

# ASIA LOCAL PAGES

## ASIA AREA LEADER MESSAGE

### Law of the Fast

By Elder Siu Hong Pon

Of the Seventy

The Lord has commanded us to “look to the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer” (D&C 38:35). President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “Remember the principle of the true fast. Is it not to deal our bread to the hungry, to bring our own house the poor who are outcast, to clothe the naked, to hide not ourself from our own flesh? (See Isaiah 58:7). An honest fast offering, a generous fast offering, will certainly be an indication to our Heavenly Father that we know and abide this particular law.”<sup>1</sup>

As members or leaders of the Church, we are constantly reminded and taught of the importance of the law of fast. The law of fast is taught by Church leaders in conferences, sacrament meetings, priesthood meetings, Relief Society and other auxiliaries meetings, home teaching and visits, temple recommend interviews, and tithing settlement interviews.

Church members are encouraged to fast whenever their faith needs special fortification and/or whenever they are facing trials and challenges, to fast

and pray for someone who is in need of help, and to fast once a month on fast Sunday. Typically, the first Sunday of each month is designated as fast Sunday. On this day we do not eat or drink for 24 hours. We, when physically able, are encouraged to fast and to pray and bear witness to the truthfulness of the gospel in our fast and testimony meeting. We also commune with our Heavenly Father and contribute a generous fast offering to help the poor and the needy. Our fast offering should at least be equal to the value of the food that we would have eaten.

We have observed in the scriptures or received teaching that fasting is always linked with prayer. Fasting is more than just not eating or drinking; we need to lift our hearts, our minds, and our voices to communicate with our Heavenly Father. When linked with prayer in humility, fasting becomes powerful to allow us to receive revelations through the Holy Spirit and to strengthen us against temptation. Our testimonies grow each time we fast, and we will gain a little more control over our weaknesses and passions. Our righteous prayers and pleadings often have greater power when we fast.

We certainly will encounter hunger when we fast. However,



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when we literally put ourselves in the position of the hungry and the needy, we will have greater understanding of the deprivations that they feel. The hungry feeling will then be relieved by the feeling of love and gratitude. When we give to the bishop an offering to relieve the suffering of others, we not only do something good for others but also do something wonderful for ourselves. This was taught by King Benjamin that as we “impair of [our] substance to the poor,” we retain “a remission of [our] sins from day to day” (Mosiah 4:26).

Bishop Dean M. Davies, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, taught in the October 2014 general conference: “The law of the fast applies to all Church members. Even young children can be taught to fast, beginning with one meal

and then two, as they are able to understand and physically keep the law of the fast. Husbands and wives, single members, youth, and children should begin the fast with prayer, giving gratitude for blessings in their lives while seeking the Lord's blessings and strength through the fast period. Complete fulfillment of the law of the fast occurs when the fast offering is made to the Lord's agent, the bishop."<sup>2</sup>

Charged with this sacred responsibility, the Aaronic Priesthood quorum members collect fast offerings, wherever possible. This has brought forth blessings to those young men who participate in and perform this sacred responsibility. Bishop Dean M. Davies further taught: "As you Aaronic Priesthood holders magnify your priesthood responsibilities and extend this opportunity to all Church members, you frequently facilitate the promised blessings of the fast to those who may need them the most. You will witness that the spirit of caring for the poor and needy has the power to soften otherwise hardened hearts and blesses the lives of those who may infrequently attend Church."<sup>3</sup>

The Lord has entrusted bishops, the judges of Israel, with a sacred responsibility to administer fast offering assistance to

Church members. Bishops will "minister to the temporal and spiritual needs of members by carefully using fast offerings as a temporary support and as a supplement to extended family and community resources."<sup>4</sup> Through seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and "with the support of the Relief Society president and Melchizedek Priesthood quorum leaders," assistance will be provided to the poor and the needy in a manner that will promote personal responsibility, sustain life rather than lifestyle,<sup>5</sup> and provide commodities and work opportunities. These principles will help the poor and the needy to move along the path toward self-reliance.

Having served as a bishop many years ago, I am grateful that the law of the fast has helped me understand the following principles and blessings:

1. Just like deepening my conversion, I need to faithfully live the law of the fast to receive the testimony and promised blessings associated with this law.
2. The Lord has established the law of the fast and fast offerings to bless His people and to provide a way for me to serve those in need.<sup>6</sup>
3. A proper fast day would include abstaining from food

and drink in a 24-hour period, attending fast and testimony meeting, and contributing to the Church a fast offering at least equal to the value of food that I would have eaten. If possible, I should contribute generously and give more.<sup>7</sup>

4. The law of the fast applies to all Church members [regardless of their economic situation] through their faith and conversion.
5. I have learned by experience that the "blessings associated with the law of the fast include closeness to the Lord [with humility], increased spiritual strength [to handle our trials and challenges], temporal well-being [to become more self-reliant], greater compassion [toward our fellowmen], and a stronger desire to serve [others]."<sup>8</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) once asked, "What would happen if the principles of fast day and the fast offering were observed throughout the world[?] The hungry would be fed, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered. . . . A new measure of concern and unselfishness would grow in the hearts of people everywhere."<sup>9</sup>

When all Church members observe the law of the fast and make a generous fast offering,

there will be sufficient funds to care for the poor and the needy, and we will receive great promised blessings associated with the law of the fast.

Through living the law of the fast these many years, I am grateful for receiving promised blessings by the Lord which are associated with this law: “I will . . . open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing” (Malachi 3:10; see also 3 Nephi 24:10). I testify that those who faithfully live the law of the fast will surely discover the rich blessings associated with this holy law, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## NOTES

1. See General Authority Training Presentation, October 7, 2014; see also Isaiah 58:7; emphasis added.
2. Dean M. Davies, “The Law of the Fast: A Personal Responsibility to Care for the Poor and Needy,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 54–55.
3. Dean M. Davies, “The Law of the Fast: A Personal Responsibility to Care for the Poor and Needy,” 55.
4. Dean M. Davies, “The Law of the Fast: A Personal Responsibility to Care for the Poor and Needy,” 55.
5. See Dean M. Davies, “The Law of the Fast: A Personal Responsibility to Care for the Poor and Needy,” 55.
6. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 6.1.2, [www.lds.org/handbook-2-administer-the-church/welfare-principles-and-leadership](http://www.lds.org/handbook-2-administer-the-church/welfare-principles-and-leadership).
7. See *Handbook 2*, 6.1.2; 21.1.17, [www.lds.org/handbook-2-administer-the-church/welfare-principles-and-leadership](http://www.lds.org/handbook-2-administer-the-church/welfare-principles-and-leadership); [www.lds.org/handbook-2-administer-the-church/selected-church-policies](http://www.lds.org/handbook-2-administer-the-church/selected-church-policies).
8. See *Handbook 2*, 6.1.2, [www.lds.org/handbook-2-administer-the-church/welfare-principles-and-leadership](http://www.lds.org/handbook-2-administer-the-church/welfare-principles-and-leadership).
9. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “The State of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 52, 53, [www.lds.org/general-conference/1991/04/the-state-of-the-church](http://www.lds.org/general-conference/1991/04/the-state-of-the-church).

## I Thought I Did Not Need to Fast

Sahil Sharma, Dwarka Branch, India New Delhi Mission

I joined the Church when I was 15 years old and since then, I started praying. I also learned about fasting, but for a long time I did not fast. I thought I didn’t need to because I thought I could ask God in my prayers. Why did I need to fast? But as I grew in the Church, my understanding about the gospel increased. I was taught by one of the missionaries that fasting is a commandment from God. It is a way to ask Him what we need and to thank Him for the things He has given us. It’s powerful and it also teaches us self-control.

In 2013 our Dwaraka Branch was divided into four home groups, but for some reason, in my home only eight to nine people were coming in the beginning. So we decided to chain fast as a home group. Each Sunday more than two members were fasting for the growth of our home group. Our fasting continued for a while. Members started visiting other members and helping people to come to church. Eventually our attendance increased and the most we had was more than 50, but the average was more than 35, which was good. We don’t have home group anymore, but that experience gave us a chance

to learn and gain experience of fasting and prayers. All the members from this home group were blessed to have this testimony about fasting. We had a hard time increasing membership and because of that hard time we were able to grow and learn more than we could’ve without it.

We know all that God does is for our good. It might not seem right at that particular time, but we will get to know His purposes when the right time comes. ■

**Sahil Sharma**



# The Wonderful Blessing of Fasting with Prayer

Monica Gupta

When I was still investigating this Church and taking the missionary lessons, one of the commandments the missionaries taught me was “fasting with prayer.” I had always believed in the power of prayer, which had been manifested in my life many times before; however, fasting was a new principle for me. Having come from a non-Christian background, I had seen lenient sort of fasting wherein you are allowed to drink milk, tea, fruits, and other allowed food items. However, I learned that in this Church, fasting means going without food and water for two consecutive meals. This I felt was a bit hard. I was also taught that prayer is a necessary part of fasting and that, as the Savior taught, a purposeful fast is more than just going without food and water. Our fast should be accompanied by sincere prayer, and we should begin and end our fast with prayer.

As Latter-day Saints, we observe fast and testimony Sunday every first Sunday of the month wherein we refrain from eating and drinking for two consecutive meals and fast for specific purpose(s). The cost of these two meals is donated as a fast offering. The fast offering can be as liberal as possible. Like many other faithful members of the Church, I also gained a strong testimony about this very principle. I want to share few of them:

Last year I found out that a young friend of mine who was just 22 years of age was suffering from last stages of bone marrow cancer. He was from Nepal. His older brother brought him to Delhi to get him the best treatment possible to save his life. I used to travel almost every other day to visit him at the hospital where he was admitted. He was in poor health. He almost



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turned into a skeleton, was losing his hair, lost his appetite, and his memory was fading away with every passing day. I soon found out that he lost his eyesight as the cancer cells had spread to his eyes. My heart ached seeing his agony and I just felt helpless for this sweet young man. I was praying fervently every day to God to grant him his life; however, the following Sunday when I was fasting and praying for him, I felt the need to change the words in my prayers from “save his life” to “heal him, but let Thy will be done whatever Thou thinks is best for him.” Since he was in so much pain, my friend’s family was broken seeing him in misery with every passing day. Soon he was discharged from the hospital, as the doctor said that he was not curable. They had tried everything but nothing more could be done so

there was no need to keep him in the hospital anymore. He was taken home to spend his last few mortal months peacefully with his loved ones. I bid them a teary farewell as they left India to go back to Nepal. I kept in touch with them to have updates about his health and if there was any improvement. After three months I received a message from his older brother that his sweet little angelic brother passed through the veil peacefully in his sleep. I was in tears but felt a strange peace in my heart as if he was telling me “I am free and happy now.” In that moment I realized that God answered my sincere prayers for him and that it was His will to free him from this ongoing pain and great misery. Though I miss my friend terribly at times, I know that he is in safer hands now and at peace. I know someday I will see him again, and I am praying for that day.

Another experience I had recently was when one of my office friends told me about his dad’s sickness. He was suffering from cancer; however it was fortunately detected early. The entire family cried when they found out about it. The doctor said that treatment should start immediately. After numerous tests and trial medications, the doctor said that he needed to be operated on, as the cancer had spread to his lower food pipe, which made him unable to swallow or even talk. He was in deep pain and we were all praying that the surgery would go well and that he would be fine. Finally, the day came when this surgery was to be done. My friend reached out to me to ask if I knew anyone who could donate blood for his dad’s surgery. I immediately contacted YSAs in the Church to spread word if there was anyone who could donate blood. I circulated my friend’s number to them so they could contact and coordinate with him. Later, my friend told me that he received many calls from my reference to help him with blood donations. Soon blood donations were arranged and a surgery date was decided.

I fasted for him, keeping this issue specifically in my prayers. Since I had learned from my previous experience, I prayed that he would be healed if it was in God’s will, and that he would be healed according to his faith. The surgery lasted many hours since it was a major one. I was in contact with my friend throughout the surgery to get updates. Finally, I got a message that the surgery had been successful and that the cancerous growth was removed, so he should be fine soon. Soon he was discharged and brought back home. He recovered miraculously.

By these experiences I learned that fasting combined with sincere, purposeful prayers can accomplish anything. Fasting can be done for many reasons: to overcome weaknesses, to seek help and guidance for self and others, for the sick and afflicted, to know of a gospel principle’s validity, to help others embrace the truth, to seek humility and forgiveness, and most often just to express our gratitude for the many blessings the Lord has already blessed us with.

As per Isaiah, “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am” (Isaiah 58:8–9).

Fasting brings many blessings other than the purpose for which we are fasting. It helps us gain strength of character and we can learn to control our appetites and passions, improve our self-control, and strengthen our faith in Heavenly Father and our Savior. I bear my sincere witness that honest, purposeful fasting combined with fervent prayers can bring mighty miracles in our lives, and we can help God manifest His grandeur even in the matters that seem impossible for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*Monica Gupta lives in New Delhi*

## Temple Connects Us All

**M**y name is Challa Archana Thomas. I was married in 1995 to Challa Alfred Thomas. We have two children, the older is Challa Akhil, studying in grade 12, and the younger is Challa Nikhil, studying in grade 10.

In 1994, after seeing the example of my brother, Sanayi Jitender Kumar, I went to church for the first time. I attended the church for half an hour and left. Missionaries used to come to my home but I was not serious. One day my brother, Kumar, came to my home with his family. I was impressed by their examples and by the happiness and unity they had as a family. It was all attributed to the Church and its teachings. Impressed, I told to my brother I want to come to church. On the third Sunday of October 2008, I went to church and I felt so happy and peaceful as I learned so many things like how to be a mother, wife, and daughter-in-law. On the same day, I paid my tithing. From that day till now, I have never stopped going to church. I realized how important missionaries are, working for the salvation of other people. I was blessed to meet them and take their lessons.

Sister missionaries, namely, Sister Arza, Sister Ana Lefever and Sister Anu Yadav taught me. I had a good fellowship from the sisters in the Church, notably, Sudha Pydimalla, Bharathi Sumarajan, Sai Kumari, Anitha Austin, and Alice, who helped me feel comfortable at church.

After three months of attending church, I was baptized on 1 February 2009, along with my two sons, in West Marredpally Second Ward. It was a great day for me. I was confirmed on 8 February 2009. I have received many callings in the Church and I love to serve people. I love all the callings I receive.

Two years ago I tried to go to temple, but I could not make it. I am thankful to my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ for all their blessings to

me. By the will of God, on 19 November 2013, I had an opportunity to visit the Hong Kong China Temple. It was the most memorable and wonderful experience of my life—one I will never forget in my life. And also, when I was preparing to go to the temple, my husband never allowed me to go anywhere alone. I thought that he, being a non-member, might tell me not to go. But I was very surprised to see my husband encourage me to go to the temple. It happened because God recognized my fasting and answered my prayers.

As I went inside the temple, I felt such a warm feeling that I thought I had come to paradise. All the members inside the temple were wearing white—looking like angels. They were so humble and patient. I was able to do temple work for my father, my father-in-law, and perform saving ordinances for about 20 of my relatives. It was a great experience performing baptisms, endowments, and sealings for the dead. I felt my ancestors saying “Thank you.” I felt very happy at that moment.

I know the temple is a place of God, where I felt the Lord’s presence and His Spirit. I know this gospel is true. Through this gospel I was able to go to that holy place, where I did baptisms, endowments, and sealings for my deceased family members. But I missed my husband and two children. I know one day I will be sealed with my husband and two children as a family in the

**Challa Archana Thomas**



temple. I know through the plan of salvation we will all meet together as families. It was a great experience in the temple; I felt peace, comfort, and happiness. I am thankful to my husband, my children, and my mother. I am so grateful to my Heavenly Father for His blessings. The temple will connect all of us one day, and we will enjoy the blessings of peace and happiness with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I know this Church is true. This is my testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*Challa Archana Thomas lives in Hyderabad, India*

## 10-year-old and Missionary Work

**Sheryl Blessy N., Madinaguda First Ward, Hyderabad India Stake**

**M**y Primary leaders always teach about missionary work and tell us that preparation should start from childhood. I have always looked for an opportunity to invite my friends, but they always reject. I often think that maybe I am too young to invite my friends to church, and that someday when I grow big like the sister missionaries, then I will start doing missionary work.

Recently I found out that one of the sister missionaries was to complete her mission in a couple of days. I asked my parents if we could invite the sister missionaries to our house for family home evening. My parents were very happy and immediately asked me to call and invite them. As it was my invitation, they assigned

me to plan the agenda and snacks for family home evening.

The sisters were very excited to join us. My dad taught the lesson on missionary work. He gave us a challenge to invite at least one person every month. This was tough! I asked him, “How do we invite?” I always wanted my school friends to come and see the church because I love them and I wanted them to learn what I learned in church. My parents helped me understand that I should pray before I invite. The sister missionaries, my parents, and I sang “I Want to Be a Missionary Now” (*Children’s Songbook*, 168). I listened carefully when my parents and the sisters shared their experiences. My interest toward missionary work increased. Before going to



**Sheryl Blessy N.**

bed I prayed to Heavenly Father to give me one opportunity.

The next day I went to school. I am a member of the School Activities Committee, and since it was the Christmas season, my principal suggested that we plan something new and exciting. I immediately told her that we could go visit the church I go to. She asked me if the Church leaders would permit it. I told her that they would be very happy to receive us and that they love little children. I asked my principal if the entire primary children group could go see the church. She came closer and hugged me and said, “God bless you.” Later she called my mom and spoke with her about my invitation. My mom spoke with my dad and the bishop. They coordinated with the single adults, the Primary leaders, and the missionaries for the visit.



The visit was on 23 December 2014. I was very excited and nervous at the same time. My parents were very excited for me. My mom prepared my favorite snack and my dad dropped me off at school. When I entered the premises, my friends rushed toward me, asking me to wear Santa's cap. I looked around and saw everyone ready to go see my church. After an hour the principal gathered all the students and we all started singing "Jingle Bells."

We went to the church and the missionaries welcomed us warmly. My bishop was very happy to see my friends. We all

watched a video on the birth of Jesus Christ. The single adults and the missionaries sang Christmas songs for my friends. Later, the bishop spoke to us about how Jesus Christ loves little children. My dad spoke about loving one another, honoring our parents, and listening to our teachers. Then I spoke about Christmas.

My principal thanked the team for organizing such a wonderful program for the school children. She and my teachers thanked me for inviting them to my church. They went around the building asking questions to our missionaries.

My prayers were answered. I thank God for this opportunity. There were a total of 486 students and staff who accepted my invitation. They loved it. My friends were so happy.

Though this was a small invitation, it has given me confidence. I know if we ask God to help us do His work, He will show us the way. Someday I will see the 486 getting baptized because it is God's work and we are all His children. He loves me and all of us. I thank my parents, Primary leaders, and the sister missionaries for teaching me about missionary work. ■

*The missionaries, children, and others who participated in the Christmas program.*

