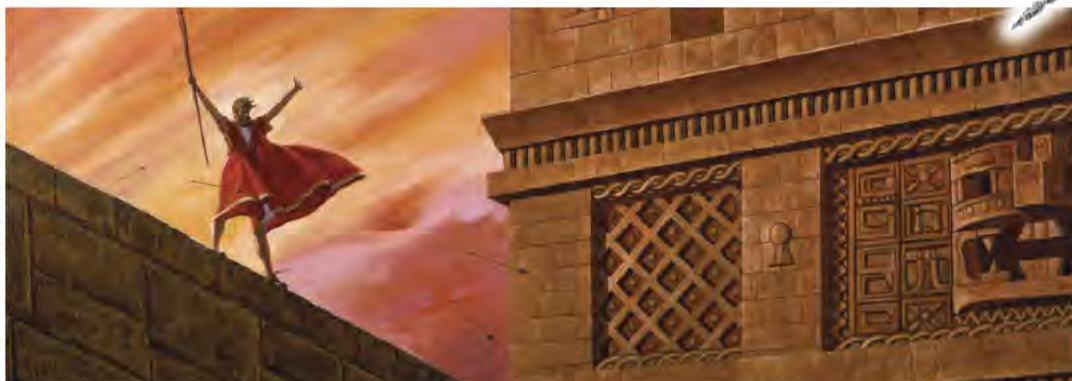




AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

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Listening and Following the Voice of Prophets

The centerpiece of the Philippines Area Goals for 2014 reads: “Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.” This scriptural passage comes from the Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ (2 Nephi 32:3).

It is a great blessing to have the words of Christ contained in the Book of Mormon, in addition to His words contained in other books of scripture. The Philippines Area Goals for 2014 invite us to have daily personal and family scripture study. As we “feast upon the words of Christ” found in the scriptures we will be able to make better decisions as we journey on the pathway of life. We will know what we should do to achieve happiness, and eternal life with our families.

In addition to the words of Christ found in the scriptures, we are blessed to also have the words of our modern-day prophets tell us what Jesus Christ wants us to hear. Following the words of the Lord’s prophets will also guide us toward eternal joy.

I am a convert to the Church. I was baptized at the age of 14. Six weeks after my baptism, the missionaries who converted my family arranged for us to attend the General Conference of the Church in Salt Lake City, Utah.

I was looking forward to seeing the Lord’s living prophet, David O. McKay. Unfortunately, we did not arrive at temple square in time to get a seat inside the Tabernacle. However, we learned from talking with other people standing outside of the Tabernacle that President David O. McKay would exit



By Elder
Larry J. Echo Hawk
Area Presidency

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a certain door after the General Conference session. I wanted to see the Lord's prophet, but there were too many people crowded outside of the door.

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With the help of my brothers I climbed the high wall around temple square to a place where I would be able to see President McKay when he came out the door of the Tabernacle. When he came out I saw for the first time in my life one of the Lord's prophets. He looked up at me and smiled; then he waved at me. As I waved back, I immediately felt something very special. I knew and felt that he was truly a modern-day prophet.

Since then I have had many opportunities to be in the presence of the Lord's modern-day prophets and apostles. On every one of these occasions I have felt something very special. The Spirit has witnessed to me that they are have been called by God to testify of the truth of the gospel in these latter-days.

On February 3, 2012 I was called to serve as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. I was sustained at the Saturday Afternoon Session of General Conference held on March 31, 2012. Soon afterwards I was assigned to accompany members of the Quorum of the Twelve

Apostles to stake conferences in the United States so that I could be taught by them how to preside at a stake conference. On

one occasion I was seated on an airplane next to Elder Neil L. Andersen as we traveled from Salt Lake City to Portland, Oregon. He was teaching me about the importance of feasting on the words of Christ. He counseled me about the importance of having daily personal scripture study. He then reached into his briefcase and retrieved a copy of the *Ensign* magazine that contained the talks given during the most recent General Conference. I noticed that there was something different about his copy of the magazine. He had colored tabs affixed to each talk of the 15 prophets and apostles. One color was used to mark the talks of the members of the First Presidency and another color for the Quorum of the Twelve.

Elder Andersen then opened the *Ensign* magazine and showed me that he had highlighted key phrases of the talks with a colored marker. He said: "I need to know what the Lord is trying to tell us through the voice of His prophets." When he said this it made a great impression on me. I realized that we need to listen

to the voice of our prophets and then we need to thereafter read and re-read their printed words. By doing this we can supplement our knowledge of the words of Jesus Christ contained in the scriptures, with the teachings of modern-day prophets.

In Section 21 of the Doctrine and Covenants we are taught that the words given to us by prophets and apostles of Jesus Christ are vitally important. Referring to the prophet Joseph Smith, verses 5 and 6 say: "For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith. For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory."

We live in perilous times when the adversary wants to deceive and mislead us on our pathway to eternal life and exaltation. We need to study the scriptures, and listen to and follow the words of our modern-day prophets and apostles.

During the upcoming April 2014 General Conference I pray that members in the Philippines will listen carefully to the spoken words of the brethren and then read and re-read their talks when they are printed in the *Liahona*. We need to truly "feast upon the words of Christ" by listening, reading and studying, and then following the voice of our prophets today. ■

Local **LDS** Voices

What is sexual purity?

PHOTO BY EDWIN REDRINO

"Being sexually pure is a way to prepare to build a strong marriage and fulfill Heavenly Father's plan of happiness. Sexual purity includes not participating in passionate kissing, lying on top of another person's body or touching the sacred parts of another. It also includes not doing anything or engaging in discussions that would lead to arouse sexual feelings. If you are sexually pure, the Holy Ghost would help and guide you in making right decisions. You will become confident and happy and develop the ability to resist temptation. We show respect to our Heavenly Father and ourselves if we keep this sacred commandment. You could also become an example to others that being sexually pure is important and you care for your future. Homosexual and lesbian behavior is also a serious sin. We must not be ashamed if you are sexually pure, because being sexually pure would help us prepare an eternal family that would lead us to eternal happiness."

Josh B., 16 years old
Butuan Philippines Stake



"Sexual purity is being clean physically, mentally and spiritually. It is keeping pure thoughts

and actions, not going astray from the teachings of the Church and being led by the wrong actions of others."

Alma Rhee S., 16 years old
Butuan Philippines Stake



"Sexual purity before marriage is very important. It is a commandment that can be our guide as we remain pure and true to our covenants."

Vince P., 14 years old
Butuan Philippines Stake



"Being clean and pure before marriage even if I'm a young man is a Godly characteristic. We are blessed to have the pamphlet-*For the Strength of Youth* as our guide to avoid any sexual sin before marriage."

Jonhrie C., 16 years old
Butuan Philippines Stake



"Sexual purity includes no kissing, no touching of one's private parts. When we are sexually

We must not be ashamed if you are sexually pure, because being sexually pure would help us prepare an eternal family that would lead us to eternal happiness.



pure we will not be ashamed before God and we can invite the Holy Ghost.”



Shien T., 17 years old
Butuan Philippines Stake

“**T**he Holy Ghost will be always our constant companion when we are sexually pure. We develop confidence in facing other people. And if you find your eternal companion you can enter in the temple and be married there. We can receive the ordinances of the temple and your family will live together eternally one day. Be a virtuous young woman.”



Ellen Mae J., 16 years old
Butuan Philippines Stake

Before I do's

By Ma. Teresa Canadalla-Pangilinan

“**L**et marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” (Hebrews 13:4)

In the world today, being sexually pure is an old fashioned idea. This idea is being used by Satan, especially among the youth or even with married or committed individuals.

President Spencer W. Kimball said that the expression of our procreative powers is pleasing to God, but he

has commanded that this be confined within the relationship of marriage. President Spencer W. Kimball taught that ‘in the context of lawful marriage, the intimacy of sexual relations is right and divinely approved...there is nothing unholy or degrading about sexuality in itself, for by that means men and women join in a process of creation and in an expression of love. (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball, 1982, p.311).

Let us hear what young dating couples do to make themselves pure and holy in the eyes of the Savior at the same time keep their relationship stronger:

As a couple preparing for celestial marriage, we set goals to be sexually pure by always praying and studying the scriptures together. It is so wonderful to learn new insights from your companion. It will really help you strengthen your relationship. Singing church songs really invites the spirit every time we are together. Consistent temple visit is also a big help!



Francis Jared B. Garcia
Tarlac Philippines Stake

“In 1 Timothy 4:12 “...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” My girlfriend and I express our love and respect through our words and in our conversation. For us, the topics we discuss, the ideas we share and the choice of words we use

are ways we can be pure and clean in and out. Our words reflect who we are. Good communication can help us become confident and truly happy as well. It invites the Spirit which helps us make good decisions, have pure thoughts and become a virtuous person.



Tristan Adao
San Pablo Philippines Stake

Merlina and I do not watch movies alone, as much as possible we go on group dates. We attend Church activities and listen to talks especially those that discuss sexual purity. I respect her and want her to be the mother of my future children.



Alvin A. Doricarion
Makati East Philippines Stake

As a couple we are aware of the negative forces of this world. As a result we set goals and make plans to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. We strive to improve daily by looking for a spiritual experience each day. We discuss scriptural verses as couple. We know that we should reserve such intimacy after marriage so we strive to be a help and a reminder to each other to keep our words, thoughts and actions clean and pure the best that we can. We also have an automatic song when our thoughts are straying it's, "If the Savior Stood Beside Me." By so doing, we are always reminded of who we are

and we see miracles and blessings that strengthen our relationship with our Father in Heaven and our Savior Jesus Christ."



Maria Alysa Ramos
Dasmariñas Philippines Stake

"James and I study the scriptures daily as a couple even though we live miles apart right now by using the technology that we have been blessed with. We don't lose sight of our goal: the temple."



Carla Lucy Guerrero
QC South Philippines Stake

As you prepare to make and keep sacred covenants you should be responsible in protecting yourself and your partner. It is essential for us to be happy in this life and the life to come.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the quorum of the Twelve said "We should be preparing now to live in a better world...this life is so vital, but it is such a small moment. And if we are too quick to adapt to the ways of this fleeting and flawed world, that very adjustment will not prepare us for our life in the next—a life that will last forever! No wonder those who break this commandment "lacketh understanding."

We should always be worthy, live a chaste life and practice fidelity before or after those I do's. ■

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Philippines Area Goals

Share the Gospel and Rescue the One

Part of Hastening the Work

By Marites Manjares
Legazpi Philippines Stake

When I was baptized, I decided that I wanted to show Heavenly Father how much I was grateful for His love and the blessing of being part of His Church. I decided that I could help His work by working with the missionaries.

As a mother of four, I

was busy with household chores but I was determined to work with the sister missionaries whenever an opportunity came. Sometimes we arranged our schedule during the



weekly ward coordination meeting and sometimes they would text me when they needed someone to fellowship the investigators they were teaching. With my fellow Relief Society sisters, we would start working with them in the morning and stay until the kids were

home from school. Our ward covers a relatively large geographical area and we sometimes walked a lot. When the missionary age was lowered and we got three pairs of missionaries in our ward, I began to work on a more regular basis. Since the sisters' area is now relatively smaller, 2-3 hours per week became very manageable as the people I helped teach now lived near our neighborhood. I could also more easily follow-up with the people we taught, even if I was not with the missionaries.

My family has been blessed with the gospel, and I have gained even more blessings as I worked with the missionaries. Sometimes I take my daughters with me and they have been blessed as well. My second daughter Astrid is 17 now and she has grown in her understanding of the gospel. My youngest daughter Jade is almost eight and she is excited to be baptized.

I know that as we make ourselves available to help in missionary work, we will find that it is possible to be part of hastening the work of salvation, we will have the time we need and we will be blessed.

Help On Short Notice

Elder Masula and Elder Smith
Quezon City Philippines Mission

We have been assigned to the mission office and sometimes we struggle to go out and teach after a long busy day at the office. One day we got a referral to visit an older gentleman who lived near a member's

house. We had not been able to visit him yet but as we were walking to an appointment on a Sunday afternoon, we met a returned missionary who was a friend of ours. We were prompted to visit the older gentleman who was referred to us the previous week. On impulse, we asked the returned missionary to accompany us to visit the referral and he readily agreed.

We found our referral watching a basketball game in his home and surprisingly, he let us in and we started a conversation about the Church. Being busy, he gave us a set time of 10 minutes to teach him. It sounded like a challenge at first, and as we began talking about families, he began asking questions about the revelations that the Prophet Joseph Smith received. Our talk eventually turned to the temple and its relation to families, as we felt that he really valued his family and wanted to be with them again. We were about



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to exceed the time limit he set and he agreed to extend the time. As missionaries, we couldn't answer all his questions. However, we had a member that helped answer his questions for us. Our returned missionary friend and our referral had some similar experiences and both of them related well. We felt the Spirit as our friend shared his testimony and how he knew the Church is true. Our 10-minute conversation turned into a 30-minute discussion and our referral invited us back the following Sunday.

Because our friend was willing to work with us on short notice and because he was willing to share his experiences as inspired by the Spirit, we now have a new investigator. In these days when the Lord is hastening His work of salvation, member missionary work is essential. We know that in addition to the referrals that members give to missionaries, members will be placed on the path of missionaries as they go about their work, and as members choose to heed the Spirit, they will help fulfill the Lord's eternal purposes.

Valentine's Referral

By Charisse Mae V. Tibule
Pasis Philippines Stake

February 14 is not just an ordinary Valentine's day for me, because it marked the start of my new life having entered the waters of baptism 11 years ago. All blessings I have received and are continually enjoying now are all anchored to that decision.

The journey began when a friend and classmate showed an example to me, brought me to a church activity, invited me to a seminary class then introduced me to the missionaries, received lessons and then after a



PHOTO BY FELVIC ORDINARIO

month got baptized. To the eye of an investigator, being a Latter-day Saint is a new world. You will have a different circle of friends, different standards and just about everything feels really different. But when someone like my friend Divine Grace, who would sit with me during Sunday services, untiringly invited me to activities, unselfishly shared her testimony, showed me how to love my family even more, and a lot more, made it all a colorful world to enter in.

I never realized the extent of how she helped me find the light of the gospel until I served as a full-time missionary. Indeed, members like her are angels who are keys to hasten the work of salvation here on earth. I know I also have that responsibility being helped by an angel before. Once you have received that light, it will be your charge to also help others out. Then the light will continue to roll forth until everyone is enlightened by the gospel message. ■

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