

MOM'S CHRISTMAS QUILT

One of the most challenging experiences of my life happened shortly after the passing of our 10-year-old daughter from brain cancer. The saying “You can’t take it with you” came with clarity as we looked around her room one Saturday afternoon.

Clarissa was gone, but her room still held the identifiable remnants of her earthly stay. We now had the daunting task of deciding what to do with her personal belongings. I knew that parting with a single item would not

be easy, especially for my wife.

Dealing with the whirlwind of details associated with hospitals, chemotherapy, and radiation had left us little time to clean and organize.

Memories came as we packed up items she’d arranged on her headboard or bookshelf. They all held heartfelt meaning—from her favorite blanket, book, or necklace to her stuffed animals, schoolbooks, and football. My wife sobbed as we asked what to do with each item.

We gathered many of Clarissa’s books and took them to her elementary school for other children to enjoy. We gave her dresser to a neighbor. Some of her clothes went to cousins. Focusing on others helped make the difficult situation of parting with her things a little easier.

Several weeks later, as Christmas approached, my two teenage daughters asked their mother if they could use some of Clarissa’s clothes to make a special Christmas gift. They selected each article of clothing for its

I will always remember my wife’s expression when she opened her gift and saw what her daughters had made for her.



HE NEEDS MY SERVICE NOW

intrinsic family memory and carefully cut squares to represent precious moments in her life.

A few days before Christmas, they and their Young Women leader, who had helped them come up with the idea, showed me a quilt they were making. I looked in astonishment at each square of fabric, which represented an event in Clarissa's life: a square from her football uniform, a square from the shirt we bought her on a family trip, a square from the pajama pants she wore at the hospital. Each piece, so precious and beautiful, reminded me of our time with her. I told my daughters it was perfect. I knew their mother would love it.

That Christmas morning I saw a gift given from the heart. I will always remember my wife's expression when she opened her gift and saw what her daughters had made for her. Each night since then she has wrapped her Christmas quilt around her, recalling memories and dreaming of the day our family will be united again—thanks to the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. ■
Jed Packer, Utah, USA

I sit at the sewing machine and feed thread onto seams of flannel. Child-print patterns in soft colors decorate the tops, with coordinating colors forming the backs of the baby receiving blankets I'm sewing.

Our ward Relief Society assembles newborn kits for poverty and disaster areas. I'm an amateur seamstress, but I'm committed to participate. I enjoy choosing fabric for the project and cutting out blanket-sized squares.

I put right sides of the fabric together, sew around the edges, and leave an area open to turn the blanket right side out. Then I stitch along the edges, clip the corners, turn the blanket so that the colorful sides are on the outside, and stitch up the open area.

I sew along the top of the edges to reinforce the seams. I ease the fabric into place and take off at a brisk pace. As I rush to finish so I can resume household duties, a thought strikes me: "What if I were sewing this blanket for baby Jesus?"

With that thought, I slow down and take great care to straighten the seams. But even with care, the stitching doesn't run straight.

Next I sew a 10-inch (25 cm) square in the center to secure the front to the back. I make a heavy paper template, center it on the blanket, and lightly mark around it. I put the fabric in place, ease down the needle, and carefully sew.

When I'm done, I clip the threads and pull out the finished blanket. It

isn't square—it's a cross between a trapezoid and a parallelogram.

I set the blanket aside, pull out fresh flannel, and start again—taking greater pains for this gift worthy of Deity. But even with the extra effort, the results are only slightly better. Each blanket I sew is imperfect.

I feel that I can't take any of the blankets to the collection site, at least not this year. I'll keep practicing, and perhaps someday I can make a contribution.

Then another thought floats through my mind: "If you wait until your sewing is perfect, the Christ child will be in Egypt."

I understand. The opportunity for service would be gone. The Savior accepts our offerings when we use our best efforts, imperfect though they may be. I know that a newborn, wrapped in a soft, clean blanket, would not refuse to sleep because the corners aren't square.

As I contemplate whether my efforts will make a dent in worldwide needs, Christ's counsel comes to mind: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

So I continue sewing blankets, working to make them as attractive as I can. I know there is a need now, not some vague time in the future when I can sew them perfectly. ■

Jean Hedengren Moultrie,
Washington, USA



OUR BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT EVER

It was Christmas Eve, and our family had gathered as we do every year to celebrate. The clock was about to strike midnight when Dad called us together, saying that he had something to show us.

With all the preparation and excitement that accompany Christmas Eve, my sisters, mother, and I had not noticed what Dad had prepared for the occasion. As soon as we were all comfortably gathered together, he began to show us some slides.

In his slide show, which featured a painting of the Savior, Christmas scenes, and carefully crafted words, Dad expressed his love for us. His presentation also reminded us of the

true meaning of Christmas and the happiness and gratitude we should feel for the Savior's birth. One slide of a colorful Christmas tree also featured the words, "This Christmas the love of Jesus Christ will bring me a new life."

The most special part of Dad's presentation followed when he used a slide of a painting of the Savior to give us some news. It wasn't just any news; it was the best news ever. Above the Savior appeared the words "I have decided to get baptized in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

Our father had finally decided to join the Church! Such a decision may be easy for some people, but it wasn't for our father. He had been studying

the gospel and learning about the Church for 25 years. Despite our best efforts and many missionary discussions, he still had not been baptized. We never understood why, but we knew he wasn't ready.

I admit there were times when I felt that my father would never be baptized. Deep inside, however, I never lost hope, and we all continued to pray for him. On Christmas Eve, the Lord answered our prayers.

When Dad made his announcement, at first all we could do was weep for joy. We felt a mixture of feelings—excitement, surprise, and above all else, an enormous happiness that is difficult to describe.

Dad's announcement didn't just change Christmas Eve—it changed life for our entire family. We still have progress to make as individuals and as a family, but I know moving ahead will be better now that we're together in the Church.

I am so grateful to the Lord for this blessing. In a few months we will be sealed as a family in the temple. Dad's announcement was definitely the best Christmas present ever. ■

Adriana Nava Navarro, Bolivia

The most special part of Dad's presentation occurred when he used a slide of a painting of the Savior to give us the best news ever.



CHRISTMAS UNDER CORRUGATED METAL

While I was stationed in Manila, Philippines, during World War II, I would often meet with a small group of other LDS servicemen to hold sacrament meeting. During one meeting I noticed a Filipino woman at the back of our bombed-out building peering through an opening that had once been a door. I wondered if our singing had attracted her. While our eyes were closed for the benediction, she quietly slipped away.

During one of her subsequent visits, we invited her to join us. Her name was Aniceta Fajardo, and she enthusiastically accepted our friendship. As she continued attending our meetings, she learned about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

With Christmas approaching, we decided to bless Aniceta and her family with some Christmas presents. We gathered canned milk, meat, and vegetables; a couple of blankets; and a medical kit, including penicillin to treat Aniceta's sick grandson.

On Christmas Eve we loaded up the gifts and went to Aniceta's home. She lived with her daughter and grandson under sheets of corrugated metal that leaned against a brick wall—a remnant of a building that had been blown apart. We wondered how they could survive with such little protection during the tropical rains so prevalent that time of year.

One of our men pulled a branch

from a mango tree and stuck it in the ground. We found bits of litter to decorate the branch.

Aniceta and her family looked on with delight and amazement. When they saw the gifts we had brought, their delight turned into tears of happiness and appreciation. They hadn't seen or eaten such food in a long time, and they wept so much that for a time they couldn't speak.

Because it was Christmas Eve, our thoughts turned to home and loved ones. I thought of the cablegram I had received just two days before, informing me that I had become a father. We shared our feelings, ending with our testimonies of the Savior and the restored gospel.

We assured this wonderful family of the Savior's love for them. They found

comfort in our words, and a feeling of peace warmed the night air. Then we bid our dear friends good-bye and wished them a merry Christmas.

Soon afterward I was transferred to a new area, and I never saw Aniceta or her family again. But years later I opened the *Church Almanac* to a section on the Philippines and read that Aniceta Pabilona Fajardo was the first Filipino to join the Church in those islands.¹ What a wonderful blessing to think of the seeds that were planted during that Christmastime in 1945. ■

Erwin E. Wirkus, Idaho, USA

NOTE

1. See "Philippines," *Deseret News 1991–1992 Church Almanac*, 157; recent issues of the *Church Almanac* spell Sister Fajardo's first name Aneleta.

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