

unselfish, stunning, and encompassing His Atonement becomes!

### **The fellowship of Christ's sufferings**

When we take Jesus' yoke upon us, this admits us eventually to what Paul called the "fellowship of [Christ's] sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). Whether illness or aloneness, injustice or rejection, etc., our comparatively small-scale sufferings, if we are meek, will sink into the very marrow of the soul. We then better appreciate not only Jesus' sufferings for us, but also His matchless character, moving us to greater adoration and even emulation.

Alma revealed that Jesus knows how to succor us in the midst of our griefs and sicknesses precisely because Jesus has already borne our griefs and sicknesses (see Alma 7:11-12). He knows them firsthand; thus His empathy is earned. Of course, we do not comprehend it fully any more than we understand how He bore all mortal sins, but His Atonement remains the rescuing and reassuring reality.

### **We will praise Jesus' loving-kindness**

No wonder, of all the things for which we might praise Jesus when He comes again in majesty and power, we will praise Him for His "loving kindness" and His "goodness"; moreover, we will go on praising Him forever and ever! (D&C 133:52; see also Mosiah 4:6, 11;

Alma 7:23). We will never need to be coaxed.

Thus, ever acknowledging God's redeeming hand is very important, but, alas, so doing is diminished by the unwise mortal reliance on "the arm of flesh" (2 Nephi 4:34; D&C 1:19). Ah, the arrogant arm of flesh, like the quarterback whose arm was so strong it was boasted that he could throw a football through a car wash and it would come out dry on the other side! Such naïveté, such triviality symbolize not only the arm, but also the mind of flesh, which misses "things as they really are, and . . . things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13).

### **Gratitude for the precious Comforter**

Finally, my humble praise today flows not only to God the Father for His loving plan of salvation and to Jesus, the Lord of the universe, for His marvelous and remarkable Atonement, but also to the Holy Ghost, about whom we speak less. Among His many roles I express my particular and personal gratitude today for the recent ways in which He has been the precious Comforter, including in the midnight moments!

In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

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## **Sister Patricia P. Pinegar**

### **Unite in caring for the souls of children**

The longer I serve in my calling as Primary president, the greater is my concern for children. Children are a sacred gift from a loving Heavenly Father. "Children are an heritage of the Lord"

(Psalm 127:3). The more I think about children, the more I worry about parents.

President Spencer W. Kimball said: "Our Heavenly Father placed the responsibility upon parents to see that their children are well fed, well groomed

and clothed, well trained, and well taught. Most parents protect their children with shelter—they tend and care for their diseases, provide clothes for their safety and their comfort, and supply food for their health and growth. But what do they do for their souls?" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 332).

I am afraid that some children may someday have the feelings expressed by the Psalmist: "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4).

Today I speak to all parents and every adult member of the Church and invite all to unite in caring for the souls of children.

### Many dangers threaten our families

Several years ago I was working in my garden and was delighted to see a family of quail. I watched the father sitting on top of the wall standing guard. The mother was busy keeping her 10 precious babies together and seemed to be demonstrating how to peck in the earth for food. I was fascinated. I carefully and quietly walked closer. All too soon I was detected by the watchful father, and he let out a warning call. The mother tried to guide the children around the wall to safety, but I—the danger—was too near, and she became frustrated and confused and flew up on the wall by the father. I didn't want to harm this family, so I quickly retreated out of sight.

Unlike my experience with the quail family, the dangers threatening the lives of our families do not retreat. Satan rejoices in our confusion and frustration, and his influences surround us. We turn on the television—is this a family show? We hear something coming out of our child's room—is this music? We try to pick a movie—did this one really have an acceptable rating?

Sometimes Satan's influences are more subtle. I have asked myself these questions: Do I leave my children exposed to danger when I don't teach them the truths of the gospel? Do I neglect their souls when I don't help them recognize the promptings of the Spirit and the guidance they can receive? Do I leave my children exposed to danger when my example is not the same as my words or when I don't share my love in such a way that each child feels it deeply?

### Parenting is a godly responsibility

Statistics and news reports tell us that there are children who have been tragically deserted. Happily, that is not the plight of all children. I have visited homes where love abounds, the gospel is taught, and children's souls are well cared for. I have witnessed single parents who are magnificent in their faith and dedication. I know single adults who are involving themselves in the lives of families and strengthening both the parents and the children. I know teachers and leaders and other caring adults who touch the lives of children and youth, who care for their souls.

The blessings of parenting and helping to care for children are many. President Hinckley said: "Of all the joys of life, none other equals that of happy parenthood. Of all the responsibilities with which we struggle, none other is so serious. To rear children in an atmosphere of love, security, and faith is the most rewarding of all challenges. The good result from such efforts becomes life's most satisfying compensation" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 74; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54).

Parenting is a godly responsibility necessary for the salvation of Father's children and important for our preparation for eternal blessings. Rejoice in your opportunities to love and care for the souls of children. Our Father has

blessings and eternal rewards available for each of His children, whether they are married or single, parents or childless. Our circumstances may be different, our opportunities may be varied, but the end result of our righteousness can be the same—eternal parenthood, eternal lives. Helping to care for the souls of children will help each of us prepare for this eternal blessing.

### **Follow the example of the Father and the Son**

What are some things that we can do to improve? I believe that seriously studying how our Father cares for His children can help us. Everything we know about our Heavenly Father is connected with His parenthood and His loving care for our souls. He loves each of His children unconditionally. We can do the same in our families. His plan of happiness is a plan to help His children progress and be prepared to receive His greatest blessings. We can make plans to help our families progress. He included His children in the great Heavenly Council and allowed us to participate and use our agency to choose. We can have family councils and include our children as active participants. Under His guidance, this earth was prepared as a place where we could learn and grow. Our homes can be happy places where our children can learn and grow. He has given His children rules of conduct and commandments that keep us moving forward, focused on the path that leads to our heavenly home. The rules of conduct in our family can help us move forward on the path back to our Heavenly Father.

The Only Begotten Son of our Father, our Savior Jesus Christ, spent His earthly ministry showing us how to love, bless, and teach all of the family of God. He taught us that not one soul should be lost. We should follow His example in loving and blessing our families and do-

ing all we can to see that not one soul is lost.

### **Receive blessings from temple attendance**

In preparation for this talk and in search of answers to how we can better care for each child, my husband, Ed, and I attended the temple. I was so grateful for that sacred opportunity, for in the temple we were reminded of promised blessings. I realized that the blessings offered in this sacred place provide help needed by every parent in raising children today.

Work toward being temple worthy, and obtain a temple recommend even if the temple is too far away to attend very often. Great blessings will come to you and your children because of your personal righteousness. If you now have a temple recommend, study and pray and attend the temple often to increase your understanding of the covenants you have made.

### **Receive inspiration from the Lord**

Each parent also needs to follow this counsel from President Hinckley: "You need more than your own wisdom in rearing [your children]. You need the help of the Lord. Pray for that help and follow the inspiration which you receive" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 120; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 89).

As we become more righteous by keeping our covenants and by more closely following the counsel in the scriptures and from our living prophets, we will truly be blessed with the daily guidance that we need from our Father and Savior to raise our children in righteousness.

To all fathers and mothers of the Church, tell your children that you love them and that you are so happy to have them in your family. Prepare yourselves spiritually to receive guidance through

the Holy Ghost. As you prayerfully study the scriptures and "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102), listen and respond to the promptings of the Spirit. Be aware of Satan's influences. Where do the feelings come from that make you feel that your efforts in the home are not fulfilling or important? Where do the feelings come from that make you feel unappreciated? Rejoice in this preparation for godhood. Rejoice in the opportunity to teach your children the truths of the kingdom, and help them experience the peace and joy that come from following these truths.

### Young people should prepare

May I say something to the young men and women of the Church. Look to parenthood; prepare and plan for it. Prepare to be worthy fathers and mothers. The thoughts of your future children can keep you in the right way. If this blessing isn't yours in this earth life, your preparation and desire will prepare you to love and nurture all of God's children as the Savior did. Your eternal reward can be an eternal family.

### The prophet's counsel

In a recent stake conference, our prophet counseled parents:

"Never forget that these little ones are the sons and daughters of God and that yours is a custodial relationship to them, that He was a parent before you were parents and that He has not relinquished His parental rights or interest in these . . . little ones. Now, love them, take care of them. Fathers, control your tempers, now and in all the years to come. Mothers, control your voices, keep them down. Rear your children in love, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Take care of your little ones, welcome them into your homes and nurture and love them with all of your hearts" (Gordon B. Hinckley, Salt Lake University Third Stake conference, 3 Nov. 1996; in *Church News*, 1 Mar. 1997, 2).

My prayer, my brothers and sisters, is that all of us will rejoice in the opportunities we have in caring for the souls of children, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Thank you, Sister Pinegar. Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, Primary general president, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

We are all impressed with Elder Neal A. Maxwell's beautiful talk. I might add, he now joins the ranks of those, especially Brother Oaks and me, with illuminated heads. But most of all, we remember him for his wisdom, inspiration, and great leadership in the kingdom. What a miracle it is to have him here today. The Lord has blessed him and heard our prayers.

### Great things are happening

General conference is an inspiring time of the year for the entire membership of the Church. Our purpose is to "instruct and edify each other, that [we] may know how to . . . act upon the points of [God's] law and commandments."<sup>1</sup> I humbly pray that we may continue to have that same spirit with us that we have enjoyed so much during this morning's session.