



**By President
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ENCIRCLED IN His Gentle Arms

Like many others, I have often been inspired by beautiful works of art and music. One such occasion was when I stood before a masterful painting created by the Danish artist Frans Schwartz titled *The Agony in the Garden*.¹

This achingly beautiful painting depicts the Savior kneeling in the Garden of Gethsemane. As He prays, an angel stands next to Him, enfolding Him in gentle arms, offering comfort, heavenly succor, and support.

The longer I contemplate this painting, the more my heart and mind swell with inexpressible feelings of tenderness and gratitude. I can sense, in small part, what it must have been like to be present as the Savior began His great culminating work of mortality by taking upon Himself the sins of the world. I marvel at the infinite love and compassion the Father has for His children. I am overwhelmed with profound gratitude for what the sinless Son did for all mankind and for me.

The Sacrifice of the Son of God

Each year at this time we commemorate and ponder the sacrifice Jesus Christ made for all mankind.

What the Savior did from Gethsemane to Golgotha on our behalf is beyond my ability to grasp. He took upon Himself the burden of our sins and paid an eternal and binding ransom not only for Adam's original transgression but also for the sins and transgressions of the billions upon billions of souls who have ever lived. This eternal, sacred sacrifice caused "even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18).

He suffered for me.

He suffered for you.

My soul overflows with gratitude when I contemplate the precious meaning of this sacrifice. It humbles me to know that all who accept this gift and incline their hearts to Him can be forgiven and cleansed of their sins, no matter how dark their blemish or how oppressive their burden.

We can be made spotless and pure once again. We can be redeemed by the eternal sacrifice of our beloved Savior.

Who Will Comfort Us?

Though none of us will ever have to experience the depth of what our Lord suffered, we each will have our



own dark and bitter hours—times when our sorrow and grief may appear to be greater than we can bear. There will be times when the weight and remorse of our sins will press mercilessly upon us.

Even so, if we will lift our hearts to the Lord during those times, surely He will know and understand. He who suffered so selflessly for us in the garden and on the cross will not leave us comfortless now. He

will strengthen, encourage, and bless us. He will encircle us in His gentle arms.

He will be more than an angel to us.

He will bring us blessed comfort, healing, hope, and forgiveness.

For He is our Redeemer.

Our Deliverer.

Our merciful Savior and our blessed God. ■

NOTE

1. The priest who spoke at Frans Schwartz's funeral said "his art was divinely endowed and seemed worthier than many a sermon" (Emmie Buchanan-Whitlock, "History of Artists' Lives Gives Greater Context for Exhibit," *Deseret News*, Sept. 29, 2013, deseretnews.com).

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Before you teach, seek the Spirit's guidance to help you understand the specific needs of those you teach. As you share excerpts from President Uchtdorf's message, bear testimony of the Savior and of His redeeming sacrifice. Consider asking those you teach what His Atonement means to them and how they have felt the Lord's comfort during their "dark and bitter hours."

Victory through Jesus Christ

Name withheld

I had a problem with overeating. My repeated bouts of gorging resulted in a harrowing mass of guilt, frustration, and disappointment. I felt so weak when I tried to overcome my problem.

For a long time I neglected the fact that the Savior's Atonement not only saves us but also redeems us and perfects



us, and that this even applies to my obviously imperfect habit of overeating.

I decided to give myself to my Savior. I prayed. I sincerely admitted my weakness and my need for grace, and then I asked Heavenly Father to bless me with His divine assistance in the upcoming day. That night I felt the assurance of a loving Father that He had the immeasurable desire to help His son and the unquestionable power to fulfill His will.

Since that night, food no longer has the same overwhelming influence over me. I know Jesus Christ is the reason for my success. Just like Paul, I am learning that "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). And I'm trying to never forget another lesson from Paul: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

CHILDREN

The Savior Will Comfort You

Ask a family member or a friend about a time when he or she felt comforted by the Savior. Try to think of a time when the Savior comforted you. You could draw a picture of the experience and hang it by your bed to remind you that Jesus Christ will always be there to comfort you.

