

BISHOP VICTOR L. BROWN

Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I believe I have a clearer meaning of what it means to endure to the end than I did earlier. [Laughter.]

Michael is now sixteen years of age. His parents were members of the Piute Indian tribe. Michael was born without his eyesight. On the Indian reservation, this was considered a terrible handicap. His family was very poor, and a blind boy was more than they could cope with. So, when Michael was about seven years old, he was left on the desert to die. Fortunately, some passing tourists found him and took him to a hospital. It took a year for the doctors and nurses to save his life and restore his health.

During this experience of being left on the desert all alone without food and water, unable to see, Michael's basic animal instincts for survival became so strong that he almost became an animal, fearing and hating everybody and everything. Eight years later, when I first met him, he told me he could remember the horror of being all alone—hungry, thirsty, and lost.

When he became well enough, Michael was sent to school. He was incorrigible. Because of his tragic experience, he destroyed everything he could get his hands on—paper, pencils, record player. Everything was his enemy. I suppose the school authorities despaired of ever reaching this boy. One day, they placed a call to a wonderful Latter-day Saint woman and asked her if she would mind taking an Indian boy into her home. She readily agreed.

Michael's nature had not changed. He still considered everyone his enemy. He continued to destroy almost everything that came in his way. One day one of the neighbor boys, a white boy by the name of Richard, became acquainted with Michael. Richard was about fifteen years old. He was a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. He took an interest in Michael and fast became his friend.

Richard came to the Presiding Bishopric's Office one day and asked about

the cost of the Book of Mormon in Braille. He had been saving his money for a long time so that he might purchase a Book of Mormon in Braille as a birthday present for his blind Indian buddy. The cost was more than Richard had saved. However, a kind person made it possible for him to obtain the book. As Michael read with his fingers, Richard followed along in his own Book of Mormon reading out loud, thus helping Michael over the more difficult words. As I visited with Michael, he said he had never read such wonderful stories. He said that everything he had read in the past was kid stuff, but the Book of Mormon was different. I asked him what the greatest desire of his heart was. This fifteen-year-old Indian boy replied: "To become sixteen years old so I can be baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." He explained that he must wait until his sixteenth birthday because of the requirement of the agency responsible for him.

Michael had his sixteenth birthday just this August and was baptized by his buddy, Richard, who is now a priest. Just four weeks ago, Michael was ordained a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood by his foster father.

Michael told his mother that as he was being confirmed a member of the Church, the brightest feeling went through his entire body. He said, "I know now what 'white' looks like." This sixteen-year-old Indian boy who has never seen the light of day now knows what "white" looks like. The Holy Ghost has borne witness to him.

This last school year, Michael, the boy who was incorrigible, was honored for his excellence in school effort—excellence in deportment, scholarship, and progress—the only boy so honored by his school this year. He hopes someday to teach other blind children as he has been taught.

Bill is now fifteen. His parents are Navajo. When Bill was a child, he was stricken with polio, which left him

Sunday, October 6

Third Day

without the use of his legs. Bill and Michael are brothers in this foster home. They are both Boy Scouts. A year ago, they needed money to go to Scout camp, so they decided to sell toothbrushes and toothpaste. They didn't have much luck in their own neighborhood, so Michael pushed Bill in his wheelchair seven miles to another community where they had some success. They said that the most interesting and funniest experience of the day was when they sold a toothbrush and some toothpaste to a man who didn't have any teeth.

Three weeks ago at a stake quarterly conference, I invited Bill to come to the front of the chapel and bear his testimony to over twelve hundred people. I wish you could have seen this fifteen-year-old Navajo Indian boy. Immaculate in his appearance and with all the dignity and majesty of a great chief, he sat in his wheelchair and humbly expressed his gratitude to his Heavenly Father for his many blessings, for his parents, his brothers and sisters, his membership in the Church and the blessing of holding the office of teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. Bill is a fine artist and hopes someday to become a great architect.

Bill and Michael have two lovely, blond, fair-skinned sisters and a baby brother, Ronnie. Let me tell you about Ronnie. As far as we know, he is also a Navajo Indian boy. When the agency called this same good mother and asked if she would take a three-year-old Indian baby into her home, they said that the child was totally incapacitated. He could not walk; he could not talk. They explained the outlook for him as almost hopeless. Notwithstanding this, she accepted him into her home. When I met Ronnie the other day, he had a mischievous twinkle in his eye and a smile on his face as he ran and tried to escape from one of his sisters—as normal a four-year-old as I have ever seen.

A blind boy, a crippled boy, a child who was a complete invalid—each one destined to a life of misery and hopelessness, but for the love, compassion, charity, and understanding of a wonderful

woman—a woman who had the support of a good and faithful husband—a woman who wanted children more than anything else in the world and who was not blessed with any of her own. She wanted them so badly it didn't matter what their handicaps nor that their skin was copper color. The love she gave them was the love she had missed so desperately during her childhood. The compassion she blessed these children with was the compassion she longed for and sought but failed to find as she was growing up. To me she typifies the saint as described by Felix Adler as he makes the distinction between a hero and a saint. Paraphrasing this statement:

"The hero (heroine) is one who kindles a great light in the world, who sets up blazing torches in the dark streets of life for men to see by. The saint is the man (woman) who walks through the dark paths of the world, himself (herself) a 'light.'"

I suppose that most of the teachings of the Master can be gleaned from the lives of this family, also from Richard, the white boy, a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, impervious to the taunts of the other boys as he held Michael's hand while they walked down the streets, a boy who so loved the Lord that he wanted to share the gospel with his friend. What a wonderful example of living the first two great commandments as found in the twelfth chapter of Mark, verses thirty and thirty-one:

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

"And the second is like, namely, this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

There is such a desperate need in the world today for this kind of love, for each mother to want her children, to want them so badly that her love transcends all else. A mother's love is one of the basic instincts God has implanted in a woman's heart. It is so basic that it exists in all animals that

bear offspring, and yet there are those who fail to use this love wisely.

From studies made by social workers, they find that when children get into trouble it is altogether too often because:

1. Mother's social status is reflected through her child.

2. Mothers push their children into mature social experiences far beyond their age.

3. There is a feeling on the part of parents of getting the child out of the home so they can have more freedom, so they can be to themselves, and so they can travel and not be hampered by having children in the home.

4. All too often the child is not taught dependability and self-reliance. He is left on his own.

5. Another major contributing factor is that the parents are not home enough.

Mothers, you most of all have the destiny of this generation in your hands. Surely, we fathers have a part as do we leaders of youth, but nothing we can do will compare with a mother's love if it is wisely placed.

Now, may I just mention a group of mothers. I think there are about four thousand of them. These mothers have a special place in my heart. They are the mothers whose husbands are bishops in this great Church. The other day a lovely young mother, the wife of a bishop, wrote me a sweet letter. She expressed, among other things, a need for encouragement so she would always be an inspiration to her

husband, so that she would have the strength to suppress the normal feelings of loneliness and discouragement, of being left alone so much of the time, of having to shoulder a great share of the responsibility of rearing her children than would otherwise be the case, and of being the last one to know what is going on in the ward. I suppose this runs contrary to the basic nature of most women.

We want you to know that you are not forgotten for a moment. We meet your husbands more often than we do you, and perhaps we talk about them more. We want you to know that we are fully aware that behind every good bishop in this Church is a good woman, a woman who, through sharing her strength, is instrumental in making a good man.

May God bless all good women everywhere that their love may bless mankind, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

We have just listened to Bishop Victor L. Brown, a member of the Presiding Bishopric.

We shall now hear from Elder Mark E. Petersen, of the Council of the Twelve, and President of the West European Mission, who has just recently left the sick bed, but we are glad he is able to say a few words to us before he goes back to Great Britain.

ELDER MARK E. PETERSEN

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

President McKay is always so gracious and so wonderful. I love him with all my heart, as you do, and with all my soul I sustain him as our great prophet leader. I am grateful for his courtesy at this time.

I have been greatly stirred by this conference. I have been stirred more than normally, I suppose, because of the experiences my wife and I have had in the last eight or nine months. I now see the Church in a new perspective. I am a different man from what I was a

year ago. I am a different kind of Latter-day Saint. I have come to realize that the great mission of this Church is that which President McKay has taught us so often in our council meetings—that we must bear testimony to the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It has taken me eight months now to realize how far the world has drifted away from belief in the Savior. It has taken newspaper articles and books and sermons, all from clergymen of various faiths, in which they deny the existence