

President Tanner opened this session with the following remarks:

President N. Eldon Tanner

President Spencer W. Kimball, who is en route to Fayette, New York, has asked me to conduct this session.

Brethren, we are assembled in the general priesthood session of the 150th Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit transmission and will reach members of the priesthood gathered in the Salt Palace and in approximately 1,924 locations in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, Australia, the Philippines, Korea, and, for the first time, the Dominican Republic.

We extend our greetings and blessings to all the priesthood members assembled here in the Tabernacle or elsewhere. We commend all members of the priesthood who have made arrangements to participate in this important meeting.

We note that Elders O. Leslie Stone and Rex D. Pinegar preside in the Salt Palace, and Elder Adney Y. Komatsu and Bishop J. Richard Clarke preside at the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of the brethren in outlying areas, we announce that at the general session this morning sisters Dwan J. Young, Virginia B. Cannon, and Michaelene P. Grassli were sustained as the new

general presidency of the Primary Association.

The singing during this session will be furnished by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from the Jordan, Jordan South, Sandy, Midvale, Crescent, Draper, Taylorsville, and Taylorsville West regions under the direction of Norman Wendel with Roy Darley at the organ. I would like to say what a fine-looking group of Aaronic Priesthood we have here tonight!

We shall begin this service by the choir singing "Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning." Following the singing, Elder Loren C. Dunn, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and Executive Administrator of the Australia, New Zealand Area, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang the hymn "Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning."

Elder Loren C. Dunn offered the invocation.

President Tanner

The choir will now favor us with "I Face the World" and "I Am a Mormon Boy," after which we shall be pleased to hear from Elder Marvin J. Ashton, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir rendered the numbers "I Face the World" and "I Am a Mormon Boy."

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

When our prophet, Spencer W. Kimball, and I walked through the admittance door of the Utah State Prison a few days ago, the sound of sliding, electronically controlled cell doors could be heard clanging in the

background. The grating sounds of the steel bars against the concrete floor and walls let me know where I was again. The total situation was familiar to me. I had been in prison many times before (as a visitor).

President Kimball visits prison

It was President Kimball's first visit. Once past the heavily guarded door, we were escorted to Warden Lawrence Morris's office, located near the front of the medium security area. Even after we were safely seated in his office, I was still filled with real anxieties. I hoped conditions would be completely under control with no disturbances possible. There must not be any interference or interruption during the visit of the prophet. I was responsible for this trip, and as we sat there together, this total situation weighed heavily upon me. Past experience had taught me that the behavior of some inmates is unpredictable. Fortunately the able warden had prepared well, and conditions in and around his office were ideally calm and quiet. To my great relief it appeared that the "grapevine" means of communication inside the prison had not learned of the President's coming.

What had attracted President Kimball to the prison? Why was he there? What was his special interest? What was on his mind? Was there a certain inmate he wanted to see? Why should he expose himself to this dangerous environment, when he had mountains of responsibilities needing his attention in his own office?

With this latest prison visit over and having had a few days to reflect on and ponder the situation, I now know that President Spencer W. Kimball went there for many reasons and people. Being at his side and seeing him share himself with these special people will always be one of the choicest experiences of my life. I learned much. I was with a prophet in an unstable environment. My senior companion, if you please, taught me well. As we traveled together to the prison, visited there, and returned in the car, the warmth and wisdom of this mighty man renewed in me a

thrilling appreciation for his greatness.

Leadership traits

Let me share with you, especially you members of the Aaronic Priesthood, some of the leadership traits I witnessed during this tour with President Kimball. As we review and think together, I hope that we can apply these same traits in our lives. We can accomplish more and become stronger individually by following his example.

After a short visit in his office, the warden invited two inmates to come in and meet President Kimball. As they hesitatingly came in, President Kimball stood up, shook their hands, and gave them a warm welcome. Here was a prophet with two prisoners. I watched with keen interest. What would President Kimball say following the greeting? "What are your special jobs out here? Where is your home? Tell me about your family. Are you working on the construction of the new chapel?" These were some of his questions—all of which were free of criticism and embarrassment. Perhaps others would have been inclined to say under these circumstances, "How long is your prison sentence? What was your crime? How long have you been here? Your family can't be very proud of you. You ought to be ashamed wasting your life in jail. Why don't you shape up?"

President Kimball set the example for me and for all of us as he conducted this personal interview, if you please, with skill and sincerity. In a very few minutes, with few, but appropriate, words, he let the two prisoners know he was with them because he cares.

When this short visit with the two prisoners was over, we were to make our way to the prison chapel.

When we were outside again, it was about 10:30 A.M., with the temperature near 40 degrees Fahrenheit. "Would you like to ride or walk the two-block distance?" President Kimball was asked. He responded with, "I would like to walk." Since President Kimball was without a top coat, his personal secretary, D. Arthur Haycock, started to take his off to share with the President. President Kimball said, "No, thank you. You keep it on. If I walk, I won't need it." Just a routine appreciation gesture? Perhaps, some would say. But to me it was evidence of President Kimball's courteous way of life.

As President Kimball walked the distance to the new chapel site with the wardens, prisoners, and a few others of us, I was close enough at hand to hear his constant questions and concerns. He listened intently as answers were given and situations of interest pointed out. I was impressed again with his concern for people, their confinement and treatment.

Once within the walls of the chapel under construction, he took time to shake hands with workers, some of whom were prisoners, and with other visitors who were now aware of his presence. He seemed to take time for everyone. People never seemed to be a bother. I saw a number of workers jump down from scaffolds to shake his hand. In some cases I saw his arm go out to them before they could clean mortar and dirt from their fingers. They and leaders from other churches heard him say, "This interdenominational worship facility will help prisoners find their way back." He also added, "The Church and our people are happy to be participants in any and all community projects that are worthy." Once again I was impressed with his wholesome relationship with all people.

Respect and dignity

The highlight of the chapel inspection tour and the prison visit in general, it seemed to me, came when two inmates were invited to stand at the side of the prophet in the minimum security reception area for picture taking. As the President welcomed them forward and later put his arms around them, he said, "It is an honor for me to have my picture taken with you." The two prisoners were obviously touched by his comment. Others of us again saw the greatness and stature of the one we love so much. Respect and human dignity were witnessed. Again he taught well that all people are entitled to be treated as human beings, wherever they are found and regardless of where they have been. President Kimball, it was obvious, is a foe of sin but a friend of the sinner. The scripture found in D&C 50:26 came forcefully to my mind: "He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all."

As we were finishing our visit, one inmate rushed up to me and said, "I didn't get a chance to shake President Kimball's hand. Would you please tell him I love him?" Another prisoner responded with, "I'm not a Mormon, but he's got to be a special guy." Some day I hope that prisoner finds out what a special guy President Kimball really is.

As we walked back to the car to return to Salt Lake City, this choice experience with the prophet brought to mind the story of Parley P. Pratt when he and the Prophet Joseph Smith were together in a prison in Richmond, Missouri. The situation was much different, but the same witness of true dignity and majesty was enjoyed. (See Parley P. Pratt,

Jr., ed., *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1938, pp. 193-200, 210-215, 230-240.) I, too, saw true majesty when a prison visitor performed and spoke under God's authority and shared himself fearlessly.

All men basically good

Before we drove away from the prison compound, President Kimball viewed the maximum security area. When he looked at the extra fences, towers, guards, and isolated location, he commented on how unfortunate it is when men can't be given freedom, responsibilities, and the joys of work. "All men are basically good. Some just lose their way and need to be led back into proper paths and habits," he said.

President Kimball asked the warden how the Church's family home evening program was doing at the prison. (President Kimball had been instrumental in its implementation years ago.) When told it was most successful, he was very pleased. The warden informed him that each week dozens of families continue to go to the prison on Monday evenings to provide family experiences for those qualified to be involved. These good people serve as families for inmates who don't have them. Their relationship, which very often goes on after prisoners are released, provides an excellent anchor in rehabilitation. The strength of the family is available on a regular basis. President Kimball has long been a believer that every person is entitled to family relationships, and when told that some inmates have their first real family experiences through this program, he was delighted.

During the tour of the new chapel and the walk between the buildings, there were always a number of young and old nearby to assist and respond to President Kimball's ques-

tions. After hearing President Kimball refer to me a number of times as "Marv" as we walked together, one of the younger set was impressed to say, "Isn't it kind of neat to have President Kimball call you 'Marv'?" I responded with, "Yes, it is, and it is especially neat to know that President Spencer W. Kimball is a prophet of God." I had again seen him in action.

In the car returning to Salt Lake City, President Kimball thanked us time and again for taking him to the prison. He felt good about the response of those with whom he had associated. "I hope you will make it possible for me to go back again," he suggested. "Those people need our love and constant encouragement."

Ten major points

What can we as priesthood members and leaders learn from President Kimball's trip to the prison? Much, I hope. Could I just quickly mention ten major points I observed? I think they can help us all be and do better if we will but follow his example.

1. He demonstrated how to interview "inactives," if you please, with friendly and sincere comments. His questions were free of embarrassment, ridicule, and criticism. How do you approach those who haven't been seen for a while and you want to reactivate?

2. He made others feel comfortable in his presence. He never talked down to anyone. He was always "one with" and not "one apart." Do we know how to make our associates feel comfortable during our visits, or are they allowed to feel we are just trying to improve our percentages?

3. He listened intently to the comments of his associates. Those about him knew they had his atten-

tion and his interest. I thought of the scripture found in Luke 2:46-47: "After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

"And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." In this case perhaps we are within our rights to paraphrase this quotation a little and say, "After a few minutes they found him in the prison, sitting in the midst of the prisoners, both hearing them and asking them questions.

"And all that heard him were astonished at his capacity to ask and listen."

4. He was courteous. He knows well the fifth point of the Boy Scout Law and has undoubtedly been practicing it for more than seventy-five years.

5. He treated every person he met like a friend. He seemed to classify all he met into one category—basically good. Do you have the skill and capacity to be friendly to others when, in your limited vision, they may not seem to deserve it?

6. He expressed appreciation to everyone. No favor or assistance was ever taken for granted. "And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things" (D&C 59:21). Some who escape our love and quorum associations are starving for a word of encouragement and appreciation.

7. He exhibited a dignity and poise that was most impressive. Governor Scott M. Matheson of the State of Utah was on hand during President Kimball's tour. As I walked, talked, and visited with both men, I was greatly impressed with the fact that the governor received the same treatment from President Kimball as did the inmates. Do you have the capacity to love the nonattender as

much as you do the 100-percent attender?

8. He despises sin, but he loves the sinner. When I saw his arms go around the shoulders of the prisoners, I was touched. Are we beneath or above this type of behavior?

9. He is available to all God's children. He made prisoners feel they were doing him a favor to let him have his picture taken with them. As I watched him in his personal associations, never once did I see him avoid a situation or an individual. When they wanted to shake his hand or have a picture, there was never "I'm tired" or "not now."

10. He took long and meaningful strides in the direction of all who were inclined to hesitate. He seems determined to bring those on the edges back. Do we have the same kind of continuing approach with those who are temporarily sidelined?

Heartwarming example

I am glad the time and conditions were right for President Kimball to visit his friends in prison and that I could be with him. One prisoner who stood by his side for the picture is serving time for theft and burglary; the other is there for manslaughter. One was a member, one a nonmember. His greetings to them, "It is an honor for me to have my picture taken with you," continues to ring in my ears. "I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matt. 25:36). Once again we have the heartwarming example of seeing how widely our President can spread his arms in love. He makes room for all of us. He will not give up on anyone.

It is my hope and prayer that we will have the courage in our lives, homes, and quorums to lift, lead, and love in the way I saw demon-

strated by a prophet in prison. This I humbly ask in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Marvin J. Ashton, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us.

Elder Paul H. Dunn

“Time-out”

Like many of you, I really enjoy sports. Sports often teach great lessons. The other night while I was watching an NCAA championship basketball game, I heard one of the players call out that familiar word, “time!” The team ran to the sidelines to receive some instructions from the man who could give them some help—the coach. And he did.

Isn't it interesting that, generally speaking, a team calls time-out when they're in trouble, when they need to regroup? I recall many times in my career when we'd call “time,” and the catcher or the pitching coach or the manager would come to the mound and give me some needed instructions or encouragement. Sometimes the language was a little different, but the counsel was most always appreciated, sometimes even humorous.

I recall in one of my first professional games many years ago, in the very first inning the first three hitters hit safely, all of them on the first pitch. Out of the dugout came the pitching coach. The catcher joined him, and the three of us assembled on the mound.

The pitching coach turned to my catcher and said, “What in the world has Paul got on the ball anyway?”

The catcher said, “I don't know. I haven't seen it yet.”

Well, what's that got to do with you and me? Life, you know, is a

We shall now hear from Elder Paul H. Dunn, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder A. Theodore Tuttle, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and president of the Provo Temple.

little like “the big game.” There are times when you and I need to call time-out. Have you ever had the experience of loading the bases while continuing to throw high and wide? Have you experienced “fourth down and one” on the goal line with ten seconds left? Have you watched your twenty-point lead dwindle to two? Or in life's game do you have a challenge controlling your temper or language? Is that personal weakness you've noticed still not under control? Are school subjects your nemesis? Are your finances ready to pull you under? Is your family solidarity sitting on shifting sand? And most important of all, are you trying to do it alone? Or have you been smart enough to call time-out to ask the coach for help?

Prayer

You know, it doesn't always have to be a formal prayer, my young brethren. You can do it as you drive in the car, on a date, in the privacy of your room, or on the playing field.

I'm reminded of something I read just the other day. Let me share it with you. It seems that a small boy was trying to lift a heavy stone, but couldn't budge it. His father, watching very interestedly, said, “Are you sure you're using all of your strength?”

“Yes, I am!” the boy cried.