

## President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren of the priesthood, assembled here in the Conference Center and worldwide, I am humbled by the responsibility which is mine to address a few remarks to you. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to attend me as I do so.

I am aware that our audience this evening ranges from the most recently ordained deacon to the eldest high priest. To each, the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist and the Melchizedek Priesthood to Joseph and Oliver by Peter, James, and John are sacred and treasured events.

### **Deacons serve a brother with palsy**

To you deacons, may I say that I recall the time when I was ordained a deacon. Our bishopric stressed the sacred responsibility which was ours to pass the sacrament. Emphasized were proper dress, a dignified bearing, and the importance of being clean inside and out. As we were taught the procedure in passing the sacrament, we were told how we should assist Louis McDonald, a particular brother in our ward who was afflicted with a palsied condition, that he might have the opportunity to partake of the sacred emblems.

How I remember being assigned to pass the sacrament to the row where Brother McDonald sat. I was fearful and hesitant as I approached this wonderful brother, and then I saw his smile and the eager expression of gratitude that showed his desire to partake. Holding the tray in my left hand, I took a small piece of bread and pressed it to his lips. The water was later served in the same way. I felt I was on holy ground. And indeed I was. The privilege to pass the sacrament to Brother McDonald made better deacons of us all.

### **Deacons serve the sacrament to 5,000**

Just two months ago, on Sunday, July 31, I was at Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia, attending an LDS sacrament meeting held during the National Scout Jamboree. My purpose in being there was to speak to the 5,000 Latter-day Saint young men and their leaders who had spent the previous week participating in the activities of the jamboree. They sat reverently in a natural amphitheater as an impressive 400-voice Aaronic Priesthood chorus sang:

A Mormon boy, a Mormon boy,  
I am a Mormon boy.  
I might be envied by a king,  
For I am a Mormon boy.<sup>1</sup>

The sacrament was blessed, with 65 priests officiating at the many large sacrament tables which had been placed throughout the assembled group. Approximately 180 deacons then passed the sacrament. Within the time it would take to handle the passing of the sacrament in a crowded ward chapel, this large gathering was served. What an awe-inspiring sight I witnessed that morning as these Aaronic Priesthood young men participated in this holy ordinance.

### **Young men visit Welfare Square**

It is important for each deacon to be guided to a spiritual awareness of the sacredness of his ordained calling. In one ward the lesson was effectively taught pertaining to the collection of fast offerings.

On fast day the ward members were visited by deacons and teachers so that each family could make a contribution. The deacons were a bit disgruntled, having to arise earlier than usual to fulfill this assignment.

The inspiration came for the bishop-ric to take a busload of the deacons and teachers to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City. Here they saw needy children receiving new shoes and other items of clothing. Here they witnessed empty baskets being filled with groceries. There was no money exchanged. One brief comment was made: “Young men, this is what the money you collect on fast day provides—even food, clothing, and shelter for those who are in need.” The Aaronic Priesthood young men smiled more, stepped higher, and served more willingly in filling their assignments.

### Teachers and priests are home teachers

Now, pertaining to the teachers and priests, every one of you should be given the assignment to home teach with a companion who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. What an opportunity to prepare for a mission. What a privilege to learn the discipline of duty. A young man will automatically turn from concern for self when he is assigned to “watch over” others.<sup>2</sup>

President David O. McKay counseled: “Home teaching is one of our most urgent and most rewarding opportunities to nurture and inspire, to counsel and direct our Father’s children. . . . [It] is a divine service, a divine call. It is our duty as Home Teachers to carry the divine spirit into every home and heart.”<sup>3</sup>

Home teaching answers many prayers and permits us to see the occurrence of living miracles.

### Johann Denndorfer’s home teachers

As I think of home teaching, I am reminded of a man by the name of Johann Denndorfer from Debrecen, Hungary. He had been converted to the Church years before in Germany, and now, following World War II, he found himself virtually a prisoner in his own land of Hungary. How he longed for contact with the Church. Then his home teachers visited. Brother

Walter Krause and his companion went from the northeastern portion of Germany all the way to Hungary to fulfill their home teaching assignment. Before they left from their homes in Germany, Brother Krause had said to his companion, “Would you like to go home teaching with me this week?”

His companion asked, “When will we leave?”

Brother Krause’s response: “Tomorrow.”

Then came the question, “When will we come back?”

Brother Krause did not hesitate; he said, “Oh, in about a week.”

And away they went to visit Brother Denndorfer and others. Brother Denndorfer had not had home teachers since before the war. Now, when he saw the servants of the Lord, he was overwhelmed. He did not shake hands with them; rather, he went to his bedroom and took from a secret hiding place his tithing that he had saved for years. This tithing he gave to his home teachers, and then he said, “Now I can shake your hands.”

### A priest overcomes stuttering to baptize

Now a word for the priests in the Aaronic Priesthood. You young men have the opportunity to bless the sacrament, to continue your home teaching duties, and to participate in the sacred ordinance of baptism.

Fifty-five years ago I knew a young man, Robert Williams, who held the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. As the bishop, I was his quorum president. When he spoke, Robert stuttered and stammered, void of control. He was self-conscious, shy, fearful of himself and everybody else; this impediment was devastating to him. Rarely did he accept an assignment; never would he look another person in the eye; always would he gaze downward. Then one day, through a set of unusual circumstances, he accepted an assignment to perform the responsibility to baptize another.

I sat next to Robert in the baptistry of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. I knew he needed all the help he could get. He was dressed in immaculate white, prepared for the ordinance he was to perform. I asked him how he felt. He gazed at the floor and stuttered almost uncontrollably that he felt terrible.

We both prayed fervently that he would be made equal to his task. The clerk then said, “Nancy Ann McArthur will now be baptized by Robert Williams, a priest.”

Robert left my side, stepped into the font, took little Nancy by the hand, and helped her into that water which cleanses human lives and provides a spiritual rebirth. He spoke the words, “Nancy Ann McArthur, having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

And he baptized her. Not once did he stutter! Not once did he falter! A modern miracle had been witnessed. Robert then performed the baptismal ordinance for two or three other children in the same fashion.

In the dressing room, I hurried to congratulate Robert. I expected to hear this same uninterrupted flow of speech. I was wrong. He gazed downward and stammered his reply of gratitude.

I testify to you that when Robert acted in the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood, he spoke with power, with conviction, and with heavenly help.

Just over two years ago it was my privilege to speak at the funeral services for Robert Williams and to pay tribute to this faithful priesthood holder who tried his best throughout his life to honor his priesthood.

### **Young men, never give up**

Some of you young men here tonight may be shy by nature or might consider yourselves inadequate to respond to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours

and mine alone. We can look up and reach out for divine help.

Like some of you, I know what it is to face disappointment and youthful humiliation. As a boy, I played team softball in elementary and junior high school. Two captains were chosen, and then they, in turn, selected the players they desired on their respective teams. Of course, the best players were chosen first, then second, and third. To be selected fourth or fifth was not too bad, but to be chosen last and relegated to a remote position in the outfield was downright awful. I know; I was there.

How I hoped the ball would never be hit in my direction, for surely I would drop it, runners would score, and teammates would laugh.

As though it were just yesterday, I remember the very moment when all that changed in my life. The game started out as I have described: I was chosen last. I made my sorrowful way to the deep pocket of right field and watched as the other team filled the bases with runners. Two batters then went down on strikes. Suddenly, the next batter hit a mighty drive. I even heard him say, “This will be a home run.” That was humiliating, since the ball was coming in my direction. Was it beyond my reach? I raced for the spot where I thought the ball would drop, uttered a prayer while running, and stretched forth my cupped hands. I surprised myself. I caught the ball! My team won the game.

This one experience bolstered my confidence, inspired my desire to practice, and led me from that last-to-be-chosen place to become a real contributor to the team.

We can experience that burst of confidence. We can feel that pride of performance. A three-word formula will help us: *Never give up.*

### **Magnify priesthood calling by serving**

From the play *Shenandoah* comes the spoken line which inspires: “If we don’t

try, then we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

Miracles are everywhere to be found when priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes. The priesthood is not really so much a gift as it is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others.

The call of duty can come quietly as we who hold the priesthood respond to the assignments we receive. President George Albert Smith, that modest yet effective leader, declared, "It is your duty first of all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of His holy Priesthood to magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows in such a way that the people will be glad to follow you."<sup>4</sup>

And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it. An elder magnifies the ordained calling of an elder by learning what his duties as an elder are and then by doing them. As with an elder, so with a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a bishop, and each who holds office in the priesthood.

Brethren, it is in *doing*, not just *dreaming*, that lives are blessed, others are guided, and souls are saved. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves,"<sup>5</sup> counseled James.

May all within the sound of my voice make a renewed effort to qualify for the Lord's guidance in our lives. There are many who plead and pray for help. There are those who are discouraged and in need of a helping hand.

### The conversion of the Anastors

Many years ago when I served as a bishop, I presided over a large ward with over 1,000 members, including 87 widows. On one occasion I was visiting, along with one of my counselors, a widow and her mature handicapped daughter. As we left

their apartment, a lady from the apartment across the hall was standing outside her door and stopped us. She spoke with a foreign accent and asked if I were a bishop; I replied that I was. She told me that she noticed I often visited with others. Then she said, "No one visits me or my bedfast husband. Do you have time to come in and visit with us, even though we are not members of your church?"

As we entered her apartment, we noticed that she and her husband were listening to the Tabernacle Choir on the radio. We talked with the couple for a while, then provided a blessing to the husband.

Following that initial visit I stopped by as often as I could. The couple eventually met with the missionaries, and the wife, Angela Anastor, was baptized. Sometime later her husband passed away, and I had the privilege of conducting and speaking at his funeral services. Sister Anastor, with her knowledge of the Greek language, later was to translate the widely used pamphlet *Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story* into the Greek language.

### Do your duty; that is best

I love the motto "Do [your] duty; that is best; Leave unto [the] Lord the rest!"<sup>6</sup>

Active service in the Aaronic Priesthood will prepare you young men to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to serve missions, and to marry in the holy temple.

You will ever remember your Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and your fellow quorum members, thereby experiencing the truth "God gave us memories, that we might have June roses in the December of our lives."<sup>7</sup>

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, your future beckons; prepare for it. May Heavenly Father ever guide you as you do so. May He guide all of us as we strive to honor the priesthood which we hold and to magnify our callings, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Evan Stephens, "A Mormon Boy," in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 296.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
3. *Priesthood Home Teaching Handbook*, rev. ed. (1967), ii–iii.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 14.
5. James 1:22.
6. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Legend Beautiful," in *The Complete Poetical Works of Longfellow* (1893), 258.
7. Paraphrasing James Barrie, in *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time*, comp. Laurence J. Peter (1977), 335.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Seek to live exemplary lives

My dear brethren of the priesthood, wherever you may be across this broad world, what a tremendous body you have become, men and boys of every race and kindred, all a part of the family of God.

How precious is His gift to us. He has given to us a portion of that which is His divine authority, the eternal priesthood, the power by which He brings to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. It follows that when much has been given to us, much is required of us (see Luke 12:48; D&C 82:3).

I know that we are not perfect men. We know the perfect way, but we do not always act according to our knowledge. But I think that for the most part we are trying. We are trying to be the kind of men our Father would have us be. That is a very high objective, and I commend all of you who are trying to reach it. May the Lord bless you as you seek to live exemplary lives in every respect.

### Helping people in the Gulf States

Now, as all of us are aware, the Gulf States area of the United States has re-

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Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the father-and-son priesthood choir for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "True to the Faith." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Adhemar Damiani of the Seventy.

cently suffered terribly from raging winds and waters. Many have lost all they had. The damage has been astronomical. Literally millions have suffered. Fear and worry have gripped the hearts of many. Lives have been lost.

With all of this, there has been a great outpouring of help. Hearts have been softened. Homes have been opened. Critics love to talk about the failures of Christianity. Any such should take a look at what the churches have done in these circumstances. Those of many denominations have accomplished wonders. And far from the least among these has been our own Church. Great numbers of our men have traveled considerable distances, bringing with them tools and tents and radiant hope. Men of the priesthood have given thousands upon thousands of hours in the work of rehabilitation. There have been three and four thousand at a time. There are some there tonight. We cannot say enough of thanks to them. Please know of our gratitude, of our love, and of our prayers in your behalf.

Two of our Area Seventies, Brother John Anderson, who resides in Florida, and Brother Stanley Ellis, who lives in