

Hope in Holland

By Megan Armknecht

Based on a true story

Grace is a 15-year-old girl living in Holland during World War II. The war has gone on for a long time. The people in Holland are starving, and they hope the war will soon be over.

The last year of World War II was the very worst for Holland. The Nazis took absolutely everything. Grace couldn't go to school. There was no coal to heat their house. Grace and her family had to eat tulip bulbs to keep from starving. They tasted *horrible!* Worst of all, Dad was still a prisoner of war.

But hope was in the air. People said the Nazis were losing the war. And in May of 1945, the Nazis surrendered. Holland was finally free again! People celebrated in the streets. Now Grace could go back to school. There were no soldiers to be afraid of.

Best of all, one day when Grace and her brothers were walking back from school, they saw that the flag of Holland was flying in front of their home. They knew that could mean only one thing.

"Dad's home!" shouted Heber.

Grace and her brothers ran inside. Grace threw her arms around Dad and gave him a big hug. He hugged her back tightly. It was so wonderful to have Dad home.

Soon after that, packages of food, clothes, and



medicine began arriving in Holland.

The Church leaders in Salt Lake City sent a lot of supplies to help people after the war. Grace even got a new dress! She had worn the same dress for five years, so she was very happy to have a new one.

For the first time in years, Grace had enough to eat. The mission presidency and the government in Holland decided to start a potato project to grow more food. Church members planted lots of potatoes in nearby fields. By fall they would have thousands of potatoes to eat.

"Look!" Grace told Dad, pointing to a sprouting potato plant. "We'll never go hungry again!"

Dad nodded but didn't smile. He said, "I was talking to President Zappey. He told me that the Latter-day Saints in Germany are still starving, just like we were. They are not getting help from the government like us." Dad put his arm around Grace's shoulders. "President Zappey has asked if we would give our potatoes to the German Saints."

"Give up our potatoes!" Grace cried. But the *Nazis* were from Germany! "They might be Latter-day Saints, Dad, but they're still Germans."

"I know it's not easy," Dad said. "But they are also children of God. He loves them too. I forgave them for making me a prisoner. The Lord can help us all forgive."



Grace looked up at Dad. He was the bravest person she knew, but she didn't know if she had the courage to forgive like him. Then she remembered one of her teachers in school during the war. Her teacher had said that not all Germans were Nazis, and not all Nazi soldiers were bad. And now the girls and boys in Germany were starving, just like Grace had been.

Grace took a deep breath. "I understand," she said. "Let's give them our potatoes."

Dad hugged her and smiled. "You are such a brave girl. This is a hard thing to do. But we are disciples of Jesus Christ, and so are our German brothers and sisters."

Grace smiled. The angry feelings in her heart melted, and she felt calm and warm. She could forgive the Germans. And Jesus could help her love them too. ■

The author lives in New Jersey, USA.

Latter-day Saints in Holland gave 140,000 pounds (70 tons) of potatoes and 180,000 pounds (90 tons) of herring to the German Latter-day Saints. Later, in 1953, the German Saints sent supplies to Church members in Holland after a huge flood.