

Welcome to the Church of Joy

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Naragsak nga Isasangbay iti Simbaan ti Rag-o

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Because of the redeeming life and mission of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, we can—and should—be the most joyful people on earth!

I was baptised into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Christmas Eve of 1987, nearly 37 years ago. That was a truly wonderful day in my life and in my eternal journey, and I'm profoundly grateful for the friends who prepared the way and brought me to the waters of that new birth.

Whether your baptism was yesterday or years ago, whether you meet in a large multiward Church building or under a thatched canopy, whether you receive the sacrament in remembrance of the Saviour in Thai or Swahili, I would like to say to you, welcome to the church of joy! Welcome to the church of joy!

The Church of Joy

Because of the loving plan of our Heavenly Father for each of His children, and because of the redeeming life and mission of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, we can—and should—be the most joyful people on earth! Even as the storms of life in an often-troubled world pound upon us, we can cultivate a growing and abiding sense of joy and inner peace because of our hope in Christ and our understanding of our own place in the beautiful plan of happiness.

The Lord's senior Apostle, President Russell M. Nelson, has spoken of the joy that comes from

Gapu iti makasubbot a biag ken mision ti Mangisalakantayo, ni Jesucristo, kabaelantayo—ken nasken—ngaagbalin a karagsakan a tattao ditoy daga!

Nabuniaganak iti Ti Simbaan ni Jesucristo dagiti Santo iti Ud-udina nga Aldaw manipud Bisperas ti Paskua ti 1987, dandani 37 a tawenen ti napalabas. Pudno a naisangsangayan dayta nga aldaw iti biagko ken iti agnanayon a panagdalia-satko, ket agyamanak unay kadagiti gagayyem a nangisagana iti dalan ken nangisangbay kaniak iti danum dayta a baro a pannakaipasngay.

Idi man kalman ti panagbuniagyo wenno tawtawenen ti napalabas, agtataripnongkayo man iti dakkal a pasdek ti nadumaduma a ward ti Simbaan wenno iti sirok ti garami a canopy, awatenyo man ti sakramento a panglaglagip iti Mangisalakan iti pagsasao a Thai wenno Swahili, kayatko nga ibaga, naragsak nga isasangbay iti simbaan ti rag-o! Naragsak nga isasangbay iti simbaan ti rag-o!

Ti Simbaan ti Rag-o

Gapu iti plano ti Nailangitan nga Amatayo iti annakna, ken gapu iti makasubbot a biag ken mision ti Mangisalakantayo, ni Jesucristo, mabalina—ken rumbeng—a datayo ti agbalin a karagsakan a tattao ditoy daga! Adda man dagiti bagyo ti biag a sumangbay kadayto, mabalintayo a patanoren ti dumakdakkal ken agnanayon a rikna ti rag-o ken talna gapu iti namnama ken Cristo ken pannakaawat iti lugartayo iti napintas a plano ti ragsak.

Ni Presidente Russell M. Nelson, ti senior nga Apostol ti Apo, nagsao maipapan iti rag-o

a life centered on Jesus Christ in nearly every address he has given since becoming the President of the Church. He summed it up so concisely: “Joy comes from and because of Him. ... For Latter-day Saints, Jesus Christ is joy!”

We are members of the Church of Jesus Christ. We are members of the church of joy! And nowhere should our joy as a people be more apparent than when we gather together each Sabbath in our sacrament meetings to worship the source of all joy! Here we assemble with our ward and branch families to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, our deliverance from sin and death, and the Saviour’s powerful grace! Here we come to experience the joy, refuge, forgiveness, thanksgiving, and belonging found through Jesus Christ!

Is this spirit of collective rejoicing in Christ what you find? Is this what you bring? Maybe you think this doesn’t have much to do with you, or perhaps you are simply used to how things have always been done. But we can all contribute, no matter our age or our calling, to making our sacrament meetings the joy-filled, Christ-focused, welcoming hour they can be, alive with a spirit of joyful reverence.

Joyful Reverence

Joyfulreverence? “Is that a thing?” you may ask. Well, yes, it is! We deeply love, honour, and respect our God, and our reverence flows from a soul that rejoices in Christ’s abundant love, mercy, and salvation! This joyful reverence to the Lord should characterise our sacred sacrament meetings.

However, for many, reverence only means this: folding our arms tightly around our chests, bowing our heads, closing our eyes, and holding still—indefinitely! This might be a helpful way to teach energetic young children, but as we grow and learn, let us see that reverence is so much more than this. Is that how we would be if the Saviour were with us? No, for “in [His] presence is fulness of joy”!

Well, for many of us this transformation in

nga aggapu iti biag a naisentro ken ni Jesucristo iti dandani tunggal palawag nga intedna manipud pay idi nagbalin a Presidente ti Simbaan. Nalawag ti pananggupgopna nga: “Umay ti rag-o manipud ken gapu Kenkuana. ... Para kadagiti Santo iti Ud-udina nga Aldaw, ni Jesucristo ti rag-o!”

Miembrotayo iti Simbaan ni Jesucristo. Miembrotayo iti simbaan ti rag-o! Ket awan sadinoman nga ad-adda a nalawag ti rag-otayo kas tattao ngem no agtitipontayo iti tunggal Sabbath kadagiti mitingtayo iti sakramento tapno agdayaw iti pagtaudan ti amin a rag-o! Ditoy nga agtitipontayo kadagiti pamiliatayo ti ward ken branch tapno rambakan ti sakramento ti Pangrabii ti Apo, ti pannakaispaltayo iti basol ken ipapatay, ken ti nabileg a parabur ti Mangisalahan! Ditoy nga umaytayo a mangpadas iti rag-o, pagkaman-gan, pammakawan, panagyaman, ken pannakabilang a masarakan babaen ken Jesucristo!

Daytoy kadi ti kaipapanan ti naummong a panagrag-o ken ni Cristo a masarakanyo? Daytoy kadi ti iyegyo? Mabalin a pagarupen a saan unay a pakainaigan daytoy kadakayo, wenno nalabit nairuamkayo lang no kasano a kanayon a maar-aramid dagiti banag. Mab-alintayo amin ti tumulong, uray ania ti edad wenno ti calling-tayo, tapno agbalin a narag-o ti sacrament-tayo, a naipamaysa iti Cristo, oras a makapasangbay, nabiag nga addaan iti espiritu ti naragsak a panagraem.

Naragsak a Panagraem

Naragsaka panagraem? “Maysa kadi a banag dayta?” masaludsodyo. Wen, kasta! Ay-ayat-en, raemen, ken dayawentayo ti Diostayo, ket ti panagraemtayo agayus manipud iti kararua nga agrag-o iti nawadwad nga ayat, asi, ken panangisalahan ni Cristo! Daytoy naragsak a panagraem iti Apo ti rumbeng a pakabigbigan dagiti sagrado a mitingtayo iti sakramento.

Nupay kasta, para iti adu, ti panagraem kaipapananna laeng: ti nairut a panagdali-kep, panagdumog, panagkidem, ken agtalinaed a natalna—nga agnanayon! Makatulong daytoy a mangisuro iti nakuti nga ubbing, ngem iti panagdakkel ken panagsursurotayo, makitatayo a ti panagraem ket ad-adda pay nga amang ngem itoy. Kasta kadi ti kasasaadtayo no kaduatayo ti Mangisalahan? Saan, gapu ta “iti imatang[Na] ti pakabuklan ti rag-o”!

No kasta, para iti adu kadatayo daytoy a

sacrament services will take practice.

Attending versus Worshipping

We do not gather on the Sabbath simply to attend sacrament meeting and check it off the list. We come together to worship. There is a significant difference between the two. To attend means to be present at. But to worship is to intentionally praise and adore our God in a way that transforms us!

On the Stand and in the Congregation

If we are gathering in remembrance of the Saviour and the redemption He has made possible, our faces should reflect our joy and gratitude! Elder F. Enzio Busche once told the story of when he was a branch president and a young boy in the congregation looked at him on the stand and asked loudly, “What is the man with that mean face doing up there?” Those who sit on the stand—speakers, leaders, choirs—and those who gather in the congregation communicate to each other this “welcome to the church of joy” through the expressions they wear on their faces!

Hymn Singing

As we sing, are we joining together to praise our God and King no matter the quality of our voices, or are we just mumbling or not singing at all? Scripture records that “the song of the righteous is a prayer unto [God]” in which His soul delights. So let’s sing! And praise Him!

Talks and Testimonies

We center our talks and testimonies on Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and the fruits of humbly living Their gospel, fruits that are “sweet above all that is sweet.” Then we truly “feast ... even until [we] are filled, that [we] hunger not, neither ... thirst,” and our burdens become lighter through the joy of the Son.

The Sacrament

panagbalbaliw iti serbisiotayo iti sakramento ket agkasapulan iti aramid.

Idadar-ay bersus Panagdaydayaw

Ditayo agtataripnong iti Sabbath tapno laeng dumar-ay iti miting ti sakramento ken ma-check iti listaan. Agtitipontayo tapno agdaydayaw. Adda napateg a nagdumaan dagitoy a dua. Tidumar-aykaipapananna ti presensia. Ngem tipanagdaydayawket naigagara a panagraem ken panagrukbab iti Diostayo iti wagas a mangbalbaliw kadatayo!

Iti Stand ken iti Kongregasion

No agtitipontayo a manglaglagip iti Mangisalakken ken ti pannakasubbot nga inaramidna, rumbeng nga iyanninaw iti rupatayo ti rag-o ken panagyamantayo! Insalaysay ni Elder F. Enzio Busche nga idi branch president isuna ket maysa nga ubing a lalaki iti kongregasion ti nangmatmat kenkuana iti sango ket dinamagna iti napigsa, “Ania ti ar-aramiden ti lalaki a naunget ti rupana dita ngato?” Dagiti nagtugaw iti sango—dagiti agsarita, lider, koro—ken dagiti naguummong iti kongregasion ket ipakitada iti tunggal maysa daytoy a “naragsak panangpasangbay iti simbaan ti rag-o” babaen kadagiti ebkas iti ruprupada!

Panagkanta ti Himno

Bayat ti panagkantatayo, agtitinnulongtayo kadi a mangidaydayaw iti Dios ken Aritayo uray ania ti kalidad ti timektayo, wenno agmulmulagattayo laeng wenno di a pulos nga agkanta? Nairekord iti nasantuan a kasuratan a ti kanta dagiti nalinteg ket maysa a kararag iti [Dios] a pakaragsakan ti kararuana. Isu nga agkantatayo! Ket agdaydayawtayo Kenkuana!

Dagiti Palawag ken Pammaneknek

Isentrotayo dagiti palawag ken pammaneknekayo iti Nailangitan nga Ama ken ni Jesucristo ken ti bungbunga ti sipapakumbaba a panagbiag iti ebanghelioda, dagiti bunga a “nasam-it ngem iti amin a nasam-it.” Kalpasanna pudno nga “agpennektayo ... agingga a mapnek[tayo], a di[tayon] mabisin, wenno ... mawaw,” ket agbalin a nalaglag-an dagiti dagensentayo, babaen ti rag-o ti Anak.

Ti Sakramento

The glorious focal point of our services is the blessing and receiving of the sacrament itself, the bread and the water representing the atoning gift of our Lord and the whole purpose of our gathering. This is “a sacred time of spiritual renewal” when we witness anew that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and make again the covenant to always remember the Saviour and keep His commandments.

In some seasons of life, we may approach the sacrament with heavy hearts and overwhelming loads. At other times, we come free and unburdened from cares and troubles. As we listen intently to the blessing of the bread and water and partake of those sacred tokens, we may feel to reflect on the sacrifice of the Saviour, His agonies in Gethsemane, His anguish on the cross, and the sorrows and pains He endured on our behalf. That will be what relieves our souls as we connect our suffering to His. At other times, we will feel to wonder with grateful awe at the “exquisite and sweet” joy of what Jesus’s magnificent gift has made possible in our lives and in our eternities! We will rejoice for what is yet to come—our cherished reunion with our beloved Father and risen Saviour.

We may have been conditioned to suppose that the purpose of the sacrament is to sit in the pew thinking only about all the ways we messed up during the week before. But let’s turn that practice on its head. In the stillness, we can ponder the many ways we have seen the Lord relentlessly pursue us with His wonderful love that week! We can reflect on what it means to “discover the joy of daily repentance.” We can give thanks for the times the Saviour entered into our struggles and our triumphs and the occasions when we felt His grace, forgiveness, and power giving us strength to overcome our hardships and bear our burdens with patience and even good cheer.

Yes, we ponder the sufferings and injustices inflicted upon our Redeemer for our sin, and that does cause sober reflection. But we sometimes get stuck there—in the garden, at the cross, in-

Ti nadayag a kangrunaan a pokus ti serbisiotayo ket ti bendision ken panangawat iti sakramento a mismo, ti tinapay ken danum a mangibagi iti mangsubbot a sagut ti Apotayo ken ti panggep ti panagtitipontayo. Daytoy ti “maysa a sagrado nga oras ti naespirituan a pannakapabaro” no saksiantayo manen a situt-loktayo a mangawat iti nagan ni Jesucristo ken makitulagtayo manen ken kanayon a laglagipentayo ti Manangisalakken ken tungpalentayo dagiti bilinna.

Iti sumagmamano a panawen ti biag, mabalina a makiranudtayo iti sakramento nga addaan kadagiti nadagsen a puso ken aglaplapusanan nga awit. Iti dadduma a tiempo, makiranudtayo a nawaya ken nalag-an kadagiti pakaseknan ken riribuk. Nodenggentayo ti panangbendision iti tinapay ken danumken makiranud kadagiti a sagrado a pagilasinan, mautobtayo ti sakripisio ti Mangisalakken, dagiti panagsagabana idiay Getsemani, ti panagleddaangna iti krus, ken dagiti ladingit ken ut-ot nga inibturanna paraa kadatayo. Dayta ti mangpabang-arto kadagiti kararuatayo no ikonektatayo ti panagsagabatayo Kenkluaan. Iti dadduma a gundaway, agsiddawtayo a buyogen ti panagyaman iti “napipintas ken nasam-it” a rag-o no ania ti inaramid a posible ti sagut ni Jesus iti biagtayo ken iti kinaagnan-ayontayo! Agrag-otayo para iti dumteng pay—ti ipatpategtayo a panagtitipon manen iti dungdunguentayo nga Ama ken nagungar a Mangisalakken.

Mabalina a nakondisiontayo a mangipapan a ti panggep ti sakramento ket agtugaw iti bangko a mangpampanunot iti amin a wagas a nariribuktayo ti napalabas a lawas. Ngem bay-an nga iturongtayo dayta nga aramid iti ulona. Iti kinaulimek, mautobtayo dagiti wagas a nakitatayo ti Apo a di agsarday a mangsurat kadatayo babaen ti naisangangayan nga ayatna iti dayta a lawas! Mautobtayo ti kaipapanan ti “takuaten tirag-oiti inaldaw a panagbabawi.” Makapagyamantayo iti panawen a simrek ti Mangisalakken kadagiti npagkarigatan ken balligitayo ken dagiti gundaway a nariknatayo ti paraburna, pamakawanna, ken panangtedna iti bileg a mangpamek kadagiti rigrigattayo ken mangibaklay ikadagiti dagisentayo a siaanus ken sirarag-o.

Wen, utobentayo ti panagsagaba ken kinnaan hustisia a naipaay iti Mannubbottayo gapu iti basoltayo, mapanunottayo a nasayaat dayta a talaga. Ngem no dadduma, agtalinaed-

side the tomb. We fail to move upward to the joy of the tomb bursting open, the defeat of death, and Christ's victory over all that might prevent us from gaining peace and returning to our heavenly home. Whether we shed tears of sorrow or tears of gratitude during the sacrament, let it be in awesome wonder at the good news of the Father's gift of His Son!

Parents with Children Who Are Young or Have Special Needs

Now, for parents of children who are young or have special needs, there is often no such thing as a time of stillness and quiet reflection during the sacrament. But in small moments throughout the week, you can teach by example the love, gratitude, and joy you feel for and from the Saviour as you constantly care for His little lambs. No effort in this pursuit is wasted. God is so aware of you.

Family, Ward, and Branch Councils

Likewise at home, we can begin to enhance our hopes and expectations for our time at church. In family councils, we can discuss how each individual can contribute in meaningful ways to welcoming all to the church of joy! We can plan and expect to have a joyful experience at church.

Ward and branch councils can envision and create a culture of joyful reverence for our sacrament hour, identifying practical steps and visual cues to help.

Joy

Joy looks different for different people. For some, it may be exuberant greetings at the door. For others, it might be quietly helping people feel comfortable by smiling and sitting next to them with a kind and open heart. For those who feel left out or on the margins, the warmth of this welcome will be crucial. Ultimately, we can ask ourselves how the Saviour would want our sacrament hour to be. How would He want each

tayo sadiay—iti minuyongan, iti krus, iti uneg ti tanem. Mapaaytayo nga agpangato iti rag-o ti panagburak ti tanem, ti pannakaabak ni patay, ken ti panagballigi ni Cristo iti amin a makalapped kadatayo a manggun-od iti talna ken agsubli iti nailangitan a pagtaengantayo. Agarubos man ti luatayo ti ladingit wenno lua ti panagyaman bayat ti sakramento, agbalin koma daytoy a nadayaw a siddaawtayo iti naimbag a damag ti sagut ti Ama nga Anakna!

Dagiti Nagannak dagiti Ubbing wenno Addaan kadagiti Naisangsangayan a Kasapulan

Ita, para kadagiti nagannak nga addaan ubbing wenno addaan iti naisangsangayan a kasapulan, masansan nga awan ti kanito ti panagulimek ken panagutob bayat ti sakramento. Ngem iti babassit a kanito iti intero a lawas, maisuroyo babaen ti ulidan ti ayat, panagyaman, ken rag-o a mariknayo para ken manipud iti Mangisalakan bayat ti panangaywano iti babassit a Korderona. Awan ti masayang a panagregget itoy a pananggun-od. Kasta unay ti pannakaammo ti Dios kenka.

Dagiti Konseho iti Pamilya, Ward ken Branch

Kasta met iti pagtaengan, marugiantayo a pasayaaten dagiti namnamaentayo para iti panawentayo iti simbaan. Kadagiti konseho ti pamilya, mapagsasaritaan no kasano a makatulung ti tunggal maysa iti wagas a naragsak a panangpasangbay iti amin iti simbaan ti rag-o! Makapaglano ken namnamaen a maaddaantayo iti naragsak a padas iti simbaan.

Mailadawan ken parnuayen dagiti konseho ti ward ti kultura ti naragsak a panagraem iti oras ti sakramentotayo, a mangilasin kadagiti maaramat nga addang ken makita a tanda a makatulung.

Rag-o

Naiduma ti langa ti rag-o para iti nagduduma a tattao. Para iti dadduma, mabalin a naragsak dayta a kablaaw iti ruangan. Para iti dadduma, mabalin a panangtulung iti tattao a makarikna iti nam-ay babaen ti panagisem ken pannakiabay buyogen ti naasi ken silulukat a puso. Para kadagidiay makarikna a nabaybay-an wenno adda iti igid, napategto ti kinabara daytoy a naragsak a panangpasangbay. Kamaudiananna,

one of His children to be welcomed, cared for, nourished, and loved? How would He want us to feel when we come to be renewed through remembering and worshipping Him?

Conclusion

At the start of my journey of faith, joy in Jesus Christ was my first great discovery, and it changed my world. If you have yet to discover this joy, embark on its quest. This is an invitation to receive the Saviour's gift of peace, light, and joy—to revel in it, to wonder at it, and to rejoice in it every Sabbath.

Ammon in the Book of Mormon expresses the feelings of my heart when he says:

“Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were [a people] that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being, even unto salvation, to those who will repent and believe on his name.

“Now if this is boasting, even so will I boast; for this is my life and my light, ... my joy, and my great thanksgiving.”

Welcome to the church of joy! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

damagentayo iti bagitayo no kasano ti kayat ti Mangisalakan a pagbalinan ti oras ti sakramen-totayo. Kasano a kayatna a naragsak a mapasang-bay, maaywanan, mataraonan, ken maayat dagiti annakna? Kasano ti kayatna a mariknatayo no mapabarotayo babaen ti pananglagip ken panag-daydayaw Kenkuana?

Panangigibus

Iti rugi ti panagdaliasatko iti pammati, ti rag-o ken ni Jesucristo ti umuna a dakkell a natakuatak, ket binalbaliwanna ti lubongko. No diyo pay natakuatan daytoy a rag-o, rugianyon ti agsapul iti daytoy. Daytoy ket awis nga uma-wat iti sagut ti Mangisalakan a talna, lawag, ken rag-o—tapno agragsak, agsiddaaw, ken agrag-okayo iti tunggal Sabbath.

Iyebkas ni Ammon iti Libro ni Mormon ti rikna ti pusok no kunana:

“Ita awan kadi ti kalintegantayo nga agrag-o? Wen, awanen ti tattao nga addaan iti kalintegan nga agrag-o ngem datayo, ket malapunos ti rag-ok, uray pay iti panagpasindayagko iti Diosko; agsipud ta adda kenkuana amin a bileg, amin a nainsiriban; ken amin a pannakaawat; matukod-na amin a banag, ket manangngaasi a Tao, uray pay iti pannakaisalakan, kadagiti agbabawi ken mamati iti naganna.

“Ita no panagpasindayag daytoy, agpasin-dayagak latta; agsipud ta daytoy ti biagko ken silawko, ... daytoy ti rag-ok, ken naindaklan a panagyamanko.”

Naragsak nga isasangbay iti simbaan ti rag-o! Iti nagan ni Jesucristo, amen.