

the Spirit and the passage of the years have softened our sadness. His small picture graces the mantel of our living room beside a more current family portrait of children and grandchildren. But Pat and I know that his path through mortality was intended by a kind Heavenly Father to be shorter and easier than ours and that he has now hurried on ahead to be a welcoming presence when we likewise eventually cross that same fateful threshold.

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow,
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, . . .
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,

My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.

The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design . . .

Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine. . . .

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose

I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, . . .

I'll never, no never, no never forsake!
["How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach

Our covenant to sacrifice

The words "sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven," from the hymn "Praise to the Man,"¹ always stir my soul. Sacrifice is defined as "the act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else more important or worthy."² Sacrifice comes in many forms and may not always be convenient. Latter-day Saints make a covenant with the Lord to sacrifice. By doing so, we surrender our will to His, dedicating our lives to building up His kingdom and serving His children.

Sacrifice of paying an honest tithe

For those who faithfully sacrifice through an honest tithe, the Lord has promised that He will open the windows of heaven.³ Not only does such sacrifice bless the individual and the family, but those voluntary contributions to the Church

provide the energizing resources that help the kingdom of the Lord to perform miracles every day. King Benjamin said: "Consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual."⁴ The faithful contribution of tithes is an outward expression of an inner commitment to sacrifice.

Sacrifice of obeying the law of the fast

Obeying the law of the fast is another form of sacrifice. The Lord asks us to set aside one Sunday a month to fast for two meals. We are invited to contribute the money saved on the cost of those two meals to the Church so it can assist those in need. Fasting and contributing a generous offering have a refining effect upon the soul. President Spencer W. Kimball

stated, "Upon practicing the law of the fast, one finds a personal well-spring of power to overcome self-indulgence and selfishness."⁵

Sacrifices in temple, family history work

Temple and family history work is a sacrifice of love. Faithful Saints contribute millions of hours compiling family history. They research microfilms and records, and with pens and computers they record dates and events. In the temple they perform sacred ordinances for their precious ancestry. Like the Savior, this is an expression of sacrifice—doing something for others which they cannot do for themselves.

A few years ago, while on a Church assignment in St. Petersburg, Russia, my wife, Mary-Jayne, and I had the unique opportunity to feel the blessings of family history work. We visited the vital statistics archive to view the Church's efforts to microfilm some of the records of western Russia. As I watched the archivist photographing pages of moldy old books from the city of Pskov, the names became real people. They seemed to leap right off the page and say, "You have found me. I am no longer lost. I know that someday, somewhere, someone in my family will take my name to the temple, and I will be baptized and endowed, and my wife and children will be sealed to me. Thank you!"

Joseph Smith's example of sacrifice

Joseph Smith's life was an example of unselfish sacrifice for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Though the Prophet Joseph suffered greatly, he remained optimistic and overcame many persecutions. Parley P. Pratt tells of a heartrending experience of being imprisoned with the Prophet in Missouri in the winter of 1838–39. Those six months of suffering and confinement tutored this foreordained, preeminent Prophet.

While the Prophet and his brethren were being held in a cold, unfinished court-

house in Richmond, Missouri, they had listened to the boasting and the despicable abuses the guards had committed among the "Mormons." Finally the Prophet could abide their sordid cursing no longer. Suddenly he stood and in "a voice of thunder" said:

"*SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still. . . .*"

" . . . He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained, and without a weapon; calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel." The quaking guards shrank into a corner, dropped their weapons, "begged his pardon, and remained quiet till a change of guards."

Brother Pratt writes further: "I have seen the ministers of justice, clothed in magisterial robes . . . ; I have witnessed a Congress in solemn session . . . ; I have tried to conceive of kings, of royal courts, of thrones and crowns . . . ; but dignity and majesty have I seen but *once*, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri."⁶

Some weeks after that event, in another dark hour, Joseph implored the Lord for guidance. The Lord answered, "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment."⁷ Then the Lord said these intriguing words to the Prophet: "The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name."⁸

Five years later, looking back on the incomplete construction of the Nauvoo Temple, Joseph knew his journey's end was near and that he was going "like a lamb to the slaughter," yet he was "calm as a summer's morning."⁹ With assurances for his protection, he submitted to one more arrest. However, his trust was dishonored. On June 27, 1844, he and his brother Hyrum were savagely murdered in Carthage Jail.

The ends of the earth have inquired after the name of Joseph Smith, and today the sun never sets on the worldwide membership of the restored Church of Jesus

Christ. These words about the martyred Abraham Lincoln also describe the majesty of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

Here was a man to hold against the world,
A man to match the mountains and the sea. . . .
And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down
As when a lordly cedar, green with boughs,
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.¹⁰

The Savior's atoning sacrifice

There can be no sacrifice greater than the atoning sacrifice of the Savior Jesus Christ. His Atonement, though incomprehensible and without equal, was this world's crowning event. Gratefully, because of His supreme offer of charity, there is no sting of death, and the grave has no victory.

Our challenge is to unselfishly sacrifice all that we have been given, including our will. Elder Neal A. Maxwell rightly said: "The submission of one's will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God's altar. The many other things we 'give' . . . are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us."¹¹

Sacrifice is ultimately a matter of the heart—the heart. "Behold, the Lord requir-eth the heart and a willing mind."¹² If we are caring, if we are charitable, if we are obedient to God and follow His prophets, our sacrifices will bring forth the blessings of heaven. "And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit."¹³

In an unusual way, I experienced a glimpse of our Savior's sacrifice of love for me. While in Jerusalem on Christmas Eve, my wife and I visited several of the sites where the Savior walked and taught. The agony suffered by the Savior brought deep

sorrow to us as we stood in the dungeon below the palace of Caiaphas. It was there that our Lord was flogged and scourged. We saw the chain holes in the wall. With tears we sang "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."¹⁴ He was so alone amongst vile perpetrators. With heavy hearts we prayed for courage to be His worthy servants.

Shortly thereafter, we visited the empty Garden Tomb. The words from the scriptures "He is not here: for he is risen"¹⁵ resounded through our hearts. Eliza R. Snow penned:

Although in agony he hung,
No murm'ring word escaped his tongue.
His high commission to fulfill, . . .
He magnified his Father's will.
He dies a sacrifice for sin, . . .
That man may live and glory win.¹⁶

The Savior's Atonement was the greatest act of charity known to mankind.

We sing these words from President Gordon B. Hinckley:

He lives, my one sure rock of faith,
The one bright hope of men on earth,
The beacon to a better way,
The light beyond the veil of death.¹⁷

I sorrow that a single drop of His blood was shed for me. I pray that someday I will meet the Savior. I will kneel and kiss the wounded hands and feet, and He will wipe away my tears. I pray that He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."¹⁸ Because of His mercy, we have hope, brothers and sisters. He is the "Fount of every blessing."¹⁹ Of this I testify in the name of the greatest example of sacrifice, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Hymns*, no. 27.
2. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* (1991), "sacrifice," 1272–73.
3. See Malachi 3:10.
4. Mosiah 2:41.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 121; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 80.

6. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (1985), 180.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 122:1.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 135:4.
10. Edwin Markham, "Lincoln, the Man of the People," in *A Treasury of Great Poems*, comp. Louis Untermeyer (1955), 994-95.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 24.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
13. 3 Nephi 9:20.
14. *Hymns*, no. 29.
15. Matthew 28:6.
16. "Behold the Great Redeemer Die," *Hymns*, no. 191.
17. "My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 135.
18. Matthew 25:21.
19. "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," *Hymns* (1948), no. 70.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Service of the Twelve abroad

Buenas tardes, hermanos y hermanas. I bring you greetings from the wonderful members and missionaries in Latin America. As many of you know, Elder and Sister Dallin Oaks and Elder and Sister Holland have been called to serve in the Philippines and Chile Areas of the Church, respectively. If the buzz of conversation is any indication, this has proven to be of more interest to the Church than one might have supposed. Whatever your speculation, I think I am authorized to assure you that we are not going to these distant outposts as two of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. For those looking for a "sign" in all this, please take it as a sign of a wonderful, growing, international Church, with members and missionaries spreading steadily across languages and continents. It is a joy to meet and serve with Latter-day Saints anywhere, near or far, at home or abroad, and we thank you for your prayers and your interest in the work.

Such service by the Twelve is, of course, not new, and I must say our generation has less challenge in going out than did our predecessors. Best of all, I have Sister Holland at my side, rather than leaving her at home to fend for herself and our children. Furthermore, I did

not have to do manual labor along the way in order to earn the fare to Santiago. We flew to our destination for a few hours in a modern jet airliner rather than sailing for weeks, even months, in the steerage of a ship. I did not leave suffering with chills and fever, cholera, or consumption, although I did have a cold and one leg of our flight was delayed an hour. I have hoped these hardships would qualify me to one day face Peter and Paul, Brigham and Wilford.

Sacrifices of early Church members

As did many of you, I grew up on the stories of the early brethren going to Canada, England, Scandinavia, continental Europe, the Pacific Islands, Mexico, Asia, and so on. More recently I have read of Parley P. Pratt's brief mission to Chile, where the Pratts lost and buried their infant son at Valparaíso. I have read of Elder Melvin J. Ballard, who was called to dedicate South America when that marvelous continent was still one new and rather overwhelming mission field. The service which builds a young, growing Church is not casually requested or whimsically given. On occasion the obstacles have been great and the price sometimes very dear.