

Elder Claudio D. Zivic

Being more than ordinary

I have heard that no one has ever died giving a talk in a general conference. If that is the case today, I sincerely apologize.

While serving in the required military service in Argentina, I read a book whose author I do not remember. He wrote, “I choose not to be an ordinary man; it is my right to be someone out of the ordinary, if I am able.”

To be someone out of the ordinary means to be successful, unique, and outstanding.

That phrase has remained written in my mind and heart. My feelings were and are that we, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ, have chosen not to be ordinary men and women. The last words, “if I am able,” made me think that it is not enough to go through the motions of being baptized and confirmed, but rather we have to fulfill and honor the commitment that we made with the Lord on that memorable day.

Becoming free from sin

Lehi taught his son Jacob, saying: “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

Undoubtedly, freedom and eternal life are what we seek. We tremble at the very thought of dying and being captives of the devil.

Nephi taught clearly what we ought to do. He said, “For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

I believe that the first thing we have to keep in mind in doing “all we can” is to repent of our sins. We will never be able to reach our divine potential if we remain in our sins.

I have fond memories of the day of my baptism when I was eight years old. It was performed in the Liniers Branch, the first chapel of the Church built in South America. After my baptism, as I was returning home along with my family, my oldest brother started wrestling with me, as he often did. I exclaimed, “Do not touch me! I cannot sin!” As the days passed, I realized that it was not possible to remain sinless for the rest of my life.

It is difficult to bear the sufferings that are inflicted upon us, but the real torment in life is to suffer the consequences of our own shortcomings and sins which we inflict upon ourselves.

There is only one way to rid ourselves of this suffering. It is by means of sincere repentance. I learned that if I could present unto the Lord a broken heart and a contrite spirit, feeling a godly sorrow for my sins, humbling myself, being repentant of my faults, He, through His miraculous atoning sacrifice, could erase those sins and remember them no more.

The Argentine poet José Hernández, in his famous book *Martín Fierro*, wrote:

A man loses a lot of things
and sometimes finds them again,
but it's my duty to inform you,
and you'll do well to remember it,
if once your sense of shame gets lost
it will never again be found.

[*La Vuelta de Martín Fierro*, part 2 of *Martín Fierro* (1879), canto 32; bilingual ed., trans. C. E. Ward (1967), 493]

If we don't experience the godly sorrow that results from our sins or unrighteous actions, it will be impossible for

us to remain on the way of outstanding people.

Doing all we can to share the gospel

Another important principle to remember in doing “all we can do” is to look for and develop the opportunities that life within the gospel constantly offers us and recognize that the Lord has given us all that we have. He is responsible for all that is good in our lives.

Another thing that must be our permanent responsibility is to do “all we can do” to share the gospel of happiness with all mankind.

Some time ago I received a letter from Brother Rafael Pérez Cisneros of Galicia, Spain, telling me about his conversion. Part of his letter said the following:

“I had no concept of the purpose of life or what the family really is. When I finally allowed the missionaries to come into my home, I told them, ‘Give me your message, but I warn you that nothing is going to make me change religions.’ On this first occasion my children and my wife were listening attentively. I felt separated from the group. I felt afraid, and without thinking I went to my bedroom. I closed the door and began to pray from the depths of my soul like I had never prayed before. ‘Father, if it is true that these young men are Your disciples and have come to help us, please make it known to me.’ It was in that very moment that I began to cry like a small child. My tears were abundant, and I felt happiness like I had never before experienced. I was absorbed in a sphere full of joy and happiness that penetrated my soul. I understood that God was answering my prayer.

“All of my family was baptized, and we had the blessing of being sealed in the Swiss Temple, making me the happiest man in the world.”

I think this story should motivate us to do “all we can do” to share the blessings of joy that come from living the gospel of happiness.

Serving the Lord until the end of our lives

The final concept I want to share is that we should do “all we can do” until the end of our mortal probation. Without question, we have living examples like President Gordon B. Hinckley and many other men and women who continue to faithfully serve at ages that others may consider inconvenient.

When I served as president of the Spain Bilbao Mission, I was impressed with the quality of members and missionaries that I met, who moved the work forward with great ability and love, as do many faithful members of the Church in other parts of the world. To all of them, I express my sincere respect and admiration.

The Lord has said He is “delight[ed] to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

“Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory” (D&C 76:5–6).

May we always have in our minds and hearts the words of Nephi: “Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. . . . My soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation” (2 Nephi 4:28, 30).

It is my humble prayer that the Lord may bless us to do “all we can do” in this “out of the ordinary” path that we have chosen, which I testify to be true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.