

REVERENCING

Latter-day Saint youth in South Africa know the house of the Lord is worthy of their deepest respect.

BY PAUL VANDENBERGHE
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Naledi Mqokozo has been coming to the temple grounds since she was small. And now that she is older and often in the temple, you could say the temple is in her—in her heart and in her thoughts. “I have a picture in my room of the Johannesburg temple,” says Naledi, 17. “I put the picture up on my wall so I can always think clean thoughts and help keep the presence of the Spirit.”

It’s a little rainy on this morning in Johannesburg, South Africa. But the rain has not dampened the happy mood of Naledi and the other youth from the Ennerdale Branch, Johannesburg South Africa Stake, who have come to the temple to perform baptisms for the dead. Naledi is here because she “wanted an opportunity to see the temple again and to experience the Spirit of the Lord.” To Naledi, a day at the temple is not just another day. “This is a special occasion and a special moment,” she says, “so we should dress and act in a special way.”

Naledi understands that the temple is a sacred place: “We should be very reverent in the temple because it is the house of God and it has the Holy Spirit inside. So we should prepare ourselves and carry ourselves in a moral way and be very clean and respectful.”



Holiness to the Lord

Temples are literally houses of the Lord. In fact, inscribed on every temple are the words, “The House of the Lord, Holiness to the Lord.” They are the most sacred places of worship on earth. Because the temple is holy and because the work that is performed there is holy, everyone who attends the temple must be clean and worthy. In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Savior promised:

“Inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, . . . my glory shall rest upon it;

“Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God” (D&C 97:15–16).

Does this mean that everyone who goes to the temple will see God? Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

“It is true that some have actually seen the Savior, but when one consults the dictionary, he learns that there are many other meanings of the word *see*, such as coming to know Him, discerning Him, recognizing Him and His work, perceiving His importance, or coming to understand Him.

“Such heavenly enlightenment and blessings are available to each of us.”¹

Louis Groenewald, president of the Johannesburg temple, says that the youth of the Church can expect to learn more about the Savior and more about themselves

THE TEMPLE



Opposite page: Letsoalo Tumi stands outside the Johannesburg temple. Above: Henry Mkhonza sets a good example of reverence. Inset (left to right): Henry Mkhonza, Grace Nkosi, Palesa Mqokozo, and Lindiwe Morei meet with temple president Louis Groenewald.

in these holy buildings. “The temple not only provides a sacred opportunity to do work for the dead,” he says. “It also helps prepare our youth to have a fulness of life in this life and in the next.” The blessings from serving in the temple are many.

Four Great Blessings

First, says President Groenewald, as youth attend the temple they will have the privilege



Youth who attend the temple have the privilege of coming closer to the Savior in His house.



of coming closer to their Father in Heaven and the Savior in His house. This is what Elder Haight spoke about when he said that the temple is a place to come to know the Lord.

Second is the opportunity of serving unselfishly. President Groenewald says that this kind of service “is the basis of charity and the Spirit of Christ.” He goes on to say: “Hopefully the youth will have many experiences of coming to do baptisms for the dead, and then this will eventually lead them to receive their own endowment and the sacred sealing opportunity. These ordinances open the portals to unlimited blessings in the eternities.”

Temple ordinances are the third great blessing President Groenewald points out: “Without these ordinances we cannot obtain a fulness of life or exaltation.” The endowment and celestial marriage are two of these ordinances. The endowment consists of a series of instructions and includes covenants, or promises, we make to live righteously and follow the Savior’s teachings. Celestial marriage is the temple



Top: Naledi Mqokozo keeps a picture of the Johannesburg temple in her room to help her feel the Spirit. Above (clockwise from left): Roxanne Cockrell, Vincent Maiete, Kyle Zeeman, and Jimmy Plaattjes enjoy the temple grounds.

ordinance that seals a husband and wife together with their children for eternity.

And fourth, “the temple puts everything together,” explains President Groenewald. He says that everything the youth are taught in the Church is reinforced and brought together in the temple. And all those teachings revolve around the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation. In the temple, “the gospel becomes one great, whole experience.”

Temple Peace

“This is the Lord’s house, so we need to show respect and be at peace,” says Vincent Maiete, 17, of the Ridgeway Ward. Vincent

came to the temple early in the morning along with other youth from his ward, including Roxanne Cockrell, Jimmy Plaatjies, and Kyle Zeeman.

Roxanne, 14, says, “It was my choice to come to the temple instead of sleeping.” But getting up early was worth it. She’s glad she chose to perform baptisms for the dead along with her friends. “I helped people. It was a good experience.”

Kyle, 17, looks around at the beautiful grounds of the temple. Everything is lightly damp after the early morning rains. “There is a serenity here that you don’t feel anywhere else,” he says. “Sometimes you have to make small sacrifices to come here, but it’s good to come. I want to marry in the temple.”

“Having a temple here in South Africa means a lot,” says Jimmy, 20. “We are able to perform these special ordinances, being baptized for our family members who have passed on. It’s a big blessing for us. The Spirit, especially when you are inside the temple, is strong. Even when you are outside, you can just feel the peace.”

Dressed for Respect

Palesa Mqokozo, 14, of the Ennerdale Branch, always wears her best clothing when she comes to the temple. “I dress this way out of respect for our Heavenly Father,” she explains. She has that respect because of the way she feels when she comes to the temple. “When you enter the house of the Lord, you feel no temptation and you know that everything is right here. You are not going to go wrong.”

President Groenewald smiles as he says, “The youth come to the temple dressed appropriately. What is proper dress? It is your best Sunday dress.” It is the same clothing you would wear to sacrament meeting. “Their dress should be neat, appropriate for Sunday, the best they have,” he says. “That is the standard.”

Henry Mkhonza, 18, also from the Ennerdale Branch, stands with his hands folded as he talks about the temple. Henry looks the part of a missionary—a calling he has



“Take advantage of the opportunity of being baptized in behalf of the dead. And then let that sacred experience become an anchor to

your lives, that you so conduct yourselves at all times and in all circumstances that, at the proper time, you may secure a special and restricted credit card with the Lord, even a recommend to His holy House, there to enjoy all of its blessings and privileges.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Keeping the Temple Holy,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 49.

been preparing for for a long time. “Reverence is what people see—the way you dress, the way you act. It reflects a lot upon who you are,” he explains. “If you are reverent in the way you dress, you don’t really have to say much. People can tell from that what is important to you.”

“There is a significance in the way we dress,” agrees Stephanie Madhav, 16, of the Ennerdale Branch, “because the temple is so magnificent. It is the house of the Lord, and so we dress as if we were in the presence of the Lord.”

What these youth have come to understand is that proper dress and grooming show their respect and reverence. “It all becomes symbolic of a great heritage,” says President Groenewald. “For example, it’s not about the white shirt; really it’s about the symbol of purity. Those who don’t see clearly see the *symbol* as the *substance*. A white shirt is simply a symbol of purity. It’s not a case of fashion or style; it’s a case of my indicating outwardly that in my heart and mind I want to follow the living prophets.”

Prepared for the Future

The peace in heart and mind, the joy from service, the confidence in self are clear in the faces of these young men and young women from Johannesburg. Because they have a firm sense of the sacred nature of the temple and the blessings that are available in these holy houses, they are examples of righteousness to others.

The blessings of the temple are evident in the lives of the youth in South Africa, just as President Groenewald promised. “The youth are developing a sense of their chosen sisterhood and brotherhood,” he says. “They are becoming more confident to go out and do the work of the Lord. This feeling will carry them through thick and thin. Yes, at the temple, the Lord is preparing the youth for their future.” **NE**

NOTE

1. “Temples and Work Therein,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 59.