

When Saw We Thee Sick?

From 2003 to 2005 I served as Young Women president in the Gutiérrez Zamora Ward, in Veracruz, Mexico. Each Christmas the young women and their leaders baked treats to take to the older members of our ward.

As Christmas 2005 approached, we practiced singing Christmas carols and donned red hats and scarves. In the winter our village receives a steady drizzle of rain and a lot of cold wind from the north. But that did not prevent about a dozen of our young men and young women from going out with our load of pineapple pies.

When we arrived at the homes of our elderly brothers and sisters, we sang with great joy. We left each home feeling pleased because, even if for only a moment, we had brought happiness with our carols and pies.

The last sister we visited had been less active for many years. Though none of the youth had met Juanita, my husband and I had known her for a long time. She was now bedridden, terminally ill, and very poor. A few days prior, the elders quorum had visited her home to make some repairs.

When we arrived at her home, I called out her name. No one answered, so I kept calling. Soon I heard a soft voice say, “Come on in, Sister Araceli.” We entered and sang with joy and enthusiasm, even though her condition saddened us. Not long before, Juanita had been full of life. Now when she sat up, the youth couldn’t restrain their tears. She

was deeply moved and thanked us for visiting her and helping her feel, through our carols, that our Heavenly Father remembered her and loved her.

After we left her humble

dwelling, the youth expressed gratitude for having been able to sing for her. They didn’t care that they ended up wet and cold; their hearts were filled with joy for having shared a small portion of the happiness they felt. It was then that I understood

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more fully the verses that read:

“I was sick, and ye visited me. . . .

“ . . . When saw we thee sick . . . and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:36, 39–40).

I was saddened when Juanita passed away a few days later, but I know without a doubt that Heavenly Father loves His children. I also know that if we follow the Spirit, we can be instruments in His hands in blessing each other. ■

Araceli López Reséndiz, Veracruz, Mexico

Dressed in Love

It was December, the season when people’s feelings are tender as they remember the birth of Jesus Christ and what He did for us through His infinite Atonement.

When I arrived home from work, my three children and my beautiful wife shared with me a decision they had made about Christmas: “There won’t be any need to buy presents this year,” they declared.

Surprised, I asked, “And what brought about this decision?” After all, my children would be sacrificing something they

had looked forward to all year.

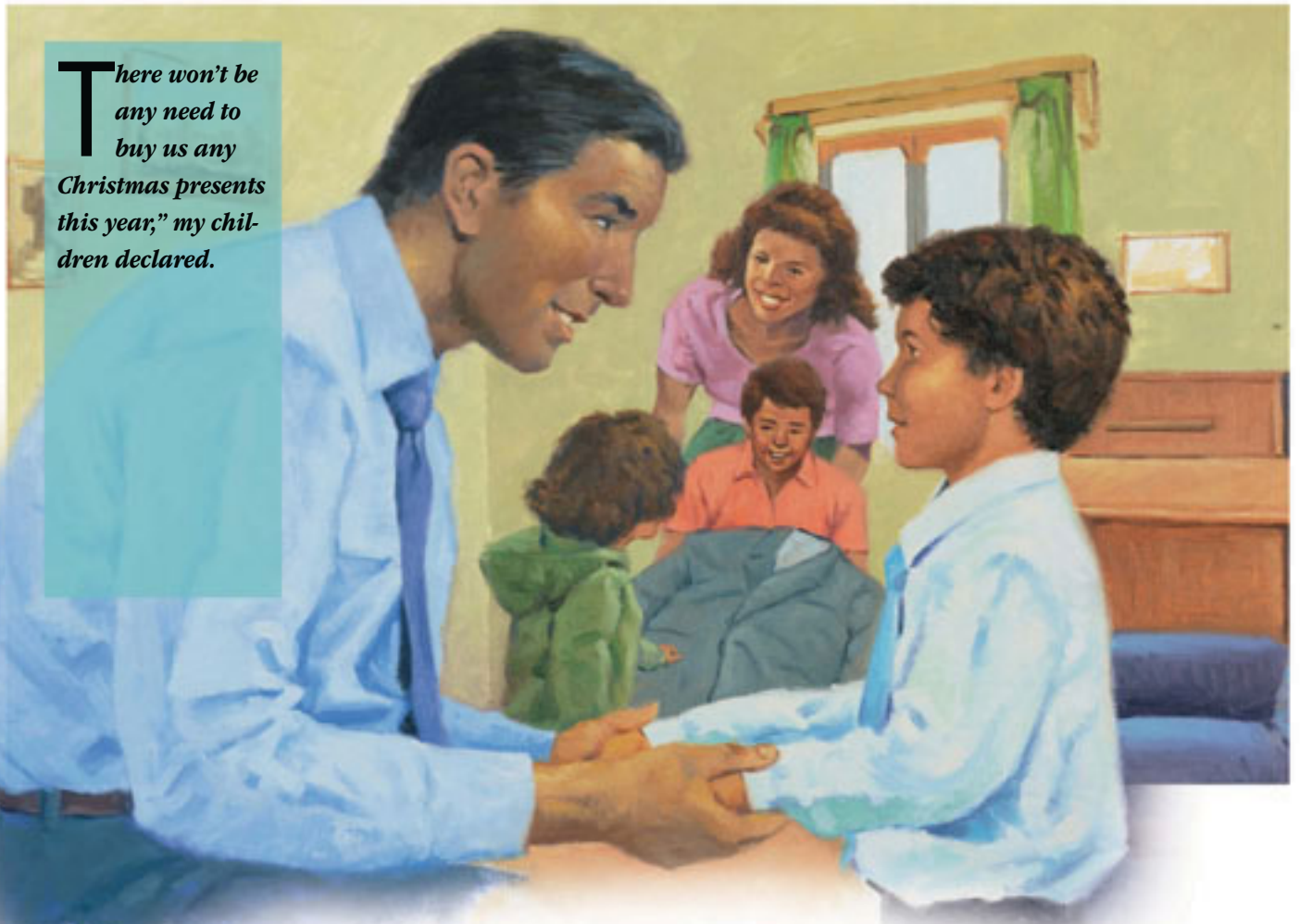
They immediately went and retrieved my two old, frayed suits. “Daddy,” they said, “with the money we were going to use for Christmas presents, we want you to replace these old suits with a new one. We would like to see you go to work in a new suit!”

I realized that this was the true spirit of Christmas. When we sacrifice something for someone else, we come to understand the meaning of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Later, when I put on the new suit I received for Christmas, I felt that I was dressed in love. ■

Walter Ciro Calderón R., Bogotá, Colombia

There won't be any need to buy us any Christmas presents this year," my children declared.



Teaching My Teacher

One autumn many years ago I was a new graduate student at Columbia University in New York City. In a large classroom full of students, our professor was discussing modern imitations of ancient texts. As he cited a list of forgeries, I was startled to hear him add the Book of Mormon to his list.

Instantly I knew I could not leave the classroom without doing something. I could not disappoint my ancestors, whose testimonies of the Book of Mormon had led them to sacrifice everything.

After class I approached the professor, who held the Charles Anthon chair at Columbia. More than 100 years before, Martin Harris had come to visit Professor Anthon at Columbia. Martin carried a paper with engravings copied from the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated.

I remembered my father sharing with me a letter his father wrote about Martin Harris. My grandfather told of seeing Martin shortly before Brother Harris died. When grandfather asked him about the Book of Mormon, Martin raised himself up from his bed and bore a strong testimony. He did see an angel, he did hear his voice, and he did view the plates of gold.

"My name is Diana, and I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," I said shakily to my professor. "The Book of Mormon,

for me, is a book of scripture. I would like to hear your reasons for calling it a forgery."

As we walked across the campus, the professor, who had read the Book of Mormon, listed several objections to its authenticity. I hurriedly wrote them down, and when he had finished, I asked him, "May I write what I learn from sources on the subject in response to these objections?" He agreed.

I walked back to the dorm, closed the door of my room, knelt in prayer, and began weeping. I felt weak and inadequate. Fortunately, that evening we had a Church activity. Following a discussion that lifted my spirit, I asked for help from the full-time missionaries, who had attended. They shared some sources of information that covered most of the points raised by my professor. Then I searched the vast library of Columbia. In my paper I addressed the professor's questions and offered my testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Then I gave it to him.

I waited several weeks for his response. Finally I asked him if he had read it.

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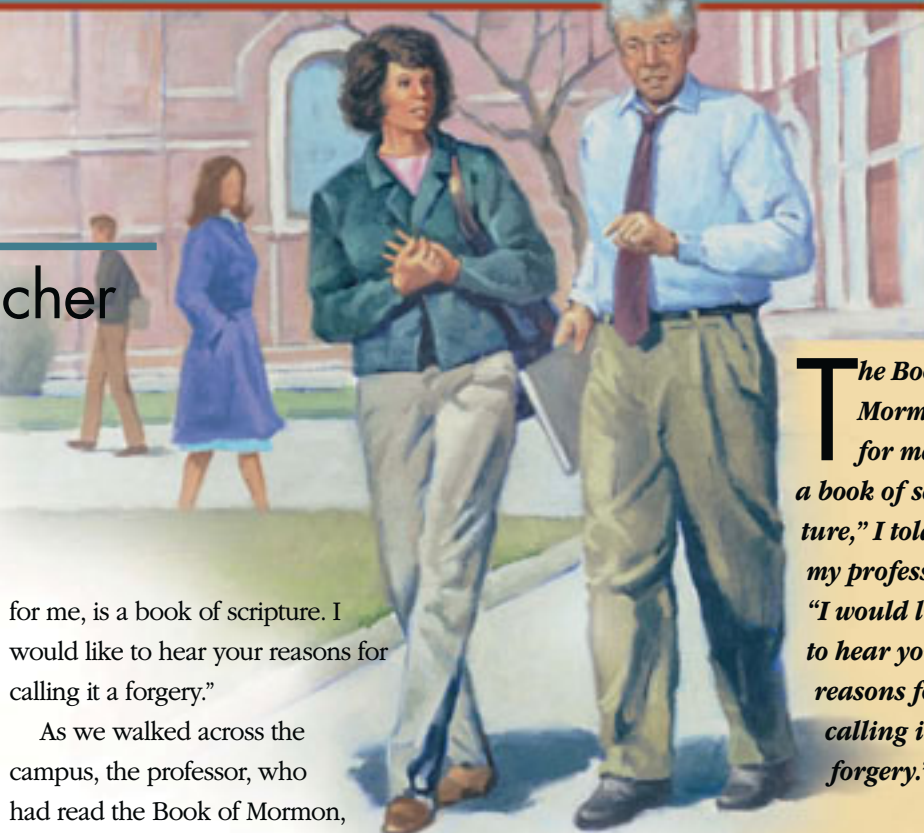
"Yes, and I gave it to my wife to read.

She told me, 'Whatever you do, don't destroy that student's faith.'" He then turned and walked away.

As Christmas drew near, I was strongly impressed to give him a copy of the Book of Mormon. I found a copy, added my testimony, and thanked him for reading my paper. I then wrapped the book in Christmas paper and gave it to him. Shortly afterward, I received a handwritten note from him in which he expressed gratitude for receiving a copy of "this remarkable book."

When I read his words, my eyes filled with tears. The Spirit whispered that this professor would no longer hold up the Book of Mormon to ridicule. I was grateful the Spirit had softened hearts and helped me know how to teach my teacher. ■

Diana Summerhays Graham, Utah, USA



The Greater Gift

One morning as I finished reading from and pondering the Book of Mormon, I realized that I would again finish it by the end of the year. This realization brought back the memory of my brother, whom I cared for in my home during his final weeks with terminal cancer in 2005.

Oliver was determined to fulfill a promise to himself to follow the counsel of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) and read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year.¹ But by that fall, Oliver still had many pages

to go. Eventually he became so weak that he could no longer read to himself.

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Determined to keep his commitment, Oliver asked me if I would read the Book of Mormon to him. I was much further along in my own reading, but I was glad to begin where he had left off.

By reading to Oliver every day, I was able to help him reach his goal to finish the book by year's end, just days before he died. By that time he could hardly speak audibly, but his mind was clear and active. With much effort, he often expressed his appreciation to me for the gift I had given him, saying he could now die in peace because he had fulfilled his promise.

I had read the Book of Mormon many times before, but I had never felt its spirit so powerfully or understood its precepts so clearly as I did during those waning months of my brother's life. Truly, Oliver had given me the greater gift. ■

Lois N. Pope, Utah, USA

NOTE

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Liahona and Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6.

Why Do I Need to Be Here?

A week before Christmas in 2007 two of my children were diagnosed with strep throat and ear infections. Jacob, age 5, whined all the way to the pharmacy for his medicine, and Beth, 19 months, was especially clingy.

When we arrived, we were greeted by a long line at the prescription counter. While Jacob tugged at my leg and complained about his ear, Beth wiggled out of my arms. I thought she would stay beside me, but as soon as she was free, she ran straight to an elderly gentleman sitting on a bench near the line.

The man was looking at the floor, his face resting in his hands. I called after Beth, not wanting to leave the line, but she approached the man anyway and bent down to look up



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I then sent Jacob to get her. He grabbed her hand and tried to pull her away from the man, but she refused to come. Then she started pushing on the man's forehead in order to get him to raise his head. As I grew agitated, Beth took off her untied shoes and shoved them into the man's lap. He sat up and smiled.

"Beth!" I called.

"It's all right," the man said in a tired voice. "I'll tie her shoes for her."

I grew a little nervous as he began putting Beth's shoes on her. When he finished, he wrapped his arms around her and kissed her on the head. He was slow to let her go, so I quickly left the line to rescue my daughter from this stranger.

As I approached, I noticed that he had tears in his eyes. Concerned, I sat down next to him.

"I have to tell you something," he said, staring straight ahead. "Not more than a month ago my wife died, and about an hour ago I found out that I have terminal cancer. I came here to get medicine, and I have been contemplating my life and thinking that I might move along the inevitable. I didn't think I could bear going through Christmas and the pains of cancer without my sweet wife."

He said he had been praying, asking God, "If I need to be here for

something,
You better
speak now,
or I'm
going
home to
end

things."
Before he
had even said "amen," Beth began pestering him and calling him "Grandpa."

"Now I know why I need to be here longer," he said. "I need to stick around for my grandkids. They need me."

I threw my arms around him and could not help but weep. I then got

our medicine.

Beth, who had seemed so ill only moments earlier, kissed the man on the cheek and bounded away with Jacob and me, waving and saying, "Bye-bye, Grandpa."

I didn't ask his name, but I will never forget that even a young girl who pesters an old man can be an answer to prayer. ■

Megan Robinson, Utah, USA

