

Keys to the

This young man in Italy knows that exercising the priesthood helps build a bridge to his happiness.

BY KIMBERLY REID
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In Florence, Italy, couples used to follow an old tradition: they attached padlocks to the Ponte Vecchio bridge and threw the keys into the Arno River below, signifying that their love was “locked” for eternity.



Today attaching padlocks is discouraged to help protect the historic bridge, which dates back to medieval times. But 16-year-old Cristian Morelli knows there are real keys that existed long before the Ponte Vecchio—powerful priesthood keys that were restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1829, when the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were restored. One of those keys is the sealing power, and Cristian knows a family’s love really can be “locked” eternally. His parents were sealed in the temple by one holding that priesthood authority, and someday he

plans to receive temple blessings too. He prepares by fulfilling his Aaronic Priesthood duties and living worthy of this sacred trust.



Pure Creativity

Florence is known as the birthplace of the Renaissance, a flowering in art, literature, and scientific thought. Like talented Renaissance men before him, Cristian knows there is much good to be found in music and books. He’s been playing the bass for three years, and he enjoys studying English literature and philosophy.

But he knows well that sometimes “creativity” crosses into sin. He knows some teenagers who indulge in bad music or pornographic entertainment. Remembering the priesthood he holds, Cristian knows he must be different.

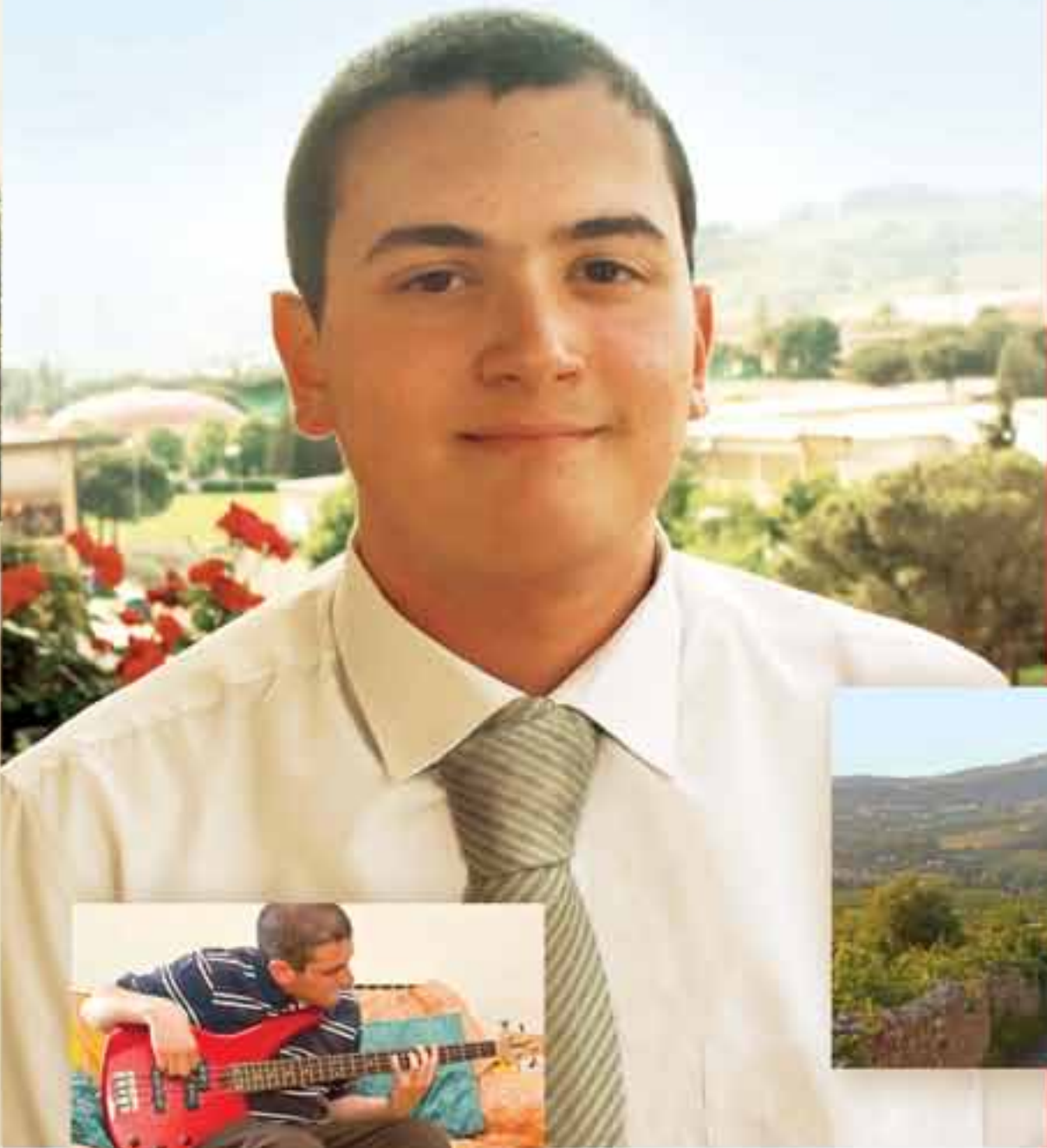
Purifying Fires

In 1497 a Florentine monk convinced citizens to burn anything they owned that might be considered worldly or crude, including mirrors, expensive clothes, and artwork.

Future

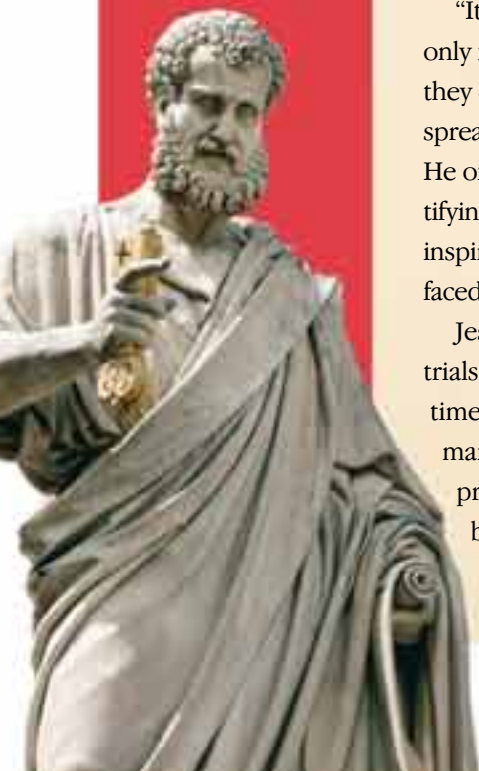


Cristian Morelli lives in a small town outside Florence, Italy, a city well known for its art and architecture. He enjoys nurturing his own talents, such as playing the bass.





Cristian is grateful for spiritual vision. He knows there is a Heavenly Father, that Jesus Christ is a God of miracles, and that priesthood keys, such as those held by Peter, have been restored to earth. Such knowledge shapes the way he lives.



In 2008 Cristian's strategy is a little different. Instead of trying to purge society around him, he seeks the fire of the Holy Ghost to purify his own life.

"It can be hard," Cristian says. There are only four students in his seminary class, and they can't meet every day because they are spread over such a large geographic region. He often feels alone, but he knows that sanctifying power can come through trials. For inspiration, he looks to others who have faced opposition.

Jesus Christ's Apostle Peter experienced trials in Cristian's homeland, spending time in prison in Rome and likely dying a martyr's death there. To this day, Peter's priesthood authority is often illustrated by his holding large keys. Like Peter, Cristian wants to be a true disciple and remain committed to his

priesthood callings, no matter the cost.

Another of Cristian's heroes is Nephi. "Nephi, like Peter, had to undergo several trials," Cristian says. "These trials helped make him what he was."

Prayer, scripture study, and the safe haven he calls home help make Cristian who he is—a Latter-day Saint committed to honoring the priesthood, serving a mission, and becoming a righteous husband and father someday.

Focused on Joy

Such goals set Cristian apart from his friends. "I've wanted to serve a mission since I was in Primary," he says. Unfortunately, his friends don't care to hear about his beliefs or religion of any kind because "they are so focused on studying, playing sports, and having fun."

He remembers having spiritual experiences passing the sacrament as a deacon and fasting for a relative who was sick. He feels great satisfaction in home teaching when he “can tell the difference between before and after the visit,” when the families he and his dad teach “receive comfort and are grateful for the words that have been said.”

These are feelings and experiences many of Cristian’s friends can’t relate to. He might feel misunderstood at times, but spiritual vision is a blessing he never wants to lose. Like the blind man healed by the Savior in one of Cristian’s favorite New Testament stories (see John 9:1–11), Cristian can see clearly while many of his friends are still blind to the joy of the gospel.

Sharing the Vision

That’s one reason he looks forward to serving a mission: to help others see spiritual realities that he has been blessed to understand. Since childhood, he has enjoyed good friendships with missionaries and felt sad whenever one of them was transferred. “As time goes by, I might forget the missionary’s name, but I never forget the experience. Each one has left an impression,” he says. “I want to be like the missionaries I’ve known so far.”

Cristian is especially impressed by the determination he witnesses when he volunteers with missionaries. Even though “many people may say a definite ‘No, I’m not interested’ or slam the door in their face, they keep



LIVE DIFFERENTLY FROM THE WORLD

“As priesthood holders of this Church, part of the price we need to pay is by living differently from the world. We are the possessors and custodians of these commanding powers which can and do roll back the power of Satan on the earth. With all my heart I urge you to please help us push back the world.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Devil’s Throat,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2003, 52.

going,” Cristian says. “They keep knocking on the next door and trying to share the knowledge of the gospel with someone else.”

Cristian prepares for his own mission not only by staying pure and studying the gospel but also by dressing appropriately for the occasion—without being showy.

Fashion is a big deal in Florence, but for Cristian, expensive clothes aren’t important. On Sundays, “I wear a white shirt, jacket, and tie to show respect for the Sabbath and the Lord,” Cristian says. He knows this will help him keep the missionary dress code. The rest of the week he wears what he wants. “I have never liked following fashion rules,” he says. “I don’t care what I wear, as long as I dress appropriately”—without paying attention to whose name is on the label.

Keys to Happiness

Cristian looks forward to receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood, the temple endowment, the call to serve as a full-time missionary, and someday the opportunity to “lock his love” to an eternal family of his own.

Ultimately, Cristian looks forward to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. “It comforts me that when He comes,” the sins of the world and all the resulting sadness “will be over.” Until then, Cristian will honor those who hold priesthood keys and keep the covenants that draw him close to the Savior. He knows it’s the only way to be spiritually safe and eternally happy. **NE**

