



MY Hidden
BLESSING

I didn't think I was ready for my patriarchal blessing, but Heavenly Father knew how much I would need it.

By Thomas Petrunaro

I was born in Fontana, California. Both my mother and father struggled with substance abuse, and they divorced when I was 18 months old. As I grew up, I found fellowship and safety in each of the four Christian churches within walking distance of my home. When I was 13, I watched an advertisement for a free Book of Mormon and decided to order it. This eventually led to my baptism in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My parents didn't seem to care one way or the other about my joining the Church.

About a year later, I attended a special youth fireside where the stake patriarch spoke about patriarchal blessings. I had never heard of them. I was only 14 at the time, and I figured it would at least be another two years before I was mature enough to even think about getting mine.

Two weeks later, Brother Clark, my neighbor, was driving me to early-morning seminary and said, "Thomas, Sister Clark and I have been thinking about you and wonder how you felt about the patriarchal blessing fireside."

"Getting a patriarchal blessing sounds wonderful," I said. "I hope to get one when I'm mature and ready!"

"You could start thinking about getting one sooner," he said. "It can really help you through difficult circumstances."

"I'm sure you're right," I replied, "but I'm afraid if I got it too soon, it wouldn't be everything I wanted it to be."

A few days passed, and Brother Clark brought it up again. "I know we're only your neighbors and don't have the right to receive revelation for you, but we believe you should get your blessing."

Though I was touched by his thoughtfulness, I was still unsure. However, the following Sunday, my bishop called me into his office and said, "Thomas, Brother Clark has told me his feelings about your blessing. I have prayed about it, and I agree with him. I feel very strongly that you should get your patriarchal blessing. Please reconsider."

With all the courage I could muster, I said, "OK, I'll do it. I hope I'm ready."

"I'm glad," the bishop replied, "because I made you an appointment with the patriarch this evening."

The blessing was a sacred experience, and Heavenly Father exceeded my desires that day. But this isn't where my story ends.

Five days later, I received the hard copy of my blessing in the mail. That same day, my mother and stepfather sat me down and informed me that they had made some decisions. In the time since my baptism, they had built up a great dislike toward my membership in the Church. They told me they were sending me to my dad's house in Las Vegas and handed me a bus ticket.

The following day, I arrived at my dad's. The first thing I did was look up the nearest meetinghouse for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But my dad yelled, "You are no longer a Mormon! Got that? John Smith was not a prophet, and the bronze plates are a hoax!" He then took my scriptures and Church magazines and wouldn't allow me to talk to anyone from the Church.

I went to my room devastated. But I suddenly remembered the envelope I had tucked into my jacket pocket the day before. My patriarchal blessing! My parents had taken a lot of things, but they didn't know anything about patriarchal blessings. I was overjoyed.

For the next three and a half years, I wasn't allowed to set foot in a Latter-day Saint building. Having my patriarchal blessing was crucial for me during this time.

I know that God could foresee the struggle I would have in the coming years in high school and beyond. I am so glad I did not put off receiving my blessing because of my fears and assumptions. My patriarchal blessing truly is a great blessing from my Father in Heaven. **NE**

The author lives in Virginia, USA.

