



# Unique but UNITED

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*Being together  
forever starts  
with being  
united now.*

**D**iana Vasquez didn't get a chance to say good-bye to her father. She didn't know she needed to. When she and her two brothers went to school on June 9, 2007, he seemed fine. But before she got home, he lay down to rest and didn't wake up.

"It was so unexpected," says Diana, who was 16 at the time. "At first I couldn't accept it."

Even those who know that families are meant to be together forever sometimes take their family for granted. Sure, siblings can be annoying, parents and children don't always see eye to eye, and spending time with friends often seems like more fun.

But when tragedy strikes without warning, as

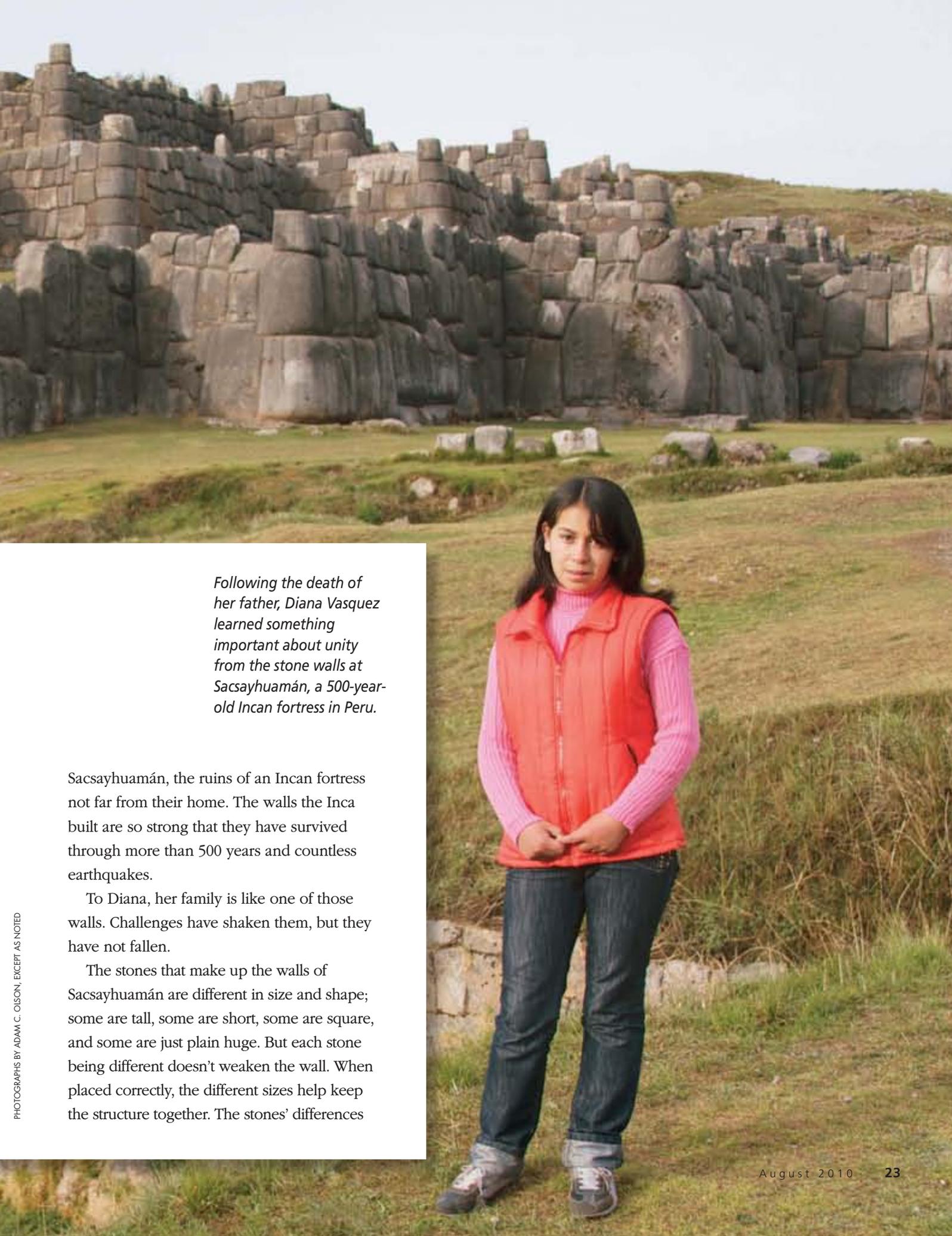
it did in Diana's family, suddenly things that really matter—like family—become more important.

Fortunately for Diana's family, being united here and hereafter was something they were already working on. Pulling together when hard times could have pulled them apart has brought peace and happiness in this life and hope that they can be together in the next.

## What Is Unity?

Diana and her family live in Cusco, a city high in the Peruvian Andes, at the heart of the ancient Incan empire.

In the years before her father died, Diana's family found a favorite spot for picnics at



*Following the death of her father, Diana Vasquez learned something important about unity from the stone walls at Sacsayhuamán, a 500-year-old Incan fortress in Peru.*

Sacsayhuamán, the ruins of an Incan fortress not far from their home. The walls the Inca built are so strong that they have survived through more than 500 years and countless earthquakes.

To Diana, her family is like one of those walls. Challenges have shaken them, but they have not fallen.

The stones that make up the walls of Sacsayhuamán are different in size and shape; some are tall, some are short, some are square, and some are just plain huge. But each stone being different doesn't weaken the wall. When placed correctly, the different sizes help keep the structure together. The stones' differences



## DEVELOPING UNITY

“The gift of unity will come through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we keep our covenants to take His name upon us, to remember Him always, and to keep all His commandments, we will receive the companionship of His Spirit. That will soften our hearts and unite us.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “That We May Be One,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 68.

actually help accomplish their common purpose.

The same can be said for our differences.

“We all have different gifts and talents,” says Diana. “We should use them to help others” (see 1 Corinthians 12).

After Diana’s father died, she and her mother and two brothers took on different roles suited to

their talents and abilities, but each worked with a common purpose: to take care of each other. As they did so, they had “their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21).

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, explains: “Our Heavenly Father wants our hearts to be knit together. That union in love is not simply an ideal. It is a necessity.”<sup>1</sup>

### How Do We Become United?

In their best stone work, the Incas didn’t use mortar. They fit the stones together so carefully that there isn’t enough space to slide a piece of paper between them. This extraordinarily close fit is possible because these master builders were able to see a place for each stone and how it should be shaped to fit the overall plan.

As we let the Master Builder shape us, we can become one with each other and with Him.<sup>2</sup> President Eyring says this unity happens when we are obedient to the ordinances and covenants of the gospel.<sup>3</sup>

Receiving gospel ordinances and keeping

covenants had a dramatic influence on Diana’s family. Diana and her younger brother, Emmanuel, were the first to join the Church. Before that time, Diana says, her family argued a lot. She knew her parents wanted the best for her and her brothers, but they were strict.

“We felt more fear than love for my dad,” she says.

Several months after she was baptized, her father and older brother, Richard, joined the Church, followed more than a year later by her mother.

“My father changed,” Diana says of her father’s conversion. “When we did things wrong, he would talk to us about it. We had fewer arguments. There was more harmony in our home.”

Covenanting to follow Jesus Christ had drawn them closer to Him and to each other. They had a common purpose: to become an eternal family. A year after Diana’s mother was baptized, the family was sealed in the temple.

“It was a beautiful experience,” Diana says. “I can’t explain how I felt when we walked into the sealing room and saw my parents there. I didn’t want to leave.”



*Right: Diana, her mother, Duvalie, and her brothers, Richard and Emmanuel (top), have grown closer as they have supported each other in keeping the commandments.*

Afterward, the family felt an even greater desire to keep the commandments so they could be an eternal family. Less than a week before Diana's father died, he taught a family home evening lesson on being united in keeping their covenants so they could be together forever. "Nobody has tomorrow guaranteed," he said. "We need to be prepared so that if any one of us dies, we can still be together."

### Keeping Covenants Changes Hearts

Diana has learned how working together to keep gospel covenants can bring a family together, and she is grateful she learned before it was too late.

The last thing Diana's father said to her as she left for school on the day he died was, "*Te quiero mucho, Dianita.*" (I love you very much, little Diana.)

Diana has confidence in the Lord's promise that her family can be together again if they will continue to keep their covenants.

"I have seen how Heavenly Father has brought us closer together for following the Savior," she says. "I have to believe He will also keep His promise that we can be together forever if we keep the commandments.

"I know our families can truly be eternal thanks to the divine plan.

"I know we can realize the eternal glory our Heavenly Father promises. Only by enduring to the end, putting our hearts into the things of God, and helping each other can we achieve our objective to be an eternal family." ■

#### NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, "Be One," *Liahona*, Sept. 2008, 2; *Ensign*, Sept. 2008, 4.
2. See Thomas S. Monson, "Heavenly Homes, Forever Families," *Liahona*, June 2006, 66; *Ensign*, June 2006, 98.
3. See Henry B. Eyring, "That We May Be One," *Ensign*, May 1998, 66.

## A MODEL OF UNITY

Creating unity isn't always easy when everyone around us is different. Yet unity is a commandment.

Diana Vasquez and Jhonathan Herrera Barra, a friend from another ward in the Cusco Peru Inti Raymi Stake, got together to discuss an important principle that can serve as a pattern for creating unity in any relationship—among friends, family, classmates, or quorum members.

Imagine two people at different ends of the same horizontal line. The distance between them represents their lack of unity. To be united, one or both would have to move to where the other is. However, even when they know they should be united, many things can keep them from coming together. Maybe both feel they are right. Perhaps pride or anger keeps one from moving. Misunderstandings are often divisive.

Moving together on this horizontal line often involves compromise, which can create its own additional tension. Meeting in the middle can be difficult when you can't agree on where the middle is.

Now imagine a third person standing above the other two, creating a triangle. This person represents the Savior.

As we draw nearer to Him, ultimately we will find that we have also closed the distance between each other.

"Jesus Christ is the middle point," Diana says. "If we all move to where He is, we all move closer together."

Jhonathan suggests this can happen as we worthily "partake of the sacrament to renew our covenants, give service, go to the temple, and leave the world behind. We can't be with Him and the Spirit can't be with us if we aren't clean."

