

THOMAS E. RICKS BUILDING DEDICATION:

18 FEBRUARY 2005

Elder David A. Bednar—Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Brothers and sisters, it is a privilege and an honor for Sister Bednar and me to be here with you on this special occasion. I might note that it is easy to see the hand of the Lord in the selection of Elder Kerr as the Commissioner of Church Education. He will do much to move the work of education forward in the Church.

I have been intimately involved in the planning for and constructing of this building for a number of years, and I fully expected to attend this dedicatory session. But never did I ever think I would be invited to offer the dedicatory prayer and to attend and participate in this service in the role in which I am participating today.

**I suppose it would
be customary and
even expected
that today we
would pay tribute
to and honor
the memory and
accomplishments
and legacy of
Thomas E. Ricks.**

I suppose it would be customary and even expected that today we pay tribute to and honor the memory and accomplishments and legacy of Thomas E. Ricks. Indeed he was a remarkable man who did much to strengthen the Church and to establish this community. However, today I would like to pay tribute to Thomas E. Ricks in a slightly different way.

I invite you to pay close attention for a few moments as we discuss the Spirit of Ricks and what that means. Given my almost eight years of service on this campus, I want to see if I can give voice to and articulate some things about the Spirit of Ricks.

The Spirit of Ricks has long been the hallmark and defining phrase that describes this remarkable institution. The Spirit of Ricks suggests the spirituality, the desire for obedience, the personal caring and warmth, the humility and modesty, the friendliness and genuine concern for others, the bright smiles and cheerful hellos, and so many other elements that make this University an unusually inviting and supporting and nurturing institution.

In recent years some of the new students at BYU–Idaho, students who have not acquainted themselves with the history of Ricks College, have wondered why we talk so much about the Spirit of Ricks when the school is now named Brigham Young University–Idaho. The answer to that question is very simple. The Spirit of Ricks has been and always will be a defining characteristic of this institution—regardless of the name of the institution.

The phrase “the Spirit of Ricks” speaks to the commitment, to the sacrifice, and to the integrity of so many who have helped make this institution what it is today—and what it will ultimately and inevitably become in the future. If the day should ever come that the phrase “the

Spirit of Ricks” and its connotations were lost from the vocabulary of Brigham Young University–Idaho, then something fundamental and foundational would be absent from this institution.

You will find many definitions for the Spirit of Ricks, but today I would like to reiterate the definitions I came to understand during my service here in Rexburg. The Spirit of Ricks is the Holy Ghost and its attendant spiritual gifts.

Following a presentation several years ago in which I referred to the Spirit of Ricks as the Holy Ghost, a faculty colleague suggested to me that he was troubled by my definition—that it was too simple and incomplete. I, in turn, suggested to him that defining the Spirit of Ricks as the Holy Ghost was the most comprehensive and the most complete definition possible.

Please now consider the attributes that we so often consider to be central to the Spirit of Ricks as we review the following teachings of Elder Parley P. Pratt:

An intelligent being, in the image of God, possesses every organ, attribute, sense, sympathy, affection that is possessed by God Himself.

But these are possessed by man, in his rudimental state, in a subordinate sense of the word. Or, in other words, these attributes are in embryo; and are to be gradually developed. They resemble a bud, a germ, which gradually develops into bloom, and then, by progress, produces the mature fruit, after its own kind.

Let me step out of the quotation for a second. Consider who we are and where we are on this campus. Consider the imagery of the bud, the germ, and the developmental process. And in the totality of this quotation from Elder Pratt, consider that as it focuses on who we are and what we might become through what is available on this campus. I now continue the quotation:

The gift of the Holy Ghost adapts itself to all these organs or attributes. It quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of the person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being.

**Consider the
imagery of the
bud, the germ, and
the developmental
process.**

Now, that focuses on the role of the Holy Ghost in the developmental process that was described in the earlier paragraph. I continue with the quotation (this is where you really have to listen):

In the presence of such persons, one feels to enjoy the light of their countenances, as the genial rays of the sunbeam. Their very atmosphere diffuses a thrill, a warm glow of pure gladness and sympathy, to the heart and nerves of others who have kindred feelings, or sympathy of spirit. No matter if the parties are strangers, entirely unknown to each other in person or character; no matter if they have never spoken to each other, each will be apt to remark in his own mind, and perhaps exclaim, when referring to the interview—“Oh, what an atmosphere encircles that stranger! How my heart thrilled with pure and holy feelings in his presence! What confidence and sympathy he inspired! His countenance and spirit gave me more assurance than a thousand written recommendations, or introductory letters.” Such is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and such are its operations, when received through the lawful channel—the divine, eternal priesthood.

To those who spend considerable time on this campus, I invite you to consider the interactions of students—as they greet each other on this campus and they smile and say hello, the interaction of faculty and students and others—and to consider these statements by Elder Pratt:

No matter if the parties are strangers, entirely unknown to each other in person or character; no matter if they have never spoken to each other, each will be apt to remark in his own mind and perhaps exclaim, when referring to the interview—“Oh, what an atmosphere encircles that stranger.” (*Key to the Science of Theology*, pp. 100-102)

Brothers and sisters, this is the most beautiful description I have ever read or heard of what we on this campus frequently refer to as the Spirit of Ricks. And the ongoing tribute we pay to Thomas E. Ricks—a tribute far more meaningful and significant than naming a university or a building or a garden in his honor—is that the workings of the Holy Ghost in this sacred and set-apart place are affectionately and warmly referred to as the Spirit of Ricks.

In 1987 Elder Marvin J. Ashton, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, spoke in general conference about spiritual gifts. Interestingly, he detailed and described a number of less-conspicuous spiritual gifts—attributes that many of us might not have ever considered spiritual gifts. For example, Elder Ashton highlighted:

- the gift of asking,
- the gift of listening,
- the gift of hearing and using a still, small voice (when we communicate),

**And the ongoing
tribute we pay to
Thomas E. Ricks—
a tribute far more
meaningful and
significant than
naming a university
or a building or a
garden in his honor.**

- the gift of being able to weep (I am married to the person on the planet who has more of this gift than any other person who has ever lived),
- the gift of avoiding contention,
- the gift of being agreeable,
- the gift of seeking that which is righteous,
- the gift of looking to God for guidance,
- the gift of being a disciple,
- the gift of caring for others,
- the gift of being able to ponder,
- the gift of bearing mighty testimony,
- the gift of receiving the Holy Ghost.

And he continued with a number of other, less-conspicuous, spiritual gifts.

As I think of these gifts, I find a clear linkage between many of them and the Spirit of Ricks. Let me emphasize once again that the Spirit of Ricks is the Holy Ghost and its attendant spiritual gifts. In fact, I might add to Elder Ashton’s list some additional gifts that are especially characteristic of this campus in Rexburg, Idaho:

- the gift of smiling,
- the gift of learning or teaching without becoming intellectually arrogant,
- the gift of cheerfulness,
- the gift of avoiding the supposed cleverness and cuteness of secular cynicism,
- the gift of academic integrity.

I repeat the ongoing tribute we pay to Thomas E. Ricks—a tribute far more meaningful and significant than naming the University or a building or a garden in his honor—is that the workings of the Holy Ghost in this sacred and set-apart place are affectionately and warmly referred to as the Spirit of Ricks.

I conclude my remarks this afternoon by repeating a statement I made in a devotional message last August. I emphasize this point in the authority of the Apostleship:

In the midst of an increasing downpour of devilish devastation across the earth, you are blessed to be here at one of the Lord’s Disciple Preparation Centers. BYU–Idaho is not just a university. You are not merely university students. Studying here involves much more than taking tests and performing well in academic classes—although your academic development and performance truly are important. But there are essential lessons to be learned and preparations to

As I think of these gifts, I find a clear linkage between many of them and the Spirit of Ricks.

A key factor that makes you more than mere students or faculty members or employees is the individual and collective desire to receive and to retain the gift of the Holy Ghost and its associated spiritual gifts.

be made to this [Disciple Preparation Center] by the Lord's latter-day disciples (*Brigham Young University—Idaho Devotional*, August 31, 2004).

A key factor that makes BYU—Idaho more than just a university is the power of the collective invitation that occurs here to receive and to retain the gift of the Holy Ghost and its associated spiritual gifts—the demonstration of which we frequently refer to as the Spirit of Ricks.

A key factor that makes you more than mere students or faculty members or employees is the individual and collective desire to receive and to retain the gift of the Holy Ghost and its associated spiritual gifts—the fulfillment of which we often refer to as the Spirit of Ricks.

And the ongoing tribute we pay to Thomas E. Ricks is that the workings of the Holy Ghost in this sacred and set-apart place are affectionately and warmly referred to as the Spirit of Ricks.

May it ever be so. And may each of us have the eyes to see and the ears to hear the workings and the whisperings of the Holy Ghost.

I declare my testimony and witness that the Savior lives. I know that my Redeemer lives. He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen ∞