

Father lives. Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, guides his church today through his prophets.

Let us, as Latter-day Saints, claim those "exceeding great and precious promises" so that we, "Holy Father, . . . may grow up in thee, and receive a fullness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing" (D&C 109:14-15).

I invoke his blessings upon you in your homes, in your work, in your service in his church.

I pledge my life, my strength, and the full measure of my soul to serving him. May we have ears to hear and hearts to feel and the courage to follow,

I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

President Monson

President Howard W. Hunter, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has just spoken to us and delivered a masterful address. He has been followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve will now address us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

President Hunter, we have been thrilled by your inspired message. We express our love to you. We also congratulate the newly called and sustained General Authorities and general officers of the Church.

Our hearts have united with the Mormon Youth Chorus's spirited singing of Charles Wesley's inspired words, "Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore!" (*Hymns*, no. 66). With the events of this solemn assembly, we have also felt the overwhelming gratitude expressed in our beloved hymn "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" (*Hymns*, no. 19). We have rejoiced in the privilege of sustaining President Howard W. Hunter as President of the Church and Presidents Hinckley and Monson as his Counselors. In this worldwide assembly, we have pledged our prayers and best efforts to support the men whom the Lord has called to lead his church. I testify that what we have done has been recorded in the heavens

and that each of us will be accountable to God for the way we respond to the leadership we have sustained in this solemn and sacred way.

Hymns invite the Spirit

Last spring I made my first visit to Brasília, Brazil. Over three thousand Saints gathered for a regional conference. The printed program listed the musical numbers, but the Portuguese words meant nothing to me. But when their beautiful choir began to sing, the music crossed all barriers of language and spoke to my soul:

The morning breaks, the shadows
flee;
Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled! . . .
The dawning of a brighter day
Majestic rises on the world.
["The Morning Breaks," *Hymns*, no. 1]

Through the miracle of sacred music, the Spirit of the Lord descended

upon us, and we were made ready for gospel instruction and worship.

The First Presidency has said:

"Inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. The hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord.

"Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end" (*Hymns*, p. ix).

The singing of hymns is one of the best ways to put ourselves in tune with the Spirit of the Lord. I wonder if we are making enough use of this heaven-sent resource in our meetings, in our classes, and in our homes.

Hymns bring peace and calm

Last July I visited the Church's Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii. Before the evening show of dancing and music from various island cultures, I went backstage to thank the performers. I arrived during those frantic moments before the show began. Scores of performers were hurrying through the last-minute tasks required to coordinate their efforts in a fast-moving performance. I wondered how the director would bring this turmoil to order in preparation for my brief remarks.

It happened as if by miracle. On signal, one strong voice began, and the strains of "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" quickly swelled into a beautiful chorus as the uniquely talented young people brought their thoughts into harmony with the Lord.

We had a similar experience in our family. Last spring some of our children and fourteen of our grandchildren had a family outing in the mountains. One of our activities was a meeting to share

experiences and testimonies. We gathered at the appointed time, but the little people were gathered only in body. The large spirits in those little bodies were clamoring for more of the exciting outdoor activities they had been enjoying. The cabin where we met was too small to contain them, and it seemed as if a dozen restless children and their outcries were ricocheting off the walls in every direction. Grandparents will appreciate the apprehension I felt at trying to sponsor something serious in that setting.

Suddenly the instinctive wisdom of young mothers rescued our efforts. Two mothers began to sing a song familiar to the children. Others joined in, and within a few minutes the mood had changed and all spirits were subdued and receptive to spiritual things. I offered a silent prayer of thanks for hymns and for mothers who know how to use them!

Hymns used to learn and worship

The singing of hymns is one of the best ways to learn the doctrine of the restored gospel. Elder Stephen D. Nadauld captured this unique strength in some lines he wrote and shared in a General Authority meeting:

If I would teach with power
The doctrine and the plan,
I'd wish for gentle music
To prepare the soul of man.

And then to press forever
These truths upon his mind,
We'd sing the hymns of Zion
With their messages sublime.

The scriptures contain many affirmations that hymn singing is a glorious way to worship. Before the Savior and his Apostles left the upper room where they had the sublime experience of the Last Supper, they sang a hymn. After their hymn, the Savior led them to the Mount of Olives (see Matthew 26:30).

The Apostle Paul advised the Colossians that they should be “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16; see also Alma 26:8).

Modern revelation reaffirms the importance of sacred music. In one of the earliest revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord appointed Emma Smith “to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church.

“For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (D&C 25:11–12).

In a revelation given through another prophet a generation later, the Lord commanded his people to “praise the Lord with singing, [and] with music” (D&C 136:28).

Hymns in temple meetings

This direction to praise the Lord with singing is not limited to large meetings. When the Lord’s Apostles meet in modern times, the singing of hymns is still part of their meetings. The weekly meetings of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the Salt Lake Temple always begin with a hymn. Elder Russell M. Nelson plays the organ accompaniment. Members of the First Presidency, who conduct these meetings, rotate the privilege of selecting the opening song. Most of us record the date each hymn is sung. According to my records, the opening song most frequently sung during the decade of my participation has been “I Need Thee Every Hour” (*Hymns*, no. 98). Picture the spiritual impact of a handful of the Lord’s servants singing that song before praying for his guidance in fulfilling their mighty responsibilities.

The veil is very thin in the temples, especially when we join in worshiping through music. At temple dedications I have seen more tears of joy elicited by music than by the spoken word. I have read accounts of angelic choirs joining in these hymns of praise, and I think I have experienced this on several occasions. In dedicatory sessions featuring beautiful and well-trained choirs of about thirty voices, there are times when I have heard what seemed to be ten times thirty voices praising God with a quality and intensity of feeling that can be experienced but not explained. Some who are listening today will know what I mean.

All should participate in singing

Sacred music has a unique capacity to communicate our feelings of love for the Lord. This kind of communication is a wonderful aid to our worship. Many have difficulty expressing worshipful feelings in words, but all can join in communicating such feelings through the inspired words of our hymns.

When a congregation worships through singing, all present should participate. Here I share another experience. I had finished a special assignment on a Sunday morning in Salt Lake City and desired to attend a sacrament meeting. I stopped at a convenient ward meetinghouse and slipped unnoticed into the overflow area just as the congregation was beginning to sing these sacred words of the sacrament song:

’Tis sweet to sing the matchless love
Of Him who left his home above
And came to earth—oh, wondrous
plan—
To suffer, bleed, and die for man!
[“’Tis Sweet to Sing the Matchless
Love,” *Hymns*, no. 177]

My heart swelled as we sang this worshipful hymn and contemplated renewing our covenants by partaking of

the sacrament. Our voices raised the concluding strains:

For Jesus died on Calvary,
That all thru him might ransomed
be.

Then sing hosannas to his name;
Let heav'n and earth his love pro-
claim.

As we sang these words, I glanced around at members of the congregation and was stunned to observe that about a third of them were not singing. How could this be? Were those who did not even mouth the words suggesting that for them it was *not* "sweet to sing the matchless love" or to "sing hosannas to his name"? What are we saying, what are we thinking when we fail to join in singing in our worship services?

I believe some of us in North America are getting neglectful in our worship, including the singing of hymns. I have observed that the Saints elsewhere are more diligent in doing this. We in the center stakes of Zion should renew our fervent participation in the singing of our hymns.

Guidelines for worshipping through music

There are a few conventions all of us should observe as we worship through music. As we sing we should think about the messages of the words. Our hymns contain matchless doctrinal sermons, surpassed only by the scriptures in their truth and poetic impact.

We depend on our choristers and organists to lead us at the prescribed pace. Singing too slowly or too fast can detract from a worshipful mood.

We should be careful what music we use in settings where we desire to contribute to worship. Many musical numbers good for other wholesome settings are not appropriate for Church meetings.

Our hymns have been chosen because they have been proven effective to

invite the Spirit of the Lord. A daughter who plays the violin described that reality. "I love to play classical music," she said, "but when I play our hymns, I can just feel the Spirit of the Lord in my practice room."

Soloists should remember that music in our worship services is not for demonstration but for worship. Vocal or instrumental numbers should be chosen to facilitate worship, not to provide performance opportunity for artists, no matter how accomplished.

Our sacred music prepares us to be taught the truths of the gospel. This is why we are selective in the kinds of music and the kinds of instruments we use in our worship services. This is why we encourage our choirs to use the hymnbook as their basic resource. We can make selective use of other music that is in harmony with the spirit of our hymns, such as Charles Gounod's marvelous "O Divine Redeemer," sung at the funeral of President Ezra Taft Benson. But a hymnbook's hymn is often the most inspiring and appropriate musical selection for a choir, a vocalist, or an instrumentalist (see Michael F. Moody, "Conversation: Learning and Singing Hymns," *Ensign*, Aug. 1994, p. 79).

Sacred music can help us even where there is no formal performance. For example, when temptation comes, we can neutralize its effect by humming or repeating the words of a favorite hymn (see Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, pp. 21-26; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, pp. 25-28).

Singing with deaf members

Our hymns can work their miraculous effect even when the chorus of voices is few and even when hardly a sound can be heard. I felt this a few months ago as I participated in a musical performance that was unique in my church experience. I had been invited to speak at the Great Basin LDS Deaf

Conference, hosted by the Salt Lake Valley (Deaf) Ward of the Salt Lake Park Stake. Over three hundred deaf brothers and sisters were in attendance. The members of the stake presidency and I were almost the only adults in the congregation who could hear and who attempted to sing audibly. The rest of that large assembly sang with their hands. Hardly a lip moved, and hardly a sound was heard except the organ and four faint voices from the stand. In the audience, all hands moved in unison with the leader as the audience signed, "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning!" (*Hymns*, no. 2). As we sang together, the Spirit of the Lord descended upon us, and we were made ready for prayer. Our sacred music is a powerful preparation for prayer and gospel teaching.

Make better use of hymns

We need to make more use of our hymns to put us in tune with the Spirit of the Lord, to unify us, and to help us teach and learn our doctrine. We need to make better use of our hymns in missionary teaching, in gospel classes, in quorum meetings, in home evenings, and in home teaching visits. Music is an effective way to worship our Heavenly

Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. We should use hymns when we need spiritual strength and inspiration.

We who have "felt to sing the song of redeeming love" (Alma 5:26) need to keep singing that we may draw ever closer to him who has inspired sacred music and commanded that it be used to worship him. May we be diligent in doing so is my humble prayer, which I offer with a testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the divine calling of those we have sustained today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

Now as we demonstrate our acceptance of his message, the choir and congregation will join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Sister Michaelene P. Grassli, who was released this morning as general president of the Primary.

The chorus and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Sister Michaelene P. Grassli

It is a distinct privilege to participate in this historic meeting, adding my heart and hand and voice to sustain the Lord's living prophet—and I do so with all my heart. I support also the action taken today sustaining Sister Patricia Pinegar as the new Primary general president. My time here has been full of extraordinary experiences, and I will miss them. But I know Sister Pinegar, Sister Wirthlin, and Sister Warner, and I know our children

are in good hands. I wish this new presidency well.

Love and protect children

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has always cherished children. The First Presidency, recognizing today's unprecedented world conditions, has taken unprecedented action that renews our commitment to our little ones. Through a message to the Church called