

INTERPRETER

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A JOURNAL OF MORMON SCRIPTURE

Volume 25 · 2017 · Pages 61-65

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Offprint Series

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ISSN 2372-1227 (print)

ISSN 2372-126X (online)

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THE HEALING AND EXALTING POWERS OF CHRIST WEAVE TOGETHER AT EASTER

Ann Madsen

Abstract: In this personal essay, Ann Madsen reflects on the ways in which the healing power of Christ converges with His exalting power at Easter. Cold gives way to warmth, pride to submission, and reflection to sanctification. The weekly Sacrament provides a time for cleansing, renewal, and drawing our thoughts toward the Lord. The path leads to us becoming like Him.

During the gray days of winter we look for the light. On a sunny day the light surrounds us, though we may still feel frigid as we venture out into the snow. But in spring the world changes; it brightens and gradually warms.

It is the perfect setting for Easter.

It signals fresh, new beginnings as sleeping bulbs awake and stretch sunward. Women often feel the impulse to clear away the winter dust and call it “spring cleaning.” The impulse to be clean is shared by many humans everywhere. Our grandmothers taught us in these western valleys that “cleanliness is next to Godliness.” (A saying I disliked as a young girl each Saturday morning as I was urged to ready our home for the Sabbath.) As a great-grandmother, “clean” takes on a deeper meaning. It’s all about being clean, isn’t it? *Purified, cleansed, and sanctified* are all closely related terms. The beautiful scene of Jesus washing his apostles’ feet illustrates this when he declares they can be “clean every whit” (John 13:8–10).

My husband often called the temple a sanctuary, I think because he saw it as a *place* where we learn to be sanctified. If the temple is a sanctuary or place where we can become sanctified, then the Sacrament is the *time* each week — a time and space we can wall off — in which we can be cleansed and renewed and increase our worthiness for temple

worship. “No unclean thing can enter his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end” (3 Nephi 27:19).

All that we take into our souls should sanctify us.

Each week we come to the Sacrament to measure ourselves next to Jesus Christ, our eternal standard. What do we bring? We bring Him our sins, reckoned in complete honesty — not a lamb or a dove as they did anciently, but our broken hearts and contrite spirits, remembering again His blessed sacrifice for us.

The Sacrament Prayers¹

The words are repeated
once again,
this sacred, Sabbath time.
Words I can trace
through the week
but this time
unique,
spoken quietly
in youthful
intonation
and the nourishment
is proffered
to me
by a boy's hand,
in exchange
for
my changing.

Picture a conduit of light with you inside it, sitting silently with head bowed, asking, “How holy am I? Why do I promise to remember Christ? What is the exchange that is taking place?”

I sacrifice my sins and ask with all my heart each week, “What lack I yet?” When the answer comes, I write it down. These are a few of the impressions that came one Sabbath day in 1995:

- Know when to speak and when to keep silent.
- Do nothing.
- Keep sacred things in my heart.
- Give myself to Truman every day. (He died 14 years later.)
- Process pain through love. Metabolize hurt with charity.
- Restraint.

1. Ann Madsen, January 14, 1990, PV 1 Sacrament Meeting.

I eat the bread and drink the water, taking into myself the symbols of a perfect life, lived for me, given for me, my everlasting example of goodness and decency. And I do it with others, sitting side by side, that through this ordinance we may be “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Truman Madsen wrote, “By partaking, accompanied by the Spirit of God, we are preparing ourselves to be sufficiently pure to enter His presence ... [T]he Spirit is invited in and comes to stay.”²

We partake of a tiny piece of bread, which has been blessed and sanctified to our souls’ good, a tiny piece of bread, symbolizing the resplendent, resurrected body of Him who redeems us. We drink a single swallow of water in the smallest of cups, symbolizing His blood, which cleanses our inner vessel and washes clean our souls.

This is the exchange: His love for us, a pure love that never fails, an Atonement infinite and eternal in exchange for our growing love for Him, which enables our changing. We remember Him, we promise again and again to always remember Him so that *we* may become like Him, not His everlasting inferior, but *like Him* in every way we have learned to observe and feel in our hearts. We cannot withhold our hearts from Him. His magnetic love draws us to Him. We cannot ignore His sacrifice for us. I cannot ignore His sacrifice for me. This is the Christ we remember each Sabbath.

I lived in Jerusalem for nearly five years, and I could visit Gethsemane often. One day I had a few moments alone there. I went into the lovely church built near the ancient olive trees. It has violet-stained glass windows to make it seem always night-time, the time when Jesus pleaded with His Father to let the awful cup pass, and set the pattern for us forever.

“Nevertheless, not my will, but *thine*, be done” (Luke 22:42, emphasis added).

It was a strangely quiet time for that usually crowded place of pilgrimage. No one was in sight. I was brimming with love and gratitude and felt the Spirit in my pounding heart. I sank to my knees to quietly whisper a prayer. I knew that somewhere nearby, not far from where I knelt, He had knelt in agony. It was a sacred moment in a sacred space. As I arose from my knees, I had been able to say only the smallest part. I was prompted to write down the last of the prayer I had spoken. I wanted to remember the moment, the sacred space the sanctifying

2. Truman G. Madsen, *The Sacrament: Feasting at The Lord’s Table* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2015; original edition 2008), 134.

time. This is how I ended that prayer. I didn't realize it was poetry until I wrote it down:

Beneath the Violet Windows — Gethsemane³

Dear Lord Jesus,
 Thou who lovest
 The people of the Mosque,
 Who would have gathered
 The people of the synagogue,
 Whose arms continue open
 To each saffron-robed monk
 And searching nun,
 Lord of the children
 And the childlike,
 Pulled by thy love,
 Seized by thy suffering,
 Drawn to thee
 By everlasting cords,
 I come!

How can I duplicate these sacred feelings each Sacrament time? Can I go in my mind to the place He knelt bringing my specific, honest, evaluation of myself from the week just past? Can I offer my list to Him from my broken heart, on the altar we call a Sacrament table? Can I give away all my sins to know Him and by that action become more like Him?⁴ How could I know Him better than to become like Him and embrace His attributes? Can I cry out in my heart, "Dear Lord Jesus, I come! I will become the pure in heart thou knowest I can be. I will create my own sacred space and resolutely stand in it. I will walk out of each Sacrament meeting cleansed. It will take time, but I will one day say simply, 'I am clean, I am clean.'"

Truly, this healing and exalting power of Christ weave together and converge at Easter.

Ann Madsen, wife of the late Truman G. Madsen, is the mother of three (plus an Indian foster son), a grandmother of sixteen, and a great-grandmother of 37 going on 40. She loves swimming, cooking, writing

3. Ann Madsen, October 17, 1976.

4. See Alma 22:18.

poetry, family history, and photography. Ann received her BS degree from the University of Utah and her MA degree from BYU in Ancient Studies with a minor in Hebrew. She has taught Ancient Studies at BYU for 41 years. Her church service has included: Mission Presidents's wife (New England Mission 1962–65), Stake Relief Society President (BYU 8th Stake and Provo Utah Sharon East Stake), and Jerusalem Branch Relief Society President 1991–93. She was on the Gospel Doctrine writing committee for the Church for 17 years. Ann served a short-term mission in the Adriatic North Mission in 2013, was released from the Sunday School General Board in 2014, and is presently a Visiting Teacher in her ward.

