



## Fathers, Mothers and Ordinances: Thoughts for Father's Day

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I remember a Father's Day in Rio de Janeiro, in 1965 or 1966, in which my father recorded the wise words of a neighbor of my grandfather Francisco Assis, Mr. Oscar Veiga, about fatherhood. Sadly, the tape containing the recording was lost many years ago, and I just remember that my father and uncles were very impressed by what Mr. Veiga said, I believe inspired by the Light of Christ<sup>1</sup>.

I suppose that today I may be about the age Mr. Veiga was at that time, almost 60 years ago. And I possess two things far more precious than his wisdom—I have the knowledge of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, and I have the understanding and conviction of it that come to me by God's mercy through the power of the Holy Ghost.

With that, what can I say at 62 years of age and nearly 50 years of discipleship in Christ about fathers—and consequently about their companions, the mothers, without whom they would not enjoy the honor of fatherhood?

As you well know, of all the titles Almighty God could have chosen for continual use, He determined that we would address Him using the title "Father". As instructed by the Savior Jesus Christ himself, we address the Father in personal prayer using the term "Father"<sup>2</sup> or "Heavenly Father", or some variant of these terms. And by revelation and divine instruction given two thousand years ago, we use "God, Eternal Father" in the ordinance of the sacrament<sup>3</sup>.

Just like Mary, mother of Jesus, mothers are "chosen vessels" of the Lord<sup>4</sup>. Vessels or vases are clay containers, sometimes adorned, in which we cultivate ornamental plants. Vessels are also made of glass or fine crystal in which we keep flowers. Mothers choose their companions—we hope freely—with whom they will become "vessels" through which will flow the divine priesthood power necessary for the generation of new human life "in the image and likeness of God"<sup>5</sup>. Mothers consecrate their bodies, in angelic language "tabernacles of clay"<sup>6</sup>, and with the care given to a precious crystal, they generate a new life that we hope will become an ornament to the world.

If all goes well, sometime after the birth, by divine command<sup>7</sup> Melchizedek Priesthood-holding fathers are privileged to exercise their authority as elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and bless that little child in the name of Jesus Christ.

Let me open a long parenthesis at this point, and emphasize something I've been talking about since 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> Alma 29:8; Doctrine and Covenants 84:46

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 6:9; 3 Nephi 13:9; 17:14; 18:19-21; 19:7-8, 20-23, 27-29

<sup>3</sup> 3 Nephi 18:1-14; Moroni 4-5

<sup>4</sup> Alma 7:10

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 1:26-27; Moses 6:8-10; Ether 3:14-16

<sup>6</sup> Mosiah 3:5

<sup>7</sup> D&C 20:70

Please do not change the names of the divine ordinances. Do not use man-made terms to describe ordinances revealed by God. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “ordinances instituted in the heavens ... are not to be altered or changed”<sup>8</sup>, and since I am in my home and not in an official church meeting, let me expand on this teaching and suggest that not even the names of the ordinances should be changed, except by divine revelation to those chosen and ordained to serve as prophets, seers, and revelators<sup>9</sup>.

I see a growing number of people calling the blessing of little children a “presentation” and the sacrament “communion.” No doubt they do this with good intentions, as they wish to use language familiar to their relatives and friends who belong to other churches. However, I say that by doing so, we lose a precious missionary opportunity. By using the language from other churches, we induce our relatives and friends to wrongly conclude that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “more or less equal” to their churches.

On the other hand, when we use official language, which is based on scriptures and divine revelations, we generate curiosity. We lead our relatives and friends to ask, “*What is this? What is this ‘blessing’ of a little child?*” And then the Holy Spirit can begin to work on those people’s minds until it convinces them to ask us about it. And if we have good sense, we will simply respond, “*God exists, and he is a perfectly loving Father. So, just as in Biblical times, he called prophets in our day and sent messengers from heaven to bring back to earth the power that Jesus Christ used to bless little children 2000 years ago. And God commanded us to use that power today to continue blessing little children.*”

If that person is one of the Lord’s “elect”<sup>10</sup> she may ask, like King Lamoni in the Book of Mormon, “*What is this power?*”<sup>11</sup> or else similarly to King Lamoni’s father, “*What is a prophet? And how and when did God give this command regarding little children?*”<sup>12</sup>. And again, if we have common sense, we’ll simply respond, “*Look, I really want to share with you everything I know about this. And I will be honored if you accept my invitation to meet with missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These are young men and women who have received the divine call to officially teach about these things you are asking me.*”

I close my parenthesis here, although I could talk more about how unofficially changing the names of ordinances may open a “crack in the door” of apostasy.

Returning to fathers and mothers, we can assume that the blessing given by priesthood authority to a little child<sup>13</sup> would be the earthly and mortal version of a heavenly and eternal blessing that we surely would have received before departing from the safety and fullness of divine light of our premortal home, a departure that made us forget perhaps millions of years of glorious experiences and memories obtained in the presence of our Heavenly Father and Mother.

Now, here on mortal earth, we need to gain precious experiences and memories in the presence of our earthly fathers and mothers. Sadly, millions of children do not have this opportunity, and even among latter-day saints we see situations where fathers and mothers, due to inexperience or past trauma, do not exercise this divine calling in the ideal way decreed by God.

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<sup>8</sup> *Teachings of Presidents of the Church—Joseph Smith*, p.417

<sup>9</sup> D&C 21:1-5; 28:1-7

<sup>10</sup> D&C 29:7

<sup>11</sup> Alma 18:20

<sup>12</sup> Alma 22:5-6

<sup>13</sup> D&C 20:70

With his atonement, Jesus Christ paid for the mistakes of these fathers and mothers, and will one day make up for all the losses of these children<sup>14</sup>.

For those fathers and mothers who strive to do the best they can according to the revelations of prophets, inspired teachings from Church leaders, and words of wisdom obtained in the best books<sup>15</sup>, their mission is to prepare their children to one day become fathers and mothers themselves, carrying forward the great divine plan of salvation and extending to another generation the blessings of mortality and eventual resurrection prepared and guaranteed by Jesus Christ<sup>16</sup>.

This preparation is made in the home and supplemented by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Following the example of Adam and Eve, fathers and mothers teach the words of eternal life to their children<sup>17</sup> and inform them of God's commandments and expectations regarding prayer, obedience, righteousness, baptism, laying on of hands, weekly worship, and work<sup>18</sup>.

Eventually, fathers and mothers will prepare their children to receive the ordinances that compose the endowment in the House of the Lord. We receive the ordinances of the endowment in preparation for eternal life<sup>19</sup>, not merely to serve a full-time mission or for a matrimonial sealing in the temple. The endowment is essential, and its blessings are effective in our lives, regardless of a full-time missionary service or a matrimonial sealing<sup>20</sup>.

With the endowment, fathers and mothers complete the major requirements under their charge for their children to qualify for eternal life. I say "requirements under the parents' charge" because the most complete preparation for eternal life will only take place in the future, over many, many years, under the influence of a "help meet", a good spouse<sup>21</sup>, united to each son and daughter by priesthood authority in the House of the Lord. But that's another subject that I've covered on other occasions.

If almost 60 years ago Mr. Veiga had known the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, he might have uttered words like these. But today you heard the words of Brother Martins. Who knows if these words of mine may be repeated by some of you, still young today, in a much more refined and powerful way around the year 2081?

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*Dr. Marcus H. Martins is a professor of religion and leadership and former dean at Brigham Young University-Hawaii, and has served as a translator, temple officiator, high councilor, bishop, and mission president. These informal remarks do not constitute an official statement of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.*

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<sup>14</sup> *Teachings of Presidents of the Church—Joseph Smith*, p.51

<sup>15</sup> D&C 88:118

<sup>16</sup> Ether 3:14-16

<sup>17</sup> John 6:68; Moses 6:57-59

<sup>18</sup> D&C 68:25-30; Moses 5:12; 6:57-59

<sup>19</sup> *Teachings of Presidents of the Church—Joseph Smith*, p. 417

<sup>20</sup> D&C 105:10-12; 124:39

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 2:18; Moses 3:18