Ministering with the Power and Authority of God

We will minister in His name, with His power and authority, and with His loving-kindness.

My beloved brethren, thank you for your devotion to the Lord and His holy work. It is truly a joy to be with you. As a new First Presidency, we thank you for your prayers and for your sustaining efforts. We are grateful for your lives and for your service to the Lord. Your devotion to duty and your selfless service are just as important in your callings as ours are in our callings. Through a lifetime of service in this Church, I have learned that it really doesn't matter where one serves. What the Lord cares about is how one serves.

I express deep gratitude for President Thomas S. Monson, who was an example to me for more than 50 years. And for his counselors, President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, I express profound admiration. I commend them for their service to the Lord and His prophets. Both of these devoted servants have received new assignments. They continue to serve with vigor and commitment. I honor and love them both.

It is a remarkable blessing to serve in the Lord's true and living Church with His authority and power. The restoration of the priesthood of God, including the keys of the priesthood, opens to worthy Latter-day Saints the greatest of all spiritual blessings. We see those blessings flowing to women, men, and children throughout the world.

We see faithful women who understand the power inherent in their callings and in their endowment and other temple ordinances. These women have the assurance of immortality and the opportunity for eternal life. Each of us should be faithful and diligent in doing our part in this great work of God our Eternal Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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guide, protect, and strengthen others by the power of the priesthood they hold. They bring miracles to those they serve while they keep their own marriages and families safe. They shun evil and are mighty elders in Israel. I am most thankful for them!

Now, may I voice a concern? It is this: Too many of our brothers and sisters do not fully understand the concept of priesthood power and authority. They act as though they would rather satisfy their own selfish desires and appetites than use the power of God to bless His children.

I fear that too many of our brothers and sisters do not grasp the privileges that could be theirs. Some of our brethren, for example, act like they do not understand what the priesthood is and what it enables them to do. Let me give you some specific examples.

Not long ago, I attended a sacrament meeting in which a new baby was to be given a name and a father’s blessing. The young father held his precious infant in his arms, gave her a name, and then offered a beautiful prayer. But he did not give that child a blessing. That sweet baby girl got a name but no blessing! That dear elder did not know the difference between a prayer and a priesthood blessing. With his priesthood authority and power, he could have blessed his infant, but he did not. I thought, “What a missed opportunity!”

Let me cite some other examples. We know of brethren who set sisters apart as Primary, Young Women, or Relief Society leaders and teachers but fail to bless them—to bless them with the power to fulfill their callings. They give only admonitions and instructions. We see a worthy father who fails to give his wife and his children priesthood blessings when that is exactly what they need. Priesthood power has been restored to this earth, and yet far too many brothers and sisters go through terrible trials in life without ever receiving a true priesthood blessing. What a tragedy! That’s a tragedy that we can eliminate.

Brethren, we hold the holy priesthood of God! We have His authority to bless His people. Just think of the remarkable assurance the Lord gave us when He said, “Whomsoever you bless I will bless.” It is our privilege to act in the name of Jesus Christ to bless God’s children according to His will for them. Stake presidents and bishops, please ensure that every member of the quorums within your stewardship understands how to give a priesthood blessing—including the personal worthiness and spiritual preparation required to call fully upon the power of God.

To all brethren holding the priesthood, I invite you to inspire members to keep their covenants, fast and pray, study the scriptures, worship in the temple, and serve with faith as men and women of God. We can help all to see with the eye of faith that obedience and righteousness will draw them closer to Jesus Christ, allow them to enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and experience joy in life!

A hallmark of the Lord’s true and living Church will always be an organized, directed effort to minister to individual children of God and their families. Because it is His Church, we as His servants will minister to the one, just as He did. We will minister in His name, with His power and authority, and with His loving-kindness.

An experience I had more than 60 years ago in Boston taught me just how powerful the privilege of ministering...
one-on-one can be. I was then a resident surgeon at the Massachusetts General Hospital—on duty every day, every other night, and every other weekend. I had limited time for my wife, our four children, and Church activity. Nonetheless, our branch president assigned me to visit the home of Wilbur and Leonora Cox with the hope that Brother Cox might come back into activity in the Church. He and Leonora had been sealed in the temple. Yet Wilbur had not participated for many years.

My companion and I went to their home. As we entered, Sister Cox welcomed us warmly, but Brother Cox abruptly walked into another room and closed the door.

I went to the closed door and knocked. After a moment, I heard a muffled “Come in.” I opened the door to find Brother Cox sitting beside an array of amateur radio equipment. In that small room, he lit up a cigar. Clearly, my visit was not all that welcome.

I gazed about the room with wonderment and said, “Brother Cox, I have always wanted to learn more about amateur radio work. Would you be willing to teach me about it? I’m sorry I can’t stay any longer tonight, but could I come back another time?”

He hesitated for a moment and then said yes. That was the beginning of what became a wonderful friendship. I returned and he taught me. I began to love and respect him. Through our subsequent visits, the greatness of this man emerged. We became very good friends, as did our dear eternal companions. Then, with the passage of time, our family moved away. Local leaders continued to nurture the Cox family.

About eight years after that first visit, the Boston Stake was created. Can you guess who its first stake president was? Yes! Brother Cox! During subsequent years, he also served as a mission president and a temple president.

Years later, I, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was assigned to create a new stake in Sanpete County, Utah. During the usual interviews, I was pleasantly surprised to encounter again my dear friend Brother Cox! I felt impressed to call him as the new stake patriarch. After I ordained him, we embraced each other and wept. People in the room were wondering why these two grown men were crying. But we knew. And Sister Cox knew. Ours were tears of joy! We silently remembered the incredible journey of love and repentance that began more than 30 years ago, one night in their home.

The account doesn’t end there. Brother and Sister Cox’s family grew to include 3 children, 20 grandchildren, and 54 great-grandchildren. Add to that their impact on hundreds of missionaries, on thousands more in the temple, and on hundreds more who received patriarchal blessings at the hands of Wilbur Cox. His and Leonora’s influence will continue to ripple through many generations throughout the world.

Experiences such as this with Wilbur and Leonora Cox occur every week—hopefully, every day—within this Church. Dedicated servants of the Lord Jesus Christ carry out His work, with His power and authority.

Brethren, there are doors we can open, priesthood blessings we can give, hearts we can heal, burdens we can lift, testimonies we can strengthen, lives we can save, and joy we can bring into the homes of the Latter-day Saints—all because we hold the priesthood of God. We are the men who have been “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of [our] exceeding faith,” to do this work.

Tonight I invite you literally to rise up with me in our great eternal
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Take the Holy Spirit as Your Guide

What an incomparable gift comes to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. That gift is the Holy Spirit.

On this Easter Sunday, our thoughts turn to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and to the empty tomb that gives every believer hope in Christ's triumph over otherwise certain defeat. I believe, with the Apostle Paul, that just as God “raised up Christ from the dead [so] shall [He] also quicken [our] mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in [us].”

To quicken means to make alive. Just as Christ brings our bodies back to life after physical death through the power of His Resurrection, so can He also quicken us, or make us alive, from spiritual death.

In the book of Moses, we read of Adam undergoing this kind of quickening: “[Adam] was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man.”

What an incomparable gift comes to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. That gift is the Holy Spirit giving us what the New Testament calls “life in Christ.”

But do we sometimes take for granted such a gift?

Brothers and sisters, it is an extraor- dinary privilege to “have . . . the Holy Spirit for [our] guide,” as demonstrated by the following experience.

During the Korean War, Ensign Frank Blair served on a troop transport ship stationed in Japan. The ship wasn’t large enough to have a formal chaplain, so the captain asked Brother Blair to be the ship’s informal chaplain, having observed that the young man was a person of faith and principle, highly respected by the whole crew.

Ensign Blair wrote: “Our ship was caught in a huge typhoon. The waves were about 45 feet [14 m] high. I was on watch . . . during which time one of our three engines stopped working and a crack in the centerline of the ship was reported. We had two remaining engines, one of which was only functioning at half power. We were in serious trouble.”

Ensign Blair finished his watch and was getting into bed when the captain knocked on his door. He asked, “Would you please pray for this ship?” Of course, Ensign Blair agreed to do so.

At that point, Ensign Blair could have simply prayed, “Heavenly Father, please bless our ship and keep us safe,” and then gone to bed. Instead, he prayed to