

## President Spencer W. Kimball

My dear brothers and sisters, it is a deeply moving and wonderful experience to stand here today where the Prophet Joseph Smith stood 150 years ago. We came here last night by jet airplane from Salt Lake City. We made the trip in a matter of a half-dozen hours, flying eastward over the broad expanse of this beautiful land where long ago our forebears painfully traveled westward in search of a place where they could be free of persecution and could worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience.

We are here, this lovely Easter morning, in the reconstructed farmhouse of Peter Whitmer, Sr. It has been faithfully restored for this occasion to bring to us anew the recollection of the all-important and significant event which occurred here a century and a half ago. In the years to come, it will be visited by good people from over the earth who will wish to stand where I stand today.

### Organization of the Church

In this very location on April 6, 1830, there assembled a small group to formally organize The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They were believers in the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith that in a grove of trees not many miles from here, on a spring day in the year 1820, he beheld in vision God the Eternal Father and his Son, the resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ. There followed in the intervening years visitations of other resurrected heavenly beings. From the soil of Cumorah's Hill, a few miles to the west of here, Joseph obtained from the angel Moroni the records of a people who anciently inhabited this land; and,

through the gift and power of God, he translated that record, now known as the Book of Mormon. A substantial part of that work of translation was accomplished in this Whitmer home.

On that historic Tuesday of April 6, 1830, one and a half centuries ago, six men from those assembled in this house organized the Church as a religious society. Three of the descendants of those men are here with us today—Sister Lorena Horner Normandeau, a great-granddaughter of Joseph Smith; Eldred G. Smith, a second great-grandson of Hyrum Smith; and Melvin Thomas Smith, a great-grandson of Samuel Harrison Smith.

### Sure and glorious future

Standing here today we review in our minds the mighty faith and works of those who, from this humble beginning, gave so much to help move the Church to its present wondrous stature; and more importantly, we behold through the eye of faith a vision of its sure and glorious future.

Now, my brothers and sisters, with the future before us, and sensing deeply the responsibilities and divine mission of the restored Church on this sacred occasion, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declare to the world a proclamation. We have felt it appropriate to issue this statement from here, where the Church began. Accordingly, I shall ask Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, to speak in my behalf and in behalf of my brethren, to read this proclamation to you and to the world.

## Proclamation

*From the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 6, 1980*

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized 150 years ago today. On this sesquicentennial anniversary we issue to the world a proclamation concerning its progress, its doctrine, its mission, and its message.

On April 6, 1830, a small group assembled in the farmhouse of Peter Whitmer in Fayette Township in the state of New York. Six men participated in the formal organization procedures, with Joseph Smith as their leader. From that modest beginning in a rural area, this work has grown consistently and broadly, as men and women in many lands have embraced the doctrine and entered the waters of baptism. There are now almost four and a half million living members, and the Church is stronger and growing more rapidly than at any time in its history. Congregations of Latter-day Saints are found throughout North, Central, and South America; in the nations of Europe; in Asia; in Africa; in Australia and the islands of the South Pacific; and in other areas of the world. The gospel restored through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith is presently taught in forty-six languages and in eighty-one nations. From that small meeting held in a farmhouse a century and a half ago, the Church has grown until today it includes nearly twelve thousand organized congregations.

We testify that this restored gospel was introduced into the world by the marvelous appearance of God the Eternal Father and his Son, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. That most glorious manifestation marked the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise of Peter, who prophesied of "the times of restitution of all things,

which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," this in preparation for the coming of the Lord to reign personally upon the earth (Acts 3:21).

We solemnly affirm that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in fact a restoration of the Church established by the Son of God, when in mortality he organized his work upon the earth; that it carries his sacred name, even the name of Jesus Christ; that it is built upon a foundation of Apostles and prophets, he being the chief cornerstone; that its priesthood, in both the Aaronic and Melchizedek orders, was restored under the hands of those who held it anciently: John the Baptist, in the case of the Aaronic; and Peter, James, and John in the case of the Melchizedek.

We declare that the Book of Mormon was brought forth by the gift and power of God and that it stands beside the Bible as another witness of Jesus the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind. Together they testify of his divine sonship.

We give our witness that the doctrines and practices of the Church encompass salvation and exaltation not only for those who are living, but also for the dead, and that in sacred temples built for this purpose a great vicarious work is going forward in behalf of those who have died, so that all men and women of all generations may become the beneficiaries of the saving ordinances of the gospel of the Master. This great, selfless labor is one of the distinguishing features of this restored Church of Jesus Christ.

We affirm the sanctity of the family as a divine creation and declare that God our Eternal Father will hold parents accountable to rear their children in light and truth, teaching

them "to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:28). We teach that the most sacred of all relationships, those family associations of husbands and wives and parents and children, may be continued eternally when marriage is solemnized under the authority of the holy priesthood exercised in temples dedicated for these divinely authorized purposes.

We bear witness that all men and women are sons and daughters of God, each accountable to him; that our lives here on earth are part of an eternal plan; that death is not the end, but rather a transition from this to another sphere of purposeful activity made possible through the Atonement of the Redeemer of the world; and that we shall there have the opportunity of working and growing toward perfection.

We testify that the spirit of prophecy and revelation is among us. "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Articles of Faith 1:9). The heavens are not sealed; God continues to speak to his children through a prophet empowered to declare his word, now as he did anciently.

The mission of the Church today, as it has been from the beginning, is to teach the gospel of Christ to all the world in obedience to the commandment given by the Savior prior to his ascension and repeated in modern revelation: "Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, acting in the authority which I have given you, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (D&C 68:8).

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord revealed these words of solemn warning: "Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are

upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

"For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.

"And the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed.

"And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days" (D&C 1:1-4).

It is our obligation, therefore, to teach faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to plead with the people of the earth for individual repentance, to administer the sacred ordinances of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost—all of this under the authority of the priesthood of God.

It is our responsibility to espouse and follow an inspired program of instruction and activity, and to build and maintain appropriate facilities for the accomplishment of this, that all who will hear and accept may grow in understanding of doctrine and develop in principles of Christian service to their fellowmen.

As we stand today on the summit of 150 years of progress, we contemplate humbly and gratefully the sacrifices of those who have gone before us, many of whom gave their lives in testimony of this truth. We are thankful for their faith, for their example, for their mighty labors and willing consecrations for this cause which they considered more precious than life itself. They have passed to us a remarkable heritage. We are resolved to build on that heritage for the blessing and benefit of those who follow, who will constitute ever enlarging numbers of faithful men and

women throughout the earth.

This is God's work. It is his kingdom we are building. Anciently the prophet Daniel spoke of it as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which was to roll forth to fill the whole earth (see Dan. 2:31-45). We invite the honest in heart everywhere to listen to the teachings of our missionaries who are sent forth as messengers of eternal truth, to study and learn, and to ask God, our Eternal Father, in the name of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, if these things are true.

"And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moro. 10:4-5).

We call upon all men and women to forsake evil and turn to God; to work together to build that brotherhood which must be recognized when we truly come to know that God is our Father and we are his children; and to worship him and his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind. In the authority of the Holy Priesthood in us vested, we bless the seekers of truth wherever they may be and invoke the favor of the Almighty upon all men and nations whose God is the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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Following Elder Hinckley's reading of the proclamation, the Fayette Branch choir sang the hymn "The Morning Breaks; the Shadows Flee" without announcement.

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## President Spencer W. Kimball

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am grateful for this opportunity. It was a thrilling experience to speak to you a few minutes ago from the Peter Whitmer farm home where the Church was organized. It is now an inspiring experience to be in this lovely chapel in Fayette, Seneca County, New York, because it represents something of the marvelous progress made by the Church during the 150 years of its history.

### "He is risen"

My brothers and sisters, today we not only celebrate the Sesquicentennial of the organization of the Church, but also the greatest event in human history since the birth of Christ on this day 1,980 years ago. Today is Easter Sunday.

Immediately following the semi-annual conference last October, Sister Kimball and I accompanied

President and Sister N. Eldon Tanner and others to the Holy Land for the dedication of the Orson Hyde Memorial Gardens on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. During the few days we were there, we retraced the footsteps of Jesus.

We saw Bethlehem and Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, and the River Jordan. We visited the Mount of Transfiguration and Jacob's Well, the Garden of Gethsemane and Golgotha. We sat and meditated in the empty tomb. And then we walked out of the tomb into the sunlit garden where early in the morning the angels spoke to the two Marys and said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen" (Luke 24:5-6).

That is my witness to all within the sound of my voice. He is risen! He lived. He died. He was resurrected—the Son of God, who opened the door of immortality to all men