



AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHURCH MEDIA LIBRARY



Establish the Church through Your Individual Conversion

One of the Philippine Area Goals in 2014 is to establish the Church. As we ponder the concept of establishing the Church, we often think about stakes and districts and wards and branches. Our thoughts are drawn to increasing numbers and organizations, creating new units and building new meeting houses. However, if you analyze what truly is needed to establish the Church, you will find that the Church is established when you and I become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. If I were to ask you, how you could best assist in establishing the Church in the Philippines, the answer would lie in your personal conversion. When members become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Church is established.

We might then ask the question, what

does conversion look like? How can I know if I am truly converted?

In Matthew 24, in the New Testament, the Savior shares with us the signs of the times, or the things we should be watching for as we prepare for His second coming. Then in Matthew 25 he teaches us the parable of the ten virgins. As we read that parable, if we will understand that the Savior is the bridegroom; the wedding feast his second coming; the ten virgins, members of the Church; the lamps, testimony; and the oil, conversion, we can learn a very important lesson.

As the bridegroom approaches, the ten virgins awake to meet him. Five of them have been converted and have oil in their lamps. Five of them have a testimony. They have a lamp, but they have not paid the price for the oil or



By Elder
Brent H. Nelson
Area President

If I were to ask you, how you could best assist in establishing the Church in the Philippines, the answer would lie in your personal conversion. When members become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Church is established.

conversion. When the bridegroom comes they are desperately searching for oil, and try to get it from the five who have oil. They leave

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHURCH MEDIA LIBRARY



to try to purchase oil, and they are shutout from the wedding feast. Elder Bednar teaches that the reason that the five without oil do not help the five with oil is because they can't. You cannot give conversion to another. It is a price each person must pay individually. (October Conference 2012, Converted unto the Lord)

We may still ask, what does conversion look like? Two scriptures are interesting as we measure our own discipleship. In Luke 22:31-33 the Savior tells Peter that Satan desires to have him and sift him as wheat. He then tells Peter that when he is converted he should strengthen his brethren. Peter's response is thought provoking. He can't believe that the Savior is telling him that he is not converted. In vs. 33 he tells the Savior that he is ready to go to both prison and death if necessary. The Savior then tells him that before the cock crows Peter will deny Him three times. Peter wasn't yet converted. He still lacked some things before he had oil filling his

lamp.

The other example is in 3 Nephi 9:13. These are some of the first words of the Savior as he visits the faithful members in the

Book of Mormon. Many cities have been destroyed. Thousands have been killed. There are only 2,500 who have gathered to the Temple. They have been spared because they are righteous. What does the Savior say to them? "O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?" These were the righteous ones. These are the ones who were spared. What did they lack? They still needed to put oil in their lamps and become converted.

In Matthew 19 the Savior has the experience with the rich young ruler. This young man has kept all of the commandments and then asks "what lack I yet?" The Savior tells him to sell all that he has and come and follow Him. The young man turns away sorrowful. The interesting part of the story is that the Apostles are amazed. They can't believe what the Savior told the young man. The Apostles then ask the Savior in verse 25, "who then

can be saved?" In other words, "it sounds to us like none of us can be saved." In verse 29 the Savior tells us what conversion looks like. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Is that what conversion looks like? Certainly sacrificing temporal things is an indication of conversion, but it isn't just about giving up money or property or even family. It is about being willing. It is a self-analyzing process that when the question is asked, what lack I yet, we somehow are able to recognize our blind spot and correct the mote in our own eye.

Alma 23 gives us a very good example of what conversion looks like. Verse 6 describes the Lamanites becoming converted. Verse 7 then teaches us something that is very visual. "They did lay down the weapons of their rebellion that they did not fight against God anymore." In verse 8 it says, "Now these were they who were converted to the Lord." Can you see yourself carrying the weapons of your rebellion? Do you have that one thing that you can't seem to overcome? It is that one thing that keeps us from moving to the next level of discipleship

and conversion. When we understand what that one thing is and “we lay down our weapon of rebellion,” we become converted because we are willing to finally do whatever the Lord asks.

Whenever Sister Nielson and I are on a mission tour the most common question we are asked by missionaries is one of trying to find out if they themselves are converted. Their question is this, “how can I know that the Lord is accepting of my service?” The answer to the question is found in D&C 97:8. The Lord teaches us that those “who know their hearts are honest and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice-yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command-they are accepted of me.” What is He saying? He is asking us to give it all. He is asking for a willing heart. He is asking us to be willing to submit to whatever the Lord requires of us. It is when we follow the example of the Savior and allow our will to be swallowed up in the will of the Father (Mosiah 15:7) that conversion finally comes. That is what it looks like.

This life long process takes on different sacrifices for all of us. For the wonderful sisters of the Church, they actually give up their body to give life to another and then care for that child until the child moves into adulthood. This is a very difficult process that only a mother who has done it can understand. I think it is why mothers seem so willing to give to their children. They were willing to give it all to bring life to their children. For young men it may be giving up family and friends for two years as they serve a mission, or surrendering



PHOTO BY NOEL MAGLAQUE

freedom in exchange for a rigorous missionary schedule that requires their very best effort. For new fathers it is giving up sleep and games and their own recreation to become a real father to their kids. It is losing your life in the service of others.

The interesting thing seems to be that as soon as you lay down what you think is your last weapon of rebellion, the Lord quietly, softly, and with great kindness, shows you another, weapon of rebellion, and another, until the perfect day.

Once we have become converted, we see that the heavens open and the Lord pours out a blessing so great that we can't contain it. We are always in His debt. We can never get ahead of Him. That is what conversion looks like. That is what causes our bosom to burn and our testimonies to grow to conversion. We have laid down the weapons of our rebellion and said, here am I send me and the Lord in His great wisdom has blessed us beyond what we ever thought was possible.

Do you want to help establish the Church in the Philippines? Start with your own individual conversion. And then, when you are converted, strengthen your brother. (Luke 22:32) ■

Once we have become converted, we see that the heavens open and the Lord pours out a blessing so great that we can't contain it. We are always in His debt. We can never get ahead of Him. That is what conversion looks like. That is what causes our bosom to burn and our testimonies to grow to conversion.

Local News

General Relief Society and Young Women Presidencies Visit the Philippines

Linda K. Burton, General Relief Society President and Carol F. McConkie, First Counselor of the General Young Women Presidency visited the Philippines on February 14-23, 2014. The sisters were accompanied by the Area Presidency as they visited Manila; Cebu; Tacloban; Naga; Legazpi and Baguio.

CEBU

“Who needs to know that Heavenly Father loves you?”

This was the question Sister Linda Burton asked during the Relief Society auxiliary leaders’ training held on February 15, 2014, at the Cebu Temple complex which was attended by Relief Society leaders from Cebu, Bohol, Dumaguete and other nearby islands. It was noted that many of the sisters came to the this special training meeting riding jeepneys, tricycles, some came on foot, others by boat just to hear the special message of love and leadership and to be instructed in their unique callings.

Sister Burton’s post-Valentine’s message was focused on love, reminding every sister present that Heavenly Father loves each and every one of His precious daughters on earth. Because of that love, we, as sisters in Zion must share that love with others, and lift, as we have been lifted.

Using a very interactive approach, Sister Burton told the sisters that as noble



women in the Latter-day Church and as leaders, they are meant to do the work of the Lord. It begins, she said, with following the promptings of the Spirit and having the aid of the Lord as they serve their fellow sisters and their families. Through the Relief Society and Visiting Teaching programs, sisters are given the chance to serve and minister.

Sister Burton gave references from the “Daughters in my Kingdom” manual and the Church Manual to give a picture of what the Relief Society leaders can do in order to edify the work of the Lord and work side by side with the priesthood. The four leadership principles she mentioned were spiritual preparation, counsel meeting participation, ministering,



and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

By following these leadership principles, the sisters of the Church will feel the love of their Savior because they will be sharing that love with their husbands, children, their fellow sisters, and even those who are yet to hear the message of the Gospel. That is the beauty of the pure love of Christ; it is a love that is returned tenfold when it is shared.

The “Daughters in my Kingdom” manual says, “...we are beloved daughters, dedicated disciples, part of a great worldwide sisterhood.” Heavenly Father has placed a lot of compassion and strength in His daughters, and Sister Burton reminded the Relief Society of that fact.

Sister Burton’s message was a message that lifted and inspired the Relief Society. Now, it is our turn to lift others and share the love Heavenly Father has for His other daughters.

NAGA AND LEGAZPI

“We requested one of them to come to the Philippines, but we are blessed



that they sent two. It is very rare that we get the General Presidencies of the Relief Society and Young Women together. It is a great honor to be with two women from the general presidencies,” said Elder Larry J. Echo Hawk, Second counselor in the Philippines Area Presidency, as he accompanied Sister Linda Burton, General Relief Society President, and Sister Carol McConkie, General Young Women First Counselor, throughout their visits and trainings in the Legazpi District and Naga Stake.

HOME VISITS

It was indeed a blessing, especially for the Serrano Family and the Yanzon Family of Legazpi District, as Sisters Burton and McConkie and Elder Echo Hawk together with his wife, Terry Echo Hawk personally visited them in their homes before heading to the auxiliary trainings last February 18, 2014.

“Out of the millions of families in the Philippines, you are blessed to be with them,” said Elder Echo Hawk to the Serrano family. When asked by Sister Burton why they think Heavenly Father wanted them to come to the Serrano family’s home and what story they have that they can share to members from other parts of the world that they could learn from, Sister Serrano mentioned that they had a 4-year old son who died because of a brain tumor. Their son’s death left them devastated, but she and her husband drew strength from their faith and the Church. Sister Serrano said that reading stories in the Liahona about the struggles of other parents with their children also strengthened her during those times.





“The purpose of every calling is to be a faithful disciple in order to help others become a better disciple,” said Sis. Burton.

Sister McConkie told the Serrano family that in the resurrection, they will be together with their son and have the opportunity to raise that boy. Sister Burton shared the story of her great grandmother who crossed the plains and at age 19 and lost her husband and first baby during the winter trek. Because her great grandmother wrote about that experience and how she overcame that trial, it gave Sister Burton much strength to face her own trials. She said we should write down such experiences because we never know who can draw strength from it someday.

Sister McConkie also talked with the two Serrano daughters who were in Young Women about their experiences in being a Latter-Day Saint Young Woman in school and told them that it's hard to stand strong and alone, but they are doing a great job and that Heavenly Father will help them find true joy. She shared a scripture from Mosiah 2:41 about the “blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments” because they are blessed both temporally and spiritually. The second home they visited was the Yanzon Family's. Sister Yanzon was married to a non-member and had four children, the eldest of whom was preparing to go on a mission.

When asked why they think Sister Burton, Sister McConkie, and Elder Echo Hawk have come to their home, Sister Yanzon tearfully answered “because God does not want us to give up on my husband.”

Sister McConkie then said that the Savior has not given up on Sister Yanzon's husband. Their son's missionary service will be a great

blessing because as he writes home, he will touch his father's heart.

When asked by Sister Burton what Sister Yanzon learned from this trial, she said she learned to always be strong, that God loves her, and that she should never give up on her husband, and to always love her children. Sister McConkie then shared that the scriptures will lift us up when we are going through challenges. Even if we pass through sorrow and pain, there is comfort in the scriptures.

Elder Echo Hawk told the Yanzon family that when they bring the plan of salvation to others through their mission, the Lord will bless their family.

RELIEF SOCIETY AND YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS MEETING

Auxiliary leaders and teachers of the Relief Society (RS) and Young Women (YW) in Legazpi District and Naga Stake listened intently as Sister Linda Burton and Sister Carol McConkie counselled with them in focus groups and gave them inspiring messages about being the kind of leader and disciple the Lord wants us to be. They were in Legazpi last February 18 and Naga on February 19, 2014.

After the opening devotional in Legazpi, the leaders were separated into auxiliaries where Sister Burton taught the RS leaders and Sister McConkie handled the YW leaders. Both of them shared the principles of leadership which include: being spiritually prepared, participating in councils, ministering to others, and preaching the gospel. “The purpose of every calling is to be a faithful disciple in order to help others become a better

disciple,” said Sis. Burton. Sister McConkie told the YW leaders that “your service will bless your families and touch their lives as they see your example and the changes in you.”

FOCUS GROUP MEETING

In Naga, Sisters Burton and McConkie held a focus group meeting, which was a more intimate gathering with the RS and YW leaders, respectively. In this focus group meeting, they asked the leaders about the concerns of the sisters and how they managed to stay strong and keep the sisters active in the Church despite these challenges. When Sister Burton asked who among the women had been to the temple to receive their own endowment, almost all hands went up. Sister Burton was deeply touched and commended the Relief Society leaders for their valiant hearts and for receiving their temple covenants, which they can draw strength from as they magnify their callings.

Members Reactions

“I am excited because I was able to attend this once-in-a-lifetime experience. I know that these women were called of God to help us in our callings and I am grateful that they are here for us. I will strive more to be a good example to our Young Women.”

Jesel Manahan

Daraga First Ward

“I am very happy to have attended this training. I received much needed inspiration to magnify my calling as RS President, especially with the

‘High 5’ principles of being spiritually prepared which are: Pray every day, read the scriptures daily, attend sacrament every week, serve others, and always live worthy to have a temple recommend.”

Victoria Ramada

Bacacay Ward

“One thing I lack is participating in councils. From now on I will participate in councils with our Mia Maid Class Presidency. I also learned that I should always be spiritually prepared in order to be a more effective teacher to the YW.”

Darlene Dy

Naga Second Ward

“I learned the importance of ministering and preparing spiritually and I will look for more opportunities to help and minister to the Young Women this week.”

Angela M.

Iriga First Branch

“I am now fully-equipped with the tools to teach the Young Women and I will forget about murmuring. I will add more effort than what I previously gave to my calling and will set aside more time for the Young Women.”

Judith Leron

Sipucot Branch

Contributors and Photographer

Angela Carmela Uy Fantone

Sariah Guanzon-Ordinario

Neil Gonzaga

“I am now fully-equipped with the tools to teach the Young Women and I will forget about murmuring. I will add more effort than what I previously gave to my calling and will set aside more time for the Young Women.”



Philippines Area Goals – Establish the Church Visioning for Success

By Bishop Noel Rodriguez
Cubao Ward

Successful organizations, such as Apple, Google, Samsung have all established their respective visions for their company. Visions that serve as the driving force for their phenomenal success.

Acknowledging the importance of a vision for an organization, our ward - the Cubao Ward has decided to also come up with a vision. Hence, members of the ward council in one of our meetings, has come up with the following vision:

“In five (5) years, the number of faithful and active members of the Cubao Ward is sufficient to contribute in the formation of a new ward.”

In crafting said vision, members of the ward council examined the visions made by other wards specifically that provided on the video presented by Liel Maala. After watching the video, we then crafted our own vision, tailored to our situation.

With the vision crafted, we then agreed to come up with a goal for that year as well as the strategy/ies on how we are going to achieve that goal. The leader of each auxiliary organization then presented their respective strategies.

With the vision, goal, and strategies in place, we then presented it to the members of the ward for their comments and recommendations. This we deemed necessary so that each member of the



PHOTO COURTESY OF CUBAO WARD

ward will have ownership of our vision, goals, and strategies, and that they will be aware of it.

Lastly, we sought the commitment of all the members to support said vision by inviting them to join the ward fast.

In 2013, we were able to achieve 114% of our goals. It was successful because it was an effort by the whole ward. It was also an opportunity for us to improve and work harder towards achieving our goals.

The vision of Cubao Ward can be likened to a building, where the roof serves as the vision, supported by the different pillars comprising of the different auxiliaries and the base or the foundation are all the members, with the bishopric leading the entirety of it. ■

The vision of Cubao Ward can be likened to a building, where the roof serves as the vision, supported by the different pillars comprising of the different auxiliaries and the base or the foundation are all the members, with the bishopric leading the entirety of it.