

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is customary for the President of the Church to open each conference, to greet the Saints worldwide, and to set the tone of all that follows. Since President Benson is unable to be with us in person, I respond to his invitation to speak in his behalf. For the most part, I will present his actual words.

Last Wednesday, President Hinckley and I had a most delightful visit with President Benson. He greeted us warmly, flashed that friendly smile all of us love, and made us feel most welcome. When President Hinckley outlined the plans for conference and asked the President if it was his wish that we go forward with the arrangements and extend his love to all, he responded with a resounding “Yes!” We understand his concerns. We share his love, and we bring to you his blessings. This giant of the Lord merits our constant prayers and our abiding faith.

“The Mountain of the Lord’s House”

On Friday, March 26, Sister Monson and I attended and participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony formally opening a truly magnificent exhibit in the museum west of Temple Square. It is entitled “The Mountain of the Lord’s House” and depicts the fascinating forty-year saga required for the construction of the Salt Lake Temple. Where possible, I urge all of you to see the exhibit and feel the spirit it conveys. Tuesday, April 6, the Salt Lake Temple will have a birthday. One hundred years will have passed since that glorious day when it was dedicated.

While visiting the exhibit, a reporter asked me the question, “Would President Benson like this exhibit?”

I answered, “He would love it!”

President Benson’s love for temples

President Benson has always loved temples and temple work. When he felt better, each Friday he and Sister Benson

would enter the temple to participate in a session. We knew our First Presidency meeting that morning must accommodate this commitment. One morning I commented that I had to get busy and do some of my own family names that were prepared. With a smile and a twinkle in his eye, the President said, “Brother Monson, if you’re too busy, why not let Sister Benson and me do your names for you.” Needless to say, we found time to do the work ourselves.

President Benson’s own expressions indicate this love for temples. He reflected:

“I remember so well, as a little boy, coming in from the field and approaching the old farm house. . . . I could hear my mother singing ‘Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?’ . . . I can still see her in my mind’s eye bending over the ironing board . . . with beads of perspiration on her forehead.” She was ironing long strips of white cloth, with newspapers on the floor to keep them clean. “When I asked her what she was doing, she said, ‘These are temple robes, my son. Your father and I are going to the temple at Logan.’

“Then she put the old flatiron on the stove, drew a chair close to mine, and told me about temple work—how important it is to be able to go to the temple and participate in the sacred ordinances performed there. She also expressed her fervent hope that some day her children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren would have the opportunity to enjoy those priceless blessings.” He continued, “I am happy to say that her fondest hopes in large measure have been realized.”

Temples are gateways to heaven

On another occasion, President Benson instructed us: “Sometimes in the peace of lovely temples, the serious problems of life find their solutions. [At times] pure knowledge flows to us there under the influence of the Spirit.” Said he: “I am

grateful to the Lord for temples. The blessings of the House of the Lord are eternal. They are of the highest importance to us because it is in the temples that we obtain God's greatest blessings pertaining to eternal life. Temples really are the gateways to heaven."

He said: "May we remember always, as we [visit and work in these glorious temples], that the veil may become very thin between this world and the spirit world. I know this is true." He declared, "It is well also that we keep in mind that it is all one great program on both sides of the veil and it is not too important whether we serve here or over there, as long as we serve with all our heart, might, mind, and strength."²

President Benson, your words are welcomed. We have heard them. We shall

follow them. They, like the temples you so much love, are as a refuge from life's storms—even a never-failing beacon guiding us to safety.

I echo the feelings of one and all, President Benson, in saying we love you and ever pray for you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple," *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, p. 8.
2. "Temple Memories" (address given at the Denver Colorado Temple dedication, 25 Oct. 1986).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Youth, live morally clean lives

This morning I want to speak primarily to the young men and young women of the Church. I pray for the Spirit to help me inspire you young people to want to live righteous lives.

Some of you may not understand our Heavenly Father's plan well enough to appreciate how important living a morally clean life is if you want to enjoy peace, happiness, and self-esteem. When you understand, the truths of the gospel will give you the guidance you need to be worthy members of the Church. When you accept the basic principles of the gospel and commit to live them, you will have the spiritual insight that will help you be young men and women of purity, integrity, and faith.

Unfortunately we live in a world that is awash in all kinds of moral pollution, including drugs, violence, filthy language, and pornography in literature, and videotapes, films, and television shows that promote illicit sex and promiscuity as

being normal. A national debate is raging to make elective abortion acceptable.

With challenges like these, you need to remember that you do not face them alone. There are people who love you and want you to be happy. We want the very best for you. Most especially, your Father in Heaven loves you and wants you to have joy and happiness. He has made marvelous promises to His faithful children who love Him, who are baptized, and who keep His commandments.

Baptismal covenants

When you entered the waters of baptism, you made a promise to the Lord that you would "humble [yourselves] before God, . . . and witness before the church that [you] have truly repented of all [your] sins, and are willing to take upon [yourselves] the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by [your] works that [you] have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of [your] sins" (D&C