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Letter postmarked at Esquipulas November 29, 1990

Dear Mom an Dad,

I send my love and prayers to you from Guatemala. I have really been enjoying your letters. Please take care of yourselves.

I have been studying in 2 Nephi 27, 3 Nephi 26, and Ether 3 & 4 this morning. These chapters speak of revelations which we do not have access to yet. It speaks of the sealed portions of the Book of Mormon, and a revelation which exists in which the history of the world from beginning to end is given.

The Lord makes it very clear that we can receive these revelations if: we repent and become clean before the Lord, and exercise faith in Him as Jared did. He says that if we do these things that "I will manifest unto them the things which the Brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations...of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are." (Ether 3:7) Anyway, that is a great promise.

The mission is going very well, as far as my personal progress and testimony. I feel that I'm personally progressing and becoming a better person. At the same time, it is so difficult to see people refuse to accept the truth. It is also very hard to see people who have been baptized break their covenants. We have trials here, and sometimes I wonder if we're really doing much good. Whose fault is it when there aren't lots of baptisms? We're promised that if we repent, exercise faith, bring forth good works, and pray continually without ceasing that we'll be conceded thousands of baptisms (Alma 26:22). I have yet to pray for even an hour without ceasing, and truthfully, I still have much to learn.

I have a great desire to baptize families and see them being sealed in the temple, but I've only baptized a couple of families and all indications I've received say they're inactive.

I read a verse in 2 Nephi 27 that says: "All the nations of the Gentiles and the Jews will be drunken with iniquity and all manner of abominations." And it's the truth.

Even we missionaries have trouble with obedience. As we sit in our meetings and hear of new rules, etc., I hear murmurings and complaints and even rebellious comments, and I wonder how the Lord can stand it. I am not perfect, and I have to repent like the rest. Just the same, I feel very depressed when I realize where we're at. I wonder how many of us are really going to make it. I wonder if I'm going to make it. I like to say I'm doing my best---but is my best enough? This life is a real test, and the Lord has already made it clear only a few are going to pass--only a few are going to become gods.

I used to think I was an active member. I was wrong. Even now, I wonder how active I am. We as a Church have to learn a lesson. That lesson is that, as Joseph Fielding Smith says in Doctrines of Salvation: "Complete obedience brings eternal life...but to be exalted, one must obey the whole law." In another part, he states that members of the Church can go to any kingdom.

One of the things I'm learning is the need to really do it all: Serve a mission, do genealogy work, do work for the dead, accept calls in the Page

Envelope postmarked 20 Dec 1990

Dear Mom,

They say that in two years a person can change a lot. Some missionaries have even been heard to say that when they came home they couldn't even recognize their parents. I don't believe it. I think you'll be the same. PLEASE take care of yourself. I've heard that parents change after kids have left the home--that they just go to RUIN, but I have faith that won't happen to my Mom (big smiley face).

I don't know why I'm saying this. Why do I doubt? I don't know. Maybe you know the answer.

(Turn the page over and there is this charming photo:

Please.....be.....CAREFUL. All that Ben and Jerry's and cantaloupe with ice cream and all that great stuff. Just remember what one wise, old man has said: Don't eat sugar at night.

I love you. Don't be offended. I couldn't find anything else to write on [FAT chance!] Life is so hard (smiley face). Love, Elder Bartholomew

I sent back a card which showed a huge ice-cream sundae on the front which said: "Almost blew my diet on a big, gooey sundae with four scoops of ice cream and a mountain of whipped cream covered with nuts, but I came to my senses.....(turn to inside).....

...and said, 'Hold the nuts!'" Then I wrote a little comfort note: "Of all the nerve! How could you EVER include a letter to your PETITE mother on such gross, vulgar, in-fact obscene, TOTALLY INAPPROPRIATE (especially for a missionary) stationery??!#@#!**@ In order to recover from the shock of this disgraceful insult, I had to make a double batch of lasagne, loaded with extra portions of chopped sirloin, onions, peppers, mushrooms, and of course mounds of Mazarella cheese. (The other batch of it is for the local Elders who would never THINK to send their mothers such abomination!) Now, while I savour the aroma and force myself to eat this salivary seduction and stretch the Mozarella between fork and flavor, I have nothing to say in return but 'EAT YOUR HARD-HEART OUT, KID.....er ELDER! (Likewise, a smiley face.) Love, Mom" Page 2, Dec. 20 edition

He sent two envelopes. The above was in an envelope which said on the outside: "A special message from a loved one far, far away....thank goodness! (When you read this, you'll know why I said that! Smiley face.)" Second envelope's note on back: "Hello, folks! How is you be doin?! Ime nut fergettin meye eenglish nor nothin. In fakt I'm steel abel to wryte reel good! And I've unly bin hear sumthin lyke elevun munths. I feel reel gude. Yessir.