

ordinances eternal in nature were performed. Of course their return journey was just as difficult. However, they had received the ordinances and blessings of the temple, and although their purses were empty, they themselves were filled with the spirit of the temple and with gratitude for the blessings they had received.<sup>2</sup> Now, many years later, our members in Manaus are rejoicing as they watch their own temple take shape on the banks of the Rio Negro. Temples bring joy to our faithful members wherever they are built.

10- Reports of the sacrifices made in order to receive the blessings found only in temples of God never fail to touch my heart and bring to me a renewed sense of thankfulness for temples.

11- May I share with you the account of Tihi and Tararaina Mou Tham and their 10 children. The entire family except for one daughter joined the Church in the early 1960s, when missionaries came to their island, located about 100 miles (160 km) south of Tahiti. Soon they began to desire the blessings of an eternal family sealing in the temple.

12- At that time the nearest temple to the Mou Tham family was the Hamilton New Zealand Temple, more than 2,500 miles (4,000 km) to the southwest, accessible only by expensive airplane travel. The large Mou Tham family, which eked out a meager living on a small plantation, had no money for airplane fare, nor was there any opportunity for employment on their Pacific island. So Brother Mou Tham and his son Gérard made the difficult decision to travel 3,000 miles (4,800 km) to work in New Caledonia, where another son was already employed.

13- The three Mou Tham men labored for four years. Brother Mou Tham alone returned home only once during that time, for the marriage of a daughter.

14- After four years, Brother Mou Tham and his sons had saved enough money to take the family to the New Zealand Temple. All who were members went except for one daughter, who was expecting a baby. They were sealed for time and eternity, an indescribable and joyful experience.

15- Brother Mou Tham returned from the temple directly to New Caledonia, where he worked for two more years to pay for the passage of the one daughter who had not been at the temple with them—a married daughter and her child and husband.

16- In their later years Brother and Sister Mou Tham desired to serve in the temple. By that time the Papeete Tahiti Temple had been constructed and dedicated, and they served four missions there.<sup>3</sup>

17- My brothers and sisters, temples are more than stone and mortar. They are filled with faith and fasting. They are built of trials and testimonies. They are sanctified by sacrifice and service.

18- The first temple to be built in this dispensation was the temple at Kirtland, Ohio. The Saints at the time were impoverished, and yet the Lord had commanded that a temple be built, so build it they did. Wrote Elder Heber C. Kimball of the experience, “The Lord only knows the scenes of poverty, tribulation and distress which we passed through to accomplish it.”<sup>4</sup> And then, after all that had been painstakingly completed, the Saints were forced to leave Ohio and their beloved temple. They eventually found refuge—although it would be temporary—on the banks of the Mississippi River in the state of Illinois. They named their settlement Nauvoo, and willing to give their all once again and with their faith intact, they erected another temple to their God. Persecutions raged, however, and with the Nauvoo Temple barely completed, they were driven from their homes once again, seeking refuge in a desert.

19- The struggle and the sacrifice began once again as they labored for 40 years to erect the Salt Lake Temple, which stands majestically on the block just south of those of us who are here today in the Conference Center.

20- Some degree of sacrifice has ever been associated with temple building and with temple attendance. Countless are those who have labored and struggled in order to obtain for themselves and for their families the blessings which are found in the temples of God.

21- Why are so many willing to give so much in order to receive the blessings of the temple? Those who understand the eternal blessings which come from the temple know that no sacrifice is too great, no price too heavy, no struggle too difficult in order to receive those blessings. There are never too many miles to travel, too many obstacles to overcome, or too much discomfort to

endure. They understand that the saving ordinances received in the temple that permit us to someday return to our Heavenly Father in an eternal family relationship and to be endowed with blessings and power from on high are worth every sacrifice and every effort.

22- Today most of us do not have to suffer great hardships in order to attend the temple. Eighty-five percent of the membership of the Church now live within 200 miles (320 km) of a temple, and for a great many of us, that distance is much shorter.

23- If you have been to the temple for yourselves and if you live within relatively close proximity to a temple, your sacrifice could be setting aside the time in your busy lives to visit the temple regularly. There is much to be done in our temples in behalf of those who wait beyond the veil. As we do the work for them, we will know that we have accomplished what they cannot do for themselves. President Joseph F. Smith, in a mighty declaration, stated, “Through our efforts in their behalf their chains of bondage will fall from them, and the darkness surrounding them will clear away, that light may shine upon them and they shall hear in the spirit world of the work that has been done for them by their children here, and will rejoice with you in your performance of these duties.”<sup>5</sup> My brothers and sisters, the work is ours to do.

24- In my own family, some of our most sacred and treasured experiences have occurred when we have joined together in the temple to perform sealing ordinances for our deceased ancestors.

25- If you have not yet been to the temple or if you *have* been but currently do not qualify for a recommend, there is no more important goal for you to work toward than being worthy to go to the temple. Your sacrifice may be bringing your life into compliance with what is required to receive a recommend, perhaps by forsaking long-held habits which disqualify you. It may be having the faith and the discipline to pay your tithing. Whatever it is, qualify to enter the temple of God. Secure a temple recommend and regard it as a precious possession, for such it is.

26- Until you have entered the house of the Lord and have received all the blessings which await you there, you have not obtained everything the Church has to offer. The all-important and crowning blessings of membership in the Church are those blessings which we receive in the temples of God.

27- Now, my young friends who are in your teenage years, always have the temple in your sights. Do nothing which will keep you from entering its doors and partaking of the sacred and eternal blessings there. I commend those of you who already go to the temple regularly to perform baptisms for the dead, arising in the very early hours of the morning so you can participate in such baptisms before school begins. I can think of no better way to start a day.

28- To you parents of young children, may I share with you some sage advice from President Spencer W. Kimball. Said he: “It would be a fine thing if ... parents would have in every bedroom in their house a picture of the temple so [their children] from the time [they are] infant[s] could look at the picture every day [until] it becomes a part of [their lives]. When [they reach] the age that [they need] to make [the] very important decision [concerning going to the temple], it will have already been made.”<sup>6</sup>

29- Our children sing in Primary:

***I love to see the temple.***

***I'll go inside someday.***

***I'll cov'nant with my Father;***

***I'll promise to obey.***<sup>7</sup>

30- I plead with you to teach your children of the temple's importance.

31- The world can be a challenging and difficult place in which to live. We are often surrounded by that which would drag us down. As you and I go to the holy houses of God, as we remember the covenants we make within, we will be more able to bear every trial and to overcome each temptation. In this sacred sanctuary we will find peace; we will be renewed and fortified.

32- Now, my brothers and sisters, may I mention one more temple before I close. In the not-too-distant future as new temples take shape around the world, one will rise in a city which came into being over 2,500 years ago. I speak of the temple which is now being built in Rome, Italy.

33- Every temple is a house of God, filling the same functions and with identical blessings and ordinances. The Rome Italy Temple, uniquely, is being built in one of the most historic locations in the world, a city where the ancient Apostles Peter and Paul preached the gospel of Christ and where each was martyred.

34- Last October, as we gathered on a lovely pastoral site in the northeast corner of Rome, it was my opportunity to offer a prayer of dedication as we prepared to break the ground. I felt impressed to call upon Italian senator Lucio Malan and Rome's vice-mayor Giuseppe Ciardi to be among the first to turn a shovelful of earth. Each had been a part of the decision to allow us to build a temple in their city.

35- The day was overcast but warm, and although rain threatened, not more than a drop or two fell. As the magnificent choir sang in Italian the beautiful strains of "The Spirit of God," one felt as though heaven and earth were joined in a glorious hymn of praise and gratitude to Almighty God. Tears could not be restrained.

36- In a coming day, the faithful in this, the Eternal City, will receive ordinances eternal in nature in a holy house of God.

37- I express my undying gratitude to my Heavenly Father for the temple now being built in Rome and for all of our temples, wherever they are. Each one stands as a beacon to the world, an expression of our testimony that God, our Eternal Father, lives, that He desires to bless us and, indeed, to bless His sons and daughters of all generations. Each of our temples is an expression of our testimony that life beyond the grave is as real and as certain as is our life here on earth. I so testify.

38- My beloved brothers and sisters, may we make whatever sacrifices are necessary to attend the temple and to have the spirit of the temple in our hearts and in our homes. May we follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who made the ultimate sacrifice for us, that we might have eternal life and exaltation in our Heavenly Father's kingdom. This is my sincere prayer, and I offer it in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord, amen.

1. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1902, 3.

2. See Vilson Felipe Santiago and Linda Ritchie Archibald, "From Amazon Basin to Temple," *Church News*, Mar. 13, 1993, 6.

3. See C. Jay Larson, "Temple Moments: Impossible Desire," *Church News*, Mar. 16, 1996, 16.

4. Heber C. Kimball, in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (1945), 67.

5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 247.

6. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 301.

7. Janice Kapp Perry, "I Love to See the Temple," *Children's Songbook*, 95.

## The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World

THOMAS S. MONSON  
*President of the Church*  
*April 2011 General Conference*

### The all-important and crowning blessings of membership in the Church are those blessings which we receive in the temples of God.

1- My beloved brothers and sisters, I extend my love and greetings to each of you and pray that our Heavenly Father will guide my thoughts and inspire my words as I speak to you today.

2- May I begin by making a comment or two concerning the fine messages we have heard this morning from Sister Allred and Bishop Burton and others pertaining to the Church's welfare program. As indicated, this year marks the 75th anniversary of this inspired program, which has blessed the lives of so many. It was my privilege to know personally some of those who pioneered this great endeavor—men of compassion and foresight.

3- As both Bishop Burton and Sister Allred and others mentioned, the bishop of the ward is given the responsibility to care for those in need who reside within the boundaries of his ward. Such was my privilege when I presided as a very young bishop in Salt Lake City over a ward of 1,080 members, including 84 widows. There were many who needed assistance. How grateful I was for the welfare program of the Church and for the help of the Relief Society and the priesthood quorums.

4- I declare that the welfare program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is inspired of Almighty God.

5- Now, my brothers and sisters, this conference marks three years since I was sustained as President of the Church. Of course they have been busy years, filled with many challenges but also with countless blessings. The opportunity I have had to dedicate and rededicate temples has been among the most enjoyable and sacred of these blessings, and it is concerning the temple that I wish to speak to you today.

6- During the October general conference in 1902, Church President Joseph F. Smith expressed in his opening address the hope that one day we would "have temples built in the various parts of the [world] where they are needed for the convenience of the people."<sup>1</sup>

7- During the first 150 years following the organization of the Church, from 1830 to 1980, 21 temples were built, including the temples in Kirtland, Ohio, and Nauvoo, Illinois. Contrast that with the 30 years since 1980, during which 115 temples were built and dedicated. With the announcement yesterday of 3 new temples, there are additionally 26 temples either under construction or in preconstruction stages. These numbers will continue to grow.

8- The goal President Joseph F. Smith hoped for in 1902 is becoming a reality. Our desire is to make the temple as accessible as possible to our members.

9- One of the temples currently under construction is in Manaus, Brazil. Many years ago I read of a group of over a hundred members who left Manaus, located in the heart of the Amazon rain forest, to travel to what was then the closest temple, located in São Paulo, Brazil—nearly 2,500 miles (4,000 km) from Manaus. Those faithful Saints journeyed by boat for four days on the Amazon River and its tributaries. After completing this journey by water, they boarded buses for another three days of travel—over bumpy roads, with very little to eat, and with nowhere comfortable to sleep. After seven days and nights, they arrived at the temple in São Paulo, where