

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Expressions of gratitude

My brothers and sisters, my heart is filled with gratitude this morning as we gather in this great conference. I am grateful that the Lord has spared my life to see this day. As I reminded the young women to whom I spoke a week ago, someone recently gave me a copy of my old high school yearbook. It was the year of my graduation. It was 73 years ago. I was part of the class of 1928. It was an intriguing experience to thumb through it. Most of those who were so young and energetic at that time have passed on. A few are left, but they are wrinkled and somewhat feeble in their movements. Now and again when I complain of some little ailment, my wife will say, "It's your age, boy."

I repeat, I am deeply grateful to be alive. I am excited with this wonderful age in which we live. I thank the Lord for men and women of great dedication and great capacity who are doing so much to extend human life and to make it more comfortable and pleasant. I am grateful for good doctors who help us with our infirmities.

I am thankful for wonderful friends, among whom I include the great and faithful Saints across the world whom I have come to know. Thank you for all that you do for me, for the letters you send, for flowers and books and various expressions of your thoughtfulness and love. I am thankful for generous friends through whose kindness it has been possible for me to get out among the Saints in the nations of the earth, to meet with them, to share testimony and love with them.

I am grateful for my dear wife, with whom I have shared these nearly 64 years of companionship. I feel grateful for a faithful posterity. The Lord has blessed me in a marvelous way.

I am thankful for my Brethren of the General Authorities, who are so kind and deferential toward me. I am thankful for every one of you in this great family, more than 11 million strong, which constitutes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The strength and growth of the Church

In opening the conference I simply want to very briefly give a report on the Church.

It is stronger than it has ever been. It is not only larger in numbers, but I believe there is greater faithfulness among the Saints generally. During the past six months we have had the opportunity of dedicating temples scattered over the earth, far and wide. We have heard testimony of the truth of this work spoken in various languages. We have seen the overwhelming faith of our people who have traveled long distances to get to these dedications. We have witnessed a marvelous increase in the growth of temple activity. We are experiencing slow but steady improvement in most of our fields of activity.

I am so grateful that we live in an era of comparative peace. There are no great wars raging across the world. There is trouble here and there but not a great worldwide conflict. We are able to carry the gospel to so many nations of the earth and bless the lives of the people wherever it goes.

We are well on our way to enlarging the educational opportunity for our youth. We have announced that Ricks College will become a four-year school to be known as BYU—Idaho. We are grateful to learn that the school has now received an endorsement from the accrediting body. It is remarkable to have this in so short a time.

We are constructing new buildings on a scale of which we never have dreamed before. We must do so if we are to accommodate the growth of the Church.

The welfare program moves forward. We are particularly grateful that we have been able to extend humanitarian aid of a very substantial volume in many parts of the earth. We have distributed food, medicine, clothing, bedding, and other necessities to assist those who have suddenly found themselves victims of catastrophe.

I will speak this evening to the priesthood brethren concerning another program which I think will be of great interest to all of you.

Exceeding temple construction goals

One of the bellwether marks of the growth and vitality of the Church is the construction of temples. I have spoken of this before, but I am so deeply grateful that since we last met in general conference we were able to reach our goal of 100 operating temples by the end of the year 2000; in fact, we exceeded it. We have just come from dedicating a temple in Uruguay, the 103rd working temple of the Church.

The great work of temple building goes on throughout the world. I looked the other day at a list of all the temples which are now in operation or have been announced—121 of them. I was amazed at the length of the list and the incredible diversity of the areas in which they are located. It is wonderful, but we are not satisfied. We will keep on working to bring the temples to the people, making it more convenient for Latter-day Saints everywhere to receive the blessings which can be had only in these holy houses.

I have said before that the blessings of the temple represent that fulness of the priesthood of which the Lord spoke when He revealed His will unto the Prophet Joseph Smith. With the location of temples much nearer to the homes of

our people, there is made more available to them all of the ordinances to be had in the Lord's house for both the living and the dead.

Temples will soon be dedicated in Winter Quarters, Nebraska; Guadalajara, Mexico; and Perth, Australia. They are under construction in Asunción, Paraguay; Campinas, Brazil; the Tri-Cities area of Washington; Copenhagen, Denmark; Lubbock, Texas; Monterrey, Mexico; Nauvoo, Illinois; Snowflake, Arizona; and The Hague, Netherlands. Another six temples have been announced, and groundbreaking services will soon be held for these. In addition, we have visited and are giving consideration to a significant number of potential temple sites in the United States, Central and South America, Europe, and the isles of the sea. I will not mention their names because this would only create excitement when we do not yet have the ground on which to build them.

The construction of each temple represents a maturing of the Church. We will continue to build these sacred houses of the Lord as rapidly as energy and resources will allow. We are grateful for the faithful Latter-day Saints who pay their tithing and make possible this important program.

Return good for evil; be friendly

We are not without critics, some of whom are mean and vicious. We have always had them, and I suppose we will have them all through the future. But we shall go forward, returning good for evil, being helpful and kind and generous. I remind you of the teachings of our Lord concerning these matters. You are all acquainted with them. Let us be good people. Let us be friendly people. Let us be neighborly people. Let us be what members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ought to be.

My dearly beloved brethren and sisters, how much I appreciate your prayers

and your love. I extend my love to each of you. May the heavens open, and may blessings come down upon you in abundance as you walk in faithfulness before the Lord.

We shall now be pleased to go forward with the proceedings of this great gathering.

God bless you, my beloved associates, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "We Are Sowing."

President Faust

The choir has just sung "We Are Sowing." We will now hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy will speak to us.

Following Elder Jensen's remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Sister Sydney S. Reynolds, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, will then address us, followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Fulfilling the purposes of mortality

One of the most exhilarating moments of your life—when you were filled with anticipation, excitement, and gratitude—you are not able to remember. That experience occurred in the premortal life when you were informed that finally your time had come to leave the spirit world to dwell on earth with a mortal body.

You knew you could learn through personal experience the lessons that would bring happiness on earth—lessons that would eventually lead you to exaltation and eternal life as a glorified, celestial being in the presence of your Holy Father and His Beloved Son.

You understood that there would be challenges, for you would live in an environment of both righteous and evil influences. Yet surely you resolved that no matter what the cost, no matter what the effort, suffering, and testing, you would return victorious.

You were reserved to come when the fulness of the gospel is on earth. You arrived when His Church and the priest-

hood authority to perform the sacred temple ordinances are in place. You anticipated being born into a home where parents would be expected to love, nurture, strengthen, and teach you truths. You knew that in time you would have the opportunity to form your own eternal family as husband or wife, father or mother. Oh, how you must have rejoiced at that prospect.

These words express the most fundamental purpose of your being on earth:

"We will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever" (Abraham 3:24–26).

After Adam was placed on earth, God said, "Let us make an help meet for the man, for it is not good that the man