

MY LESSON IN LOVE

By Janice Tate

I didn't expect the simple service project to teach me so much about Heavenly Father's love for His children.

It sounded like a typical service project: round up a group of Relief Society sisters to put on a short choir program at a local hospital's respite care center, though no one from our ward was a patient there.

We found ourselves crammed into a small room with nine elderly patients facing us in their wheelchairs. Their faces seemed blank, empty of expression. It was hot and stuffy, and I thought, "Let's get this over with."

I was to lead the music, so I turned my back to the patients and concentrated on the program. As we began, I heard one patient calling, "Mama,



LOVE IN ACTION

"There is a serious need for the charity that gives attention to those who are unnoticed, hope to those who are discouraged, aid to those who are afflicted. True charity is love in action. The need for charity is everywhere."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Charity Never Faileth," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 124.

Mama," while another clapped and made noises. I felt uncomfortable, but in a few minutes we would finish and go home.

As we prepared to sing our last hymn, "How Great Thou Art" (*Hymns*, no. 86), we invited the patients and medical personnel to join with us. I turned around to lead everyone in the singing, and that's when I saw her—a tiny, wrinkled, white-haired lady with a lap full of tissues wet with her tears.

She motioned for me to come to her. I did so, and when I bent my head to listen, she took my hand. Her whole body trembled as she whispered, "I'm a Latter-day Saint. It's so wonderful to have my sisters come."

The Spirit filled my soul, and I knelt beside her, tears streaming from my eyes. She put a frail arm around me and patted me as if she understood my emotions. Everyone began singing the hymn, but I couldn't get the first verse out.

As the patients and staff sang of God's greatness, the Spirit filled the

room, and all were touched. I finally gained control of my feelings and joined the others, singing:

*When Christ shall come, with shout
of acclamation,
And take me home, what joy shall
fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble
adoration
And there proclaim, "My God, how
great thou art!"*

After the program the Relief Society sisters mingled with the patients and staff. The white-haired sister told us she had been lonely and had felt surrounded by strangers until we came. We didn't know she would be there, but Heavenly Father did.

I was reminded that all of these people were our brothers and sisters, that they needed love and comfort, and that someday I could be in their place. I was touched that we could be instruments of a loving Father, and I was grateful that our service project had taught me a powerful lesson about love. ■

The author lives in California, USA.

