

Smith the Lord said, "The holy scriptures are given of me for your instruction" (D&C 33:16; see also Psalms 19:7; 119:98-101; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Alma 12:10; 17:2-3; D&C 18:34-36).

4. *Increase in the power of discernment.* "The word of God . . . is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil" (Helaman 3:29). "And whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37; see also Hebrews 4:12).

5. *Increase in testimony.* From the Doctrine and Covenants: "You can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words" (D&C 18:36; see also Psalm 19:7).

Other promises

In addition to these general categories of promises of power and increase,

there are other promises, such as "for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8) and as Joseph Smith said, "Faith comes by hearing the word of God" (*History of the Church*, 3:379).

President Howard W. Hunter has said: "When we . . . read and study the scriptures, benefits and blessings of many kinds come to us. This is the most profitable of all study in which we could engage" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 90; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 64).

May we "remember also the promises." I testify that the scriptures are the word of God. I love them. I testify that God lives. He is our Father. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. They appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith just as he said they did. President Ezra Taft Benson is God's prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Augusto A. Lim

Gospel blessings in the Philippines

I would like to express my love and appreciation to my eternal companion for the support and love that she has completely extended to me through all these years of membership in this Church. I suppose many of you already know I came from the Philippines, home to close to 67 million people, the Pearl of the Orient, but now a land devastated by earthquakes, typhoons, floods, and even volcanic eruptions. I will not, however, talk about the calamities that have caused much hardship and tested the faith of our people, but I would rather talk about the great spiritual blessings that have been experienced in abundance as the gospel is spread in the land.

The restored gospel was first introduced by Latter-day Saint servicemen and women while serving in the Philippines near the end of World War II,

but missionary work officially started in the Philippines on April 28, 1961, when Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, then a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, met with a small group of members at the American War Memorial Cemetery in the suburbs of Manila to offer a prayer invoking the blessing of the Lord on the missionary work in the Philippines (see Manuscript History of the Southern Far East Mission).

Before giving his prayer, President Hinckley, in a brief talk, made this prophetic statement: "What we begin here will affect the lives of thousands upon thousands of people in this island republic, and its effects will go from generation to generation for great and everlasting good" (quoted in Conference Report, Philippine Islands Area Conference 1975, p. 20).

After his brief remarks, President Hinckley offered a prayer in which he said:

“We invoke Thy blessing, Father dear, upon the missionaries who shall come [here], that Thy Spirit may touch their hearts, that their lives may be clean and virtuous, that their examples may be marvelous before the people, [that] they may be blessed, as it were, with the ‘gift of tongues,’ that they shall speak the language of the people, that they shall work with singleness of purpose to Thy name’s honor and glory, that they shall go forth without fear, [that none shall stay them, and] that they shall declare with teaching and testimony, [the] restoration of Thy holy work for the blessing of Thy children. Father, give them joy and courage and faith and satisfaction in their labors, and make them fruitful.

“We invoke Thy blessings upon the people of this land, that they shall be friendly and hospitable and kind and gracious to those who shall come here, and that many, yea Lord, we pray that there shall be many thousands who shall receive this message and be blessed thereby. Wilt Thou bless them with receptive minds and understanding hearts, and with faith to receive, and with courage to live the principles of the gospel, and with a desire to share with others the blessings which they shall receive. We pray that there shall be many men—faithful, good, virtuous, true men—who shall join the Church and who shall receive the blessings of the priesthood, and who shall accept and grow in leadership, [that Thy work here shall be handled largely by local brethren,] under the direction of those who hold the keys in this day and time, according to the law and order of Thy church” (in *Manuscript History of the Southern Far East Mission*, 30 June 1961, pp. 9–10).

Church growth in the Philippines

A few days after that historic meeting, the first four full-time missionaries arrived from the Southern Far East

Mission, based in Hong Kong. From a handful of members in 1961, the Church in the Philippines has since grown at a remarkable rate, now increasing by more than two thousand members per month. As a result of close correlation between the full-time missionaries and members, membership is now three hundred thousand distributed in forty-eight stakes, sixty-five districts, and thirteen missions. Five of the thirteen mission presidents, all of the eight Regional Representatives, and all stake and district presidents are now native Filipinos. Sixty to seventy percent of the more than two thousand full-time missionaries now laboring in the field are also native Filipinos. And now, standing majestically on elevated grounds, overlooking a valley where hundreds of thousands live in the heart of metro Manila, is the Manila Philippines Temple.

Grateful for good missionaries

Surely the prayer of President Hinckley is being fulfilled as thousands of young men and women, as well as elderly couples, are responding to the clarion call of the Lord “that it is my will that you should proclaim my gospel from land to land, and from city to city, yea, in those regions round about where it has not been proclaimed” (D&C 66:5).

After three years of working closely as mission president with these young, devoted, upright, and virtuous missionaries, I am humbled and grateful for the good they do. These young ambassadors of the Lord leave the comfort of home and the companionship of loved ones and go to foreign lands or places far from home, bearing strong testimonies of the Savior, teaching the gospel with faith and sure knowledge of its truthfulness. My testimony has been strengthened as I see the great effort of missionaries to overcome homesickness and adapt

to new environments, new customs, new languages they must learn, and food so different from Mother's home-cooked meal in their noble desire to proclaim the gospel to the world.

I am a witness to the daily acts of sacrifices of these missionaries as they cheerfully endure hardships like energy-sapping walks of many kilometers, or riding on their bicycles under the heat of the burning sun or the cold monsoon rain, and the discomfort of riding on fully loaded jeeps driving at high speed along bumpy and dusty roads to reach teaching appointments on time.

Indeed our modern-day heralds of truth laboring in the Philippines and other lands work hard and pray constantly to be worthy instruments of the Lord in testifying and challenging all to come unto Christ through repentance and baptism, "teaching them to [do] all things" which the Lord has commanded (Matthew 28:20).

Like the sons of Mosiah, "they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God" (Alma 17:2). And "they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God" (17:3). And "they did suffer much, both in body and in mind, such as hunger, thirst and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit" (17:5). But after the completion of an honorable mission, like Ammon, one of the sons of Mosiah, these missionaries can also say, "My joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God" (Alma 26:11).

Reasons for the Church's growth

We are also witnessing the literal fulfillment of the prayers and blessings for the people of our land given by President Hinckley that lovely April

morning in 1961. Many thousands have been touched by the Spirit as the gospel message is brought to many homes by committed missionaries, with the help of members who willingly share the blessings of their Church membership.

We are often asked the reasons behind this phenomenal growth in membership. I can only venture some opinions. First, being perhaps the only Christian country in Asia for many centuries now has prepared the people for the coming of the gospel. The Philippines' being considered the third largest English-speaking country in the world certainly makes it easier for people to understand the message of the gospel and is the reason for the fast development of the leadership skills of its members.

But more important is the humble nature of the people and their dependence on the Lord for the things they stand in need of, making them receptive to the promptings of the Spirit. Because of economic difficulties experienced in the Philippines, the gospel is the answer, and rightly so, to the people's prayer for a better way of life.

As a result of the gospel-centered lives of many Latter-day Saints, people around them see changes in their lives that in turn give them hope. Member families may still live in humble homes with dirt or bamboo floors and walls, but because of their positive response to the gospel plan, and through their obedience to the Lord's commandments, they receive the promised blessings. As a result, people see the changes in these families who are now living in a more sanitary condition and are healthier, more educated, always ready and delighted to help others, grateful for what they have, no matter how humble, and generally happier. They have obeyed the Lord's counsel to "learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in

me" (D&C 19:23). Generally, however, the faith, devotion, and living of correct gospel principles by the members have improved their lives not only spiritually but also temporally, for did not the Lord say that the "willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days"? (D&C 64:34).

That the Lord will continue to bless our people with joy and peace of mind as they obey His commandments

and the counsels of our leaders in the midst of adversity is my humble prayer in Jesus' name, amen.

President Hinckley

Elders John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, and Augusto A. Lim of the Seventy have spoken to us.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder James E. Faust

As this conference comes to a close, I wish to speak of a priceless heritage. I acknowledge the faithful pioneers in all of the countries of the world who have helped establish the Church in their lands. First-generation members of the Church are indeed pioneers. They are and have been men and women of deep faith and devotion. Today, however, I speak primarily of the priceless legacy which belongs to the descendants of all pioneers, but especially to those who came into this valley and settled in Utah and other parts of western America.

Reenacting the handcart trek

In celebration of July 24th this year, we joined the Saints of the Riverton Wyoming Stake. Under the direction of President Robert Lorimer and his counselors, the youth and youth leaders of that stake reenacted part of the handcart trek which took place in 1856. We started early in a four-wheel-drive van and went first to Independence Rock, where we picked up the Mormon Trail. We saw Devil's Gate a few miles up the road. Our souls were subdued when we arrived at the hallowed ground of Martin's Cove, the site where the Martin Handcart Company, freezing and starving, waited for the rescue wagons to come

from Salt Lake City. About fifty-six members of the Martin Handcart Company perished there from hunger and cold.

It was an emotional experience to see the Sweetwater River crossing where most of the five hundred members of the company were carried across the icy river by three brave young men. Later, all three of the boys died from the effects of the terrible strain and great exposure of that crossing. When President Brigham Young heard of this heroic act, he wept like a child and later declared publicly: "That act alone will ensure C. Allen Huntington, George W. Grant and David P. Kimball an everlasting salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, worlds without end" (quoted in Solomon F. Kimball, "Belated Emigrants of 1856," *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1914, p. 288).

We went farther along the trail to the site where the members of the Willie Handcart Company were rescued. We felt that we were standing on holy ground. At that site twenty-one members of that party died from starvation and cold. We continued to travel up over Rocky Ridge, seven thousand three hundred feet high. This is the highest spot on the Mormon Trail. The two-mile ascension to Rocky Ridge gains over seven hundred feet in altitude. It was very difficult for all of the