

# LIGHT REFLECTIONS

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## For All the Saints

When I was in the MTC, our district had a theme song of sorts: the hymn “For All the Saints.” We sang it often and with brio. We sang it again in the mission home, tearfully, at the opposite end of our mission. We resonated both with the rousing words by William Walsham How and with the exhilarating music of Ralph Vaughan Williams. It is a paean of praise for those who have gone before, as well as a promise to maintain their cause in our own time and season.

*Oh, may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,  
Fight as the Saints who nobly fought of old[.]<sup>1</sup>*

The hymn still stirs my soul. I was pleased to sing it as a campus community at the beginning of yesterday’s forum, and I was doubly pleased to hear John and Susan Tanner explain its connection with All Hallows’ Eve (October 31) and All Saints’ Day (November 1).<sup>2</sup> John and Susan further connected the hymn with Section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants—President Joseph F. Smith’s soaring vision of the redemption of the dead, which was formally adopted as canonized scripture on October 31 (Halloween!), 1918.

I have always found two aspects of this revelation deeply moving. First, when the Savior’s eternal spirit left His mortal body, He went from being surrounded by those who hated Him, jeered Him, and called for His death, to being hailed and greeted by those who across several millennia had loved, worshiped, and adored Him—hailed and greeted by “an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus . . . and had suffered tribulation in their Redeemer’s name” (D&C 138:12-13). I’m grateful

“for all the Saints” who preceded the Savior’s mortal ministry and acclaimed His advent to the spirit world.

Second, the very moment the Savior had perfected His infinite offering and submitted to “the will of the Father in all things” (3 Ne. 11:11) in mortality, He immediately went again about His Father’s business, spreading grace and healing, salvation and redemption “among those who [were] in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead” (D&C 138:57).

*Now He bids them all arise,  
Now He calls them one by one,  
Fixes them with fiery eyes,  
Says, “My work is not yet done.”<sup>3</sup>*

I stand all amazed at the Savior’s cosmic love, astonished by His eternal devotion to the salvation of every solitary one of our Father in heaven’s children.

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At BYU we have reason to be grateful—on All Saints’ Day and always—for the humble followers of Christ whose labors on this campus preceded our own. A recent *Y News* feature highlighted research by Professor Jeff Bednar in the Marriott School of Business about “organizational ghosts: admired former leaders [who] become embodied prototypes of the organization’s values and identity [and] who continue to have outsized influence long after they’ve departed.”<sup>4</sup> The article mentions President Spencer W. Kimball and Coach Lavell Edwards as examples of such figures at BYU, but there are many others, whom we rightly remember and revere.

But there are many more—unheralded in their own time and all but forgotten now—who merit commemoration and thanks. In the first message of last month’s general conference, Elder David A. Bednar recalled President J. Reuben Clark’s tribute to “Them of the Last Wagon,” as well as President Howard W. Hunter’s commendation of inconspicuous Saints who are “no less serviceable” to the Lord and His Kingdom than are figures of greater renown. Elder Bednar added his own tribute to ordinary, garden-variety Latter-day Saints who are nonetheless pressing forward “in the path of their duty” (Hel. 15:5). Elder Bednar’s message reminded me further of

President Boyd K. Packer’s stirring salute to “the rank and file of the Church.”<sup>5</sup>

For nearly a century and a half, the mission of Brigham Young University has been heroically advanced through the indispensable contributions of rank-and-file faculty members and staff who were “no less serviceable” in their time than those whose names are better known. “Deep down in the heart of this great school,” said one of Karl G. Maeser’s inaugural students, “there are noble deeds untold.”<sup>6</sup> For all such untold deeds—and for all such unknown Saints—I offer grateful thanks.

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<sup>1</sup> “For All the Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 82.

<sup>2</sup> John S. Tanner and Susan W. Tanner, “Fulfilling the Dream,” *BYU Forum*, October 31, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Justin Collings, “Day of Deliverance” (unpublished).

<sup>4</sup> Carl Stengel, “BYU Business Professor is Hunting a Different Type of Ghost this Halloween,” *Y News*, October 25, 2023, <https://news.byu.edu/byu-business-professor-is-hunting-a-different-type-of-ghost-this-halloween>.

<sup>5</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “A Tribute to the Rank and File of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1980; see also Boyd K. Packer, “The Least of These,” *Ensign*, November 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph B. Keller, quoted in John S. Tanner, “Learning in the Light,” in John S. Tanner (ed), *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams* (Brigham Young University, 2022) 266.