

First Presidency Message**Sisters, Seek Everything That Is Good**

By President Spencer W. Kimball

A compilation of President Kimball's remarks at the dedication of the Monument to Women in Nauvoo, Illinois, 28–30 June 1978.

This is a joyous occasion and a day of fulfillment. Large numbers of women in many lands will be heralding this day—the day you sisters came together to dedicate this beautiful monument. I can imagine women all over the world getting together and reading of the events of this day, and they will be happy, for they have been looking forward to it a long time, and many of them have contributed toward its development.

Much has been said here about women and their program. I have thought, what was their work as the happenings of Nauvoo unfolded? What did they have to do to move, at a moment's notice, from one place to another, coming from Kirtland, Ohio, to Missouri, to Illinois, building, from the forests around them, homes that they would soon need to leave? Having been here only a short time, they were asked to move again.

The story is told of one little pioneer child who was watching her mother with great interest. The mother was weeping, tears running down her face. The child asked, "Mother, what's the matter with you?" And the mother said, "My dear, we will never see our home again." So these people had many experiences that were tender.

As they crossed the plains, beginning in Iowa, just across the river from here, it was very, very difficult. For many weeks and months before they left, the men came to the blacksmith shop to build wagons so that they could transport their families. The thought keeps recurring to me, what were the women doing all this time while the husbands were out trying to build a wagon, or to fix it so they could leave? Who did all the packing? Who did all the work of taking care of the family? The women—the mothers of Israel—were very, very busy.

I'm thinking of one man who left here with a wagon and his family, and before he got to Mt. Pisgah, Iowa, his wife had succumbed; she couldn't stand the rigors of the trip and she died. He carried her along until they came to Mt. Pisgah, where he could give her a proper burial. But he

must have passed away there, too, because his name is on the marker there at Mt. Pisgah.

The thing that appeals to me is that all the way across those plains—1,500 miles or more of hardship, hunger, cold, Indians, and the other problems that came to them—the women, the mothers, stood side by side with their husbands and suffered all the privations their husbands did. When they were building the temple here in Nauvoo, they were very, very busy sewing shirts for the workmen, preparing food, getting things together, and doing all the things women can do to make a place habitable.

I was very much impressed with the pageant we saw here last night, telling of the approximately one hundred thousand men and women who left England and Europe to come to America at the call of the Prophet to gather to Zion. We noticed, all through the program, that women had a very difficult role to play. They endured suffering and deprivation. And when the young husband in the pageant was called by the United States government with five hundred others to go to Mexico to fight as a member of the Mormon Battalion, it touched our hearts deeply.

The garden monument has reminded us again of the many powerful circles of influence of women and their great strength and importance in this world.

Let me read from a talk of President N. Eldon Tanner pertaining to women and their ideals. “The applause and homage of the world fades into insignificance when compared with the approbation of God and the expressions of love and appreciation which come from the hearts and lips of those who are nearest and dearest. ... Marriage is ordained of God, and we must do everything we can to strengthen the ties that bind, to strengthen our homes, and to prepare ourselves by exemplary living to teach our children the ways of God, which is the only way for them to find happiness here and eternal life hereafter.

“As we enumerate the many important responsibilities a woman has in connection with her duties as a wife, a mother, a homemaker, a sister, a sweetheart, or a good neighbor, it should be evident that these challenging responsibilities can satisfy her need to express her talents, her interests, her creativity, dedication, energy, and skill which so many seek to satisfy outside the home. It is impossible to estimate the lasting influence for good a woman can have in any of these roles. Let me remind us all of her primary responsibilities. ...

“A mother has far greater influence on her children than anyone else, and she must realize that every word she speaks, every act, every response, her attitude, even her appearance and manner of dress” has

an effect on the young people who grow up under her watchcare. (*The Role of Womanhood*, brochure, 1973.)

The attitudes and the hopes and the beliefs of the child are pretty well determined by what happens with the mother of the family. She is a copartner with God in bringing his spirit children into the world. Sometimes we think of the husband as being the other part to this copartnership, but that isn't entirely true. There could not possibly be children, there could not be offspring, if we depended wholly upon the fathers. The Lord had to make the program and give power to the seed that it might develop and bring forth children, so parents are copartners with God in bringing his spirit children into the world. No greater honor could be given to a woman than to assist in this divine plan. I wish to say without equivocation that a woman will find no greater satisfaction and joy and peace and make no greater contribution to mankind than in being a wise and worthy woman and raising good children.

My thoughts go back to one of the scriptures that is well known to you, and one which we have apparently almost forgotten in our day. The Lord said women have claim upon their husbands for their maintenance until their husbands be taken (see D&C 83:2). Women are to take care of the family—the Lord has so stated—to be an assistant to the husband, to work with him, but not to earn the living, except in unusual circumstances. Men ought to be men indeed and earn the living under normal circumstances.

We are interested in our sisters having everything that is good. We believe in having all these blessings—culture, refinement, education, knowledge, perfection—so that the mothers of our children may be able to rear and train them in righteousness.

We will come frequently to see this beautiful garden with its bronze figures, and we will contemplate and remember what they actually mean and what the sculptors have intended that they should show. We think that the Relief Society has done a marvelous thing in establishing this so that we may enjoy it.

All women of the Church belong to the Relief Society, whether they enroll personally or not. We want to call that to their attention, that they may enjoy all the benefits of the Relief Society and that they may go forward, working with the other women of the world, younger and older. Their weekly commitments are important. We hope that the sisters of the Relief Society will not overlook the fact that their power and influence is greatly extended if they attend their weekly meetings and contribute in the proper way with all the other sisters.

The sisters have asked that I give a dedicatory prayer.

Our Father in Heaven, we, thy loved and devoted servants and handmaidens, congregate on this, the giant horseshoe of land extending into the great Mississippi River, the Father of Waters, the great mainstream of the greatest drainage system in North America, to dedicate unto thee certain portions of this area to the memory of thy prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., who founded and was leader of thy people at this important stage of their mortal existence. We are grateful, our Heavenly Father, for all of thy blessings that have been bestowed upon us through this period of the world's history. We are grateful for the restoration of the gospel of thy Son, Jesus Christ, which has a most inspiring history. We are grateful that thy Beloved Son, the Lord, Jesus Christ, and thee, our Father, didst together manifest themselves unto the young prophet in the Sacred Grove, in the vicinity of the Hill Cumorah, in what is now New York state, and that thou didst introduce to this prophet and to the world that would follow him the gospel of thy Son. We are grateful to thee that thou didst follow thy personal ministrations to the prophet by sending three of the ancient apostles, Peter, James, and John, to bring back to the Church many of the priesthood blessings and the apostleship. We are thankful, too, that thou didst reveal and introduce John the Baptist to return to the earth the Aaronic Priesthood, with all its gifts and blessings, long withheld from the world.

Our Father, we are grateful to thee for the numerous ministrations of thy self and thy prophet and thy devoted servants, with all of the blessings that have been so important to the people of this world through all time. We are grateful that thou didst lead thy persecuted exiles from contiguous lands to this beautiful area of the world. We are grateful that thy prophet did find this land—mostly marshland—where a great city could be founded. Our Father, we are grateful, too, that the Angel Moroni did come, repeatedly, to thy servant Joseph Smith to identify for him the plates of the Book of Mormon. We are grateful, our Heavenly Father, for all of these blessings from thee.

We are grateful, again, our Heavenly Father, that the early-day exiles from Kirtland, Ohio, from Adam-ondi-Ahman in Missouri, and from other places, did finally find their way to this beautiful location, this acreage which they found, tree and bush-covered and somewhat a marshland, which could be drained and made into a beautiful developing community by thy people. We are grateful, our Father, that the Prophet Joseph and his associates did find this place, this then-uninviting area but a place of great possibilities, where solid ground could be reclaimed, where rude huts were first built, and where later, comfortable and attractive homes could be erected. We are grateful, indeed, our Heavenly Father, for the intrepid, courageous souls who settled this land, both men and women. And we are grateful, our Father,

that many of our ancestors could give, through their sacrifice and hardships, their power and their strength to create this, the home of the church of the living God for those few years. Our Father, we are grateful that these mighty souls were able, in seven short years, to develop a great commonwealth in these surroundings, on the shores of this, one of the longest rivers in the world.

Our Heavenly Father, we recognize the glorious lives and saddening deaths of many of our ancestors at this place. We recognize the courage and strength of those who built the city and finally erected a magnificent temple on these grounds. We are grateful that it could be dedicated to thee even before it was totally finished and before it went up in flames at the hands of an arsonist. And from this area began the great, perilous trek across the trackless plains, with suffering and want, so our people could found a new home in the Rockies.

We are grateful, our Heavenly Father, that this land has been preserved in much of its original beauty. We are grateful that under the direction of thy Son, much of the beauty and glory has been restored and some of the buildings have taken life again. We are grateful, our Heavenly Father, that the Relief Society organization with its numerous wives and mothers and patriots and pilgrims has found the place to beautify and to memorialize the great work done by the Prophet Joseph Smith when he gave the keys to his wife Emma and other sisters and organized them into a world-important, functioning organization. It makes permanent and continuous the program of the wonderful women's organization, memorializing the world-renowned work and service of the women of the Church. We are grateful, also, for this beautiful visitors' center, to apprise the world of the continuity of the program of the women and of the Church. We are very grateful, our Heavenly Father, for the statues that have been so artistically produced and placed here in this park, to keep in permanent remembrance the beauty of the people and the sisters and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt bless this land and sanctify it and make it beautiful and holy, and let it be a constant memory of all that has been done and attempted in this area to magnify thee, our Father. We ask thee to bless this property and all that pertains to this holy place. We now dedicate all for thy use and thy purposes and for the value of thy kingdom here on the earth. And now we dedicate this unto thee, our Heavenly Father, in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.