

dencies, and others responsible for operating welfare production projects.

President Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

President Romney opened the meeting with the following remarks:

#### **President Marion G. Romney**

Dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this general welfare services meeting, which has been especially prepared to assist the local leaders in discharging their heavy responsibilities in administering the welfare program.

President Spencer W. Kimball has asked me to conduct this session. His doctors have recommended that he not attend this session and that he watch these proceedings on television. We are happy to report that President Kimball's condition is much improved, and we hope and pray that he will soon be able to return to his normal schedule of duties.

We urge you to take notes during these sessions and, when you return to

your stakes and wards, to pass on what you learn here to your co-workers who have welfare responsibilities.

Under the direction of Donald Ripplinger with Roy Darley at the organ, we shall begin this meeting by singing hymn no. 73, "Improve the Shining Moments." The invocation will be offered by Sister Marian R. Boyer, first counselor in the general Relief Society presidency.

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The congregation sang "Improve the Shining Moments."

The invocation was given by Marian R. Boyer.

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#### **President Romney**

Bishop J. Richard Clarke, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will be our first speaker, and he will be followed by Sister Barbara B. Smith, general president of the Relief Society.

## **Bishop J. Richard Clarke**

#### **Welfare Services: to perfect the Saints**

Brothers and sisters: Rikki Pace, the fifteen-year-old daughter of Glenn Pace, our new managing director of the Welfare Department, was overheard in a conversation with a school friend. It went something like this:

"Where does your dad work?"

"At the Church Office Building."

"Where's the Church Office Building?"

"You know, that tall building by the Temple."

"What does he do?"

"He's in charge of the Welfare Department."

"What's the Welfare Department?"

Well, after several attempts to explain, it didn't appear as if any big impressions had been made. So, with one final attempt to put the subject to rest, Rikki said:

"Let me put it this way: between now and the Millennium if a member of the Church starves to death, it's all my dad's fault."

There are many perceptions of Welfare Services. I suppose most people perceive of welfare as farms,

canneries, bishops' storehouses, and Desert Industries. Welfare Services is essential to that part of the central mission of the Church, which is: to perfect the Saints. Welfare Services is the gospel in action for individual members. It is not just for group or institutional involvement. Salvation comes to us on an individual basis—each must climb the ladder independently to ascend to the level of the Master. If we are to achieve perfection, we must emulate the works of Jesus as well as his words. The Apostle Peter instructed those who would be disciples of Christ to be "partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. 1:4-7.) He told them, "For even hereunto were ye called: . . . that ye should follow his steps." (1 Pet. 2:21.)

### Walking in His steps

In 1897 Dr. Charles Sheldon, a young minister in Topeka, Kansas, wrote a book which he titled *In His Steps*. It was a novel based upon an experiment he tried. He disguised himself as an unemployed printer and tramped the streets of Topeka. He was shocked at his treatment by this "Christian" community. In his novel, a Christian minister presents his congregation with this interesting challenge:

"I want volunteers . . . who will pledge themselves, earnestly and honestly for an entire year, not to do anything without first asking the question, 'What would Jesus do?' . . . Our aim will be to act just as He would if He [were] in our places, regardless of immediate results. In other words, we propose to follow Jesus' steps as closely and as literally as we believe He taught His disciples to do." (Charles M. Sheldon, *In His Steps*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1935, pp. 15-16.)

The book describes the fascinating experience of those who accepted the challenge. I have been intrigued by the experiment and

wonder, if it were conducted today among the Latter-day Saints, how we would measure up. As latter-day Christians, we know that the "royal law" (James 2:8) of love in action is to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees." (D&C 81:5.) Do we catch the significance of this thought? We demonstrate the depth of our love for the Savior when we care enough to seek out the suffering among us and attend to their needs.

### Giving at the right moment

The philosopher William George Jordan has identified "four great hungers of life—body-hunger, mind-hunger, heart-hunger, and soul-hunger. They are all real; all need recognition, all need feeding." (William George Jordan, *The Crown of Individuality*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1909, p. 63.)

1. Body-hunger is our most conscious biological need. It is difficult to be spiritually strong when temporally deficient.

2. Mind-hunger is a craving for intellectual food, for education, and for personal development.

3. Heart-hunger is to be lonely, to have low self-esteem, to be misunderstood, to crave companionship, sympathy, and appreciation. However, we find that as we seek to satisfy the heart-hunger of our neighbor, we reduce our own.

4. Soul-hunger is the burning desire to know eternal truth. It is the yearning of the spirit to commune with God. (See Jordan, pp. 63-75.)

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ provides the solution to all the hungers of life. Jesus said: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John 6:35.) We would all like to have the Savior's capacity to assuage the hungers of the world; but let us not forget that there are many simple ways by

which we can walk in His steps. Let us remember that in giving of ourselves, it is less a question of giving a lot than of giving at the right moment.

A noted columnist, Erma Bombeck, described an experience which reminds us that little things can mean a lot. She recounted a frustrating morning of numerous phone calls and interrupting conversations before leaving for the airport.

And then she said, "[At last] there were thirty whole beautiful minutes before my plane took off—time for me to be alone with my own thoughts, to open a book and let my mind wander. A voice next to me belonging to an elderly woman said, 'I'll bet it's cold in Chicago.'

"Stone-faced, I answered, 'It's likely.'

"I haven't been to Chicago in nearly three years,' she persisted. 'My son lives there.'

"That's nice,' I said, my eyes intent on the printed page of the book.

"My husband's body is on this plane. We've been married for fifty-three years. I don't drive, you know, and when he died a nun drove me from the hospital. We aren't even Catholic. The funeral director let me come to the airport with him.'

Erma said, "I don't think I have ever detested myself more than I did at that moment. Another human being was screaming to be heard and in desperation had turned to a cold stranger who was more interested in a novel than in the real-life drama at her elbow.

"All she needed was a listener—no advice, wisdom, experience, money, assistance, expertise or even compassion—but just a minute or two to listen. . . .

"She talked numbly and steadily until we boarded the plane, [and] then found her seat in another section. As I hung up my coat, I heard her plaintive voice say to her seat companion, 'I'll bet it's cold in Chicago.'

"I prayed, 'Please, God, let her listen.''" (Erma Bombeck, "Are You Listening?" *If Life Is a Bowl of Cherries—What Am I Doing in the Pits?*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1978, pp. 197-98.)

### Art of awareness

How many times have we observed a benevolent act performed by someone and asked ourselves, "Why didn't I think of that?" Those who do the deeds we would have liked to do seem to have mastered the art of awareness. They have formed the habit of being sensitive to the needs of others before they think of themselves. How swiftly opportunity slips away, and we are left with another unfulfilled good intention. If only our acts of kindness could equal the righteous desires of our hearts.

Striking a blow at our propensity to delay our acting as we know we should, the poet John Drinkwater penned his poem, "A Prayer," which I quote in part:

*We know the paths wherein our feet  
should press,  
Across our hearts are written Thy  
decrees.*

*Yet now, O Lord, be merciful to bless  
With more than these.*

*Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,  
Grant us the strength to labour as we  
know,  
Grant us the purpose, ribbed and  
edged with steel,  
To strike the blow.*

*Knowledge we ask not—knowledge  
Thou hast lent;  
But Lord, the will—there lies our bitter  
need.*

*Give us to build above the deep intent  
The deed, the deed.*

(In *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. James Dalton Morrison, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1948, p. 418.)

### Heroic acts done quietly

When I think of performing deeds of kindness, I immediately think of bishops and Relief Society presidents. Relatively few people know of the many hours they selflessly spend in serving members of their wards. They truly translate principles into deeds.

To illustrate, I quote this heart-warming pioneer account:

"Many years ago in a small town in the southern part of the state of Utah, my great grandmother was called to be the president of the Relief Society. During this period of our Church's history there existed a very bitter and antagonistic spirit between the Mormons and the Gentiles.

"In my great grandmother's ward one of the young sisters married a gentle boy. This of course did not please either the Mormons or the Gentiles very much. In the course of time this young couple gave birth to a child. Unfortunately the mother became so ill in the process of childbirth that she was unable to care for her baby. Upon learning of this woman's condition, great grandmother immediately went to the homes of the sisters in the ward and asked them if they would take a turn going into the home of this young couple to care for the baby. One by one these women refused and so the responsibility fell completely upon her.

"She would arise early in the morning, walk what was a considerable distance to the home of this young couple where she would bathe and feed the baby, gather all that needed to be laundered and take it with her to her home. . . . One morning she felt too weak and sick to go. . . . However, as she lay in bed she realized that if she didn't go the child would not be provided for. [With the help of the Lord,] she mustered all her strength and went. [When she returned home, exhausted, she] collapsed into a large chair and immediately fell into a deep sleep. She said that as she slept

she felt as if she were consumed by a fire that would melt the very marrow of her bones. She . . . dreamed that she was bathing the Christ child and glorying in what a great privilege it would have been to have bathed the Son of God. Then the voice of the Lord spoke to her saying, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me.' " (*My Errand from the Lord, A Personal Study Guide for Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums 1976-77*, pp. 154-55.)

Perhaps the most heroic acts are done quietly and with no recognition except from a loving Heavenly Father who rewards us with the sweet peace that passeth understanding (see Philip. 4:7) and by His Spirit whispers, "Well done, [my] good and faithful servant." (Matt. 25:21.)

I was touched by an experience that was recently related to me. A dear sister had been incapacitated for the past eight years—she could not walk or talk and was confined to bed. About six years ago, she and her husband were assigned a faithful home teacher. He asked if his wife could come over to their house every Sunday morning and stay with the invalid woman while her husband attended priesthood meeting. For six years, every Sunday this home teacher would bring his wife over to stay with the invalid sister while her husband went to his meeting. And every Sunday the home teacher's wife would bring with her some baked goods or something special that she had made for this older couple.

Finally, this sister who had been ill passed away. When her daughter tried to express her deep love and appreciation to this loving home teacher and his wife for what they had done over the years, the wife said, "Oh, don't thank us. It was our *privilege* to visit with your sweet mother. What am I going to do now? The hour and a half on Sunday morning will now be, for me, the loneliest hour and a half in the week."

### Concern for aging parents

I am impressed that in the last moments of the Savior's life, He had an abiding concern for His mother and for her welfare, thus again setting the example for us. Walking in His steps are the devoted sons and daughters who honor aging parents who are no longer able to help themselves. About two years ago I read this column in the newspaper:

"Dear Abby:

"I'm sitting here on the plane reading the letter in your column about the son who didn't want to put his father up temporarily because he felt his father's visit would be an invasion of his privacy.

"That item caught my eye because I am on my way to visit my son in Omaha for two weeks—at his insistence. I was reluctant to do so initially because I felt I might be interfering with his personal activities.

"I wonder if the son who wrote that letter ever gave a thought to the privacy his father might have forfeited during his son's time at home?

"There were times during my children's lives when, given my druthers, I'd have preferred some alternative activity, but now I don't regret one minute of the time I spent with them. I'm only sorry it couldn't have been more. Their time at home seems to have been so brief.

"I won't mail this, of course, since I realize you will receive thousands of more articulate letters on the above. This is just my way of . . ."

"Dear Abby: My father died suddenly of a heart attack, and this unfinished letter was in his pocket. My wife and I will miss him very much. Sign this—'A son who really wanted his dad to come.' William Smzyk, Omaha, Nebr." (Abigail Van Buren, *Deseret News*, 13 Dec. 1979, p. C7.)

### Love extends beyond convenience

Brothers and sisters, what I have

tried to illustrate this morning is that if we are to walk in the steps of the Savior, we cannot do it without personal sacrifice and sincere involvement. It is rarely convenient; but love extends beyond convenience for those who have conditioned themselves to look for opportunities to serve. I believe that the Savior was equipped to accomplish His mission not only through His parentage, but because of His thirty years of preparation in developing an awareness of and a sensitivity to the needs of His fellowmen.

In Alma, chapter seven, we read:

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; . . . that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

" . . . And he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people." (Alma 7:11-12.)

After a recent stake conference meeting where I had discussed the role of the family in the Church, I was approached by a sweet woman who said: "Bishop, I'm a widow and I really appreciated everything you said today. I have a lovely family, but I have many problems and I do need help. My priesthood leaders have families of their own and they have lots of problems and I don't want to bother them and add to their problems. So what should I do?"

I asked her, "Do you have a good home teacher who really cares about you?"

She said, "Yes, I have a home teacher and he comes by every month or so; but he isn't very involved with our family."

Then I asked, "Well, do you have a visiting teacher who visits you and understands you?"

She said, "Yes, the Relief Society sometimes comes."

At this point, I was praying for a right answer, when a lovely sister, who was standing nearby and heard our conversation, said, "Excuse me, but I was a widow; and even though I have just remarried, I know how you feel and I understand your problems. Please let me drop by. I'd like to visit with you."

Dr. Tom Dooley offers some interesting insights regarding those who have known difficulties and can now share the burden of another. I quote:

"One of Dr. (Albert) Schweitzer's most important concepts is that of the Fellowship of Those who Bear the Mark of Pain. . . . Who are its members? Those who have learned by experience what physical pain and bodily anguish mean. These people, all over the world, are united by a secret bond. He who has been delivered from pain must not think he is now . . . at liberty to continue his life and forget his sickness. He is a man whose eyes are opened. He now has a duty to help others in their battles with pain and anguish. He must help to bring to others the deliverance which he himself knows.

"Under this Fellowship come not only those who were formerly sick, but those who are related to sufferers, and whom does this not include?" (Thomas Dooley, "A Worldwide Fellowship," *Words of Wisdom*, ed. Thomas C. Jones, Chicago: J.B. Ferguson, 1966, p. 150.)

Again I refer to Dr. Sheldon's book:

"It is the personal element that Christian discipleship needs to emphasize. 'The gift without the giver is bare.' The Christianity that attempts to

suffer by proxy [*alone*] is not the Christianity of Christ. Each individual Christian . . . needs to follow in *His steps* along the path of personal sacrifice to Him. There is not a different path to-day from that of Jesus' own times. It is the same path." (Sheldon, *In His Steps*, p. 239; italics added.)

### Aware of ways to bless those in need

This has been a difficult assignment for me. As I have pondered how practicing welfare principles brings us to Christ, I have searched my own soul and realized that I am far short of my ideal—the Savior. As a result, I have recommitted myself to achieve the "divine nature" of Christ (see 2 Pet. 1:4) by becoming more aware of ways in which to bless those in need.

I bear my testimony to you that there is a special Spirit of the Savior which accompanies welfare services. I know He loves this work and the thousands of Saints who are engaged in it. And as He counseled His covenant people in the Book of Mormon, so He entreats us today:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; . . .

"Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day. . . .

"Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am." (3 Ne. 27:21-22, 27.)

That we may walk in his steps and become even as he is I pray, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.