

of faith and perseverance is an inspiration to all.

We welcome all assembled in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on Temple Square in this, the second session, of the 151st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We also welcome the many members and friends of the Church tuned to these proceedings by radio, television, and direct wire. There is an overflow congregation in the Salt Palace, where Elders J. Thomas Fyans and W. Grant Bangerter preside.

We are pleased to acknowledge especially our guests who are present this afternoon, along with general and local Church leaders and members from many parts of the world.

We express our appreciation to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations for their cooperation in making these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

The music for this afternoon will be provided by a Primary children's choir from the Ogden Cliffview, Mt. Lewis, and Ben Lomond regions. This choir is under the direction of Vanja Y. Watkins with Roy Darley at the organ. To begin this session, the choir sang "I Know My Father Lives" and "I Am a Child of God."

The choir will now sing "I Think When I Read That Sweet Story" and "I Feel My Savior's Love."

The invocation will be offered by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

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### President Romney

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### President Romney

Elder Thomas S. Monson, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our first speaker. He will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

## Elder Thomas S. Monson

Not long ago a visitor asked, "What is there to see while I am in Salt Lake City?" Instinctively I suggested a tour of Temple Square, a drive to the nearby canyons, a visit to the Bingham copper mine, and perhaps a swim in the Great Salt Lake. A fear of being misunderstood kept me

from expressing the thought, "Have you considered spending an hour or two at one of our cemeteries?" I never did reveal to him that wherever I travel I try to pay a visit to the town cemetery. It is a time of contemplation, of reflection on the meaning of life and the inevitability of death.

### Cemeteries: small, large, and a battlefield

In the small cemetery in the equally small town of Santa Clara, Utah, I remember the preponderance of Swiss names which adorn the weathered tombstones. Many of those persons left home and family in verdant Switzerland and, in response to the call, "Come to Zion," settled the communities where they now "rest in peace." They endured spring floods, summer droughts, scant harvests, and back-breaking labors. They left a legacy of sacrifice.

The largest cemeteries, and in many respects those which evoke the most tender emotions, are honored as the resting places of men who died in the caldron of conflict known as war while wearing the uniform of their country. One reflects on shattered dreams, unfulfilled hopes, grief-filled hearts, and lives cut short by the sharp scythe of war.

Acres of neat, white crosses in the cities of France and Belgium accentuate the terrible toll of World War I. Verdun, France, is—in reality—a gigantic cemetery. Each spring, as farmers till the earth, they uncover a helmet here, a gun barrel there—grim reminders of the millions of men who literally soaked the soil with the blood of their lives.

A tour of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and other battlefields of the American Civil War marks that conflict, where brother fought against brother. Some families lost farms, others possessions. One family lost all. Let me share with you that memorable letter which President Abraham Lincoln wrote to Mrs. Lydia Bixby:

"Dear Madam:

"I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which

should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours, to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

"Yours very sincerely and respectfully, Abraham Lincoln." (21 Nov. 1864; quoted in *Selections from the Letters, Speeches, and State Papers of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Ida M. Tarbell, Boston: Ginn and Company, 1911, p. 109.)

### Sullivan brothers: "greater love hath no man"

A walk through Punchbowl Cemetery in Honolulu or the Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Manila reminds one that not all who died in World War II are buried in quiet fields of green. Many slipped beneath the waves of the oceans on which they sailed and on which they died.

Among the thousands of servicemen killed in the attack on Pearl Harbor was a sailor by the name of William Ball, from Fredericksburg, Iowa. What distinguished him from so many others who died on that day in 1941 was not any special act of heroism, but the tragic chain of events his death set in motion at home.

When William's boyhood buddies, the five Sullivan brothers from the nearby town of Waterloo, received word of his death, they marched out together to enlist in the navy. The Sullivans, who wished to avenge their friend, insisted that they remain together, and the navy granted their wish. On November 14, 1942, the cruiser on which the brothers served, the U.S.S. *Juneau*, was hit and sunk in a battle off Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.

Almost two months went by before Mrs. Thomas Sullivan received the news, which arrived not by the usual telegram, but by special envoy: all five of her sons were reported missing in action in the South Pacific and presumed dead. Their bodies were never recovered.

One sentence only, spoken by one person only, provides a fitting epitaph: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13.)

### **Life and teachings of devoted teacher not buried in grave**

Frequently the profound influence one life has on the lives of others is never spoken and, occasionally, little known. Such was the experience of a teacher of girls, even twelve-year-olds in the Beehive class of Mutual. She had no children of her own, though she and her husband dearly longed for children. Her love was expressed through the devotion to her special girls as she taught them eternal truths and lessons of life. Then came illness, followed by death. She was but twenty-seven.

Each year, on Memorial Day, her girls made a pilgrimage of prayer to the graveside of their teacher. First there were seven, then four, then two, and eventually just one, who continued the annual visit, always placing on the grave a bouquet of irises—a symbol of heartfelt gratitude. This year marked her twenty-fifth visit to the resting place of her teacher. Today she herself is a teacher of girls. Little wonder she is so successful. She mirrors the reflection of the teacher from whom came her inspiration. The life that teacher lived, the lessons that teacher taught, are not buried beneath the headstone which marks her grave, but live on in the personalities she helped to shape and the lives she so selflessly enriched. One is reminded of another master teacher, even the Lord. Once, with His finger, He wrote in the

sand a message. (See John 8:6.) The winds of time erased forever the words He wrote, but not the life He lived.

"All that we can know about those we have loved and lost," wrote Thornton Wilder, "is that they would wish us to remember them with a more intensified realization of their reality. . . . The highest tribute to the dead is not grief but gratitude."

### **Keller boys taught eternal truths**

Two years ago, in beautiful Heber Valley just east of Salt Lake City, a loving mother and devoted father returned to that personal haven called home to discover that their three eldest sons lay dead. The night was bitter cold, and the fierce wind swept the falling snow, which covered the chimney, releasing deadly carbon monoxide fumes throughout the house.

The joint funeral service for the Keller boys was one of the most touching experiences of my life. The residents of the community had placed aside their daily tasks, children were excused from school, and all thronged to the chapel to express their deep feelings of condolence. So long as time and memory endure, I shall remember the scene of three shiny caskets, followed by grief-stricken parents and grandparents making their way to the front of the building.

The first speaker was the wrestling coach of the local high school. He paid tribute to Louis, the oldest boy. With an emotion-filled voice, and choking back the tears, he told how Louis was not necessarily the most gifted wrestler on the team, but added, "No one tried harder. What he lacked in athletic skill he made up with a determined heart."

Then a youth leader spoke of Travis. He told how Travis had excelled in Scouting, in Aaronic Priesthood work, and was such a sterling example to his friends.

Finally, a distinguished appearing

and obviously competent elementary school teacher told of Jason, the youngest of the three. She described him as quiet, even shy. Then, without embarrassment, she told how Jason had, in the scrawled penmanship of a boy, sent to her the sweetest and most welcome letter she had ever received. Its message was brief—just three words: "I love you." She could barely complete her talk, so deep-felt were her emotions.

Through the tears and the sorrow of that special day, I observed eternal lessons that had been taught by those boys whose lives were honored and whose mortal missions concluded.

A coach expressed the determination to look beyond athletic prowess and into the heart of each boy. A youth leader made a solemn vow that every boy and girl would have the benefit which the program of the Church provided. An elementary school teacher looked at the small children, classmates of Jason. She said nothing, but her eyes revealed the determination of her soul. The message was unmistakably clear: "I will love each child. Each boy, each girl will be guided in the search for truth, in the development of talent, and be introduced to the wonderful world of service."

And the audience, including Elders Marvin J. Ashton and Thomas S. Monson, will never again be the same. All will strive toward that perfection spoken of by the Master. Our inspiration? The lives of the boys who now rest from care and sorrow, and the fortitude of parents who trust in the Lord with all their hearts, who lean not to their own understanding, and who in all their ways acknowledge Him, knowing that He will direct their paths. (See Prov. 3:5-6.)

Let me share with you a portion of a letter sent to me by the noble mother of these three sons. It was written soon after their passing.

"We do have days and nights that right now seem so overwhelming. The

change in our home life has been so drastic. With almost half our family gone now, the cooking, washing, and even shopping are different. We miss the noise and clutter, the teasing and playing together. Such are gone. Sunday is so quiet. We miss seeing the sacrament blessed and passed by our sons. Sunday was truly our family together day. We ponder the thought: no missions, no weddings, no grandchildren. We would not ask for their return, but we could not say we would ever have willingly given them up. We have returned to our Church duties and our family responsibilities. Our desire is to so live that the Keller family will be a forever family."

### **What happens to the spirit when we die?**

To the Kellers, the Sullivans, and indeed to all who have loved and lost, let me share with you the conviction of my soul, the testimony of my heart, and the actual experiences of my life.

We know each one lived in the spirit world with Heavenly Father. We understand we have come to earth to learn, to live, to progress in our eternal journey toward perfection. Some remain on earth but for a moment, while others live long upon the land. The measure is not how long we live, but rather how well we live. Then come death and the beginning of a new chapter of life. Where does that chapter lead?

Many years ago I stood by the bedside of a young man, the father of two children, as he hovered between life and the great beyond. He took my hand in his, looked into my eyes and pleadingly asked, "Bishop, I know I am about to die. Tell me what happens to my spirit when I die."

I prayed for heavenly guidance before attempting to respond. My attention was directed to the Book of Mormon, which rested on the table beside his bed. I held the book in my hand, and, as I stand before you here

today, that book opened to the fortieth chapter of Alma. I began to read aloud:

"Now my son, here is somewhat more I would say unto thee; for I perceive that thy mind is worried concerning the resurrection of the dead. . . .

"Now, concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection—Behold, it has been made known unto me by an angel, that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body . . . are taken home to that God who gave them life.

"And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow." (Alma 40:1, 11-12.)

My young friend closed his eyes, expressed a sincere thank-you, and silently slipped away to that paradise about which we had spoken.

### **Resurrection: peace that surpasses understanding**

Then comes that glorious day of resurrection, when spirit and body will be reunited, never again to be separated. "I am the resurrection, and the life," said the Christ to the grieving Martha. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:25-26.)

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27.)

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2-3.)

This transcendent promise became a reality when Mary and the other Mary approached the garden tomb—that cemetery which had but one occupant. Let Luke, the physician, describe their experience:

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre. . . .

"And they found the stone rolled away. . . .

". . . they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

". . . as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

"And . . . said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:1-5.)

"He is not here: for he is risen." (Matt. 28:6.)

This is the clarion call of Christendom. The reality of the resurrection provides to one and all the peace that surpasses understanding. (See Philip. 4:7.) It comforts those whose loved ones lie in Flanders fields, who perished in the depths of the sea or rest in tiny Santa Clara or peaceful Heber Valley. It is a universal truth.

As the least of His disciples, I declare my personal witness that death has been conquered, victory over the tomb has been won. May the words made sacred by Him who fulfilled them become actual knowledge to all. Remember them. Cherish them. Honor them. *He is risen*. Such is my fervent prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Romney**

Elder Thomas S. Monson, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Robert D. Hales, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Elder Adney Y. Komatsu, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.