

For our own families comes this magnificent promise:

“Therefore, thus saith the Lord unto you, with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers—

“For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God—

“Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began.”⁹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Exodus 3:11.
2. 2 Samuel 7:18.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1967, p. 115; or *Improvement Era*, June 1967, p. 101.
4. Personal journal of Manasseh Byrd Kearn, copy in possession of author.
5. In *Our Pioneer Heritage*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77), 11:320.
6. *Autobiography and Poems* (Salt Lake City, J. C. Graham and Co., 1881), p. 32.
7. In Henry Eugene Davies, *Davies Memoir*, (n.p., 1895), pp. 21–22.
8. In *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 2:323.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 86:8–10.

Elder Helvécio Martins

The revelation on priesthood

June 8, 1978, is no doubt an unforgettable day. On this day priesthood and temple blessings were extended to all worthy male members of the Church. Memorable indeed, its impact affected the lives of uncountable multitudes—of millions who had full knowledge of its meaning and of many others who have not yet arrived, perhaps, to the knowledge of the full extension of its effects.

On that date the First Presidency announced to the whole world a new and special revelation of the Lord, which was preceded by many prayers and much supplication for his divine direction.

What great changes that revelation promoted in the lives of so many children of our Father in Heaven, and among them my humble family in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

It seemed unbelievable. It was an unexpected event, never before dreamed of by those whom the Father in his perfect wisdom preserved until this day when they would be best prepared to respond to the serious requirements of this

truly honorable stewardship, which is the priesthood.

Home teacher—no greater calling

In spite of the relative knowledge acquired throughout the six years of membership in the true church, my first calling as a priesthood holder was not to serve as a General Authority, or a mission president, or a bishop, or a member of two stake presidencies. It was not to serve as an executive secretary in the stake and in the ward. My first assignment and calling was that of serving as a home teacher. This calling preceded all the others. It is interestingly significant to think of it.

Since then I have considered this to be a most important and wonderful calling. In previous callings I have always been released, but this first stewardship has been kept untouched.

“There is no greater Church calling than that of a home teacher,” taught President Ezra Taft Benson. “There is no greater Church service rendered to our Father in Heaven’s children than the ser-

vice rendered by a humble, dedicated, committed home teacher" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 61; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 50).

Home teachers feed the Lord's sheep

After his resurrection and before ascending to heaven, Jesus asked Simon Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my [sheep]" (John 21:15). The question was repeated two more times, and Peter answered in the same manner; and the Lord replied, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:16, 17).

This is the work or the stewardship of the home teacher: to feed, to nourish and quench the thirst of the sheep who are assigned to him as a shepherd.

Nothing has been represented to have higher priority or more urgency in my ecclesiastical life, followed by the lives of my children, than the dedicated, loyal, and devoted fulfillment of this stewardship.

It is worth noting the way the Lord prepares our spirit and mind, without our realizing it, to obtain this high level of understanding.

Our first home teachers

When we were still visiting the Church as investigators, in the second week we received a phone call from the branch president, Brother Antonio Landelino Barros, who asked if it were possible for him to come visit us the following night. At the assigned hour President Barros arrived, accompanied by two men, all formally dressed. Before the family gathered in the living room, President Barros asked permission to offer a prayer. His words were a simple but inspiring supplication to the Lord, asking for the guidance of his Spirit and for special blessings on the family for

us to understand the purpose of that visit and to benefit from it thereafter.

Briefly, President Barros presented a discussion on the home teaching program and introduced his companions, Brothers Nelson Bezerra dos Santos and Alfredo Orlando Torres Lima, as our home teachers and from then on our first and most direct contact with the Church.

What a great experience! What a great opportunity and privilege to serve! Those brothers were around our family during the whole time we lived in the branch area.

President Marion G. Romney taught that the home teachers "carry the heavy and glorious responsibility of representing the Lord Jesus Christ in looking after the welfare of each member" ("The Responsibilities of Home Teachers," *Ensign*, Mar. 1973, pp. 12-13).

Every Sunday those brothers received our family when we arrived at the chapel. They sat next to us during meetings. They taught us the hymns. They taught us about the standards of the kingdom. They called to inform us about the passing away of President Joseph Fielding Smith and later about the calling of the new prophet, President Harold B. Lee.

They were interested in the well-being and the progress of our family and our eventual needs. After our baptism, postponed for two months, and even after we had moved to the Tijuca Ward, these dedicated home teachers and President Barros took turns during the following three months, approximately, in regular phone calls to know if our family was well adjusted in the new ward, if everything was all right, if any help was needed.

In spite of the change of residence, the home teachers did not feel totally released of their duties of taking care of and giving attention to our family.

Even being sure we had new shepherds, they continued as our brothers in Christ.

What a magnificent attitude! They no longer had the assignment, but they kept the Christian interest. What an extraordinary bond was established. Almost twenty-three years have passed since then. Many other home teacher companions have succeeded those first ones. Their names, with few exceptions, are vaguely remembered, but the names and images of those first servants are forever in our memories since they served as true shepherds.

"The most worthy calling in life . . . is that in which man can serve best his fellow man," taught President David O. McKay ("The Noblest Calling in Life," *Instructor*, Mar. 1961, pp. 73-74).

Guardians of the flock

Those brothers were, in fact, guardians, keepers, and very supportive. It is also worth mentioning that they fulfilled their stewardship with happy countenances, which reflected a happy state of spirit.

It seemed as if it were an honor and a privilege for them to serve so. They seemed to understand the duties of the eldest and youngest alike, as taught by the Apostle Peter:

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Peter 5:2).

The example of those dedicated brothers served as the foundation for the future conduct of a new priesthood holder. As I recall these experiences, myself being a home teacher now, I have a pattern very close to the model of Jesus Christ to follow.

Ever since then I have devoted myself with all my might, with my best efforts, to the care of assigned families, and

some of my most significant experiences as a priesthood holder have been as a home teacher.

Watchmen on the tower

During the regional representatives' seminar held on April 3, 1969, President Harold B. Lee taught that "priesthood visitors are to be watchmen on the tower" (p. 78; transcript on microfilm in LDS Church Archives).

The Lord desires to gather "his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings" (D&C 29:2); and the home teachers, and by extension the visiting teachers, have a role of high relevance for the fulfilling of the desire of the Lord.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught, "[Home teaching is] a program so vital that, if faithfully followed, it will help to spiritually renew the Church and exalt its individual members and families" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 59; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 48).

I pray that as priesthood holders we may develop a more perfect understanding of this sacred stewardship.

God lives, as does his Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. The Lord speaks today through his prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, whom we love and follow.

I bear this testimony in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Monte J. Brough and Elder Helvécio Martins.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." President James E. Faust will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."
