

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TEMPLE DEDICATED

The Colonia Juárez temple was Mexico's second operating temple after its dedication on Saturday and Sunday, March 6 and 7, 1999. This historic date also marked the completion of the last of the original three small temples announced during the October 1997 general conference, the first outside the United States. The other two smaller temples already in operation were in Monticello, Utah, and Anchorage, Alaska.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DEDICATION

Many people had assisted in the final preparations for this weekend, including the construction crew, many volunteers from the temple district, the local temple committee, community agencies, General Authorities from Salt Lake City, the newly called temple presidency, and local Church leaders. All worked together



President and Sister Hinckley arrive before the dedication.

for one great cause—the dedication of “our temple on the hill.” Deadlines were miraculously met and all was in order for the arrival of President Gordon B. Hinckley and other Church leaders. Still, a myriad of last-minute details needed to be finalized, and to accomplish this, the subcommittees, appointed a few months earlier, would play a key role.

Invitations to admit the right number of persons to the four dedicatory sessions needed to be provided. This would require careful planning and organization. These recommends would be issued to members in the temple district by local bishops. The number of tickets distributed to each unit was based on its reported level of activity.

The Temple Department authorized a change in the procedure for issuing dedicatory invitations to members from outside the temple district. Heretofore, such members had requested invitations from Church headquarters in Salt Lake City; the recommend would then be sent to their local bishop, who would give it to them following a worthiness interview. Because of the large number of out-of-town members who would want to attend this particular dedication (people with roots in the colonies), they were



*An invitation to the
Colonia Juárez temple
dedication.*

asked to call Joel de la Cruz, ticketing subcommittee chairman, ahead of time for reservations. He contacted Kent Romney, who made his business office telephone and fax available for this purpose. With the assistance of his secretary, Conchita Jurado, Romney helped organize a registry for all who called in. Each caller was given a registration number and assigned to a specific dedicatory session. This gave local leaders a running tally on those who wished to attend. When these visitors arrived in Colonia Juárez, they went to the chapel, where they received their invitation from specially assigned bishops upon presentation of a valid temple recommend or letter of worthiness from their home ward bishop.

Because between three and four thousand worthy temple recommend holders were expected to attend, from the beginning it was obvious that not all could be accommodated inside

the temple. Therefore the in-temple tickets were reserved for a portion of local members, and the remaining local and out-of-town attendees were assigned to the overflow facility in the academy's auditorium. Each local unit received some dedication recommends for the celestial room, for other parts of the temple, and for the overflow at the academy.

Six choirs were needed, two for the cornerstone ceremony (one inside and one outside the temple), and one for each of the four dedicatory sessions. Because music would be a significant aspect of the dedication, the organists and choirs were expected to perform at their best. There were to be sixteen to eighteen members in each choir. The Temple Department also provided a list of approved hymns and songs from which local leaders might choose.

"The key to success," President Victor M. Cerda, chairman of the music subcommittee, asserted, "was in the selection of the directors, because they would be responsible for selecting the organists and members of the choirs." All were to have current temple recommends (except for members of the cornerstone choir which would sing outside). The Temple Department recommended that practice begin three months before the dedication, so they started in October.

Word was received that an organ rather than a piano was to be used inside the temple for the dedication and that it could be either borrowed or rented. However, it would be impossible to rent one in El Paso and bring it across the border. Then, only a few days later, the organ in the Dublán chapel broke down. Ward organist Maurice Bowman was informed that under current Church policy, an organ less than thirty years old could not be replaced. The Dublán organ was only twenty-nine years old. Furthermore, because most congregations in Mexico did not include anyone who could play even a piano, more expensive organs were not usually approved for them. Elder Eran Call, however, asked Brother Bowman to find out how many people in Colonia Dublán could play the organ. He determined there were twelve. Elder Call then instructed Church offices in Mexico City that an organ was needed for the Dublán Stake and the temple dedication. The organ was shipped with furniture for the temple. Brother Bowman happened to be working on the landscaping at the temple

on December 31, 1998, when the organ arrived. He was elated. This was the first Allen organ shipped to Mexico. Brother Bowman was convinced it was "nothing short of a miracle."¹

Four choirs, two youth and two adult, were organized with members from both the Colonia Juárez and Colonia Dublán Stakes. As early as January, however, the Temple Department raised questions about having youth choirs. Just three weeks before the dedication, officials in Salt Lake City directed that two additional adult groups should take the place of the youth choirs. Leaders in the colonies had wanted to involve the youth and now didn't want to hurt their feelings with this change. Most of these young people, however, would sing in the cornerstone choir outside instead. Even though the two new adult choirs were put together on short notice, members believed that the Spirit helped, and they sang beautifully. Several people would comment that it sounded as though angels were singing.²

Virginia Romney recalled her experience as one of the new organists called just three weeks prior to the dedication: "I'm not an organist, I just play the organ." She realized that one of the more experienced organists in the area had been practicing every day for three months. "It was really scary." The morning of the dedication she told her husband, "Honey, I just can't do it. I'm just going to lose it." Her husband

Kent gave her a blessing that she would be calm and enjoy the spirit of the dedication. This blessing was realized.³



Martha Jaidar chaired the translation subcommittee.

In the two stakes there were numerous qualified bilingual members, so it was easy to find worthy, able translators. The original thought was to have a different translator for the two speakers in the cornerstone ceremony and for each of the five speakers in the four dedicatory sessions, a total of twenty-two. Translation subcommittee chair Martha Jaidar's initial list of potential translators was cut by more than half when the decision was made to have only males translate for male speakers. Furthermore, all translators inside the temple needed to have a current recommend. Several called to offer their services.

Waldo Call was one of those invited to participate. He indicated that he appreciated the opportunity and would be pleased to help, as he would certainly receive many blessings, but he ultimately declined this once-in-a-lifetime experience because he couldn't hear very well and felt this wouldn't be fair to those who would depend on his service. Ultimately seventeen were assigned—ten to translate from English to Spanish and seven to translate from Spanish to English. For those speaking in English, a translator stood at their side in the celestial room; the speaker would give a sentence, then the translator would give the same sentence in Spanish. This was done because the majority attending spoke only Spanish. Since there were very few who didn't understand Spanish, when a speaker gave his talk in Spanish, a running translation through headphones was provided to the General Authorities and the few others who needed this service. "As I sat through the different dedication sessions," John Robinson later reflected, "I was amazed at how well and smoothly the translation went. Each of those translating did a job far above his ability. In reality, there was divine help in this and all areas of this glorious event."⁴

Housing and accommodations needed to be provided for the General Authorities during the dedication. President Hinckley asked to stay in a hotel instead of in a private home, so Aurora Nielsen arranged for a meal to be provided by the sisters of Colonia Dublán at the Hacienda Motel in Nuevo Casas Grandes when the prophet's party arrived. He also asked to stay in an office between sessions without being disturbed. He felt that the temple dedication was a great spiritual opportunity and a time of personal meditation and reflection, so he wanted this time for those purposes rather than socializing. With these instructions in mind, local leaders asked members to prepare themselves so that they could also use this opportunity for spiritual growth. Rooms were therefore set aside in the temple where President Hinckley, President Packer, and Elder Call could relax and be comfortable between sessions. The sisters of Colonia Juárez were responsible for providing food for the visiting General Authorities. Don Staheli, President Hinckley's personal secretary, helped with what type of food should be offered and when it should be served, as well as with other accommodations in general.

Lester Johnson, Colonia Juárez Stake president and Tony Jones and Marvin Longhurst of Colonia Dublán were asked to chauffeur Presidents Hinckley and Packer, and their wives the fifteen miles from the motel in Nuevo Casas Grandes to the temple. Each was given a map of the route to be followed together with telephone numbers of the highway patrol and of hospitals or other medical resources along the way. Security subcommittee chairman Frank Hatch would have the opportunity to ride with President Hinckley, and he later commented: "I was very impressed with the extra strength President Hinckley had and [I knew] the Lord had to be blessing him with physical strength. . . . Along the road wherever we had to make a stop, he always greeted the people, members and nonmembers alike, with great enthusiasm and love. . . . It was truly easy to see that he is the prophet of the Lord."⁵

During the open house and dedication, buses from the academy also made runs from the Colonia Dublán chapel and from the main plaza in Nuevo Casas Grandes, stopping in Viejo Casas Grandes before arriving at the stake center in Colonia Juárez. Schedules for these trips were distributed to all the wards. This transportation proved adequate despite the heavy interest in these events. Students in Bishop Joel de la Cruz's soldering shop also made road signs with arrows pointing the way to the temple.

Providing security for the General Authority visitors was also important. Frank Hatch was amazed at how much was involved. He was grateful for the helpful direction from David Sayer of Church security. In making assignments, he sought to involve members from every unit in both stakes. Twenty-two priesthood volunteers were divided into morning and afternoon shifts. During the open house they were stationed in the stake center, on the temple grounds, and inside the temple. Each security person was issued headphones and a radio. During the dedication they would be at these same locations plus the high school auditorium for the overflow broadcast. Leighton Romney was in charge of radio communications. Doctors Juan Hermilo González and José Luis Grajeda were asked to be responsible for first aid (fortunately there would be only two minor cases requiring their attention). Local traffic officers and the Red Cross were also helpful.

The physical facilities subcommittee chairman, Horacio Peña, was responsible for setting up about 120 seats in the parking area for the cornerstone ceremony. They also needed to rearrange the temple's usual furnishings very carefully in order to bring approximately 200 folding chairs into the various rooms of the temple for the dedicatory sessions. Another 250 chairs needed to be set up in the auditorium and music room on the Juárez Academy campus.

After the open house, three men from the Church Audiovisual Department spent a week in the colonies installing all necessary equipment. They were then on hand to see that it functioned properly during the dedicatory services.

CORNERSTONE CEREMONY

Special cornerstone ceremonies have been memorable occasions throughout the history of Latter-day Saint temple building. In earlier decades, when temples were made of hewn stones, the placing of the cornerstones marked the beginning of construction. By the later twentieth century, however, most temples were being built of reinforced concrete, so the cornerstone became strictly symbolic. The sealing of a commemorative box in this

CORNERSTONE SESSION

Saturday, March 6, 1999, 2:00 p.m.

Conducting: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Inside Choir: Members from Colonia Juárez and Colonia Dublán Stakes; Maurice D. Bowman, director; Mary S. Bowman, organist

Outside Choir: Sandra C. Hatch, director; Rea B. Schmidt, pianist

Inside Choir: "Holy Temples on Mount Zion"

Invocation: Victor Manuel Cerda, president of the Colonia Dublán Stake

Speaker: President Boyd K. Packer

Spanish translation by Kent Romney

Speaker: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Spanish translation by Anthony Nielsen

Inside Choir: "I Believe in Christ"

Benediction: David R. Brown, former counselor in the Colonia Juárez Stake Presidency

Designated group excused for cornerstone sealing outside

Outside Choir: "Bandera de Sión" ("High on the Mountain Top")

Cornerstone Sealing

Outside Choir: "El Padre nuestro" ("The Lord's Prayer")

stone came to be conducted at the time of dedication, marking the conclusion of construction.

Saturday, March 6, 1999, dawned bright and clear, in sharp contrast to the freezing, blustery day just one year before when all had gathered for the groundbreaking ceremony of the Colonia Juárez temple. Amazingly, the temple's construction had been completed in just one year. People came from parts of Mexico and the United States for the temple cornerstone ceremony and dedicatory services. This was an exciting milestone in the history of the local area and of the worldwide Church. Many people were on the temple grounds long before the appointed hour, and by the time President Hinckley came out to set the cornerstone in place, the official count was 1,839. It was a wonderful day, with just enough of a breeze to keep comfortably cool.

The first half of the ceremony took place in the celestial room inside the temple. Those who attended the overflow broadcast in the Juárez Academy auditorium felt they didn't miss a thing. The Spirit was very strong, and with the big screen projection of the proceedings, they felt like they were right in the temple. This was the same throughout the dedicatory services as well.

Following the opening hymn and prayer, President Hinckley pointed out that since the beginning of the Church, it has been customary to mark key steps in temple progress with special ceremonies praising our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. While the method of construction has varied over time, these ceremonies have usually included groundbreaking, sealing historic artifacts in the cornerstone box, and finally dedicating the completed temple to the Lord. He explained that in Kirtland, actual cornerstones were laid, while more recently only a symbolic stone is placed in the southeast corner. The prophet emphasized that the cornerstone represents Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone of the Church (see Ephesians 2:19–21).

President Hinckley affirmed that after walking through the interior of this beautiful edifice, he was very pleased to note that all was ready for the dedication. He expressed appreciation for the efforts of all who had brought the temple to completion, including the faithful members of the Church who had contributed so much in means and effort.

President Boyd K. Packer next noted that on occasions such as these, those who sacrificed and suffered to establish the colonies were permitted to be there. Although we can't see them, he explained, most spiritual experiences are felt and not seen. Then, the Saints in the celestial room who had been invited left momentarily to seal the cover of the cornerstone.

Dressed in white, President Hinckley, President Packer, and Elder Call, with members of the temple presidency and their wives, stepped outside. The outside choir of nearly one hundred voices, including many youth, began to sing "Bandera de Sión" ("High on the Mountain Top"). In characteristic style, President Hinckley's first comment was one of gratitude for the beautiful music. He also mentioned that he was pleased to see so many there. He referred to the sacredness of the task, because this stone is a reminder of the Son of God who stands as the stone on which His Church is established.

Items placed in the cornerstone box had previously been recommended and approved by the Temple Department in Salt Lake City and prepared by temple historian Virginia Romney. One of the items was the three-hundred-page history with countless pictures she had prepared. (For a complete list of items included in the box, see



Above: Cornerstone choir. All photos during cornerstone ceremony are courtesy of John Hart and Debra Spilsbury. Below: Thomas Coburn, John Robinson and Virginia Romney review the list of contents in the cornerstone box.





President Meredith Romney, President Boyd K. Packer, and Elder Eran A. Call observe as President Gordon B. Hinckley prepares to apply mortar to the cornerstone.

present, whether in the celestial room, outside, or in the overflow at the academy, considered it a privilege to be there.

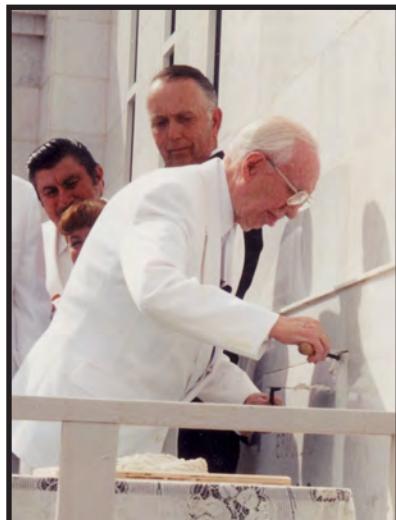
TEMPLE DEDICATION

Immediately following the cornerstone sealing ceremony, the first of four dedicatory sessions began on Saturday afternoon, March 6, 1999, at 3 o'clock. Those who had invitations to attend in the temple itself parked their vehicles by the academy, and buses were provided to transport them up the hill to the temple. Many chose to walk instead. The total attendance for the four sessions was 4,932.

General Authorities attending each dedicatory session were Gordon B. Hinckley, President of the Church; Boyd K. Packer, acting president of the Quorum of the Twelve; and Elder Eran A. Call of the Seventy, president

appendix E.) The box measured twenty inches long, fourteen inches high, and six inches deep. After all the brethren had applied mortar, President Hinckley invited their wives to take a turn. He quipped the women would do a better job because they have more experience in the kitchen. He then called three children to participate. He then invited any others who wished to participate, and many took advantage of this rare opportunity.

As the leaders went back into the temple, the outside choir sang "El Padre nuestro" ("The Lord's Prayer"). All pres-



President Hinckley applies mortar to the cornerstone.

of the Mexico North Area. Accompanying their husbands were Marjorie Hinckley, Donna Packer, and Katherine Call. Also in attendance were the new temple presidency and their wives: Meredith and Karen Romney, Merriner and Winifred Jones, and Daniel and Hilda García. President Hinckley's daughter and the former counselor in the Young Women general presidency, Virginia H. Pearce; his private secretary, Don Staheli; security guard David Sayer; and *Church News* editor John L. Hart were also present. In attendance from the Temple Department were Paul E. Koelliker, manager, and Thomas E. Coburn, area director.

Just minutes prior to each session, it was ascertained that there was room for a few more members to be accommodated inside the temple. The ushers called on radios down to the academy's auditorium, and a few members were asked if they would like to attend in the temple. They had but a few minutes to hurry up the hill and take their seats, which they anxiously did.

Each session was carried out in much the same manner. President Hinckley presided and conducted; each session featured music by a choir, addresses by the Prophet and other Church leaders, and the dedicatory prayer read in English by President Hinckley and followed by a Spanish translation. (As is the case in all temple dedications, the dedicatory prayer



Above: Axel Peña, Kelsey Brown, and Gabriela Torres were chosen to help President Hinckley at the cornerstone. Below: The Robinson sisters at the cornerstone laying, left to right: Caroline, Janessa, and Christina.

Photo courtesy of John Hart.



FIRST DEDICATORY SESSION

Saturday, March 6, 1999, 3:00 p.m.

Conducting: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Choir: Members from Colonia Juárez and Colonia Dublán Stakes; Maurice Bowman, director; Mary S. Bowman, organist

Choir: "Ya rompe el alba" ("The Morning Breaks")

Invocation: Fredrick Eyring Turley, bishop of the Colonia Juárez First Ward

Choir: "The Lord's Prayer"

Speaker: Elder Eran A. Call

English translation by Scott Bluth

Choir: "On This Day of Joy and Gladness"

Speaker: President Boyd K. Packer

Spanish translation by Robert Call

Speaker: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Spanish translation by Kent Romney

Dedicatory Prayer: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Spanish reading by Kent Romney

Hosanna Shout led by President Boyd K. Packer

Choir: "Hosanna Anthem"

With congregation joining, "The Spirit of God"

Benediction: President Jaime Beltran, second counselor in the Colonia Dublán Stake presidency

was prepared beforehand by the inspiration of the Spirit and then read in the same words for each session.) The choir concluded each session by singing the "Hosanna Anthem," climaxing with the congregation joining in singing "The Spirit of God."

Members of the temple presidency and their wives were seated in the first two rows with President Hinckley, President Packer, and Elder Call facing them. To be seated there, "to be taught [by] and partake of the Spirit was a marvelous experience," wrote Winifred Jones, wife of the first counselor in the temple presidency. "Being there in the temple surrounded by so many beloved friends and neighbors, keeping one's emotion under control was difficult. . . . 'My cup runneth over' definitely applied to our feelings."⁶

President Hinckley opened the first session by welcoming his beloved brothers and sisters.⁷ He explained that each session is of equal importance,

because the dedicatory prayer, the most important element of the services, is offered in each one. He added that temple dedications are among the most significant events associated with the Church's work and that during this time the presence of the Lord's Holy Spirit is in these sacred premises. President Hinckley reminded those present that they were in the temple as the Lord's guests and hoped this would be a memorable

occasion for them. He expressed sincere appreciation to the many who had assisted them to so diligently prepare this beautiful building for the dedicatory services, particularly the temple committee and temple presidency.

Elder Eran A. Call spoke with great emotion as he recalled his experiences growing up in the colonies. He was the youngest son of Anson Call, who was the bishop at the time Pancho Villa intended to destroy Colonia Dublán. The bishop told everyone to say their prayers, turn off or blow out the lights, and go to bed. When Villa got to the outskirts of Colonia Dublán, he thought he saw campfires and thought there were soldiers posted around the town, so he took a detour and didn't harm anyone.

Elder Call noted that the groundbreaking had taken place exactly one year before and believed it was a miracle that the temple was now completed and being dedicated. He remembered the cold, stormy weather at the groundbreaking. When he stood up to speak and to offer the dedicatory prayer, the clouds parted and the sun came out and warmed everyone. As soon as he said amen, the snow and rain resumed. "I felt Heavenly Father was letting us know of His love and approval."

President Packer praised the colonies as a seedbed for Church leadership throughout all of Latin America. He then affirmed that work for the dead, as would be done in the Colonia Juárez Chihuahua Temple, provides the only satisfactory solution to the dilemma of providing the opportunity for salvation to the millions who die without knowing about Christ or His restored gospel.

President Hinckley then spoke in English with Kent Romney at his side to translate into Spanish. He recalled how he received the inspiration to build this small temple and felt they made the right decision as to where to build it. Two beautiful pieces of property had been offered, one in Dublán and one in Juárez. While Colonia Dublán had become a part of Nuevo Casas Grandes, the temple now stands isolated from the world and overlooks the campus where the students can see it. With emotion he spoke about the miracle that had taken place. The prophet invited all to live worthy lives so they could come and participate in the blessings of the temple. He spoke with spirit and power, and many were moved to tears.

Following his remarks, President Hinckley read the dedicatory prayer in English, after which Kent Romney read it in Spanish:

This is a day long looked forward to and much appreciated by Thy faithful Saints in these colonies of Mexico. It was here in Northern Mexico, that Thou didst reveal the idea and the plan of a smaller temple, complete in every necessary detail, but suited in size to the needs and circumstances of the Church membership in this area of Thy vineyard. That revelation came of a desire and a prayer to help Thy people of these colonies who have been true and loyal during the century and more than they have lived here. They are deserving of this sacred edifice in which to labor for themselves and their forebears. . . .

We remember before Thee those who, more than a century ago, came here and established these and other communities. How hard they worked, how heavy was their labor. They established a Zion in this part of the earth. Here they built meetinghouses and schools. Here they established their homes and their farms. They made the earth yield a harvest, even as a rose growing in a desert land.

Bless Thy Saints that they may continue to live here without molestation. May they live in peace and security. May they be prospered as they cultivate their farms and pursue their vocations. May the sons and daughters of father Lehi grow in strength and in fulfillment of the ancient promises made concerning them. May there be constant peace between the cultures and may they dwell together with love and respect one for another. Bless all of Thy Saints as they live in faithfulness before Thee. Open the windows of heaven and shower down blessings upon them. Cause rain to fall upon their thirsty fields. Bless their posterity that they may go over the earth as teachers of eternal truth. . . .

Bless this nation, under whose banners our people have lived through these many years. May the days of poverty, the seasons of revolution, the times of conflict of any kind never come again. May the officers of this nation look with favor upon Thy people.⁸ (For the complete text, see appendix F.)

President Hinckley reminded those in attendance that the temple was now a dedicated building and that any who enter following the dedicatory services should conduct themselves accordingly.

President Boyd K. Packer led all in the “Hosanna Shout,” a joyous rite in which the entire congregation in unison shouts “Hosanna to God and the Lamb” while waving white handkerchiefs high overhead.⁹ Then, as the choir sang the “Hosanna Anthem” and the congregation joined in singing “The Spirit of God,” all felt an overwhelming feeling of gratitude and joy, and tears flowed freely.

At the beginning of the second session, the opening prayer was given by President José Chavez, second counselor in the Colonia Juárez Stake presidency. “He prayed as if he were speaking to a friend,” reflected Michelle Hatch Sandberg. “He thanked our Father in Heaven for sending President Hinckley to Colonia Juárez and giving him the vision to build small temples. Then he said, ‘¡Míranos, Padre, míranos! [Look at us, Father, look at us!] We are here in the temple today crying for joy.

SECOND DEDICATORY SESSION

Sunday, March 7, 1999, 8:00 a.m.

Conducting: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Choir: Colonia Juárez First Ward; Waldo P. Call, director; Gayle D. Whetten, organist

Choir: “An Angel from on High”

Invocation: President José Dolores Chavez, former second counselor in the Colonia Juárez Stake presidency

Choir: “Redeemer of Israel”

Speakers: Sister Karen Sue Ellsworth Romney, temple matron
Spanish translation by Lorena Gardea Medina

President Meredith Irvin Romney

English translation by Russell Robinson

Elder Eran A. Call

English translation by Ernest Call

Choir: “How Great Thou Art”

Speakers: President Boyd K. Packer

Spanish translation by Marvin Longhurst

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Spanish translation by John Whetten

Dedicatory Prayer: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Spanish reading by Elder Eran A. Call

Hosanna Shout led by President Boyd K. Packer

Choir: “Hosanna Anthem”

With congregation joining, “The Spirit of God”

Benediction: Tony L. Jones, first counselor in the Colonia Dublán Stake presidency

And many who have gone before are crying for joy also.”¹⁰ President Hinckley again emphasized that the dedication of a temple is one of the most significant and sacred events in which we are privileged to participate and is a special milestone in the work of the Church.¹¹ He prayed that they, as the Lord’s guests, would be uplifted by the Holy Spirit on this memorable occasion.

President Packer asserted that by living the Word of Wisdom we may become pure vessels that are capable of receiving revelation from heaven. He further declared that we can be “gloriously clean” only in the temple, which is the best place to be near to God and to hear His voice.

President Hinckley emotionally declared, “I can’t believe it,” referring to the second temple dedicated in Mexico, and affirmed that a temple in this relatively isolated settlement could only have come about as a revelation from God. He once again recalled how the inspiration for these smaller temples came during his 1997 trip to the colonies on the occasion of the academy’s centennial. He testified that this temple is a monument to the faithfulness of those who settled here, honored their covenants, and instilled faith in their posterity down to the present generation.

President Hinckley pointed out that the vicarious service in this temple helps those who are powerless to help themselves. The Atonement of Jesus Christ and the work done in the temple are “the bridge that spans death and life beyond the grave.” He spoke emotionally of the sacred sealing power and testified that it would be given later that very day to a few who would officiate in the ordinances of God’s holy house.

Speaking to a culturally diverse audience, President Hinckley also taught that all who enter the temple “stand equal before the Lord in His house.” All are fellow citizens, sons, and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father. “I plead, never let anything prevent you from being worthy to come in this house.” He continued with a prophetic blessing: “If you live to have a temple recommend, all will be well in your life. Prize your recommend. . . . God help us live worthy of our blessing.” The prophet suggested that we can give no greater gift to God than these holy temples and our service therein. “The Lord has hastened the work,” he insisted. “Cleanse yourselves.” He closed his

remarks by saying, “For as long as faith shall endure, let us go forward in faith, relying upon His blessings.”

As he had done in the previous two sessions, President Hinckley opened the third session by telling those present that they were assembled there to participate in one of the most significant events associated with the work of the Church—the dedication of a house of the Lord.

President Boyd K. Packer gave a masterful discourse on the relationship between order and ordinances. We are commanded to put our lives in order, and we do this, he taught, through participating in or by receiving sacred priesthood ordinances. As we worthily receive each ordinance, we are assured that the divine powers are aligned in our behalf and that our lives are in order. He then reviewed all the ordinances we receive from childhood to adulthood and affirmed that they culminate with those in the house of the Lord.

President Hinckley again spoke with feeling about the early Saints who established the colonies in Mexico. Likening the colonists’ exodus during the Mexican Revolution to the Saints’ expulsion from Missouri, he lauded their integrity and

THIRD DEDICATORY SESSION

Sunday, March 7, 1999, 10:30 a.m.

Conducting: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Choir: Members from the Colonia Juárez and Colonia Dublán Stakes; Kenneth R. Farnsworth, director; Virginia H. Romney, organist

Choir: “Let the Mountains Shout for Joy”

Invocation: Howard G. Schmidt, patriarch of the Colonia Juárez Stake

Choir: “Come, Ye Children of the Lord”

Speakers: Sister Winifred Alexander Campbell Jones, assistant temple matron

Spanish translation by Ana Lou Jurado Taylor

President Merriner LaRue Jones

English translation by Kelly Jones

Elder Eran A. Call

English translation by James Call

Choir: “Dios al mundo amo” (“God So Loved the World”)

Speakers: President Boyd K. Packer

Spanish translation by Rick Jones

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Spanish translation by Clayton Nielsen

Dedicatory Prayer: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Spanish reading by Elder Eran A. Call

Hosanna Shout led by President Boyd K. Packer

Choir: “Hosanna Anthem”

With congregation joining, “The Spirit of God”

Benediction: Joel de la Cruz, bishop of the Alamedas Ward

FOURTH DEDICATORY SESSION

Sunday, March 7, 1999, 1:30 p.m.

Conducting: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Choir: Colonia Dublán Stake; Christine L. Jones, director; Julie H. Taylor, organist

Choir: "Santos templos de Sión" ("Holy Temples on Mount Zion")

Invocation: Miguel Mendez, second counselor in the Colonia Juárez Mexico Stake

Choir: "Yo Sé Que Vive Mi Señor" (I Know That My Redeemer Lives")

Speakers: Sister Hilda M. García, assistant temple matron
Spanish translation by Estela Flores García

President Juan Daniel García

English translation by John Hatch

Elder Eran A. Call

English translation by Gerald Hatch

Choir: "Dulce es tu obra Señor" ("Sweet Is the Work")

Speakers: President Boyd K. Packer

Spanish translation by Leighton Romney

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Spanish translation by Gerhardt Schill

Dedicatory Prayer: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Spanish reading by Elder Eran A. Call

Hosanna Shout led by President Boyd K. Packer

Choir: "Hosanna Anthem"

With congregation joining, "The Spirit of God"

Benediction: S. Keith Bowman, patriarch of the Colonia Dublán Stake

courage during those dark days. He praised the colonists' contribution in providing leadership and building up the kingdom of God: "From this small place . . . over ninety mission presidents have been called. There is nothing like it anywhere in the Church that I know of." Speaking of the Saints' willingness to sacrifice everything, which was like living the law of consecration, he marveled that they would leave their orchards and farms in the care of others to accept the call to serve.

The prophet continued, "This is an interesting, peculiar, and strange place—an interesting, peculiar, and strange people." With power he declared, "It is a miracle. With all my heart I thank God in appreciation for the faith of this people that has made this temple possible. . . . You now have everything the Church has to offer you." A great spirit filled the room as President Hinckley pronounced a prophetic blessing, "You will not lack in your basket or in your store."

Chad Call, the young man who played such a key role in temple construction, sang in the choir during this session. He concluded that "every long hot

day, every dreary wintry day, every never-ending day, all this effort, all this love” were definitely worthwhile. “As I sang the final song, I looked into the eyes of all those for whom I had built the temple,” Chad continued. “My emotions surfaced, and I cried [through] the whole song, fighting valiantly to keep singing. The Spirit was strong, and I was saying farewell [at] the culmination, the peak, of my temple construction experience.”

Following this session Chad met David Wills, with whom he had worked so closely. With tears in their eyes they embraced, realizing their work was finished. From David, Chad learned they “were granted the great blessing of attending the final session together, in the celestial room!”¹²

David Wills later recalled: “Before the start of the last session, I was called out by the prophet’s bodyguard. I was sure there was a problem in the temple that required my attention. I was led to the president’s office and was introduced to President Hinckley. I will never forget what he said. He told me that the work was beautifully done and that I should be proud of what we had accomplished and that the Lord was also pleased and accepted the work that we had done. The ‘Hosanna Anthem’ has a line in it that says something like ‘May the work on the temple be accepted by the Lord.’ The comment by the prophet answered the prayer of my heart.”¹³

In the fourth session, President Hinckley referred to the scriptural statement that the sins of the parents will be visited upon the heads of the children unto the third and fourth generations, but he insisted that blessings are felt by future generations as well. He believed this temple is in part the result of the faithfulness of the Saints who had gone before. He petitioned that the light of faith continue to burn as brilliantly as it had in the past.



Crowds leave the temple following the dedication.



*General Authorities attending the temple dedication, left to right:
Elder Eran A. Call, President
Gordon B. Hinckley, and President
Boyd K. Packer.
Courtesy of John Hart.*

President Hinckley concluded this final session by expressing his sadness that this experience was coming to an end: “I don’t want to leave this place. I have a good feeling here in the colonies and about this house of the Lord.”

GENERAL AUTHORITIES' REFLECTIONS AND AFTERMATH

“The Mormon colonies of northern Mexico are a peculiar and remarkable institution,” President Hinckley remarked to the Church News between two sessions. He recalled how the colonists came during the 1880s and then endured the revolutions of the early twentieth century. “Since then,” he continued, “those who lived here have lived remarkable lives . . . [and are] extremely faithful. Some of them have left to go away to school and for other reasons, but they always look back to Colonia Juárez and Colonia Dublán as their roots, and they love to come back

here. . . . They love this part of the world, and they gather together as families with a great appreciation in their hearts for their roots here, and for their forebears who were so valiant and faithful in the work of the Church in this part of the world.”

President Boyd K. Packer expressed a similar thought, “This temple is the result of the work of those who went before, and while it is a fulfillment and a fruition, it is also certainly a great beginning in this beautiful valley where the Saints have been so faithful.”

Elder Eran Call added, “The Saints will be lifted; the Saints will rise to the occasion and make themselves worthy, if they aren’t now, to enjoy the blessings of a temple.”

Earlier, before President Hinckley had begun the dedicatory prayer, he announced he would add a sentence to it. He knew the colonies had been experiencing a severe drought for many years, so he included a petition for rain. Even though it had been months since rain had fallen, during that very afternoon clouds began to gather. As the last dedicatory session concluded it began to rain lightly. Heavier rains followed later during the season, and the Saints gratefully acknowledged the hand of the Lord in this wonderful blessing.



*The Colonia Juárez Chihuahua Temple.
Courtesy of John Hart.*

NOTES

1. Virginia Romney, *History of the Colonia Juárez Chihuahua Temple*, 2:441; manuscript in the authors' possession, Eran Call, interview by Richard Cowan, November 25, 2007.
2. John Robinson, "Local Chairman/Coordinator," in Romney, *History*, 2:400; see also Victor Cerdá, "Music and Member/Missionary," in Romney, *History*, 2:404.
3. Virginia Romney, interview by Richard Cowan, November 18, 2006.
4. Robinson, "Local Chairman," in Romney, *History*, 399.
5. Frank Hatch, "Security," in Romney, *History*, 2:406.
6. Merriner and Winifred Jones, "Temple Recorder Training," in Romney, *History*, 2:377.
7. Synopsis of remarks during first dedicatory session by Gordon B. Hinckley, Boyd K. Packer, and Eran Call based on notes made by Samuel H. Cluff, former president of the Chihuahua mission.
8. "This Is a Day Long Looked Forward To," *Church News*, March 13, 1999, 7.

9. Lael Woodbury, “The Origin and Uses of the Sacred Hosanna Shout,” in *Sperry Lecture Series* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 18–22.
10. Romney, *History*, 2:444.
11. Synopsis of remarks during second, third, and fourth dedicatory sessions based on notes of David Larsen.
12. Romney, *History*, 2:386.
13. David Wills, “Construction Manager’s Commentary,” in Romney, *History*, 1:138.