

WE ARE BETTER BECAUSE OF HIM

BY PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON

President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Dear family, brothers, sisters, and friends, I am honored to speak at the funeral of my leader, mentor, and dear friend, President Thomas S. Monson.

My feelings are tender for this man I have known and loved for more than 50 years. On behalf of all General Authorities and General Officers, we proclaim our love and gratitude for President Monson. To his family—Thomas, Ann, and Clark, along with their spouses, children, and grandchildren—we also express our deepest love and sympathy. We greatly appreciate the heartfelt messages spoken by Ann M. Dibb, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and President Henry B. Eyring and beautifully sung by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

President Monson lived a remarkable life. There will never be another like him! There have been and will yet be many tears of separation shed by each of us. We will really miss him! But our sorrow is assuaged by the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. His bitter cup makes our bereavement bearable. His Atonement makes the Resurrection a reality. His Atonement makes it possible for families to be together forever in Heavenly Father's plan. We rejoice in knowing that President Monson is reunited with his dear Frances and that one day we may also resume our associations with them.

Since President Monson's passing, memories of his life have been so very well prepared and presented by the media. These have been

thrilling to me. In addition, dignitaries and friends throughout the world have sent their condolences and expressed profound admiration.

This is to be expected in behalf of a man who influenced the lives and shaped the destiny of millions of people around the world. We are all better because of him. And the Church is better because of him. He leaves a legacy of growth. Since his ordination as an Apostle in 1963, Church membership has risen from 2.1 million to nearly 16 million. The number of currently serving missionaries has grown from 5,700 to more than 70,000. And temples—then only 12 in number—now number 159, and more are coming.

But with all of this, President Monson constantly focused on the individual. He reminded





Family members lay their yellow roses on President Monson's casket in a final farewell.

us with expressions such as “Send a note to the friend you’ve been neglecting,” “Give your child a hug,” “Say ‘I love you’ more often,” “Always express your thanks,” and “Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved.”

President Monson never sought the limelight. In a world saturated with “selfies,” he modeled selflessness. He personified the statement of the Lord, who said, “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”¹ He gave his own time to visit, bless, and love others. Even in his waning season, he continued to minister, making frequent visits to hospitals and senior centers.

Throughout the years, I shared many cherished experiences with President Monson. May I relate just one that shows how he used persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned to achieve tremendous goals.²

In 1985, I was given responsibility for the Church in Europe, an assignment President Monson held for many years. I was his junior companion in much of that challenging work.

Behind the Iron Curtain, President Monson had worked for nearly two decades to establish trust with government leaders of the German Democratic Republic.

In 1988, he and I traveled with a small delegation of our local Church leaders to its capital city of East Berlin. In this country that had been closed to missionary work for more than 50 years, we felt impressed to ask permission for missionaries to serve there. We also asked for permission for worthy elders from that country to have opportunity to serve the Lord as missionaries elsewhere.

This critical meeting was held on the gray and dreary day of October 28, 1988. We met with Erich Honecker, chairman of the state council for the German Democratic Republic, and his staff. He started with a long speech about the merits of communism. (All we could do was listen.)

Then, under the flashing of countless cameras, President Monson was invited to speak. He boldly but kindly presented his message of how and why our missionaries would be good for that country.

After President Monson’s plea, all awaited Chairman Honecker’s response with breathless anxiety. I will never forget his reply: “President Monson, we know you! We have watched you for many years! We trust you! Your request regarding missionaries is approved!”

As we left that meeting, clouds parted for a moment and the sun shone brightly upon us. It seemed that heaven was signaling approval upon what had just transpired.

Now, as President Monson’s mortal life has come to a close, we feel that the Lord’s blessings to His prophet Nephi apply equally to our beloved, departed leader:

“Blessed art thou, [President Thomas S. Monson], for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unweariness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.

“And now, because thou hast done this with such unweariness, behold, I will bless thee [and thy family] forever.”³

I solemnly proclaim that President Thomas S. Monson was a prophet of God. He taught as a prophet and testified as a prophet. He had the courage of a prophet and the kindness of a prophet. He received revelation as a prophet and responded as a prophet. He lived as a prophet and died as a prophet, sealing with his life his testimony that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that His Church has been restored to the earth, and that this sacred work is true. To the testimony he bore so many times from this pulpit, I humbly add mine, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 23:11.
2. See *Doctrine and Covenants* 121:41.
3. Helaman 10:4–5.