

Dear Midwest City Ward,

Today has been a particularly hard day for me. Actually the past few months have been. As I have struggled much physically, I have grown more spiritually. I prayed for this: that I may find joy in adversity so I could learn to succor the sisters in my care. During this process, I have learned Pain is a good teacher, but I feel blessed that Heavenly Father loves me enough to show me the way. Now if you have asked me how it's going I am compelled to tell the truth, so I may not sound very appreciative. Anyway, I do not write that you would feel sorry for me. I only write so you know how your efforts have helped.

As I have only spoken this to a handful of you, I am sure the rest are wondering by now what it is I am talking about, so here goes. In January while serving in the Temple, I experienced a series of symptoms that gave me a considerable jolt. During the episode my husband was found and gave me a blessing in the Temple President's office. I was able to continue serving despite the tiredness and fatigue I felt. While it was short lived I continued to struggle the rest of the day and Sunday too.

Here is my journal entry from that day: [Saturday January 25- Horrible GI pain and nausea while serving in the Temple. Tried aspirin for pain took one then took a second an hour later, nausea, intense pain, and dry heaves followed. Symptoms got pretty severe, but slowly subsided after my blessing and were mostly gone within 2 hours; fatigue has continued to linger on.]

At first this seemed like a singular event, so I didn't give it much thought. Over the next couple months I had a few more mild episodes and decided they were probably just another manifestation of Mast Cell Disease, so I left it at that. What I should have paid more attention to was the amount of weight I had lost in such a short period of time or the number of food reactions I was having. Had I seen this I would have realized something was wrong much sooner.

The episode that stopped me in tracks came later on March 6th, the same night as the Young Women's fundraiser. I was tired and had not been able to eat all day, so I brought 3 cups of milk knowing I needed to get something down and also thinking seeing all that food would prompt my appetite a bit. At the end of the evening I asked my husband to take our young grandsons home and come back for me since I had loaned the Relief Society's flowers and vases to the Young Women and wanted to put them in the closet without the aid of little boys the following morning.

Afterwards, as I was talking with Bishop and Sister Coyle I began to feel fatigued once again. I sat down in a chair to rest and soon after nausea set in. I excused myself and ran to the restroom, dry heaves and pain followed. When I came out my husband was there so I asked him to take me home. We didn't make it a mile before an intense pain shot through my upper abdomen and into my back causing me to draw my legs up close to my chest. Before we got to

Sooner I was begging Bill to drive me to the ER (this is a rare thing for me as no one knows what to do with a Mast Cell patient in an emergency and especially not one with my particular reactions).

The intense pain lasted the whole of the trip and by the time we arrived I had been screaming and begging God to make it stop for nearly a half hour. I wasn't able to stand so Bill got me a wheelchair and I was taken straight into triage. A nurse assured me I would be the next person to be seen as they wheeled me into a holding room within the triage area. After a while the pain began to subside and started coming more in waves with only intermittent screaming events. Now anyone who knows me well also is aware I have a very high tolerance for pain and can work through most things and no one is the wiser. Another half hour or so passed and the nurse returned, again assuring me I would be the next to go back.

Sometime later another lady entered and asked if we had seen registration, my husband answered he didn't think so but that he had to go move the car and wasn't sure. The lady then wheeled me out of triage and parked me 3 or 4 rooms down in what looked like a waiting room. She walked off without saying a word. I looked up and asked my husband what had happened, but he didn't know. As I prayed the pain suddenly stopped and I felt impressed to go home.

The following day was March 7th. I was filled with so much fatigue and weakness, I couldn't hide it (several of you noticed and were concerned, I thank you for that). I didn't get the little boys that morning, because I did not have the energy to care for them. Since there was no teacher for Relief Society, I had my husband bring in a stool for me to sit on during my lesson. Many of you Sisters already know what followed, but for those that don't a few minutes into class I broke down and cried. Savannah and Marcia took over the class, while Patsy and several other Sisters helped me in the hallway. I regained composure and went back inside and tried to make things right during the last few minutes. After church, I lead the Activities committee meeting. I was supposed to be an attendee only, and I was not prepared. I am sure the sisters knew I had no idea what I was doing, but as a Relief Society President it is my responsibility to fill in when someone is not there. This was the hardest day for me, but it was also quite rewarding, many of you heard the voice of God that day and acted on promptings that held me up and I thank you for that.

During the month of March, I was able to get some testing done before and while Mercy was becoming a Covid 19 hospital. Unfortunately, none of it explained the cause of the pain and today it is ongoing and still a mystery. Now that Mercy has been designated a Covid facility, my Primary care doctor can't see me and my March 11th appointment was moved to April 30th. As I am waiting, I have tried to work through the pain; Heavenly Father has sustained me well during my efforts.

He is not the only one who has strengthened me though. There have been many sisters, brothers, young women, young men, and even small children who have given me aid. Since, most have no idea of what I am going through, that fact helps me feel the Savior's love even more in their service. While I won't go into all of the details of what has happened the past few

months, I will say most of you have responded with love and kindness when I have interacted with you.

When I first started writing this I said I only wrote so you would know how you have helped. I would like to explain something. When a member of a Presidency sends a message, makes a call, or schedules a ministering interview and asks how someone is doing we are acting in our capacity as the Lord's servants. Many times these questions come from personal promptings, ward council concerns, and member concerns. I want to make this next part clear: when you receive a call it is never meant to cause you stress or grief, my goal is to inspire, lift up, and strengthen each one of you. When you speak to me, I am not judging you or your efforts in any way. I know each of us is doing our best with the knowledge we currently have. I also know as we learn more, we grow more and our capacities increase.

You are my friends, my surrogate spiritual family, and I love each of you. You fill a huge void in my life as a first generation convert and I count myself blessed to be in your presence. Please never forget that.

In the past few months I have seen much light come into our ward as several members have returned to activity. I credit this to Heavenly Father and His guidance that assists each of us in our efforts to minister to one another. You are making a difference, even if you are like me and can't always see the good you do. You can still feel the added measure of the Holy Spirit that is left as we strengthen and sustain one another. This brothers and sisters is the most beautiful part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is what He wants both you and me to comprehend. It happens with each text you send, each call you make, each person you see, and each ministering interview you participate in. You are working in the Lord's vineyard by helping His children and that is what the gospel is all about. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.