

MESSAGE FROM A MEMBER OF THE SEVENTY

He Has Given Us Life

By Elder Julio C. Acosta
Of the Seventy

Christmas has arrived! And for those of us who live in the Caribbean, the season is accompanied by more pleasant temperatures, which give it a distinctive focus at this time of year. People enter into a state of natural celebration. Decorations change the appearance of homes and entire cities. Businesses dress up in lights and colors to excite shoppers. Those who are far away begin to make plans to come home. Those who work are anxiously looking forward to the beginning of their vacations. Families dream of seeing their loved ones and being together with them, and at the peak of all of this is Christmas Eve day, our celebration as a family of the birth, which would take place the following

day, of the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God.

In many cases, we have learned that death, the separation of our loved ones, constitutes the greatest heartache we can experience. I also believe that we can agree that a birth in the family, whether it is of a son or daughter, niece or nephew, or grandchild, makes up one of the greatest joys that a person can feel. Birth fills our lives with such joy that we, in fact, celebrate it each year.

It is interesting to see how our Savior, Jesus Christ, can be represented in the two most significant emotional events for people and how, through Him, in both events, we can find common elements such as joy, hope, and peace.



Elder Julio C. Acosta

The Savior said unto us, “My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (John 14:27). Certainly, during some events of our lives, we cannot comprehend how He says that in these circumstances we will also have peace. But thus He said, and it would not only be peace as the world sees it—serenity, comfort, or being relaxed and not worrying. The peace that He promises us is this and much more. It comes along with feelings of hope, the conviction of faith, and indescribable feelings that say to us within our hearts, “But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33) it fills us with a surety that can only come through Him, telling us that all will be well.

The scriptures tell us that by man came death, yet by man came also resurrection.¹ In other words, Christ, the Alpha and the Omega², is the firstfruits of all³, yet in Him all things are finished.⁴ His birth, death, and Resurrection opened the door so that now everyone, as eternal beings, can return to “that God who gave [us] life” (Alma 40:11). Therefore, in order for us to make our way through this life as rewarding as possible, we must remember that He is the vine⁵, come unto Him⁶, and be His friends⁷. Then, if we are faithful, we will inherit⁸ all



that the Father has, and thus we will have all that is necessary to overcome spiritual death and receive the gift of eternal life.⁹

He is the reason that we are in this time of Christmas, which fills us with a spirit of happiness, brotherhood, and love that floats in the air, in peoples' eyes and in our greetings. We want to express in each action that it is because of Him. Because even when at times we forget, the Spirit bears witness to everyone that we are children of God¹⁰, that He came to

give us life, to give us hope, to join birth and death together in a life full of challenges yet great joy, no matter where or in what circumstances we find ourselves. His love is capable of filling all of our hearts, making us feel the desire to say, "Thank you, Lord!"

The Son of God said that he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,¹¹ and He has offered us His life.

May we, in these days in which we celebrate His birth, feel the whisperings of His love in our hearts. May we be happy together with our families

and friends, but above all, may we be grateful for that gift, which, for each one of us, was delivered by our Heavenly Father in a humble manger in the town of Bethlehem.

Merry Christmas!!!! ■

NOTES

1. See 1 Corinthians 15:21.
2. See 3 Nephi 9:18.
3. See 1 Corinthians 15:20.
4. See John 19:30.
5. See John 15:5.
6. See Matthew 11:28.
7. See John 15:14.
8. See Romans 8:17.
9. See John 17:3.
10. See Romans 8:16.
11. See Mark 10:45.

LOCAL PAGES

Haiti Croix-des-Missions Stake 2018 Seminary Graduation

Saturday, July 22nd was the date of the Haiti Croix-des-Missions stake seminary graduation for the 2017–2018 school year.

This activity was presided over by the stake president, Brother Kerving Joseph, with many stake and ward leaders in attendance. Brother Gethro

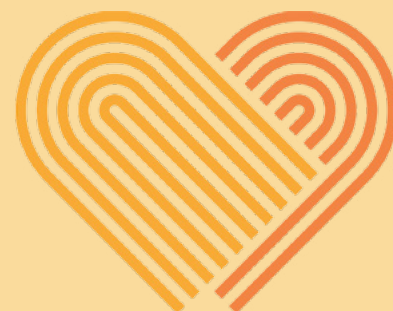
Nerosil, coordinator of the Seminaries and Institutes program in Haiti also participated.

Thirteen youth—Simon Stevenson, Judel Barthelus Ladouceur, Franska B. Mazile, Gerard Jean Mary Junior, Sagine Jules, Sariah Pierre, Lourbine Jean Pierre, Slaïding S. Auguste, Bradley E.

Prinvil, Clyde Francois, Jerome Kervens, Roosnold S. Fanfan, and Rijkaad Semaxant—completed the four-year program and received their diplomas. Another 62 youth completed the current course successfully and received this year's course completion certificates. This year the youth had the opportunity to study the Book of Mormon.

The stake president expressed his pride for the youth of the stake and mentioned that the future of these youth has not yet unfolded but that wonderful things will come from them. He stated that the youth are born to lead. They cannot copy the world; they need instead to show the





Church Announces 2019 Mutual Theme for Youth

The Church has announced that the Mutual theme for 2019 is “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

According to a letter from the Young Women and Young Men General Presidencies sent to local leaders on August 1:

“The purpose of the yearly theme is to provide opportunities for youth worldwide to learn about, study, internalize, and apply the principles taught in the scripture. Youth are encouraged to memorize the scripture, study its doctrine, and act on the principles learned throughout the year.

“In addition, the theme can be used in Mutual opening exercises, as a topic for sacrament meeting talks given by youth, and to provide focus for youth activities—including camps, youth conferences, and devotionals.

“Resources—including videos, music, and suggestions for using the theme throughout the year—will be available to leaders at youth.lds.org and in Church magazines at the end of 2018 and throughout 2019.” ■



world how to live. President Joseph saw the effort put into those four years as an eternal investment from parents, priesthood leaders, coordinators, and youth to come to this point.

Now that they are very able, it is expected that they act according to what they know and go on missions as the next move to share all that they have learned in seminary. The time spent in seminary was necessary, for “what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). While going to school is very important, so is the study of the gospel. Luke 2:47 mentions that all who heard Jesus “were astonished at his understanding and answers.” Thus it is to be of

seminary youth. May all they meet be astonished by their understanding and answers.

There is a need to study both secular and spiritual things. This year in the Book of Mormon, we studied so that we may know how to come unto Jesus and be saved (see 1 Nephi 15:14). This book is a tool that can lead us back to the Savior.

Seminaries are religion classes for youth from 14 to 17 where they are taught doctrine and how to live the gospel in the Savior’s way. Students start when they enter high school and end when they finish. The young people graduate when they have completed four years of seminary. ■

“You need not be afraid, despite the dangers and challenges you will face. You will be blessed and protected when you seek righteous, worthwhile goals. Plan and work with grit and determination, . . . and rely and focus on faith, repentance, saving ordinances, and the Savior’s atoning sacrifice as you endure to the end.” –Elder Quentin L. Cook



A Historic Journey to the Temple

Under the direction of the Caribbean Area Presidency and with inspiration from Elder Quentin L. Cook’s visit, Elder Claude Gamiette brought together the joint forces of the young single adults from the Barbados Bridgetown Mission through a historic initiative of the first young single adult trip to the temple. Representatives from the islands of Barbados, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Saint Lucia, Saint Maarten, Saint Vincent, and French Guyana came together for their first visit to the Santo Domingo Temple in the Dominican Republic, from July 20th to 28th, 2018.

Elder Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited the Caribbean from November 10th through November 20th, 2017. During this visit he addressed members and hosted a young single adult devotional. He was accompanied by his wife, Sister Mary Cook, and members of the Church’s Caribbean Area Presidency and their wives: Elder Walter F. González and Sister Zulma A.

González; Elder Claudio D. Zivic and Sister Dina Noemí A. Zivic; and Elder José L. Alonso and Sister Rebecca S. Alonso.

Elder Claude Gamiette was present during his visit to Guadeloupe and expressed his concern for the isolation that many of the young single adults in the islands feel. He wanted to break the isolation in a historic trip, the first time for many, to the temple.

“Young single adults feel alone from being a small group in their islands. This experience will inspire them to keep great relations among each other and create great temple experiences,” shared Elder Gamiette.

For eight days, these young single adults participated in a set of activities both spiritual and social, learning and interacting together in a journey that ended in tears of satisfaction.

Long before coming to the Dominican Republic, a committee compiled of representatives from these islands met in a coordinated effort to bring together all

those around them to make this a successful experience. In a great ministering effort, Xavia, Faith, Ramona, Brittany, Jordan, Kelvin, Kenlyn, Andrew, Nia, Brittaey, Jonathan, and Zariah connected to plan activities and bring people together to come to the temple.

Starting Friday, July 20th, the very first group arrived, accompanied by Brother and Sister Eclar from Guadeloupe. Fourteen young single adults were the first, and more kept coming during the next two days for a total of over 50 attendants.

During the time of this trip, the YSA participated in indexing activities, devotionals, service activities, and a dating panel, as well as social activities with the young single adults from the Santo Domingo Institute of Religion. They even went out bowling.

“I have been pondering about my life, my expectations, and the roadblocks I’ve encountered. I have been needing guidance. The opportunity to enter the temple has given me the chance to be where my blessings are,” shared Brittany Henry, a 22-year-old young single adult representative from St. Lucia and a Young Women advisor.

For many this was their first time at the temple. For others this was the opportunity to renew the covenants they had made before they served their missions.

Sister Henry said that during this trip she has felt differently. She has gotten out of her comfort zone and has learned how things are done elsewhere just from making new friends here.

“It is not just a chance for temple attendance; it is also a chance to make sacrifices together,” says Brother Jocelyn Eclar, from Guadeloupe, first counselor to the mission president. ■

