

promised for obedience. I so testify, for the Savior lives and He loves you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Moses 2:27. See also Moses 2:28; 3:5; James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 4:303; James E. Talmage, *Millennial Star*, 24 Aug. 1922, 539.
2. Alma 42:15.
3. 2 Nephi 11:5.
4. Moses 6:62.
5. Alma 42:8.
6. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. See "Proclamation," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. See 2 Nephi 9:8–9; Alma 12:4–5; Helaman 2:8; 3 Nephi 1:16; Doctrine and Covenants 10:12, 23.
9. Moses 4:17.
10. Moses 4:18.
11. Moses 4:19.
12. Moses 4:19.
13. Moses 5:10; italics added.
14. Moses 5:11; italics added.
15. See Moses 5:1.
16. See Moses 5:2.
17. Moses 5:8.
18. See Moses 5:12.
19. See Moses 5:13.
20. Moses 5:16.
21. 2 Nephi 9:13.
22. See Spencer W. Kimball, San Antonio fireside, 3 Dec. 1977, 32.
23. See Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 71.
24. See 2 Nephi 9:13.
25. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76.
26. See "Proclamation," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
27. Jeanene W. Scott, BYU Women's Conference, 6 Apr. 1989, 1.

## Sister Elaine L. Jack

### The Saints in flooded Mistolar

On the plains of Paraguay sits the tiny village of Mistolar. It is located on a large stretch of land in a desolate area near the Pilcomayo River. There in this small farming community is a branch of the Church. In June of 1987, with the melting snows of the Andes, the river which was their lifeline for crops was also the source of their destruction. It overflowed its banks not once but twice, forcing the Saints to relocate and then relocate again. They lost everything: their chapel, their homes, their gardens and fences. For a month they waded in knee-deep water simply trying to stay alive.

The Area Presidency, hearing of their plight, dispatched supplies, and Elder Ted E. Brewerton of the Quorum of

Seventy led the rescue party in a grueling two-day journey.

When the group arrived, they were warmly welcomed by the women and children because the men, for the most part, were away hunting and fishing. The people had little food and clothing to sustain them in that freezing winter weather, and their surviving livestock included three sheep, a few chickens, a goat, and a scrawny dog. At night their makeshift reed-and-stick homes offered very little protection.

Clearly their situation was bleak, yet the villagers were smiling. Their peace was a stark contrast to their destitute circumstances.

How were they sustaining their spirits under such difficulties? The answer came when Elder Brewerton asked the

young branch president, "Do you have any sick among your members?"

The young priesthood leader paused and said, "I don't think so; let me ask the other brethren." A few minutes later he answered, "There are 39 of us who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. We watch over and bless our people."

That evening at the branch meeting a sister offered a prayer, one Elder Brewerton will always remember. She said, "Father, we have lost our beautiful chapel, we have lost our clothing, we no longer have homes, . . . we don't have any materials to build anything, we have to walk ten kilometers to get a drink of dirty river water and don't have a bucket. But we desire to express to thee our gratitude for our good health, for our happiness, and for our Church membership. Father, we want thee to know that under any conditions, we will be true, strong, and faithful to the covenants we made to thee when we were baptized" (in Heidi S. Swinton, *Pioneer Spirit* [1996], 10; see 8–11).

When all around them had washed away, the Saints in Mistolar held firmly to the power of the priesthood and its spiritual blessings (see D&C 107:18). I can picture that Relief Society sister standing up to thank the Lord in prayer for all they had. They had practically nothing—not even a bucket. But they had their covenants; they had their Church membership, their commitment to Christ. They were blessed to become "partakers of the glories." In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, "Blessed are you for receiving mine everlasting covenant, even the fulness of my gospel, sent forth unto the children of men, that they might . . . be made partakers of the glories which are to be revealed in the last days" (D&C 66:2).

### **The priesthood is God's power**

I have a firm testimony of the power of the priesthood in the lives of all Church members. In the Doctrine and

Covenants we are also told that the Melchizedek Priesthood holds "the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church" (D&C 107:18). I know it is God's power and authority on earth to bless our lives and help us bridge our earthly experiences to the eternities. When we receive the blessings of the priesthood, we are drawing on the power and grace of God.

President Joseph Fielding Smith said, "Priesthood is given us for two purposes, first, that we may ourselves receive exaltation, and, second, that we may be the means of helping others to obtain like blessings" (*The Way to Perfection* [1935], 221).

### **Sisters share in priesthood blessings**

There is order to the work of God. In one of the first meetings of the Relief Society 154 years ago, the Prophet Joseph Smith charged the sisters with helping to save souls (see Relief Society minutes, 9 June 1842, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). Our purpose has not changed. It is significant to me that the women were organized under the authority of the priesthood. We sustain the priesthood and are sustained by its power. The sisters of the Church, like the one from Mistolar, treasure our opportunity to be full partakers of the spiritual blessings of the priesthood.

Each of us can be directed and blessed in our eternal progression by receiving these blessings. The ordinances, covenants, sealings, and the gift of the Holy Ghost are essential for exaltation. There are a host of individual priesthood blessings as well. Priesthood blessings give us direction; they lift our sights; they encourage and inspire us; they prompt our commitment. We can all be partakers of these spiritual blessings.

Baptism is the critical priesthood ordinance which opens the door to eternal life for each one of us. It is the benchmark from which we count our many blessings

because this is when our accountability to follow Jesus Christ and live His gospel begins. And then each week as we partake of the sacrament, we are reminded to "always remember him" (D&C 20:79). What a blessing this visual reminder is.

When we are confirmed, the heavens open and we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. By and through the Spirit, blessings of the priesthood flow into our lives—the Holy Ghost to lead and guide us, to be with us, to bring us peace, to testify of truth, to bear testimony of Jesus Christ. These spiritual blessings direct the course of our lives. And the lives of those around us are richer in things of the Spirit, for blessings are magnified as they are shared.

When hands are laid on my head in a personal priesthood blessing, I feel enveloped in the love of the Savior. I know that the brother who is administering that blessing is acting in the name of the Lord. In Mistolar, 39 of the men held the Melchizedek Priesthood—and used it to bless their people.

### **Priesthood brings peace and healing**

When I was a child I received a blessing of healing, which I attribute to the power of the priesthood and the faith of my believing parents. Several years later I distinctly remember the pressure of my grandfather's hands on my head when, as a patriarch, he blessed me with a guide for my life, an account of promises for me, conditional on my faithfulness.

I have found a distinct difference in my approach to a calling after I have been set apart. Some calls bring a feeling of total wonder—"I wonder why they called me; I wonder what I should do; I wonder who should help me." I remember the peace that came when my counselors and I were set apart as general officers of the Relief Society by the First Presidency. The setting was formal yet warm. I was addressed by my full name,

and then came quiet concentration, personal direction, and wise counsel.

I felt the same sweet spirit when my husband, Joe, was ordained a bishop and again when he gave our oldest son a father's blessing before Dave left for the Persian Gulf. Then our son, in turn, blessed his wife and baby daughter. This brought such solace during a frightening time.

This morning I asked my husband for a special blessing to complete my preparation to speak to you. It is difficult to put into words what we feel in response to the Lord's words, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John 14:27).

### **Blessings include spiritual gifts**

Spiritual gifts are powerful priesthood blessings. They increase our capacity as we develop them by drawing on the storehouse in heaven. One gift I value is discernment. When the Lord spoke to the woman at the well, He offered her living "water springing up into everlasting life." He discerned her needs. His words startled her: "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." She answered, "I have no husband," and Jesus said, "Thou hast well said." And "the woman saith unto him, . . . I perceive that thou art a prophet." (See John 4:14–19.)

Many women have the gift of discernment. Often blessed with the power to know and understand beyond their experience, women draw on this strength as they visit monthly to teach in the homes or to assess needs as directed by the bishop. We use it as we nurture our children and teach them the gospel. We discern, by the power of God given to us through His Spirit, that "one thing is needful" (Luke 10:42). Nothing we do is more important than the work of righteousness in our homes.

Discernment is critical for our times. President Boyd K. Packer has said, "We need women with the gift of discernment

who can view the trends in the world and detect those that, however popular, are shallow" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 9; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 8). That is exactly what we need.

### Priesthood blessings and the temple

The temple is the matchless setting for receiving priesthood blessings. In this holy house we are endowed individually and then sealed together as families for eternity. Priesthood authority ensures that the covenants we make in the temple are everlasting. The gifts of exaltation deepen the partnership of men and women as they commit to covenants and share the blessings of the temple. And when we attend the temple, we are blessed with knowledge of "things as they really are, and of things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13).

A Relief Society president in Ghana understood the "glories" related to the temple. Talking to some visitors to her ward, she took a small folded piece of paper from her purse and said reverently, "I am a temple recommend holder." It may be years before she can afford to go to the temple in London or Johannesburg, but she has a reminder that she is worthy and willing. The Lord asks no more. (See Don L. Searle, "Ghana: A Household of Faith," *Ensign*, Mar. 1996, 37-38.)

### Follow priesthood leaders

We have been taught in this conference by prophets, seers, revelators, and other General Authorities who bear the priesthood of God. Their messages are for every member of the Church. When we have "ears to hear" (Matthew 11:15), we can recognize that the Lord is saying, "Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

I want to bear my testimony that I know this Church is led by a prophet of

God, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Church administration on the general and local levels is evidence of the blessing of the priesthood, for this is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and He is directing the work. The Lord has said, "Let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God" (D&C 101:16).

The Saints in Mistolar knew God. They had a testimony of His gospel. They were partakers of the many spiritual blessings brought by the power of the priesthood, blessings described in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And . . . all they who receive this priesthood, receive me, saith the Lord;

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom" (D&C 84:35-38).

That we may all be "partakers of the glories" in our Father's kingdom is my prayer. And I say it in the name of Jesus Christ, my Savior, amen.

### President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack, general president of the Relief Society.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel." Elder Francisco J. Viñas, who was sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will then speak to us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

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