

“Return unto Me ... That I May Heal You”

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“Miverena Amiko ... hahazoako manasitrana anareo”

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*There is rejoicing in heaven over those who return.
It is not too late for you to come back.*

We once lived in a home surrounded by majestic trees. Next to the entrance was a beautiful willow tree. One sad night a mighty storm blew, and the willow came crashing down. It lay on the ground with its roots pulled out and was a sorry sight.

I was ready to rev up the chainsaw and cut the tree up for firewood when our neighbour came running out to stop me. He chastised me for giving up on the tree, and he emphatically urged us not to get rid of it. He then pointed to one root still in the ground and said that if we propped the tree up, cut off its branches, and nourished it, the roots would take hold once again.

I was sceptical and doubted how a tree so obviously fallen and in trouble could possibly survive and come back to life. I reasoned that even if it did begin growing again, it would surely not survive the next storm. But knowing our neighbour believed the tree still had a future, we went along with the plan.

And the result? After some time, we saw signs of life as the tree began to take root. Now, 12 years later, the tree is vibrant and full of life, with strong roots, and once again contributing to

Misy fifaliana lehibe any an-danitra ho an'ireo izay miverina. Tsy tara loatra izao raha hiverina ianao.

Nipetraka tamina trano voahodidina hazo mahafinaritra izahay tamin'ny taloha. Nisy hazomalahelo tsara tarehy iray teo akaikin'ny fidirana. Indray alina nampalahelo, nisy tafiotra be nifofofoto ka nianjera mafy tamin'ny tany ilay hazomalahelo. Niampatra tamin'ny tany izany ka niala hatramin'ny fakany ary nahonena ny nijery azy.

Vonona ny hamelona ny milina fanapahana hazo sy hanapaka ny hazo mba hatao kitay aho no iny ny mpifanolobodirindrina aminay nihazakazaka ka nanakana ahy. Nandevilevy ahy izy noho ny tsy firaharahiko ilay hazo ary namporisika ahy tamin'ny fomba hentitra izy ny mba tsy hanariako izany. Nanondro faka iray mbola niorina tanatin'ny tany izy avy eo ary nilaza fa raha toa ka ankininay amin-javatra ilay hazo sy tapahanay ireo rantsany ary kolokoloinay izany dia hiverina hamaka indray.

Nisalasala sy niahiahy ny amin'ny fomba aha-fahan'ny hazo iray izay hita mazava fa nirodana sy nijaly ka azo heverina fa ho tafavoaka velona sy ho velon'aina indray aho. Nihevitra aho fa na dia hanomboka haniry indray aza izany dia azo antoka fa tsy ho velona izany amin'ny tafio-drivotra manaraka. Kanefa noho ny finoan'ilay mpifanolobodirindrina taminay fa mbola manana ny hoaviny ilay hazo dia nanohy nanaraka ilay drafitra izahay.

Ary inona no vokany? Fotoana vitsy taty aoriana dia nahita famantarana izahay hoe mbola velona ilay hazo rehefa nanomboka niorim-paka ilay izy. Ankehitriny, 12 taona aty aoriana, dia

the beauty of the landscape.

While I meet Saints around the world, I am reminded of this willow tree and how there is hope even when all seems lost. Some once had testimonies of the gospel that were strong and vibrant like the willow. Then, for uniquely personal reasons, those testimonies became weakened, leading to a loss of faith. Others hang on with the slimmest of roots tapping into gospel soil.

Yet again and again, I am inspired by the stories of so many who have chosen to renew their discipleship and come back to their Church home. Rather than discarding their faith and belief like worthless firewood, instead they have responded to spiritual promptings and loving invitations to return.

I attended a stake conference in Korea where a returning member shared: “I thank the brothers for their willingness to accept my lack of faith and my weakness, for reaching out to me, and for the members who are always so kind to me. I still have a lot of friends around me who are less active. It’s funny, but they tell each other to go back to the Church to get their faith back. I think maybe they are all longing for faith.”

To all who are longing for faith, we invite you to come back. I promise your faith can be strengthened as you once again worship with the Saints.

A former missionary from Africa wrote a senior Church leader, apologising and seeking forgiveness for being offended by his teachings about a certain cultural tradition, which then led him to leave the Church. He humbly expressed: “Sadly, the fact that I took offense 15 years ago has made me pay an extremely heavy price. I lost so much—much more than I ever imagined. I am deeply embarrassed by the harm I may have caused along the way, but above all else I am pleased that I have found my way back.”

mavitribitrika sy velom-bolo no sady lalim-paka sy nandravaka indray ny tontolo manodidina ilay hazo.

Nandritra ny fihaonako tamin’ireo Olomasi-na maneran-tany dia nahatsiaro ity hazomalahelo ity aho sy ny fomba hisian’ny fanantenana na dia toa very avokoa aza ny fanantenana rehetra. Ny sasany dia nanana fijoroana ho vavolombelona momba ny filazantsara izay nahery sy natanjaka toy ilay hazomalahelo teo aloha. Avy eo, noho ny antony manokana dia nihamarefo ireo fijoroana ho vavolombelona ireo ary nitarika tamin’ny fahaverezan’ny finoana. Ny hafa dia mamikitra ireo faka manify indrindra, mivelona amin’ny tanin’ny filazantsara.

Manentana ny fanahiko ombieny ombieny ireo tantaran’olona maro izay nisafidy ny hanavao ny maha-pianatra azy ireo sy hiverina indray ao amin’ny Fiangonana any amin’ny faritra misy azy ireo. Raha tokony handao ny finoany toy ny kitay tsy misy ilana azy izy ireo dia naleony nanaraka ireo fitarihana ara-panahy sy ireo fanasana feno fitiavana ny hiverina.

Nanatrika fihaonamben’ny tsatòka iray tany Korea aho izay nizaran’ny mpikambana niverina mazoto iray hoe: “Misaotra ireo rahalahy aho noho ny fanirian’izy ireo hanaiky ny tsy faham-pian’ny finoako sy ny fahalemeko, nanolo-tanana ahy sy noho ireo mpikambana izay tsara fanahy amiko hatrany. Mbola manana namana maro izay malaindaina aho manodidina ahy. Mampiomahy satria mifampiteny izy ireo hoe miverena ao amin’ny Fiangonana mba hamerenana indray ny finoany amin’ny laoniny. Mihevitra aho famangetaheta mafy ny hanam-pinoana avokoa izy ireo.”

Ho an’ireo rehetra izay mangetaheta mafy ny hanam-pinoana dia manasa anareo izahay hiverina. Mampanantena aho fa afaka hampatan-jahana ny finoanareo raha toa ka miara-mitsaoka amin’ireo Olomasina indray ianareo.

Misiônera teo aloha iray avy ao Afrika no nanoratra tamin’ny mpitarika zokiny iray ao amin’ny Fiangonana, ka niala tsiny sy nangataka famelan-keloka noho ny naha tafintohina azy tamin’ny fampianarana nomen’ily mpitarika mikasika ny fombafomba fanao ara-kolontsaina iray, ka nahatonga azy handao ny Fiangonana. Nilaza tamim-panetrentena izy hoe: “Indrisy fa noho izaho nisafidy ny ho tafintohina 15 taona lasa izay dia nahatonga ahy hanonitra sarany lafo dia lafo. Namoy zavatra maro aho—mihoatra

To all who recognise what you have lost, we invite you to come back so you can once again taste the joyous fruit of the gospel.

A sister in the United States was gone from the Church for many years. Her story of coming back includes powerful lessons for parents and family members who anguish over loved ones who step away. She wrote:

“I could list a myriad of reasons for why I walked away from the Church, the gospel, and in a way, my family. But they really don’t matter. I didn’t make one big decision to leave the Church—I probably made a thousand choices. But one thing I have always known is that my parents did make one big decision, and they stuck to it. They decided to love me.

“I couldn’t possibly know how many tears have been shed, how many sleepless nights, nor how many heartfelt pleading words of prayer have been uttered on my behalf. They didn’t call me out on my sins; rather, they called out to me in my sinfulness. They didn’t make me feel unwelcome in their home and at family gatherings; any of those feelings were of my own doing. Instead, they continued to welcome me. They must have seen my light dim over time. But they knew that the person I was back then was just a shadow of who I was yet to become.

“Just as my path away from the Church was complex, so was my way back. But one thing that was not hard about coming back was the feeling of being back home where I belong.”

My message today is especially to all who once felt the Spirit but question whether there is a way back or a place for you in the restored Church of Jesus Christ. It is also for any who are barely hanging on or who are tempted to step away.

lavitra noho izay noheveriko. Afa-baraka tanteraka aho amin’ny ratsy nateraky ny zavatra nataoko nandritra izay fotoana izay kanefa ambonin’ny zavatra hafa rehetra dia faly aho fa nahita ny lalana miverina.”

Ho an’ireo rehetra izay mahafantatra ny zavatra nafoinareo, dia manasa anareo izahay hiverina mba hahafahanareo manandrana indray ny voa mahafalin’ny filazantsara.

Nisy rahavavy iray tao Etazonia izay nandao ny Fiangonana nandritra ny taona maro. Ny tantara momba ny fiverenany dia mifono lesona mahery vaika ho an’ireo ray aman-dreny sy olona ao amin’ny fianakaviana izay ory noho ny olona akaikin’ny fo manalavitra ny Fiangonana. Nanoratra izy hoe:

“Afaka manao lisitra ireo antony maro nahatonga ahy nisintaka tamin’ny Fiangonana sy ny filazantsara ary azo lazaina ihany koa hoe ny fianakaviako aho. Saingy tsy manan-danja loatra izany. Tsy hoe nandray fanapahan-kevitra iray goavana aho hiala amin’ny Fiangonana—fa mety an’arivony ireo safidy nataoko. Saingy ny zavatra iray fantatro hatrizay dia ny hoe nandray fanapahan-kevitra iray goavana ny ray aman-dreniko ary tsy niova tamin’izany izy ireo. Nanapa-kevitra ny hitia ahy izy ireo.

“Tsy ho fantatro velively hoe firy no rano-maso nalatsaka, na firy ireo alina tsy nahitana torimasoa na koa hoe firy ireo vavaka fitalahoa-na amin-kitsimpo izay notononina ho ahy. Tsy nanebaka ahy noho ireo fahotana vitako izy ireo, fa niantso ahy kosa tao amin’ny toetry ny ota nisy ahy. Tsy nanao izay hahatsapako ho tsy nilaina tao an-tokantranony sy tao anatin’ireo fivoriam-pianakaviana izy ireo. Ireny fahatsapana ireny dia avy amiko ihany. Ho solon’izany dia nanohy nandray ahy hatrany izy ireo. Tsy maintsy nahita ny fahazavako ho nihanitsilopilopy izy ireo rehefa nandeha ny fotoana. Saingy fantatr’izy ireo fa ilay izaho tamin’izany dia alok’ilay tena izaho amin’ny ho avy fotsiny ihany.

“Toy ny fahasarotan’ny lalako nanalavitra ny Fiangonana ihany ilay lalako niverina. Kanefa ny zavatra tsy sarotra tamin’ny fiverenana dia ny fahatsapana fa tafody ao amin’ny fonenako aho.”

Ny hafatro androany dia ho an’ireo rehetra izay efa nahatsapa ny Fanahy indrindra indrindra saingy manontany tena raha toa ka misy lalana miverina na toerana ho anao ao amin’ny Fiangonan’i Jesoa Kristy naverina tamin’ny laoniny. Natao ihany koa izany ho an’ireo izay zara raha

This message is not a challenge, and it is not a condemnation. It is an invitation, extended with love and a sincere desire to welcome you back to your spiritual home.

I have prayed that you will feel the witness of the Holy Ghost as you now hear this loving invitation and magnificent promise from our Saviour, Jesus Christ:

“Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?”

Every week many are responding to the Saviour's invitation by returning to discipleship and Church activity, quietly and humbly seeking the healing that Jesus promises. And contrary to narratives which sometimes circulate, record numbers of our young people are choosing to stay strong and to grow their faith in Jesus Christ.

When some of Jesus's followers in Capernaum found His teachings hard and chose to leave, He turned to His Apostles and asked, “Will ye also go away?”

This is the question we each must answer as we face our individual times of testing. Peter's response to Jesus is timeless and resounding: “To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”

So as you consider the Saviour's invitation to return unto Him, what might you learn from the story of the willow tree?

The journey back is often not easy or comfortable, but it is worth it. When our willow was stood back up, all its branches were cut away. It was not pretty. We too may feel vulnerable as we discard old ways and are stripped of pride. Focusing your faith on Jesus Christ and His gospel—the trunk and the roots—will give you the hope and the courage to take that first step back.

It took many years for our willow to regain its former strength and beauty. Now it is even

mifikitra na ireo izay alaim-panahy hanalavitra.

Ity hafatra ity dia tsy fanamby ary tsy fanamelohana tsy akory. Izany dia fanasana atolotra am-pitiavana sy faniriana amin-kitsimpo hndray anao hiverina indray ao amin'ny ankohonanao ara-panahy.

Nivavaka aho mba hahatsapanao ny vavolombelona avy amin'ny Fanahy Masina eo am-pihainoanao ity fanasana feno fitiavana ity ankehitriny sy ny fampanantenana mahatalanjona avy amin'ny Mpamonjy antsika Jesoa Kristy.

“Tsy mba te hiverina Amiko va ianareo, sy hibe-baka amin'ny fahotanareoary hiova fo hahazoako manasitrana anareo?”

Isan-kerinandro dia maro no mamaly ny fanasan'ny Mpamonjy amin'ny alalan'ny fiverinana indray ho mpanara-dia sy ny fahazotoana indray ao am-piangonana ary ny fikatsahana ilay fanasitrana amim-pahatoniana sy amim-pane-trentena nampanantenain'i Jesoa Kristy. Maro dia maro ireo tanorantsika no misafidy ny hijanona ho matanjaka sy hitombo amin'ny finoana an'i Jesoa Kristy, tsy araka ireo fitantarana miely.

Rehefa hitan'ny mpanara-dia an'i Jesoa Kristy sasany tao Kapernaomy fa sarotra ny fampianarany ka nisafidy ny hiala izy ireo dia nitodika tamin'ireo Apôstôliny Izy ary nanontany hoe: “Ianareo koa va mba te hiala?”

Izany no fanontaniana tsy maintsy valiantsika tsirairay rehefa miatrika ireo fotoanan'ny fitsapana antsika manokana isika. Tsy tontan'ny ela ary manakoako ny valin-teny nomen'i Petera an'i Jesoa: “Hankany amin'iza moa izahay? Hianao no manana ny tenin'ny fiainana mandrakizay.”

Noho izany rehefa mandinika ny fanasan'ny Mpamonjy mba hiverina Aminy ianareo dia inona no mety ianaranareo avy amin'ny tantaran'ilay hazomalahelo?

Tsy mora na mahafinaritra matetika ny lalana miverina kanefa mahaleo ny sarany. Rehefa naverina natsangana ilay hazomalahelonay dia tapatapaka avokoa ireo rantsany rehetra. Tsy tsara tarehy izany. Mety hahatsapa ho marefo ihany koa isika rehefa miala amin'ny fombantsika taloha ary esorina amintsika ny avonavontsika. Ny fampifantohana ny finoanao amin'i Jesoa Kristy sy ny filazantsarany—ilay vatankazo sy ireo fakany—dia hanome anao fanantenana sy ny herimpo hanao izany dingana voalohany miverina izany.

An-taonany maro vao niverina ny tanjaka sy ny hatsaran'ilay hazomalahelonay. Ankehitriny

stronger and more beautiful than before. Be patient as your faith and testimony also grow. This includes not taking offense at thoughtless comments like “Where have you been all these years?”

The willow would never have survived without constant care and nourishment. You will nourish your faith and your testimony as you feast at the sacrament table each week and as you worship in the house of the Lord.

Just as the willow needed sunshine for its branches and leaves to grow again, so your testimony will grow as you stay sensitive to the feelings and the witness of the Spirit. Learn from Amulek, who described his time as a less-active member by saying, “I was called many times and I would not hear.”

My neighbour knew what the willow could once again become. So too the Lord knows your divine potential and what your faith and your testimony can become. He will never give up on you. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all that is broken can be healed.

I witness that there is rejoicing in heaven over those who return. You are needed, and you are loved. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and that He blesses all who return unto Him with greater peace and with great joy. His arms of mercy are not folded but are open and extended to you. It is not too late for you to come back. With all the love in our hearts, we welcome you home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

dia matanjaka sy tsara endrika kokoa izany noho ny teo aloha. Manàna faharetana amin'ny fitomboan'ny finoanareo sy ny fijoroana ho vavombelona anananareo. Tafiditra ao anatin'izany ny tsy ho tezitra noho ny fanehoan-kevitra tsy am-pisainana toy ny hoe: “Fa taiza foana ianao nandritra izay taona maro izay e?”

Tsy ho velona na oviana na oviana mihitsy ilay hazomalahelo raha tsy nisy fikarakarana sy fikolokoloana tsy tapaka. Hikolokolo ny finoanao sy ny fijoroana ho vavolombelona anananao ianao rehefa mivoky eo amin'ny labatry ny fanasan'ny Tompo isan-kerinandro ary mitsaoka ao amin'ny tranon'ny Tompo.

Toy ilay hazomalahelo mila tara-masoandro mba hitomboan'ny rantsany sy ny raviny indray, ny fijoroanao ho vavolombelona koa dia hitombo rehefa andairan'ny fahatsapana sy ny vavolombelona avy amin'ny Fanahy ianao. Mandraisa lesona avy amin'i Amioleka, izay namariparitra ny fotoana nampalainaina azy, ka nilazany fa “nantsoina imbetsaka aho fa tsy te hihaino.”

Fantatr'ilay mpifanolobodirindrina tamiko hoe mety ho tonga toy ny ahoana indray ilay hazomalahelo. Toy izany koa no hahafantaran'ny Tompo ny fahafahanao ho tonga tahaka an' Andriamanitra sy ny fahafantarany hoe mety ho lasa toy ny ahoana ny finoana sy fijoroana ho vavolombelona anananao. Tsy hilavo lefona aminao na oviana na oviana Izy. Azo sitranina amin'ny alalan'ny Sorompanavotan'i Jesoa Kristy izay rava rehetra.

Mijoro ho vavolombelona aho fa misy fifaliana lehibe any an-danitra noho ireo izay miverina. Ilaina ianao, ary tiana ianao. Mijoro ho vavolombelona aho fa i Jesoa Kristy no Mpamonjy antsika ary hitahy ireo rehetra izay miverina Aminy amin'ny fiadanana lehibe kokoa sy fifaliana lehibe Izy. Ny sandrin'ny famindram-pony dia tsy miforitra fa misokatra sy mitolotra ho anao. Tsy tara loatra izao raha hiverina ianao. Mandray anao tonga soa ato an-trano amin'ny fitiavana rehetra ato am-ponay izahay. Amin'ny anaran'i Jesoa Kristy, amena.