

would be nice for Brother Robert McKay to say a few words to us before delivering this message.

Elder Robert R. McKay

My dear brethren: Now I know what President N. Eldon Tanner meant last Thursday morning when in the little room at the side just before the opening we were discussing the talks, and President McKay looked at me and said, "Well, Robert, what do you think?" And I said, "Whatever you think." I said, "I think I am prepared if you decide at the last minute not to deliver your message." President Tanner touched me on the shoulder and looked at the talk, and he said, "Well, at least you are better off with it than without it."

Brethren, I think there isn't a son among you here who would pass this opportunity in the presence of about 95,000 brethren to tell your father how much you loved him. The question comes to me frequently, as it does to my brothers, "How does it feel to be

the son of a prophet?" How do you answer a question like that? You don't explain it; you live it.

As my father, he has my love and devotion, and I echo the thoughts of my brothers and sisters. As the President of the Church, and as a prophet of our Heavenly Father, he has my obedience as a member of the priesthood, and my sustaining vote.

I can say this, and act as a personal witness, because in all of my years of close association in the home, on the farm, in business, in the Church, there has never been shown to me one action nor one word, even while training a self-willed horse, which would throw any doubt in my mind that he should be and finally did become the representative and prophet of our Heavenly Father. I leave you that personal witness, and I will close that in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Elder Robert R. McKay then read the message prepared for the General Priesthood Meeting by President David O. McKay.)

President David O. McKay

(Read by his son Robert R. McKay)

Brethren of the priesthood, and esteemed fellow workers, my heart is full of gratitude tonight for the privilege of participating in this meeting with you. There is a concentration of power in these priesthood meetings that is inspiring. No one who attends can escape that influence, and the responsibility of giving a message to you is overwhelming. I, therefore, pray for your sympathy, your faith, and prayers that the message given may be divinely directed.

"Beloved associates"

It has always been my nature to enjoy the company of my associates. I love to be with my friends, and the older I grow the more intense becomes my appreciation of fellowship in the brotherhood of Christ, and I sense that tonight more deeply, more sincerely than ever before. As I feel of your spirit, I picture those of you who are gathered in the Assembly Hall, and in the 478 other meetings being held at

this hour across the United States and in Canada. I have nothing but blessing in my heart for you. I like to call you my beloved associates and fellow workers, and that love is akin to the love we have for our families. If we can keep this unity, this confidence, nothing in the world can stop the progress of this work.

Comfort of close relationship with God

The greatest comfort in this life is the assurance of having a close relationship with God, and I believe in the statement that "the greatest battle of life is fought within the silent chambers of your own soul." It has been said that "consciousness of God is the highest achievement in human experience and is the supreme goal of human life. This is true religion. It is a mental, spiritual experience of the highest order." Many of you priesthood members know what that experience is. It is a good thing to sit down

and commune with yourself, to come to an understanding with yourself and decide in that silent moment what your duty is to your family, to your Church, to your country, and what you owe to your fellowmen.

Need for spirituality, meditation, communion

In view of the responsibilities facing this body of priesthood holders and leaders in the Church, especially during these uncertain and crucial times, I should like to emphasize the need for more spirituality, for more meditation and communion with our Father in heaven. I ask that you men of the priesthood—you stake presidents, you bishops, and other leaders in stakes and wards—see to it that a spirit of reverence is maintained in our homes and houses of worship.

Our houses of worship furnish a wonderful opportunity to commune with one's self and to commune with the Lord, especially during the sacrament period. Sunday is a day of worship, which we turn over to him. We may rest assured that he will be there in that house of worship to inspire us if we come in proper attunement to meet him.

We are not prepared to meet him if we bring thoughts regarding business affairs, and especially if we come knowing we have been disloyal to our wives and other members of our families, and bring feelings of hatred, enmity, and jealousy toward our fellowman. Most certainly no individual can hope to come into communion with the Father if that individual has such disloyalty or entertains any such feelings, as they are foreign to worship and are particularly out of tune with the partaking of the sacrament.

Value of meditation

I think we pay too little attention to the value of meditation, a principle of devotion. In our worship there are two elements: One is spiritual communion arising from our own meditation; the other, instruction from others, particularly from those who have authority to guide and instruct us. Of the two, the more profitable introspectively is meditation.

Meditation, spiritual language

Meditation is the language of the soul. It is defined as "a form of private devotion or spiritual exercise, consisting in deep, continued reflection on some religious theme." Meditation is a form of prayer. We can say prayers without having any spiritual response. We can say prayers as the unrighteous king in *Hamlet*, who said: "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to heaven go." (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III, scene 3.)

The poet Robert Burns, contrasting the outward form of worship and the prayer of the soul, said:

"The Power, incens'd, the pageant will desert.

The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;

But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well-pleas'd, the language
of the soul,

And in His Book of Life the inmates
poor enroll."

(Robert Burns, "The Cotter's Saturday Night.")

Sacred door to the presence of the Lord

Meditation is one of the most secret, most sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord. Jesus set the example for us. As soon as he was baptized and received the Father's approval—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17)—Jesus repaired to what is now known as the Mount of Temptation where, during forty days of fasting, he communed with himself and his Father and contemplated the responsibility of his own great mission. One result of this spiritual communion was such strength as enabled him to say to the tempter: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. 4:10.)

Before he gave the beautiful Sermon on the Mount, he was in solitude, in communion. He did the same thing after that busy Sabbath day, when he arose early in the morning after having

been the guest of Peter. Peter undoubtedly found the guest chamber empty, and when he and others sought Jesus, they found him alone. It was on that morning that they said: "All men seek for thee." (Mark 1:37.)

Again, after Jesus had fed the 5,000, he told the Twelve to dismiss the multitude. Then Jesus, the historian says, went to the mountain for solitude; and "when the evening was come, he was there alone." (Matt. 14:23.) Meditation! Prayer!

Meditation at the Lord's Supper

I believe the short period of administering the sacrament is one of the best opportunities we have for such meditation, and there should be nothing during that sacred period to distract our attention from the purpose of that ordinance.

One of the most impressive services I have ever attended was a group of over 800 people to whom the sacrament was administered, and during that administration not a sound could be heard except the ticking of the clock—800 souls, each of whom at least had the opportunity of communion with the Lord! There was no distraction, no music, no singing, no speaking. Each one had an opportunity to search himself introspectively, and to consider his worthiness or unworthiness to partake of the sacrament. His was the privilege of getting closer to his Father in heaven. That is ideal!

More reverence during meditation

I strongly urge that this sacred ordinance be surrounded with more reverence, with perfect order; that each one who comes to the house of God may meditate upon and silently and prayerfully express appreciation for God's goodness. It is up to you bishops to see to it that the sacrament is administered only by boys and young men who are worthy to attend to this sacred ordinance, and that it is done reverently with a full understanding of its significance to them and to the audience. Let the sacrament hour be one experience of the day in which the worshiper tries at least to realize within himself that it is possible for him to commune with his God.

Response to inspiration of the Almighty

Never forget that great events have happened in this Church because of such communion, and because of the responsiveness of the soul to the inspiration of the Almighty. I know it is real! You will find that when these most inspirational moments come to you, you are alone with yourself and your God. They come to you probably when you are facing a great trial, when a wall is across your pathway and it seems that you are facing an insurmountable obstacle, or when your heart is heavy because of some tragedy in your life. I repeat, the greatest comfort that can come to us in this life is to sense the realization of communion with God.

Great testimonies have come in those moments. It is just such an experience as that which came to my father in the north of Scotland when he prayed to God to remove from him a spirit of gloom and despondency that overwhelmed him. After a night of worry and restlessness, he arose at daylight and repaired to a cave on the shore of the North Sea. He had been there before in prayer. There, just as the rays of the morning light began to come over the sea, he poured out his soul to God, as a son would appeal to his father. The answer came: "Testify that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God." The cause of his discouragement flashing upon his mind, he said aloud: "Lord, it is enough!"

Those who knew my father could testify as to his integrity and his honesty. A testimony of that kind has one hundred percent value.

These secret prayers, these conscientious moments in meditation, these yearnings of the soul to reach out to feel the presence of God—such is your privilege and mine!

Reverence, manifestation of spirituality

Inseparable from the acceptance of the existence of God is an attitude of reverence. The greatest manifestation of spirituality is reverence; indeed, reverence is spirituality. Reverence is profound respect mingled with love. It

is a "complex emotion made up of mingled feelings of the soul." Carlyle says it is "the highest of human feelings." If reverence is the highest, then irreverence is the lowest state in which a man can live in the world. Be that as it may, it is nevertheless true that an irreverent man has a crudeness about him that is repellent. He is cynical, often sneering, and always iconoclastic.

Reverence embraces regard, deference, honor, and esteem. Without some degree of it, therefore, there would be no courtesy, no gentility, no consideration of others' feelings or of others' rights. Reverence is the fundamental virtue in religion. It is one of the signs of strength; irreverence, one of the surest indications of weakness. "No man will rise high," says one man, "who jeers at sacred things. The fine loyalties of life must be revered or they will be foresworn in the day of trial."

Your attitude toward the Infinite Presence

Churches are dedicated and set apart as houses of worship. This means that all who enter do so, or at least pretend to do so, with an intent to get nearer the presence of the Lord than they can on the street or amidst the worries of a workaday life. In other words, we go to the Lord's house to meet him and to commune with him in spirit. Such a meeting place, then, should first of all be fitting and appropriate in all respects, whether God is considered as the invited guest, or the worshipers as his guests.

Whether the place of meeting is a humble chapel, or a "poem in architecture" built of white marble and inlaid with precious stones, makes little or no difference in our approach and attitude toward the Infinite Presence. To know that God is there should be sufficient to impel us to conduct ourselves orderly, reverently. Presiding authorities in stake, ward, and quorum meetings, and especially teachers in classes, should make a special effort to maintain better order and more reverence during the hours of worship and study. Less talking behind the pulpit will have a salutary effect upon those who face it. By example

and precept, children should be impressed with the inappropriateness of confusion and disorder in a worshipping congregation. They should be impressed in childhood, and have it emphasized in youth, that it is disrespectful to talk or even to whisper during a sermon, and that it is the height of rudeness, except in an emergency, to leave a worshipping assembly before dismissal.

The language of reverence

Reverence for God's name should be dominant in every home. Profanity should never be expressed in a home in this Church. It is wrong; it is irreverent to take God's name in vain. There is no provocation that will justify it. Let us apply that quality and that virtue of reverence at all times.

If there were more reverence in human hearts, there would be less room for sin and sorrow, and there would be increased capacity for joy and gladness. To make more cherished, more adaptable, more attractive this gem among brilliant virtues is a project worthy of the most united and prayerful efforts of every parent, every officer, and every member of the Church.

My testimony

My soul is stirred with deep emotions when I think of what the gospel has done for this people, and what it will yet do if we will but keep in tune with his Spirit and commandments. I love the gospel and believe in it with all my soul; I know it is the power of God unto salvation. I bear witness that the gospel of Jesus Christ was revealed in its completeness to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and I pray that our young people, and all people everywhere, will be led to know of its truth.

God bless you men of the priesthood, you teachers of youth, you parents, and all good people everywhere. May the ecclesiastical groups of the Church be blessed with the spirit of unity and harmony. May there be banished from their hearts the spirit of enmity, backbiting, and evil speaking, and may they keep in their hearts the truth expressed by Jesus when he said, ". . . if ye are

not one ye are not mine." (D&C 38:27.)

Live for the companionship of the Holy Spirit

I pray we may have the strength so to live that we may merit divine guidance and inspiration; that through worship, meditation, communion, and reverence we may sense the reality of being able to have a close relationship with our Father in heaven. I bear you my testimony that it is real; that we can commune with our Heavenly Father. And if we so live to be

worthy of the companionship of the Holy Spirit, he will guide us unto all truth; he will show us things to come; he will bring all things to our remembrance; he will testify of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and restoration of the gospel. God bless you all for your faith and loyalty, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Paul H. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy will now speak to us.

Elder Paul H. Dunn

Of the First Council of the Seventy

President McKay; my brethren: This is indeed an honor. My soul with yours has been lifted by this stirring message from our President, and I have felt the Spirit of the Lord here. I think, President McKay, it was most fitting that your son Robert had this opportunity to bear his own witness, for I sensed in this great congregation, and I know it carried throughout the Church, a feeling that here was a living testimony of a father-son relationship which in reality is the best of all examples. My soul has been truly fed this night as I have heard your stirring message, and listened to the testimony of your good son.

This is always a solemn occasion, brethren, and it is wonderful to see so many assembled. To those who are not directly involved with us here in person, as usual the Tabernacle is overflowing. It is an honor tonight to be in your presence.

Parental leadership

Earlier in the conference, President McKay, as you will recall, stirred our souls with his profound message concerning our young people, and it caused me to do a great deal of thinking, some soul-searching in my own life; and as I went home last Thursday with his thoughts on my mind I reread a letter that had appeared in the *Deseret News* just a few nights before. I thought it was significant, as it applies

to father-son relationships. May I just share a part of it with you. This is a young navy man writing to an advice column in the paper. He says: "Before I came into the service, I felt I knew just about everything. I was sure my parents no longer needed me, and all that I could think of was the day that I could be on my own. The first time I realized how much my parents cared for me was the day they took me to the train station to see me off. When my father said good-bye to me, he broke down and cried. I have never seen my father cry before, and I shall never forget it as long as I live. I have had a lot of time to think. I never told my father that I loved him. I gave both my parents a hard time when they tried to guide me for my own good. Now I write home every chance I get, and I am trying to make up for the heartaches I must have caused them, and for my failure to be a better son. When my next leave comes up, I am going straight home and really get acquainted with my wonderful parents. I have written this letter in hopes that other thoughtless teen-agers will wake up before it is too late. Thanks for letting me get this off my chest."

Contrast that, if you will, with an experience I had just a few weeks ago as I came through the Los Angeles terminal on my way to Salt Lake City. While waiting for my flight, I was approached