

## ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### The Sacrament

**Elder Peter F. Meurs**

Second Counselor in the Asia Area Presidency

**M**y parents were the first members of the Church in the small country town of Warrnambool, Australia. For many years church services were held in our family home. Between 15 and 20 faithful members gathered each Sunday to partake of the sacrament and worship together. Some of my earliest memories are of the special feelings of love and peace that I felt as a child at those meetings.

On occasions when branch attendance was just a handful, my father encouraged us with this little story. He

would say that on Sunday morning, Heavenly Father sends a small bag of blessings to each congregation of the Church throughout the world. If we are lucky enough to be at church with just a few members, then we receive a much bigger portion of those blessings.

While this story has no doctrinal basis, we have an opportunity to be richly blessed each week as we attend church and partake of the sacrament. We are taught in the Doctrine and Covenants: “That thou mayest . . . keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou

shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day.” A few verses later the revelation uses the words “that thy joy may be full”, “rejoicing and prayer” and “with a glad heart and cheerful countenance”.<sup>1</sup>

In the October 2016 general conference, I shared a message titled “The Sacrament Can Help Us Become Holy”. The message outlined five ways that may help us increase the impact and blessing of the sacrament in our lives. In this article I would like to focus on just the first concept: prepare in advance.

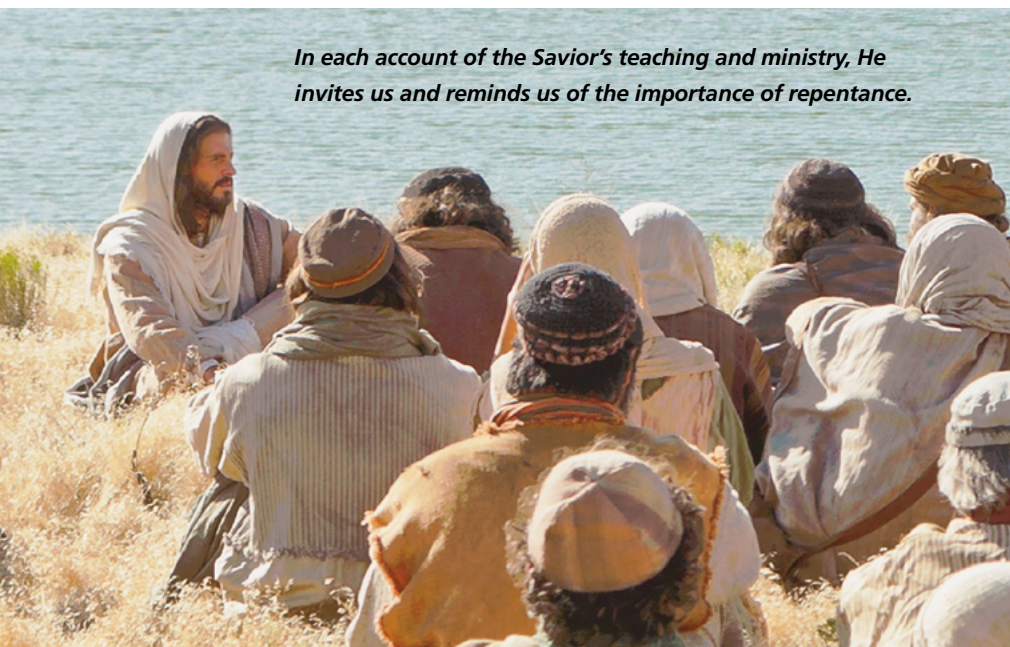
I remember the excitement and anticipation I felt before I was baptized. My parents and Primary teachers taught me about a loving Heavenly Father, who wants to bless all His children. They taught me about faith and repentance and how I could repent in preparation for baptism. They helped me understand that through the love and sacrifice of the Savior Jesus Christ, I could be clean and free from the consequences of sin.

We can feel the same sense of joy and anticipation as we prepare each week to partake of the sacrament. We can consider the love our Heavenly



**Elder Peter F. Meurs**

*In each account of the Savior's teaching and ministry, He invites us and reminds us of the importance of repentance.*



## My Journey of Faith

By **Shyamala Bale**

Mumbai Branch

I am grateful to my Heavenly Father for giving me this opportunity to share my testimony and thoughts about Faith. Before I became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, I was a Hindu.

I was not interested in Christianity, but I saw and heard about people who were Christians but who did not follow the principles taught by Christ. When I heard about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from my brother-in-law, who brought this wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ into my life, I didn't know what happened to me, but I felt that the message was true. Later, I decided to get baptized; however, as I was minor (below 18 years) I could not take major decisions on my own. I was dependent on my mother. My mother did not permit me for this, but I never gave up the gospel in my life, because my faith in Jesus Christ was unshaken.

When I was reading Moroni 7:33–34 and 1 Nephi 3:7, the Spirit touched my heart and mind, and I made a firm decision to be baptized. On 28<sup>th</sup> July 2002, I was baptized in the Second Branch of West Marredpally, Hyderabad, and

Father has for us, His desire to bless us and help us to return to His presence. We can contemplate the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind” on our behalf and who took “upon him [our] infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh” so that He could “succor his people according to [our] infirmities”.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most important preparation for the sacrament is our daily repentance. Sometimes we think of repentance as a process reserved for major sin, where we need to confess to our bishop or branch president. The sacrament reminds us that repentance is a continuing, normal and expected part of our mortal experience. Repentance allows us to gradually make progress.

In each account of the Savior's teaching and ministry, He invites us and reminds us of the importance of repentance. One powerful example is His pleading words: “For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent”.<sup>3</sup>

The Lord taught through the prophet Moroni that “if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; . . . for if they humble themselves before

me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”<sup>4</sup>

As we prepare during the week for the sacred opportunity to partake of the sacrament, we can expect to experience “the enticings of the Holy Spirit” to help us understand how, with the help of the Savior, we can continue to become more like Him.<sup>5</sup> Repentance becomes a joyful process of change. Through sincere repentance we are not only freed from sin but also receive the help of an understanding and loving Savior, who knows through personal experience how to succor and bless us.

Then having prepared carefully, we can partake of the sacrament with peace and joy. We can feel of His love for us; we can listen carefully to the sacrament prayers and recommit to our sacred baptismal covenants; and we can again receive the promise that the Holy Ghost will sanctify us and help us on our journey home.

I know that as we continue to prepare for and fully participate in the sacred sacrament ordinance that it will become the spiritual focus and highlight of our week, our faith will be strengthened, and our love for the Savior and His work will increase. ■

### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9, 13–15.
2. Alma 7:11–12.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
4. Ether 12:27.
5. Mosiah 3:19.





*Shyamala with her husband, Abraham, and their two daughters*

following my baptism, I got married to Brother Abraham, who was not a member of the Church. After one year of marriage, my husband accepted the gospel but still had difficulty with keeping the Word of Wisdom. I suffered many trials for the next eight years of my life trying to help him, I fasted and prayed sincerely with faith and asked God to strengthen my husband in his weakness and to overcome his problem with the Word of Wisdom.

The branch president of Mumbai, President Heinz Dickens, and missionaries helped my husband to overcome his obstacles. He loves me and the Lord so much that he fasted with faith to overcome his weakness, and finally he overcame it. I was filled with happiness to see the change in him and how it strengthened our family. I'm grateful for the Atonement of Jesus Christ and for Heavenly Father answering my prayers.

The next step for us was the temple. It was very difficult for us to be able to achieve this goal, but with faith, God provided a way. After a long time of preparation and sacrifice, we, along with our two beautiful daughters, Anna and Alfie, and also with my two



*The Bales are the first people in their entire family to visit the temple.*



deceased sons were all sealed in the temple for all time and eternity on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015 in the Hong Kong Temple. It was something that I had

dreamt about, and when we had the chance to go there, I couldn't believe I was actually there. The experience was indescribable, the love and care





*The Bale Family were sealed together in the Hong Kong Temple*

*President Keeler and Brother Abraham*



are privileged to have wonderful callings in the Church and to serve our Lord. We are also grateful that our children are growing in the gospel and being a very good example to their friends, and we are very grateful to the branch president, President Keeler, and his wife, Sister Wendy Keeler, for showing us how to sacrifice and prepare for the temple, and other members for their help and support in every way. Because of our sealing in the temple, we have been and continue to be abundantly blessed with both temporal and spiritual needs by our Heavenly Father.

I know that my Redeemer lives and the gospel of Jesus Christ that I accepted is true, and it has changed my life. I know The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true Church and God's kingdom on the earth and that the Book of Mormon is true and it truly testifies of Jesus Christ. I believe President Thomas S. Monson is truly called of God. I testify that these things are true and that by our faith in God and keeping His commandments, He will strengthen us in our trials and challenges. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

that was given to us was unbelievable. I thought that it truly was like heaven on earth. I am very grateful to my Heavenly Father for this great blessing because I

know that I will now be with my family forever no matter what happens.

We are the first people in our entire family to visit the temple and

## Blessed with a Great Opportunity

**Elder Kommalapati**

India Bangalore Mission

Soon after I finished my 18<sup>th</sup> month mark on mission, I was asked by my mission president to serve in a new area, where the Church has a home group. Yes, a new area in the mission in a city called Vijayawada, which is a 4–5-hour bus drive from Rajahmundry. Vijayawada was opened

to missionary work previously, but missionaries were not specifically assigned to stay in Vijayawada. I had the privilege to serve with my companion, Elder Tahiliani. For both of us it was our first experience serving in a home group. We had a group of 5 members attending the home group

at the beginning, even though the member list showed that many people had moved to Vijayawada. Five or six weeks later, there were about 25–30 people attending the church service every week.

Vijayawada is a city which has a lot of Christian families and churches. It was definitely not an easy task for us to work with the people. Most of the people whom we had met said, “We are already converted in Christ”. They requested us to visit the non-Christians



*First gathering at the Vijayawada home group*





**Stadium where we taught Brother Sam**



**Brother Sam with his mom at his baptism**

and share the gospel with them. Despite all the challenges we had the first few weeks, we were able to meet with a lot of members. We had to travel a lot on buses and autos to meet with them to get to know them a little better, invite them to church,

and to seek some referrals from them. We did get to know the area a little better and started to do our finding. Everyday we tried talking to a lot of people and knocking doors. We are really thankful for the Spirit's guidance, which helped us to identify the

people whom the Lord had prepared to receive the gospel.

Right in front of our apartment we have a hill where 90% of the people are Christians; we decided to name the hill as Pi Hill because that is where we can find lot of potential investigators who can receive the restored gospel. Weeks passed by, and we were working with a large group of investigators. Later we had to drop a lot of them because they never progressed. But two of the investigators that stayed were very strong and kept the commitments. One of them was Brother Kallu Sam Sagar and other one was Brother Manelli Krishna, two young brothers who were prepared to receive the blessings pertaining to this gospel.

We taught Brother Sam in an outdoor stadium, and he always paid attention to our teachings. He accepted our baptism invitation and on July 9<sup>th</sup> we were able to have his baptism in the Rajahmundry chapel. Brother Sam's mother was able to travel from Ongole to Rajahmundry to be part of the baptism service. Brother Sam is now preparing to receive the Aaronic Priesthood.

Meanwhile, we started helping Brother Krishna. We taught him the gospel simply and clearly; he always knew that the things we were teaching him were true. He waited to receive a

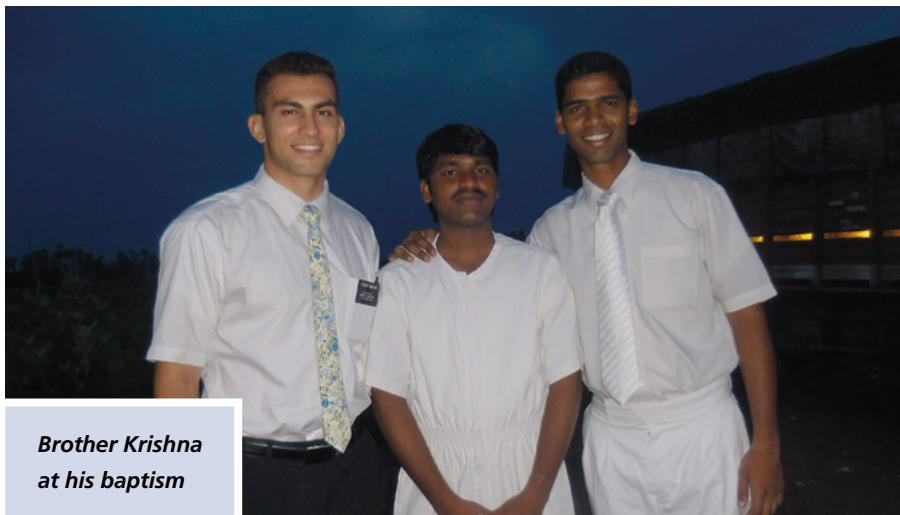
personal testimony about the gospel. Soon he was able to recognize the truth. He started to read, ponder and pray about the Book of Mormon. He received his witness, and he was ready to be baptized.

On August 17<sup>th</sup> we were able to have his baptism service. Since he couldn't travel to Rajahmundry because of his work schedule, we had to look for a font or for a pool in and around Vijayawada. With the help of our home group leader, Brother Rajeev, we were able to find a canal to have the baptism. It was late in the evening around 7:00 pm. We parked Brother Rajeev's car and turned on his car's headlights. The headlights provided enough light for us to baptize Brother Krishna.

These two young brethren have a great testimony and desire to learn more and to grow in this gospel. I was blessed with a great opportunity to meet them and help them make sacred covenants with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Brother Krishna became the first person to be baptized in Vijayawada and in his family. I thank all the members for their fellowship with these brethren and special thanks to my fellow missionaries Elder Devarapalli, Elder Tahiliani, Elder Ramishetty and Elder Tuscano for helping us with setting up everything for the baptism.



*Location where Krishna's baptism took place*



*Brother Krishna at his baptism*

The gospel brings great joy and love in our lives. The restored gospel and its standards help us to be a better person and blesses not only us but all the people whom we serve. I do have the testimony that the Church of Jesus Christ has been restored by the

Prophet Joseph Smith and President Thomas S. Monson is leading us and guiding us in these latter-days. I do believe that the Book of Mormon is the true word of God. I bear witness of these things in the sacred name of the Savior Jesus Christ, amen. ■

# Worth More Than Gold

Sharath Magesh

It is a great way to respect God to make a record of these blessings which He has poured out on me. I would not want to miss out on such an opportunity to honor my God by making things known to glorify His name.

I am Sharath Magesh, a young single adult from the Bengaluru Stake, Indiranagar Ward. As I walk down on my memory lane, I always left speechless on the mysterious yet marvelous works of God to build me to my true identity as a son of my Heavenly Father.

The world formed me to be a simple, a not so important, a very shy kid and also a student with a very average intellect. These are the things that I believed I am. When I was a primary kid, I was afraid of exams that I did miss church meetings to study. I was promised at that age that if I put God first and sought Him first, He would surely bless me with my studies. I was not mature enough in the gospel then. I simply did not believe in that promise. I was not sure whether my humble family could afford me to get a graduation degree. Against all odds, my mother always seeded hope in me. She never gave up on me but always boosted me and taught me many

valuable lessons to apply throughout my life. She always encouraged me to do my part and trusted that God will do His part.

I did only one thing that helped my life—I stayed. I stayed in the gospel. When I faced adversity or when I was alone, I stayed in the gospel. Just because I stayed in the gospel, God, my Heavenly Father, picked me up and worked on me little by little. I have completed my mechanical engineering with a pretty decent score, a great blessing to remember if I think of the circumstances I lived in. This was a daydream to me and which I never imagined I would make it. I would not forget my very good friend Suresh, whom God gave me during this graduation journey.

The best and greatest blessing is my testimony of the big picture of God that helped me pursue my happiness in the gospel, which is eternal to know my true potential and true identity that is worth more than gold on earth. I know that I can never repay God for what He did, but it would be at least fair if I tried to do His work.

The great and marvelous work, even that work of being a missionary, I can feel more excitement fill my whole being to serve an honest, grateful and loving mission, even as the Saviour did. I will ever be proud and ever rejoice in our God the Eternal Father. All glory to Him who is the Only Begotten Son of God, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## CALL FOR ARTICLES

Your local pages section is produced by members in your own area under the guidance of the Area Presidency so that it can address the needs and experiences of members where you live. The inclusion of the local pages in each issue depends on the availability of local content. We invite you to contribute your faith-promoting thoughts and experiences by contacting your local editor. ■

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