

GETTING TO THE TEMPLE

Since the time of our baptism in 2001, my husband and I had many conversations about traveling to the temple with our family to be sealed together for eternity. However, our plans came to a halt when he was diagnosed with liver disease and passed away before we could go.

I was heartbroken, but my desire for our family to be sealed for eternity grew even stronger after my husband's death. As a widowed mother of four children, however, I knew it would not be easy to raise the money needed to take my family from Cambodia to the Hong Kong China Temple—roughly 1,000 miles (1,600 km) away.

Despite our meager income, my children and I knew that we needed to get to the temple so we could be sealed as a family for eternity. I continued to work hard doing laundry at a hotel while my children worked odd jobs. We slowly began

to save a little money for our trip, but we soon realized that we might never be able to save enough.

Because we knew an eternal family was more valuable than anything we could have on earth, we decided to sell the only thing of value that we owned—my late husband's

motorbike. After we sold it for a significant amount of money, our hearts rejoiced to know that we would soon be able to be sealed to our beloved father and husband.

But our happiness was short-lived. One week after selling the motorbike, we returned from church to

We slowly began to save a little money for our trip to the temple, but after our home was burglarized, we realized that we might never have enough.

find that our home had been burglarized. When we discovered that the money from the sale of the motorbike was gone, we were grief stricken. For months

after the break-in, we continued to pray that we could find a way to go to the temple.

After several months our prayers were answered when we were told that we could receive help from the Church's General Temple Patron Assistance Fund.* My children and I rejoiced at the news and soon made our hoped-for trip to the temple.

Thanks to the generosity of other Latter-day Saints, we are now an eternal family. ■

Chhom Koemly, Cambodia

**The General Temple Patron Assistance Fund was created to give financial assistance to Church members who otherwise could not afford to attend the temple.*

A FAN, A VACUUM, AND A PLATE OF COOKIES

One summer our young family traveled 2,000 miles (3,200 km) across the country for my husband's new job. We were excited for our new adventure, but we felt very far from our home, our families, and everything else we knew. We pulled up to our new home during a downpour, and in an attempt to protect our home's newly laid carpet, we unloaded the truck with umbrellas overhead and sheets underfoot. We knew that heavy rains had been causing basements to flood, and we nervously kept an eye on ours after everything was unloaded.





At midnight, the doorbell rang. Pulling the door open, I was met by Brother Lindsay Sewell, the only person we knew in the ward.

All seemed well that night, and with our three young children finally asleep, Greg and I hurriedly made our bed. We were both exhausted, and falling into bed sounded so good. For some reason, though, Greg felt that he should unpack another box.

“Please,” I said, “let’s just go to sleep. We can unpack in the morning.”

He shook his head and headed to the basement. After a few moments, I heard him scream. Panicked, I ran to the basement only to be met by a miniature flash flood. We stood there shoulder to shoulder as cold rainwater began pooling around our ankles. Instantly we snapped into action and began dragging box after box up the steep staircase. I felt completely and hopelessly lost, my tears mixing with

the floodwater on the floor.

I called the only member of the Church we knew in our new ward, Brother Lindsay Sewell, to ask for instructions on running our sump pump to drain the water. Brother Sewell gave some quick advice, and then I went back to work trying to save our belongings. At midnight, the doorbell rang. Pulling the door open, I was met by Brother Sewell, his arms laden with a fan, a wet vacuum, and a plate of chocolate-chip cookies.

“Sounds like you guys could use some help,” he said with a bright smile. Suddenly, I didn’t feel so far from home.

All through the night, Brother Sewell stayed with us, trying to

conquer the flood. When the water level in the basement rose to more than a foot (30 cm) deep, he suggested that we call the fire department; they brought large pumps that eventually solved the problem.

The next morning Sister Sewell and other members of our new ward arrived with food, extension cords, and more vacuums. We were overwhelmed by their goodness. In the end we saved all of our belongings.

I am so grateful to be a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. No matter where I go, I have brothers and sisters waiting with open arms to welcome my family and to help in times of need. ■

Rindi Haws Jacobsen, Utah, USA

WAS I TOO BUSY TO SERVE?

In 1997 our branch president announced that the branch would do a service project in the neighborhood surrounding our meetinghouse. We were doing this activity to join with Church members all over the world in commemorating the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Latter-day Saint pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley.

The activity involved cleaning roads and filling potholes. The branch president said we would get dirty but that the activity might give us an opportunity to talk with others about the Church.

I didn't think I would go because my professor had scheduled extra lectures at the same time as the activity. I felt that everybody would understand, but then I came across a pamphlet titled *Faith in Every Footstep*. When I read excerpts about the travails of the Saints on their trek to the western United States, I was moved to tears. Some Saints left their comfortable homes to go to a desert, unsure of what they would find. Others forged ahead even after every other member of their family had died along the way. In the midst of sickness, pain, hunger, and poverty, they had faith that if they migrated to the West, they would be free from oppression.

I felt bad that the early Saints had to make great sacrifices, even their own lives in some cases, to see that the Church continued moving forward. Because of their sacrifice and faith, I now enjoy the blessings of the gospel.

I then realized how small a sacrifice I would be making by comparison. I was being asked to give a mere two hours of service and to share the gospel with a few people, and I was making excuses for not attending.

I forgot about the lectures and participated in the activity. I got dirty, but people did come and ask about the Church. I felt happy for being involved, and I have since graduated from the university—despite missing a few lectures. ■

Ngozi Francisca Okoro, Nigeria

FORGETTING OURSELVES IN SICILY

My name is Omar Interdonato," the e-mail began. "I'm the son of Fiorella Italia. I hope you still remember her baptism."

Thirty years before, my missionary companion and I had been assigned to the island of Sicily and were serving in Siracusa, a beautiful city on the Mediterranean coast. On Sundays we met with the few Latter-day Saints in the area in an old villa, holding sacrament meeting in the villa's living room.

Missionary work was difficult, and we had few baptisms. Sixteen full-time missionaries labored in the city, which had been tracted over and over. But as my companion and I studied a map of the city one day, we noticed a small village located a few miles from our apartment on the edge of the city.

We hiked through the fields to this village, knelt on the edge of a ridge overlooking a valley, and offered up our hearts and souls to God. We then began tracting in a group of tenement-type buildings that made up most of the village.

We were eventually greeted at a door by a woman in her 40s dressed all in black—a tradition in Italy following the death of a loved one. We changed our door approach to emphasize the plan of salvation. The

woman invited us in, and we met with her, two of her teenage daughters, and one of their friends. We learned that the woman was recently widowed and had four teenage children to care for. We showed the filmstrip *Man's Search for Happiness* and were invited to return the following week.

The mother, along with her oldest son and two teenage daughters, their grandmother, and their friend were eventually baptized. Following my mission, I kept in touch with the family, but until I received the e-mail,

I had wondered what had happened to Fiorella, the daughters' young friend.

"My mother has been faithful to the gospel all

My companion and I knelt on the edge of a ridge overlooking a valley, offered up our hearts and souls to God, and began tracting.



her life and in 1983 married a good Church member from the Messina Branch and got sealed in the temple,” her son wrote. “I was born in 1984 and my sister, Veronica, in 1987. We are all active in the Church. I served a mission in the Italy Rome Mission from 2005 to 2007, hoping to repay the Lord for all the struggles of two missionaries who decided to preach the gospel in the small town of Florida!”

There were times during my mission when I wondered if the two years of sacrifice were worth it. But how great is my joy (see D&C 18:15–16) to learn that Fiorella’s life was changed forever because my companion and I made the decision to go forth and forget ourselves in the service of others on the island of Sicily. ■

Louis Menditto, Nevada, USA

WHERE DID I COME FROM?

As a young child I often wondered, “Where did I come from?” Deep within my heart I knew I had lived somewhere before I became who I am now, but I had no idea where.

For many years I was afraid to tell anyone—even my parents—for fear they would think I was crazy. But one day while I was in my early teens, I was brave enough to ask the pastor of our church, “Where did we live before we came to earth?” He told me I should not think about such things. He said no one lives anywhere before they are born; we simply do not exist in any way before.

I was afraid he was right and that I *was* crazy, but I still could not put these thoughts out of my mind. I kept searching, but no one had any answers.

When I was 18 years old, our family moved. I thought the preachers in our new town might know more than our last preacher, so I decided to ask one of them my question. His response was the same: he told me it was not normal to think of such things and suggested that I see a psychiatrist.

Soon after that I stopped going to church. I got a job, met a young man, and got married. Five years later

the marriage ended in divorce. So I packed up all of my belongings, two children in tow and one on the way, and returned home.

Sometime during those five years, my mom had joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She had mentioned the Church when I visited her and had asked me to talk to the missionaries. I finally consented, but before our meeting, I made up my mind that I would agree to take the missionary discussions only if the elders could tell me where I had lived before I came to be who I am now.

To my surprise, they not only answered my question but also gave me the answer straight from the Bible (see Job 38:4–7; Jeremiah 1:5; Jude 1:6). After that, they had my undivided attention! Their answer helped me understand why all my life I had felt that I had lived before. Now I understood that I had lived in a premortal existence with my Heavenly Father.

It wasn’t long before I became a member of the Church. For the first time in my life, I felt like somebody and that I had a destination to pursue—to return home to my Heavenly Father.

I am grateful that the missionaries were able to answer the question that no one else could. ■

Betty Hollowell, Indiana, USA

