

Passed over and far beyond me, their praises proclaimed aloud.

And I learned in the deepening shadow this glorious verity,
 'Tis the torch the people follow, who ere the bearer be.

("The Torchbearer," anonymous.)

A great truth. They *will* be the torchbearers. May we be the watch-

men. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Featherstone.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder David B. Haight

I rejoice with each of you priesthood holders, assembled in hundreds of meetinghouses throughout the world, in the knowledge that what is said here tonight is in harmony with and will assist in hastening the fulfillment of ancient and modern prophecy of our Lord and Savior's plan "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

We have a great work entrusted to us. My remarks tonight are centered in our efforts to find and recover men and families who have strayed from active Church participation. The dedicated heart and willing mind of every man and boy listening tonight is required to be vigorously involved in his priesthood responsibility to bring into activity and fellowship those men and boys we classify as inactive, thereby moving mankind nearer to the ultimate peace and joy of eternal life.

Two young men took different paths

During this past month I received two widely differing messages. One was a formal invitation to attend the swearing-in ceremony in Washington, D. C., of the newest and youngest member of the United States Tax Court—an appointment made by the President of the United States, and a very prestigious honor.

Within hours of receiving that invitation, I had a visit from a law en-

forcement officer inquiring if I knew a certain young man. I replied, "Of course I know him. Why do you ask?" This young man had indicated to the officer that he knew me. A sordid story was then related to me of drugs, immorality, stealing to satisfy the high cost of drugs, buying illicit sexual favors, and cheap rooming house living. When I expressed a desire to see and help this young man, the officer suggested I not see him at this time because of his emotional condition.

The families of these two young men are well known to me. As boys they were members of the same ward. Both received the Aaronic Priesthood and had had the same Sunday School teachers. The scriptures, Church magazines, and lesson manuals had been made available in their homes.

One received the Melchizedek Priesthood, fulfilled a mission, married in the temple, and while attending law school served in a bishopric; and now, Judge Stephen Jensen Swift has been honored by his national government by appointment to a federal judgeship.

The other young man never merited or obtained the promised blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Going to top-rated private schools overshadowed interest in a mission. He never married, associated with the wrong people, has now become a ridiculer of gospel principles because they differ from his life-style, and is virtually an outcast from family,

society, and from the word of God. His family's life-style failed to encourage him spiritually by its lack of interest in the scriptures, family home evenings, family and personal prayer, and hearing in their home testimonies of religious belief.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"

The Honorable Judge Stephen Swift is settling his family in Washington, D. C., and learning to feel comfortable in the robes of a federal judge. He has our love, admiration, and highest respect.

The other young man needs our love even more—a special love. I have faith that we can recover him. It was such as he of whom the Savior spoke: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" (Luke 15:4).

Paul taught, for he had experienced firsthand, that "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Save our youth and save generations

Young men are sowers. Young women are sowers. Who trains and guides these sowers? Who points out to them which is the right grain to place in the sower's bag? Who teaches them how to place the sower's bag on their shoulders? Who teaches the young sower going out into the field for the first time whether the season is right, or how far to scatter the seed? Hopefully, a caring father, a loving mother, teachers and quorums, or other loved ones will guide their footsteps.

"When we do not act preventively in the earlier years," President Kimball said, "we must later on act redemptively but with . . . fewer and more labored results" (MIA Conference, 23 June 1974, p. 7). In saving our youth, we save generations.

Put the priesthood of God to work

There is an unusual concern being expressed by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles over the increasing numbers of men and boys—who have such an influence upon their wives and families—who are now listed on quorum and ward reports as inactive.

We remind all of you that—

Every inactive man has a bishop, quorum president, and home teachers.

Every inactive woman has a bishop, Relief Society president, and visiting teachers.

Every inactive young woman has a bishop and a Young Women's presidency.

Every inactive young man has a bishop and quorum president.

And every member of the Church has a stake president or a mission president.

President Harold B. Lee taught: "There is no new organization necessary to take care of the needs of this people. All that is necessary is to put the priesthood of God to work" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1972, p. 124).

Strengthen thy brethren

Your attention to this alarming trend of inactivity must now become one of our most urgent priorities. The worth of all souls is great in the sight of God, whether they be nonmembers, inactive members, or active members.

The gospel teaches us that every member of the Church has an obligation to strengthen his fellow members. The Savior himself instructed the Apostle Peter: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32).

Guidelines through First Presidency and Twelve

Guidelines for Melchizedek Priesthood quorum activation efforts have already been given to stake presi-

dents with the necessary instructions from the Regional Representatives.

To clarify and reemphasize the fundamental concepts of Melchizedek Priesthood quorum participation and to help the quorums utilize their manpower resources, I would like to read the following statement of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. It will guide stake presidents, bishops, and Melchizedek Priesthood quorum leaders in organizing local efforts to effectively reach their members:

"The Lord gave instruction in the revelations that holders of the priesthood should be organized by quorums. The presidency of the quorum is responsible for the activity of each quorum member. Home teaching, wherein quorum members 'visit the house of each member' (D&C 20:51), is one of the most effective means by which the members of the quorum are cared for and strengthened.

"The bishop, as presiding high priest and chairman of the ward priesthood executive committee, which is the home teaching committee, in consultation with Melchizedek Priesthood quorum presidents and group leaders, should assign families for home teaching purposes to quorums and groups. Generally, members will receive home teachers from their own quorums. However, where there is a special need, inactive Melchizedek Priesthood bearers and prospective elders and their families may be assigned to the quorum or group that can provide the most effective fellowship and teaching. Home teachers will report to their own quorum presidencies or group leaders.

"Brethren who have special talents in teaching the inactive should be assigned by the bishop as home teachers to selected inactive families. When those families are brought into activity, the teachers may then be assigned to work with other inactive families.

"When an inactive elder or prospective elder who has been assigned to the high priests is brought to priesthood meeting by his home teacher, he may attend the high priests or seventies

groups or the elders quorum, depending upon his needs. The bishop makes this decision in consultation with the Melchizedek Priesthood quorum and group leaders.

"When it is appropriate for a prospective elder to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, he should be ordained an elder and then become a member of the elders quorum. Age is not the determining factor for Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations for these brethren. Men are ordained to offices of the priesthood when their calling requires it and by inspiration and according to their worthiness." (See *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 92.)

Waiting for a knock on their door

This thoughtfully prepared statement of Melchizedek Priesthood quorum and quorum member participation has one purpose: to assist stake presidents, bishops, and the Melchizedek Priesthood quorum leaders in organizing their priesthood power to be the most productive in bringing back those who have strayed.

Many stakes have already enthusiastically implemented activation efforts, with heart-warming results. Most wards and stakes in the Church can recount their own successes—they are many. Stake and ward leaders know what to do: inspired home teaching, temple preparation seminars, fellowshiping with genuine love, appropriate church assignments—these are the key ingredients. We need to get organized and "do it."

There are tens of thousands of good people who have quietly drifted away and are now waiting for a knock on their door. Those who have strayed must experience a doctrinal conversion and social integration by someone who cares.

Become a star thrower

Loren Eiseley walked along a stormy beach late one afternoon "with the wind roaring at his back and the

seagulls screaming" overhead. Tourists who came to the beach would collect shellfish and sea life tossed up each night, boil them in large kettles, and take the shells home as souvenirs. Eiseley walked far down the beach around a point away from the collectors and saw "a gigantic rainbow of incredible perfection." Toward its foot he "discerned a human figure . . . gazing . . . at something in the sand.

"In a pool of sand . . . a starfish had thrust its arms up stiffly and was holding its body away from the stifling mud. . . . ["Is it still alive?" Eiseley asked.]

"'Yes,' [said the man standing in the rainbow] and with a quick . . . gentle movement he picked up the star and spun it . . . far out into the sea.

"It may live," he said, "if the offshore pull is strong enough. . . ."

At first Eiseley felt only the futility of the man's efforts, "throwing one starfish at a time back into the sea when it nightly tosses out hundreds." He walked away, looking sadly "at the shell collectors . . . [and] the steaming kettles in which . . . voiceless things were being boiled alive."

The next morning Eiseley again went to the beach. Again the star thrower was there. "Silently [Eiseley] . . . picked up a still-living star, spinning it far out into the waves. . . . 'I understand,' [he] said. 'Call me [a star] thrower [also].'"

Of throwing the starfish back he wrote, "It was like a sowing—the sowing of life on an infinitely gigantic scale. . . ." He saw the star thrower stoop and throw once more. Eiseley joined with him. They "flung and flung again while all about [them] roared the insatiable waters."

They, "alone and small in that immensity, hurled back the living stars." They set their shoulders and

"cast, . . . slowly, deliberately, and well. The task was not to be assumed lightly" (Loren Eiseley, *The Star Thrower* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978], pp. 171–73, 184). Each moment counted if they were to rescue the starfish that they sought to save.

We need star throwers—throwers with vision and who have a sense of discipleship with the Savior, who feel the need to save where there is still life and hope and value, and not to let that life die on a friendless beach, but to hurl it back to where it belongs.

In a world where materialism, cynicism, and hopelessness exists, we share the message of greatest hope—the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Be a star thrower! Then you may better understand our Lord's commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 19:19).

God bless us all in his divine work of the recovering of souls, that our resolve will be firm, that our timing will be now, and that our success will be sweet, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Haight.

We shall stand and sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." We shall then hear from President Ezra Taft Benson.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

President Hinckley

President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.