

HOPE

in the Ordinances of the Gospel

My wife assured me on the phone that she was feeling better and that everything would be all right. Three days later everything changed.

By Elias Magabo

I was born and raised in the Philippines, where I met and married my wife, Monina. It was there that our son, Mark, was born. In the mid-1990s, our family moved to Saipan, which is a small island in the Pacific. There, we were active members of another church. Occasionally, I'd see pairs of young men walking around the island, dressed neatly in white shirts and ties. I knew they were Latter-day Saint missionaries, but I had no plans to join another church. When I saw them coming my way, I would literally turn and run in the opposite direction.

My attitude toward the missionaries changed when two friends, Mel and Soledad Espinosa, were baptized into the Church. They encouraged our family to meet with the missionaries, and mostly out of curiosity, we agreed to do so. Our first meeting was in August 2007, and as the missionaries shared their message, I felt something powerful. My heart beat faster, and I felt a tingling sensation throughout my entire body. I later learned that my entire family felt inspired and uplifted. Our feelings intensified in the ensuing months as we learned more about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

About the time we began meeting with the missionaries, Monina's energy began to decrease, and strange bumps started appearing all over her body. Her arthritis flared up as it never had before. We sought medical help, but none of the tests gave us any answers. As the months passed, her health deteriorated to the point that she needed additional

medical attention. In December, Monina flew to the Philippines to meet with doctors there. I stayed in Saipan so I could continue to work and care for our teenage son.

Before she left, Monina told me that she wanted to be baptized when she returned to Saipan. She also asked me to continue meeting with the missionaries even though she would be missing some of the lessons. I promised her that Mark and I would do so.

During her time in the Philippines, we talked regularly so that I could hear about her doctor visits and she could hear what we were learning about the gospel. My wife reported that she was feeling less and less pain every day, and I was glad that the medical attention was working. In early January 2008, I purchased a plane ticket so I could go visit her, but she felt certain that she would be back in Saipan soon and that there was no need to waste money on the trip. She told me she loved and missed our son and me but assured me everything would be all right.

Three days later she died suddenly. The cause: undetected leukemia. Mark and I were stunned—and heartbroken. We immediately traveled to the Philippines for the funeral and then returned to Saipan. This was the most difficult time of our lives.

The sorrow I felt was profound, so much so

that I found it hard to get out of bed each morning. One particularly difficult day, Mark reminded me of something the missionaries had taught our family. He said, “Dad, don’t cry too much. Mom is in a place of God. She is in the spirit world.” How grateful I felt that a just God had provided a way for Monina to continue to learn about the gospel, that everyone who has ever lived will have a chance to either accept or reject the gospel of Jesus Christ—either in this life or the next.

As I continued to learn the teachings of Jesus Christ, I realized that Heavenly Father had provided much more than that: He also made it possible for her to receive essential ordinances like baptism. Before my wife left for the Philippines, she and I had started talking about being baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Even though she wasn’t able to be baptized in this life, Heavenly Father had not left us without hope.

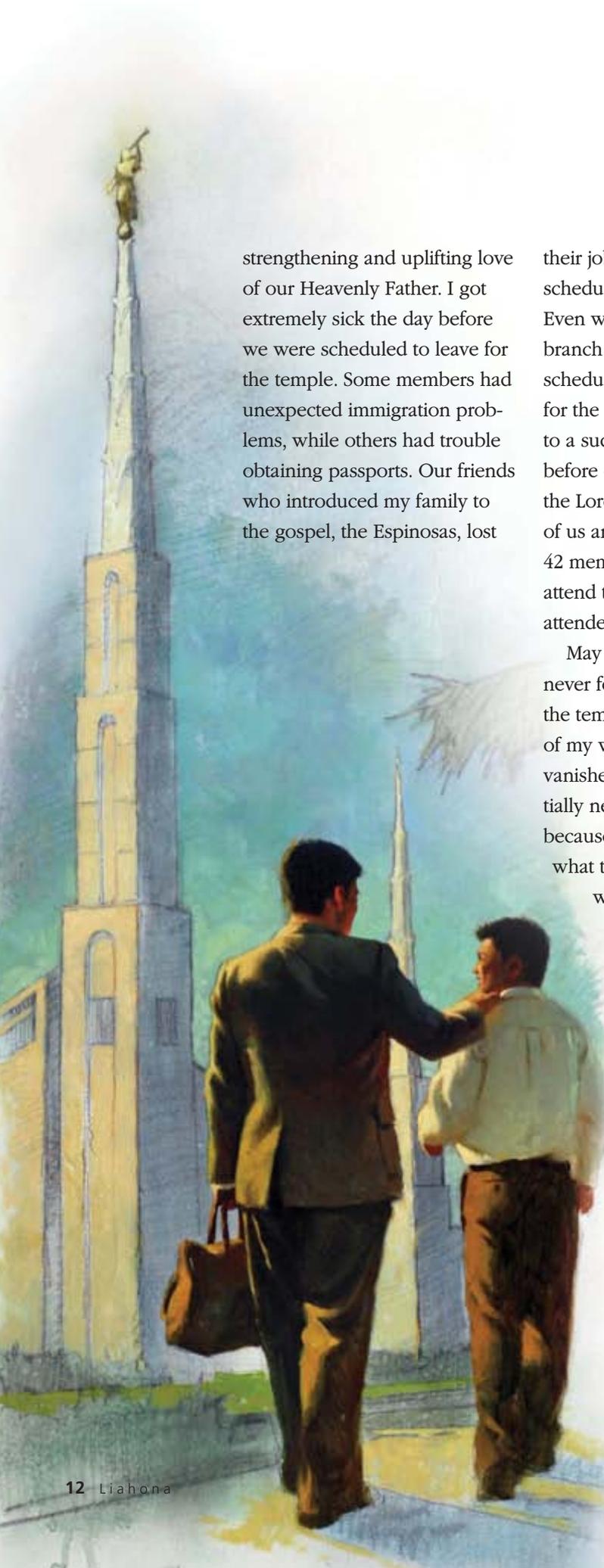
Mark and I faced several trials in the following months.

After returning to the Philippines for my wife’s funeral, I lost my job. I sold our car to pay Monina’s hospital bills. Plus, Mark and I had to adjust to life without Monina. Despite the adversity, Mark and I found hope in our new-found faith, and we were baptized in April 2008. In the months that followed, I was able to find another job and pay the hospital bills. Mark and I made a goal to attend our branch trip to the Manila Philippines Temple so we could be sealed together as a family.

After saving all our extra income and preparing ourselves spiritually, Mark and I traveled with our branch to the temple in May 2009. As we prepared for the trip, we saw firsthand the destructive hand of the adversary as well as the

The missionary lessons helped our family feel uplifted and inspired. Little did we know how much we would need that comfort in the coming months.





strengthening and uplifting love of our Heavenly Father. I got extremely sick the day before we were scheduled to leave for the temple. Some members had unexpected immigration problems, while others had trouble obtaining passports. Our friends who introduced my family to the gospel, the Espinosas, lost

their jobs the week we were scheduled to attend the temple. Even worse, a member of our branch presidency who was scheduled to attend the temple for the first time lost his father to a sudden illness three days before our trip. But in the end the Lord strengthened each of us and made it possible for 42 members of the branch to attend the temple. Sixteen of us attended for the first time.

May 13, 2009, is a day I will never forget. When I arrived at the temple, the weight and pain of my wife's death immediately vanished. Although I was initially nervous about the temple because I didn't know exactly what to do or where to go, I was struck by the calm, peaceful presence I felt once I stepped inside.

It was very different from the busy streets just outside the temple doors.

As the day progressed, my temple experience became only more meaningful and more powerful. In the morning our branch participated in baptisms for the dead. As I watched, I found myself thinking of my wife, who a year and a half earlier

At the temple with my son, we regained what I thought we had lost forever.

had expressed her desire to be baptized. I then witnessed the fulfillment of that desire as a friend was baptized for and in behalf of Monina.

The most significant portion of my trip, however, came later that afternoon when I walked into the sealing room. My wife and I were married years ago, but we were not married in the temple by Heavenly Father's priesthood authority. When my wife died, I thought I had lost her forever. But as I met with the missionaries, I learned that in the temple, families can be sealed together for eternity.

As I walked into the sealing room at the Manila Temple, I was overcome with emotion. Ever since my baptism, I had known the blessings of the gospel were real, but in that instant I truly witnessed their worth. As Mark and I knelt at the altar to be sealed as a family, I felt my wife's presence. I could hear her voice, and it was as if I were holding her hand. I felt Monina's presence with every feeling in my heart. I knew then that we were an eternal family. ■