

## Letters

The letters column primarily offers "Herald" readers the opportunity to comment on ideas presented in earlier issues. Letters should be brief and free from statements that reflect on the integrity of individuals. Address "The Editor, Saints Herald, P.O. Box HH, Independence, Missouri 64055."

### JANUARY 1 HERALD

On Thursday night, December 27, I received a telephone call from the presiding elder of our congregation in Jackson, Ohio. The city police had just arrested a fifteen-year-old boy for vandalizing the nursery classroom at our church and several cars belonging to residents of the neighborhood. There seemed to be no reason for these senseless acts, other than the boy was apparently intoxicated at the time.

Fortunately, damage to the church was minimal, although there was a lot of broken glass in the toy box and playpen. A speaker connecting to the main sanctuary had been destroyed, but everyone agreed that the damage could have been a lot worse.

Brother Ervin called me to let me know what had happened since, besides being a priesthood member, I am a reporter for the local triweekly paper, and a part of my beat is to cover police department news. Jackson is a small town—population 6,600—and there are very few secrets, so Brother Ervin told me who the boy was. A long-haired, sullen kid with an earring in one ear, he delivered the Columbus paper to my door every day.

My first reaction was I would cancel the paper and register my complaint to the circulation manager. My wife, who had spent a lot of time in the nursery with our two-year-old son, shared my view.

As soon as I had expressed this anger, however, I became upset with myself. How could I presume to be a Christian and not forgive this boy? The next day I went to the church, photographed the damage for the paper, and went to talk to Brother Ervin, who was cleaning up the broken glass. While we were still disgusted with the thoughtlessness of the youth, both of us had cooled down to the point where we realized that other members of our congregation would be upset and it would be necessary for the priesthood to take the lead in trying to guide them to a positive response.

I returned home and looked through the evening mail, where the January 1 issue of the *Herald* awaited me. In it were two articles and a poem on forgiveness. Reading these started me thinking about my response to the vandalism incident.

When I started to prepare for the senior high church school class I teach, I dis-

covered that the lesson was also on forgiveness. I realized that the boy who was arrested was the same age as some of the well-scrubbed, well-behaved teenagers I have in my class. And so, on Sunday, December 30, I presented the matter to them: can we forgive this boy enough to invite him to attend our church?

I placed three blank greeting cards in the classroom, and said, "I know how to get in touch with the boy. If any of you would like to invite him to church school, these cards are for that purpose." I then left to help prepare for the next service.

When I returned, one girl had written an invitation to the youth to come to church. I later found out an adult member of the congregation had extended a similar invitation to both the boy and his family.

Through a number of coincidences the court official asked branch representatives what suggestions they would have for sentencing the boy. One member suggested, half-seriously, "Why not sentence him to Sunday School with us for awhile? Maybe we can show him what goes on here and can teach him something that will help him."

To make a long story short, the officials liked the idea, and now this young man is attending services at our church and will continue to do so for the next nine months.

Our new friend made his first appearance January 20. There had been tremendous preparation for his coming by prayerful members of the congregation, and he was met, on his first day, by a spirit of love that may have been beyond his comprehension. There was no denying the smile that came across his face when the congregation burst into a chorus of "Happy Birthday" for him. We had learned he had turned sixteen just two days before, so we included him in our list of salutes to members' birthdays and anniversaries.

We are trying to pace ourselves carefully in our relationship with this young man. We have one goal: simply to love him for the time he is with us, and give him something good to take with him all his life.

When he has "done his time" with us, we realize we may never see him again at church. But we also realize that there could be an exciting and happy end to this story. No matter how it turns out, this is a mountaintop experience for all of us Saints in Jackson, Ohio.

We will appreciate prayers of support from all our brothers and sisters in the World Church.

Jackson, Ohio

Clifton Spires, Jr.

I find I must take exception to some comments made in the book review of *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*. Reading the review left me with the distinct impression that Joseph Smith, Jr., prophet-seer and founder of the original Latter Day Saint church, quite possibly either had been a polygamist or had taught that polygamy was sanctioned by divine revelation. This casts considerable doubt on the character of the Martyr.

In view of all the evidence that has been presented through numerous sources I am completely convinced that Joseph Smith, Jr., was not a polygamist, nor did he ever preach or teach this doctrine. I do not like to see articles in our church publication which even faintly suggest the possibility of there being some truth to the claims of the Utah Mormon church.

Port Angeles, Washington Laurel N. Oppelt

I was delighted to see the "Midway Report" on the Faith to Grow program but distressed after reading the article.

Nowhere did I see in what new areas the church was established or how many new branches were formed. I did not see any evidence of increased financial accountability or contributions. Where were the converts listed or baptisms given? How many calls were made to the priesthood? What evidences of the outpourings of gifts of the Holy Spirit were cited? In short, I read the entire article and was never informed of any of the above mentioned. When will the real "Midway Report" be given?

Syracuse, Nebraska

Geo. D. Fannon

### NOTE OF APPRECIATION

I must write to say how much I enjoy reading the *Herald*. The December 1 issue was excellent. I read and reread all of the articles ("The Love Connection" was a masterpiece). I am a seventy-five-year-old widow and live twenty-five miles from the nearest branch, so reading church material is very important to me. I was converted after reading the Book of Mormon, given to me by a friend in Kansas City; I went there to be baptized.

The group at Sparta, Illinois, is small, but we have a wonderful spirit present every time we meet. We are studying *The Life and Ministry of Jesus*, as teacher of the class, I have learned much.

My life has been made full by the reading and studying I have done. Keep the *Herald* full of good articles.

Ava, Illinois

Grace Lively