

who are wholesome, prepared emotionally and practically, and who are honest. It requires being *ready* to go to a temple, being mature enough to make promises and keep them and to receive holy promises and qualify for them.

So wherever we are with respect to marriage—years from it, close to it, or deeply committed in it—we must be wise, be faithful to the commandments of God, be true. Marriage is the closest and most intimate relationship one makes in this life, and the most serious and sacred decision. If you haven't been to the Lord's house, get ready, be clean, prepare to come to establish the foundation for a special, happy, eternal marriage.

### Circle of affection and appreciation

And the inspiration for all of this is the sweet assurance—deeply rooted in the heart of every decent man who is living as he should with his sweetheart wife, or who has so lived, or who is planning and preparing such a union—that heaven will be heaven for us because we know we will be there with the one we love the best. Parley P. Pratt said after he met the Prophet in Philadelphia that “it was from him that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity; and that the refined sympathies and affections which endeared us to each other emanated from the foundation of divine eternal love. It

was from the Prophet that I learned that we might cultivate these affections, and grow and increase in the same to all eternity” (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 297–98).

We sat in a room the other night with our five children and their eternal partners, and with their sixteen children. Twenty-eight of us joined in a circle of affection and appreciation. That circle, established with the two of us in a holy house of the Lord only a few short years ago, has expanded miraculously. Our last child was born twenty-four years ago, but the circle continues to expand and grow. God being willing, we may live to see another generation of wonderful children entering the world. We are grateful to know that our family will relate with us eternally, even as we will with those who gave us mortal life, and all of us together will find a loving place ultimately and a continuing relationship under the holy influence of Him whose spirit children we are and of Him whose holy sacrifice brought us the blessings of eternal life. Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Hanks.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Bishop Victor L. Brown, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

## Bishop Victor L. Brown

### Aaronic Priesthood—a personal ordination

I deeply appreciate the opportunity tonight to address the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and their leaders. I have a sincere desire to cause each one to enlarge his vision of what the Aaronic Priesthood means and what a great blessing it is to be entrusted with

its power. I think it is very important to recognize that the Lord has entrusted each individual with the responsibility associated with the Aaronic Priesthood. In other words, when I speak of the Aaronic Priesthood, I speak of it as it affects each individual, not just as a large number of boys or men. When one receives the Aaronic Priesthood, he receives it as a personal, private ordina-

tion, not just as one of many. Therefore, I hope you will feel that what I have to say tonight should be taken as a personal message—to the deacon in the upper row of the balcony here in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, to the teacher watching the satellite transmission in New Jersey, and to the young priest hearing the broadcast in France or Samoa or Brazil—to each individual young man.

### **Parallel between summer Olympics and Aaronic Priesthood**

This summer we all witnessed one of the most wonderful and inspiring exhibitions of youthful accomplishments among athletes that can be imagined. People all over the world were lifted to new heights of faith in mankind through the performance of the men and women at the summer Olympic games in Los Angeles. Their self-confidence and commitment to excel were infectious. I, for one, have unrestrained admiration for all of them, not only those who received medals, but all of the participants; and, of course, the thousands of volunteers who made that great event possible deserve to be recognized as well.

I would like to draw some parallels between the experiences of these young people and the experiences, which are far greater and longer lasting, that most of you will have in your life's contest. I specifically speak to the deacon, teacher, and priest who have had conferred upon them the power and the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood.

### **Preparation and sacrifice to qualify**

Each participant in the Olympics needed to train thoroughly to even qualify to participate. It took many, many hours of practicing, of developing self-discipline, of developing further commitment to achieve the goal. It required sacrifice, and it required a feeling of self-confidence. You as an Aaronic Priesthood holder have qualified to receive that priesthood. Had you

not qualified, it would not have been given to you, and you would not be authorized to participate and exercise its power and authority.

You did not have to spend the hours the athletes had to spend to condition and perfect your physical body, but you had to do something more important than that. It was necessary for you to prepare your spirit to receive the blessings of this great honor. Now that you have been accepted, if you expect to succeed, it is essential that you do those things that will bring about success. When you do succeed, which requires not just months but a lifetime of living and proving yourself, you may not receive the applause of men. You will not be performing before large audiences of enthusiastic supporters, but you will have performed many of the necessary labors in private and without expectation of recognition. And that, of course, requires greater self-discipline than just about any other human endeavor.

### **Inspiration and motivation**

In striving to do their best, these young athletes often looked for inspiration and motivation to those who had performed in prior games, establishing Olympic records. They worked to perfect their talents in order to equal or better those records. You as an Aaronic Priesthood holder have available many examples of those who have honored their priesthood: John the Baptist, Joseph Smith, your own father, and your bishop. You need only strive to be and do your best to follow these examples.

### **Contest is with self**

Most of the participants in the Olympic games recognized that in athletics, as well as in life, the real competition is with self, not against others. I watched a television interview one day where this was made very clear. The fourteen-year-old figure skating champion of Canada was asked how she felt

when she performed to her very best and won. She responded, "Wonderful."

"How do you feel when you perform your very best—and lose?"

"Wonderful."

"How do you feel when you don't perform your very best and win?"

"Terrible."

As an Aaronic Priesthood holder, your contest is with yourself as you honor your priesthood.

### **A preparatory priesthood**

The priesthood you hold was restored to the earth on 15 May 1829, by a heavenly messenger, John the Baptist—the same John who with the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood baptized Jesus of Nazareth in the River Jordan and later, as a resurrected being, laid his hands on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and said:

"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; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness" (D&C 13).

John the Baptist said he came at the direction of Peter, James, and John. The ordination was performed before the Church was organized again upon the earth.

The Aaronic Priesthood is a preparatory priesthood. It is an appendage to the Melchizedek Priesthood and has to do largely with outward ordinances and temporal responsibilities. However, in the ordination, John the Baptist said that it "holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins." These are essential for admittance into the Church of Jesus Christ and to achieve the goal of exaltation in the kingdom of God.

I feel sometimes we consider the preparation and handling of the sacra-

ment and the collecting of fast offerings and so forth as almost the sum and substance of the Aaronic Priesthood responsibility. This is not true. These activities, of course, are very important, but there is so much more. As a preparatory priesthood it is preparing you ultimately, of course, for eternal life and exaltation. The Lord said, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). And further He has told us that eternal life—exaltation—is the greatest gift of God to man.

### **Service to Heavenly Father**

As a holder of the priesthood you are a servant of our Heavenly Father. If you are to honor the priesthood, you must truly be a servant and serve your fellowmen. If you make this service a part of your life, you won't have to continually make decisions about what is right and what is wrong. It will become second nature to your way of living because through service you will be drawing closer to your Heavenly Father.

### **Serve your fellowmen**

I am very much aware that you and some of your peers are living that way now. For instance, a fifteen-year-old Korean boy took his weekly allowance and bought newspapers with it. Then he and some friends sold these on the streets of Seoul, Korea, to raise money to help a fellow student who did not have sufficient funds to stay in school. This young man also gave part of his lunch to this boy each day so that he would not go hungry. Why did he do these things? Because he had been studying the story of the Good Samaritan and didn't just want to learn about the Good Samaritan but wanted to know what it felt like to be one by doing what a Good Samaritan would do. (See Luke 10:25–37.) He related these things to his father only after careful questioning by his father about his ac-

tivities. He had done them without any thought of recognition.

I doubt very much that the bishop of this young man would have to worry about how he looked when he came to participate at the sacrament table or whether his heart and hands were clean and pure. I don't think his father would have to worry about whether or not he was honest in his relationships with others, or whether or not he cheated at school.

Another father told me of an experience he had with his son who was a priest. This man needed some help around the house with cleaning and repainting and so forth. Pleasantly and cooperatively, this young man went ahead and accomplished much of the work. He is preparing himself for trust and responsibility by honoring his parents and willingly accepting chores at home. He is beginning to put on the whole armor of God, which will assure peace and happiness in this life and in the life to come. He is developing the strength and self-discipline needed to obey all of the commandments.

In another instance, some of the young men and women in one ward found themselves wavering in their testimonies and uncomfortable with Church activity. One day they decided, under the guidance of a very wise bishop, to involve themselves actively with several of the elderly members of the ward who were homebound. They divided into small groups, with each group determined to develop a family-like relationship with one of the homebound members. On a regular basis the young women and young men prepared meals that they and their elderly friends enjoyed together in the homes of the elderly members. Each Sunday the young men took the sacrament into the homes. On occasion, they arranged to hold special family home evenings to-

gether. These activities caused a remarkable change in the attitude of the young people toward themselves, toward the elderly, and toward the Church. They found a way to express the gospel of Christ through giving loving service.

### **The banner of the Lord**

I don't think any of us will ever forget the sight of hundreds of young athletes marching proudly behind the flags and banners of their respective countries, thrilled to have been chosen to represent their nation at the Olympic games. You, my brother of the Aaronic Priesthood, seated in the balcony here, at a stake center in New Jersey, or in a chapel in France, Samoa, or Brazil, you are a chosen representative of God, having received the authority to act in His name, as has every worthy young man who holds the priesthood. The banner you carry every day may not be seen by millions of people, but it is seen by Him whose banner it is and by those who know who you are, both members of the Church and nonmembers. It is the banner of the Lord, displaying what you really are deep down inside as you show your love of God by keeping His commandments and by serving your fellowmen.

It is my firm prayer that each of you bishops and quorum advisers of these young men will aid in their understanding what it means to hold the holy priesthood and to put on the whole armor of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, Bishop Brown.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.