

Tabernacle Memories

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First Counselor in the First Presidency

As this building is rededicated today, may we pledge to rededicate our lives to the work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



My brothers and sisters, both here in the Tabernacle and listening by various means throughout the world, it is a joy for me to stand before you once again in this magnificent building. In this setting one cannot help but feel the spirit of the early Saints who constructed this beautiful house of worship, as well as all those who over the years have labored to preserve and beautify it.

I have been thinking recently of the many significant events in my life which are associated with the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Although there are far too many for me to mention today,

I would like to share just a few.

I recall the time I approached baptism, when I was eight years of age. My mother talked with me about repentance and about the meaning of baptism; and then, on a Saturday in September of 1935, she took me on a streetcar to the Tabernacle baptistry which, until recently, was here in this building. At the time it was not as customary as it is now for fathers to baptize their children, since the ordinance was generally performed on a Saturday morning or afternoon, and many fathers were working at their daily professions or trades. I dressed in white and was baptized. I remember that day as though it were yesterday and the happiness I felt at having had this ordinance performed.

Over the years and particularly during the time I served as a bishop, I witnessed many other baptisms in the Tabernacle font. Each was a special and inspiring occasion, and each served to remind me of my own baptism.

In April of 1950, my wife, Frances, and I were in attendance at the Sunday afternoon session of general conference, held in this building. President George Albert Smith was the President of the Church, and in closing the conference, he delivered an inspiring and powerful message concerning the

Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Before he concluded his remarks, however, he sounded a prophetic warning. Said he: "It will not be long until calamities will overtake the human family unless there is speedy repentance. It will not be long before those who are scattered over the face of the earth by millions will die . . . because of what will come" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 169). These were alarming words, for they came from a prophet of God.

Two and a half months after that general conference, on June 25, 1950, war broke out in Korea—a war which would eventually claim an estimated 2.5 million lives. This event prompted me to reflect on the statement President Smith made as we sat in this building that spring day.

I attended many general conference sessions in the Tabernacle, always being edified and inspired by the words of the Brethren. Then, in October of 1963, President David O. McKay invited me to his office and extended to me a call to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He asked that I keep this sacred call confidential, revealing it to no one except my wife, and that I be present for general conference in the Tabernacle the next day, when my name would be read aloud.

The following morning I came into the Tabernacle not knowing exactly where to sit. Being a member of the Priesthood Home Teaching Committee, I determined that I would be seated among the members of that committee. I noticed a friend of mine by the name of Hugh Smith, who was also a member of the Priesthood Home Teaching Committee. He motioned for me to sit by him. I couldn't say a thing to him about my call, but I sat down.

During the session, the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were sustained and, of course, my name was read. I believe the walk



from the audience to the stand was the longest walk of my life.

It has been nearly 44 years since that conference. Until the year 2000, when the Conference Center was dedicated, it was my privilege to deliver 101 general conference messages from the pulpit in this building, not including those given at general auxiliary conferences and other meetings held here. My remarks today bring the total to 102. I have had many spiritual experiences over the years as I have stood here.

During the message I delivered at general conference in October 1975, I felt prompted to direct my remarks to a little girl with long, blonde hair, who was seated in the balcony of this building. I called the attention of the audience to her and felt a freedom of expression which testified to me that this small girl needed the message I

had in mind concerning the faith of another young lady.

At the conclusion of the session, I returned to my office and found waiting for me a young child by the name of Misti White, together with her grandparents and an aunt. As I greeted them, I recognized Misti as the one in the balcony to whom I had directed my remarks. I learned that as her eighth birthday approached, she was in a quandary concerning whether or not to be baptized. She felt she would like to be baptized, and her grandparents, with whom she lived, wanted her to be baptized, but her less-active mother suggested she wait until she was 18 years of age to make the decision. Misti had told her grandparents, "If we go to conference in Salt Lake City, maybe Heavenly Father will let me know what I should do."

Misti and her grandparents and her aunt had traveled from California to Salt Lake City for conference and were able to obtain seats in the Tabernacle for the Saturday afternoon session. This was where they were seated when my attention was drawn to Misti and my decision made to speak to her.

As we continued our visit after the session, Misti's grandmother said to me, "I think Misti has something she would like to tell you." This sweet young girl said, "Brother Monson, while you were speaking in conference, you answered my question. I want to be baptized!"

The family returned to California, and Misti was baptized and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through all the years since, Misti has remained true and faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Fourteen years ago, it was my privilege to perform her temple marriage to a fine young man, and together they are rearing five beautiful children, with another one on the way.

My brothers and sisters, I feel privileged to be standing once again at the Tabernacle pulpit in this building which holds for me such wonderful memories. The Tabernacle is a part of my life—a part which I cherish.

I have been honored and pleased during my lifetime to raise my arm to the square in sustaining nine Church Presidents as their names have been read. This morning I joined you in sustaining once again our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. It is a joy and a privilege to serve by his side, along with President Faust.

As this building is rededicated today, may we pledge to rededicate our lives to the work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who so willingly died that we might live. May we follow in His footsteps each day, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■