

Elder Loren C. Dunn

Love toward fellowmen, love toward God

There is a hymn, which is a favorite hymn among Latter-day Saints, and comes to us from pioneer days. It was also reported to be among the favorite hymns of the Prophet Joseph Smith and was sung in those fateful hours prior to his martyrdom.

The words of the first verse go this way:

A poor wayfaring Man of grief
Hath often crossed me on my way,
Who sued so humbly for relief
That I could never answer nay.
I had not pow'r to ask his name,
Whereto he went, or whence he
came;
Yet there was something in his eye
That won my love; I knew not
why.

(*Hymns*, 1985, no. 29.)

The other verses of this hymn show that our love toward our fellowmen is indeed an expression of our love toward our God.

The greatest expression of love from our Father in Heaven to the human family is probably the infinite atonement of the Savior. "For God so loved the world," said John, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The most noble expression of love by man is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . .

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

Marie Hansen's example

To love our neighbor is a godlike trait and can take many forms.

On the day that no one in the neighborhood saw "Hanse," as she was called, concerned neighbors rang her

doorbell, but to no avail. They were anxious for this gentle and gracious widow who found a place in their hearts. They looked on her as one of their own.

Finally, a member of the bishopric forced open the door and there, in the bedroom, was Marie Woodruff Hansen, as if she had fallen asleep, but never again to awaken in this life.

As the bishopric member paused to take in this sad but peaceful scene, he was startled, when from behind him he heard the words, "I love you." Knowing that Marie lived alone, he turned; and there in the corner was a bird cage. A second time the bird said, "I love you."

It was as if Marie, herself, had paused at the portals that mark the point between life and death to send back one final message before moving on to that new day.

Behind her was a neighborhood of friends, both young and old. She knew them all. They were like family to her; Marie's baked goodies found their way into their homes, and they looked after her like a favorite aunt or a grandmother. Home teaching and visiting teaching were only the beginning as the whole neighborhood was caught up in this love affair. Children were welcomed into her home. They always knew there would be fresh-baked cookies. There was a warmth about that little home that was a reflection of Marie's whole life. Many prayers had been offered here: prayers of gratitude, prayers of thanksgiving.

The words she taught her pet bird were the words she lived by. Even in death they echoed in the ears of those she left behind. Ahead of Marie was a husband who had gone first, too many years ago. She had lived a full life and left one final message of good-bye in the words she knew best: "I love you."

Marie Hansen left a great legacy, probably greater than she realized. For did not the Savior say, "A new com-

mandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34)?

Missionaries love the people they serve

There are those who wish to know us better, to understand us better as a religion, as a church. There are those who write about us and study us. But may I suggest that until they take into account this spirit of love, they will never really understand. At the heart of it all is a genuine love of God and of fellowman.

Today, for instance, there are scores of Latter-day Saint missionaries in many countries throughout the world. They are easily identified by their dress and manner. They come on their missions for many reasons: duty, service, the testimony they have of their message. But after serving honorably for eighteen months or two years, virtually all of them develop a deep and profound love for the people they serve among. One missionary put it this way: "Although it was hard, I am thankful for all the experiences I've had here. They were right about the mission field; it's the best place to practice true Christianity, and it's the best time of your life." Another says: "I thank the Lord with all my heart for giving me the opportunity to serve him. I love this great land, and I love these people."

An orphan boy in Colombia

In Cali, Colombia, a few days ago, the mission president visited one of our Church meetings. At the start of the meeting a seven-year-old boy came up on the stand and sat next to him. He was not on the program; he just wanted to be there. When the meeting was nearly over he strode to the pulpit and bore his testimony.

When he finished, he went back and sat next to the president. The two exchanged glances. The mission president smiled approval. The young boy smiled back. In those dark eyes was a

message of love and security. Here was someone who knew he belonged.

Later it was learned the boy had spent his earlier life as an orphan. A couple in the ward had taken him in and were raising him as their own. The whole ward was his home, and he was blossoming in this atmosphere of acceptance.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

President Kimball's concern for others

A few years ago, when President Kimball was a member of the Council of the Twelve, he and Sister Kimball were touring missions overseas.

A change in the airline schedule found them, along with a mission president and his wife, in a cold and drafty airport, late at night, with no place to go but wait for an early morning flight.

Sister Kimball had her coat, but the mission president's wife did not. President Kimball tried to give her his coat, but she would not take it. As they began to fall asleep on those hard benches, President Kimball got up and gently put his coat over the sleeping wife of the mission president. This kind of selfless concern for others is how President Kimball has lived his life. This is the same leader we sustain today as prophet, seer, and revelator. This is the man whom God has called to lead nearly six million Latter-day Saints.

He has literally spent his life in taking off his coat, so to speak, and putting it around the shoulders of those he judged to be in greater need: people of all colors and creeds; men, women, and children. It has never made any difference to him. All are his brothers. All are his sisters.

"And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all

things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. . . .

"[For] charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever" (Moroni 7:45, 47; see also 1 Corinthians 13).

Young lady in Brazil: "I love you"

Not long ago Sister Dunn and I attended a stake conference in Marilia, Brazil. Marilia is a beautiful city of 100,000 in the southeast interior of the country. The Sunday session had just concluded. The theme was the atonement of Christ and how he is the Savior of the whole world.

Some had traveled by bus for more than three hours to be at this meeting. As we were shaking hands, a young lady came up. She first stopped in front of the mission president and asked how to say "I love you" in English. She then stood in front of Sister Dunn and me and with a broad smile and great sincerity said "I love you." It seemed a little thing, but it touched our hearts. It was the effort of a humble follower of Christ to express herself. The message could have been said in any language and been understood.

The spirit of love reaches across language barriers. There is a purity about it that lifts the soul and causes us all to realize that we are the children of the same God.

The gospel of love

There is a thread running through it all: Marie Hansen; an orphan boy in Colombia; the young lady in Brazil; and our revered President, Spencer W. Kimball.

No one professes to be perfect, but there is a spirit in this work and among

this people that makes them better than they would otherwise be. It is the spirit of love borne on the wings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It comes from a God of love. It causes the Church to reach out to the lives of men and women everywhere.

We claim no corner on love of others. We know the world is filled with many good, decent people. We respect and admire them and the righteous things they stand for. We teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a gospel of salvation and exaltation. It is a gospel of love—love of God and love of fellowmen.

The final verse of the hymn that we mentioned in the beginning goes like this:

Then in a moment to my view
The stranger started from disguise;
The tokens in his hands I knew;
The Savior stood before my eyes.
He spake, and my poor name he
named,
"Of me thou hast not been
ashamed.
These deeds shall thy memorial be;
Fear not, thou didst them unto
me."

By way of testimony, I wish to express my love for my Father in Heaven, for his Son Jesus Christ, for each one of you wherever you are, and for these my Brethren and associates of the General Authorities. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have listened to Elder Loren C. Dunn, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Robert L. Backman, also a member of that Quorum, will be our next speaker.