened the Church and the fullness of the gospel to a piano with all keys intact and functioning. Other faiths have some keys, with some faiths having more keys than others. According to him, one could play a melody using the incomplete keys, as long as the missing keys were not needed in that particular melody. He said that individual



circumstances would vary, but he counseled about fasting and praying for that loved one, quoting 2 Nephi 28:30, that God gives “line upon line, precept upon precept”.

While Elder Clayton led the discussion, he also invited his wife Kathy, Elder Echo Hawk and his wife, Terry, as well as the Area Seventies in attendance to share their counsel.

Sister Clayton shared ways on how to help others to repent and change. According to her, those who have had great spiritual experiences are often targeted with greater temptation. She advised the single adults to always be on guard, that love is a better motivator to help others to repent and change and to always include Heavenly Father in the process by always starting and ending with a prayer.

Elder Echo Hawk, commenting on what has been discussed, cited the parable of the sower and talked about the need for gospel roots to be deep. He reminded the young single adults about President Thomas S. Monson’s call to rescue the one. In response to a question about personal revelation, Sister Echo Hawk shared her experience when she awoke in the middle of the night with an impression about one of their sons. According to her, if one is obedient and worthy, one can always receive answers.

Elders Collado and Vicencio, Area Seventy, both testified about the counsel from Church leaders to not delay marriage and family after serving a mission. Having followed the same counsel years before, they encouraged the single adults to have faith and trust the Lord and His servants.

The young single adults who attended the meeting were a

mixed group – some were waiting for their mission calls or their entry date to the Missionary Training Center, some were returned missionaries, some were preparing to be married in the temple and some simply wanted to be strengthened and hear the Lord’s voice through his servants. Following are some comments from the attendees:

“I’m glad to hear that we don’t always have to see the bigger picture, that with faith, one step is enough.”

Jamie Ortiz
Malolos Philippines Stake

“The recurring message for me was about the need to keep the commandments and the need to counsel with the Lord in prayer because Heavenly Father really knows everything.”

Jick Baldoviso
Pasay Philippines Stake

Elder Clayton concluded the meeting by sharing his testimony about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. He assured the young single adults that Heavenly Father knows them and that when they see Him, they will remember that they know Him. He counseled the young single adults to keep the commandments, as it is the only thing that Heavenly Father asks of them. He assured them that as the Lord has promised, every single blessing would be theirs if they would keep His commandments.

A Special Cultural Celebration
The visiting general authorities were treated to a night of song and

dance when 294 young and women from 15 stakes performed traditional Philippine songs and dances from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Attendees included the Area Presidency, some members of the Area Seventy and the 21 mission presidents and their wives.

Elder Andersen, Elder and Sister Clayton expressed their love and appreciation to the youth and YSAs who took the time to prepare for the wonderful cultural show they witnessed. They were admonished to continue being faithful and to remember who they are.

BACOLOD

YSA Devotional with Elder Andersen

“I pray that you may never forget who you are; that you may never forget what destiny awaits you.”

The evening of November 2, 2013 became special when the Young Single Adults from the different wards and branches under Bacolod Philippines Mission attended the devotional with Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Also present during the devotional were Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy, Elder Ian S. Ardern and Elder Larry Echo Hawk of the Philippines Area Presidency, and Elder Ramon C. Nobleza, Area Seventy.

The devotional was filled with reminders for the Young Single Adults that were present. Elder Clayton spoke about the importance of making correct choices now and cautioned about the long term effects of wrong decisions. Elder Ardern reinforced Elder Clayton’s words as he shared why it is necessary to have the guidance of the Holy Ghost in one’s



life. Elder Echo Hawk emphasized to the Young Single Adults that the choices they make now do not only affect them but their future generations as well.

Elder Andersen reminded the single adults present of their divinity through an analogy of the life of the monarch butterfly. He encouraged everyone present to always remember that they are sons and daughters of God and that they have a wonderful future ahead of them. He admonished them that since they are children of Heavenly Father, they should “be not afraid, only believe”.

The meeting concluded with the skies already dark but the faces of the YSAs present shone brightly after being edified by the messages. They never mind the exhaustion and long hours of travel; that once-in-a-lifetime experience with Elder Andersen compensated it all.

Reactions from the YSAs who attended:

“It was a blessing to listen to the Apostle of the Lord. I have felt the Spirit as it taught me who I am and what I should strive for. I was reminded that I am a son of God and that He expects me to make the trials that I am facing and will face as stepping stones to become better. I am still a “caterpillar” but I know that as I follow the promptings of the Spirit and keep the commandments, I will become a full-grown “butterfly”. It will not be easy but I know my Heavenly Father will guide me.”

A. Denmar Domingo *Bacolod Philippines Stake*

“I was reminded how important it is to follow the path, and remain in the

boundaries the Lord has set for us.”

Ronwell Imperial *Bacolod Philippines Stake*

“If you make righteous decisions it will not only bless you, but it will bless your generation. These words from Elder Andersen reminded me that in every choice we make we should not just think of ourselves, we always need to consider if this choice will affect our life and our future. One wrong choice might lead you away to where you’re supposed to be leading to. As a future wife and a mother I should set an example to everyone around me to always choose the right. It is indeed a great blessing to listen to the apostle’s voice and be reminded on how we should become a better sons and daughters of God.”

Deannette Madriaga *Bago Philippines Stake*

“This is the first time I’ve attended a Youth/YSA Devotional and from the moment I stepped into the halls of the chapel, I felt blessed. I felt so blessed to be given this opportunity to listen to an apostle. It is indeed one of the best moments in my life.”

Franceska Marie Romero *Bacolod Philippines Stake*

“Making choices when you’re a returned missionary can sometimes be difficult. Hearing the messages from the leaders yesterday helped me know what I really need to do and what I should be.”

Karl Mahilum *San Carlos District*

“The devotional was such a

blessing for all of us. Aside from shaking the hand of the apostle, all the messages we have heard helped us identify the things in life that matter most especially for the youth and the YSAs. What a great experience!”

Chaelyn Albances *Binalbagan Stake*

“I’m so grateful that I had the opportunity to meet and hear Elder Andersen. His words elevated my spirit, inspired me, and strengthened my testimony. I was once a caterpillar who turned into a butterfly because of the Gospel I have received.”

Jessie Mae Albances *Binalbagan Stake*

“It was a comfort to hear a message of compassion, love, and warning that are really important to remember in this crucial stage of life.”

Janice Morales *Binalbagan Stake*

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