

Saturday, April 4

First Day

hood, and we must better ourselves through attaining these goals.

And so we have a task here upon this earth. What is our task?

God says, Your task is to build a better world; I answered how

This world is such a large, vast place, so complicated now,

And I so small and useless am, there is nothing I can do.

But God in all his wisdom said, Build a Better You.

This is our responsibility as priesthood bearers, as members of this Church, to build a Better You, to make our one goal here upon his earth the celestial kingdom. And let us remember too that

Heaven is not gained by a single bound,  
That we build the ladder by which we  
rise

From the lowly earth to the vaulted  
skies

And mount its summit round by round.

Our obligation as young men of this Church is to build this ladder and build it well and build it sturdily; build it through our advancement in the priesthood; build it through an honest life; build it on service in this Church; build it upon prayer and build it upon the commandments that the Lord has set for us to keep; build it upon a life that has been untarnished by unclean thought, unclean speech or unclean actions. Build it for the good, remembering always that advancement in the priesthood means greater moral responsibility.

Brethren, I have a testimony of this gospel. I know it to be the truth, and

I pray to my Heavenly Father that we as the youth of Zion will not falter, that we will accept this Gospel, that we will use it in our lives, that we will build on it and that we will work and work and work to gain the celestial kingdom and eternal salvation. I am thankful for this priesthood which I hold and for the opportunity it gives me of serving in the Church, and I say these things humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President David O. McKay:**

Thank you, young men, for your messages this night. You will never forget this experience! It almost seemed to overwhelm Brother Plumb. But didn't you admire him as he stood there facing an audience of approximately 50,000? He gave a very lovely talk. So did Brother Cowie. But the experience of overcoming the fear and timidity will stay with Brother Plumb all his life, and he will be thankful for his achievement.

I remember that same feeling in facing a smaller audience than he faced tonight. I couldn't remember the prayer on the Sacrament. I could say it alone from memory, and intended to ask the blessing on the bread until I looked at the audience. It was only a Huntsville audience, but it was a big audience (laughter), but the memory of that achievement—going through with it—has remained all through the years.

Thank you again. You have overcome fear and you succeeded in giving the messages, just as I did.

Bishop John H. Vandenberg, Presiding Bishop to the Church, will now address us.

## BISHOP JOHN H. VANDENBERG

*Presiding Bishop of the Church*

Two weeks ago I was flying over the Hoover Dam as a passenger in a jet airliner. The person sitting next to me peered out of the window, viewing the vast reaches and expanse of Lake Mead

below, and then narrowing his attention to the Hoover Dam, exclaimed, "It seems incredible that such a small dam could control and hold in check such a vast supply of water."

### Marvels of Men, How Achieved

We marvel at the works of man, but sometimes fail to remember the planning, the engineering, and the designing which is necessary to build a structure such as the Hoover Dam. Construction of such a work requires the careful placing of each bar of steel, the perfect mixing of each batch of concrete, the proper control of temperatures, and the exact performance of other manifold and critical details to achieve the necessary built-in strength to insure endurance and permanency to such a gigantic project. Now, just as it is necessary to carefully "build in" the needed strength to protect the safety of a material structure—so it is necessary to build into the souls of men the moral strength that helps mould character that will protect the safety of the individual.

### Priesthood an Active Force for Character Building

Tonight, we have heard excellent addresses given by two young men holding the Aaronic Priesthood. [Ronald G. Plumb, Douglas Cowie]\* They have shown evidence of having built moral strength into their character, as they have touched the hearts of this vast priesthood assemblage. The priesthood which we bear should be an active force to develop a more effective application of moral principles, thereby strengthening our powers to subdue the adversary.

The great Archimedes of Syracuse exclaimed to his king, "Give me a lever and a place on which to rest it, and I will move the world." (*100 Great Lives*, p. 526.)

It is the Holy Priesthood, likened unto a lever, placed upon and entrusted to worthy men, that is bringing forth the mighty work of God.

"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; . . ." (D&C 13.) Thus spoke John the Baptist as he conferred the Lesser Priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

This was the beginning—as the Lord

has said, "To prepare the weak for those things which are coming on earth, and for the Lord's errand in the day when the weak shall confound the wise, and the little one become a strong nation, and two shall put their tens of thousands to flight.

"And by the weak things of the earth the Lord shall thrash the nations by the power of his Spirit." (*Ibid.*, 133:58-59.)

The Aaronic Priesthood, with its various offices of deacon, teacher, and priest, is conferred upon worthy men and boys in the Church over twelve years of age. It is expected that everyone thus ordained will officiate in his respective office and calling with dignity and devotion. The office of bishop is conferred by ordination to those especially called to administer all of the affairs of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward.

### The Office of Bishop

The office of a bishop is one of the great offices in the priesthood. It is highly important that every bishop in the Church recognize as a prime responsibility his calling and ordination in the Lesser Priesthood. The bishop is familiar with God's purposes, for God has said: ". . . this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39), and the true bishop will resolve, "this is my work and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of each boy and girl entrusted to my care." To do this requires not only dedication and singleness of purpose but also the necessity of being an example in his own personal conduct. Paul counseled Titus, ". . . a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

"But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers." (Titus 1:7-9.)

### Attitude of Bishop

The attitude of a bishop with respect to his calling may bring about the

Saturday, April 4

First Day

rise or fall of Aaronic Priesthood bearers in his ward. Advancement in this priesthood should warrant greater moral responsibility. Advancement to the office of a bishop means the greatest of moral responsibility not only to his own life but to the life of each boy and girl in his ward.

#### Assignments of Responsibility

I believe every boy looks forward to being ordained to the office of a deacon. He has prepared himself to the best of his youthful ability to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. From this point forward, if he fails to carry out the responsibilities involved, it is usually due to his own father's or to his bishop's neglect. This poses an awesome thought, but remember the boys must not stand alone, they "... need to have firm limits set for them as they grow," counseled Graham B. Blaine, Jr., "for only in this way can they learn to impose discipline upon themselves; without such limits they grow into irresponsible, selfish, and conscienceless adults." (*Journal of National Association of Women's Deans and Counselors*, Nov. 1, 1963, Blaine, Graham B. Jr., "Stress and Distress and Identity Formation in College and High School.")

#### A Testimony from Life

I believe every boy should feel as Elder James E. Talmage did when he was ordained a deacon. He said: "I was called and ordained one Sunday morning, without any previous notice; and that afternoon was placed as a sentinel at the door of the house in which the Saints had met for worship. As soon as I had been ordained, a feeling came to me such as I have never been able to fully describe. It seemed scarcely possible, that I, a little boy, could be so honored of God as to be called to the priesthood. I had read of the sons of Aaron and of Levi who were chosen for the sacred labors of the Lesser Priesthood, but that I should be called to do part of the service that had been required of them was more than my little mind could grasp. I was both frightened and happy. Then, when I was placed on duty at the door, I forgot that I was but an eleven-year-old lad; I felt

strong in the thought that I belonged to the Lord, and that he would assist me in whatever was required of me. I could not resist the conviction that other sentinels, stronger by far than I, stood by me though invisible to human eyes.

"The effect of my ordination to the deaconship entered into all the affairs of my boyish life. I am afraid that sometimes I forgot what I was, but I have ever been thankful that ofttimes I did remember, and the recollection always served to make me better. When at play on the school grounds, and perhaps tempted to take unfair advantage in the game, when in the midst of a dispute with a playmate, I would remember, and the thought would be as effective as though spoken aloud—'I am a deacon; and it is not right that a deacon should act in this way.' On examination days, when it seemed easy for me to copy some other boy's work or to 'crib' from the book, I would remember again, 'I am a deacon, and must be honest and true.' When I saw other boys cheating in play or in school, I would say in my mind, 'It would be more wicked for me to do that than it is for them, because I am a deacon.'

"Nothing that was required of me in the duties of my office was irksome; the sense of the great honor of my ordination made all service welcome. I was the only deacon in the branch, and had abundant opportunity to work.

"The impression made upon my mind when I was made a deacon has never faded. The feeling that I was called to the special service of the Lord, as a bearer of the priesthood, has been a source of strength to me through all the years. When later I was ordained to higher offices in the Church, the same assurance has come to me, on every such occasion,—that I was in truth endowed with power from heaven, and that the Lord demanded of me that I honor his authority. I have been ordained in turn a teacher, an elder, a high priest, and lastly an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, and with every ordination there has come to me a new and soul-thrilling feeling which first I knew when I was called to be a deacon in the service of the Lord." (*Course of*

*Study for the Quorums of the Priesthood: Deacons 1914*, pp. 135-136.)

I am sure this testimony of Elder Talmage will make us appreciate more fully the great privilege it is to hold the priesthood.

### Youth Wants to Be Strong

There is much evidence to indicate that young people want to learn and to be strong. A recent report in *The British Journal of Educational Psychology* said: "School children may be more eager to learn than teachers are to teach them. More than 800 British primary and secondary school children were given a list of qualities of good teachers that had been compiled from student essays. They were asked to grade these qualities in order of importance. The children rated the teacher's ability to teach above all other qualities and also put disciplinary skills above such personal skills as friendliness, patience, kindness, and good humor."

### The Body a Sacred Blessing

Basically, the right and responsibility of teaching a boy or girl the sacredness of their bodies is an obligation of parents. Fathers should be so close to their sons that many discussions can be held on the subject. It is unfortunate when a boy holding the priesthood of God does not feel free to initiate such a discussion with his father and must satisfy his curiosity by listening to others.

### Cooperation of Parents and Bishops

Bishops should encourage parents to learn the moral standards that have been established by God and urge them to teach such to their children when the children's comprehension level is such that it does not become suggestive. We have recommended to the bishops, for a number of years, that they meet with the parents of every boy who is approaching twelve years of age to explain the programs, opportunities, and moral obligations of priesthood service.

This conference with parents is necessary to bring about greater parental encouragement to the boys. It would seem that a wise bishop might profitably explain to the parents at such a time

the Lord's fiats on chastity and urge them to explain these things to their sons whenever their maturity level would justify.

In the book of Samuel there is an interesting account of the high priest Eli. Eli was a judge, a devoted servant of the Lord in ancient Israel. He was a descendant of Aaron through his younger son. Most often we think of Eli through his connection with the child Samuel in the temple. But the sons of Eli were evil and did not keep the commandments of the Lord. They, therefore, knew not the God of Israel but worshiped wickedness. The account reads: "Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; . . ." (1 Sam. 2:22.)

As a result of their evil acts, they were not privileged to administer the ordinances of the Lesser Priesthood. It would have been their right to continue in offering the outward ordinances of the Lesser Priesthood after their father's death. Instead, they lost not only the privileges of priesthood service but also eternal life.

The Lord condemned Eli, and he was no longer among the chosen because as a father he did not discipline and control his sons. ". . . I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth;" said the Lord, "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." (*Ibid.*, 3:13.)

Someone has said: "There is no need of searching out your genealogy if you did not know where your children were last night." There is no calling in this Church that supersedes that of being a father. No assignment in the Church should ever be considered as an excuse to neglect the home. The home is the basic unit of the Church. Teach your sons by example to be loyal and faithful to the law, to the officers, to the priesthood, and to the authority of God. Your family needs your allegiance and fidelity to the Church which includes the home. Refrain from evil speech; your language should at all times be clean and elevating.

The late Elder Albert E. Bowen said: ". . . one of the marvelous things about the gospel is that when a command has been given, or otherwise to state it, a

Saturday, April 4

First Day

principle of progress is revealed, there is always incorporated a means for effecting its purpose." (*The Welfare Plan*, p. 142.)

### Aaronic Priesthood, Effective Principle of Progress

Now to you boys, we want the Aaronic Priesthood to be an effective principle of progress in your lives to prepare you for leadership in the Church. This year we included some additional goals for you to achieve in the priesthood program. One of these is the memorization of specific scriptures. We chose them because we believe they will be helpful for you better to understand some basic tenets of the gospel. There is no doubt that you can learn them if you will just apply yourselves to the task.

The other evening, Sister Vandenberg and I were walking down Main Street. We were about fifteen feet behind two young men in their early teens. The smaller of the two was reciting with vigor part of Anthony's "oration over Caesar's body." I could not help but overhear—he did it so well. As I listened I thought how wonderful is the exuberance of youth with its ability to learn and absorb—I also thought of the goals we had set for the Aaronic Priesthood and felt good in the thought that if this youngster could recite literature on the street, certainly there would be no difficulty for the boys who bear the priesthood of God to memorize and recite the scriptures as assigned.

As I close, let us ponder the promise of the Lord: "Thou shalt take the things which thou hast received, which

have been given unto thee in my scriptures for a law, to be my law to govern my church;

"And he that doeth according to these things shall be saved, and he that doeth them not shall be damned if he so continue.

"If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal." (D&C 42:59-61.)

### "Young Men, God Loves You"

Let me assure you young men that God loves you. You are a thousand-fold more valuable than the works of men over which we frequently marvel. God, therefore, expects you to discipline yourselves and to build into your character virtues that will endure forever.

May God bless the Aaronic Priesthood of this Church is my humble prayer which I ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President David O. McKay:

Brother Richard P. Condie will now lead the congregation and chorus in singing, "Do What Is Right."

The Men's Chorus and the congregation joined in singing the hymn, "Do What Is Right."

### President David O. McKay:

President Nathan Eldon Tanner will now address us.

## PRESIDENT NATHAN ELDON TANNER

### *Second Counselor in the First Presidency*

My brethren: To me it is a great privilege and blessing to be able to meet with the priesthood, and as President McKay said this evening, the largest body of priesthood that has ever met in the history of this Church.

"Seek ye first. . . ."

What an inspiration it is to hear these young men bear their testimonies as to

what the priesthood means to them and how they are determined to strive to live worthy of the priesthood which they bear. It makes me believe that they sincerely mean and understand that if they seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things which will be for their good will be added unto them. (See Matt. 6:33.)