

Just SMILE and SAY NO

By Hazel Marie Tibule

One summer, I participated in an internship on an island in Bicol, Philippines. The view of the ocean was wonderful, and I looked forward to each morning.

I dreaded the evenings, however. That's when the people in the camp would start drinking and having parties. Invitations to such parties were frequent, and my fellow interns and I had to attend, since not attending would be disrespectful.

The first party was a welcoming party for new interns. I was afraid to attend, because I was pretty sure that they would offer us drinks and I wasn't sure how to decline. I called a friend in my home ward, and he gave me some wonderful advice that boosted my confidence.

When the party began, they offered us drinks but, fortunately, did not compel us to drink. Since my fellow interns accepted my stand of not drinking, refusing the next offers to drink was now easy for me—until one night. During one of the parties, the president of the company came. He was carrying a bottle of *lambanog* (a local wine made from coconut).

Soon after his arrival, I saw him pouring some of the wine. He then said, "You must learn how to drink" and gave the glass to one of the interns. She quickly drank it.

My heart began to pound heavily. It would soon be my turn. I was whispering silently to myself, "I will

I had turned down offers to drink, but now the president of the company was offering me a glass of wine.

not drink it. I will not drink it." Then I saw the president extending the glass of wine to me. I didn't know what to do. My fellow interns were looking at me, waiting to see what I would do. I smiled at the president and humbly said, "Sorry, sir, but I do not drink."

I knew he was disappointed. He asked why I didn't drink. I said, "I am a Mormon."

He said, "I haven't heard of that religion. It sounds like a type of food." Everyone laughed.

I smiled too, not because of his joke but because I knew I had done the right thing.

No one ever offered me a drink again. But still the ridicule did not cease, even from my own friends. One even said that I was lying and that it's unimaginable that members of the Church do not drink. During this time I felt the pressures that come to members of the Church.

My stay on that island taught me a lot of lessons, not just academically but spiritually. I learned that mockery may never cease, but the Spirit of the Lord will always guide you to do what is right. ■

The author lives in Metro Manila, Philippines.

