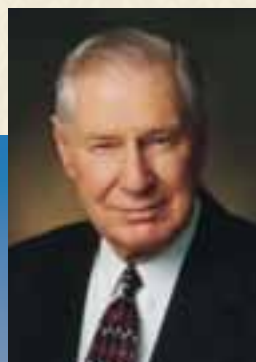




Don't Be Afraid to Be **Different**

BY PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Young Joan of Arc, one of the greatest heroines in history, became the unlikely standard-bearer for the French army in the Dark Ages, long before the gospel was restored. Joan had the Light of Christ and also the courage to follow its promptings and make a difference. Joan was a peasant girl who could neither read nor write. Long years of war had impoverished and divided her country. At 17, sensing her life had a purpose, she left home, determined to help liberate her oppressed country. People scoffed at her ideas and thought she was a little crazy, but in the end she persuaded them to let her have a horse and an escort to go and see the king.



Through the example of Joan of Arc, President Faust shows what great things can be done by those with the courage to follow their conscience.

Young King Charles VII had heard about Joan and decided to test her. He slipped into the ranks of the army and let one of his trusted associates occupy the throne. When Joan came into the room, she barely acknowledged the man on the throne, but promptly walked up to Charles and curtsied to him. This so impressed the king that he gave her command over his 12,000 troops. At first the French soldiers did not want to obey her, but when they saw that all who followed her succeeded and all who disregarded her failed, they came to look upon her as their leader.

Clad in a suit of white armor and flying her own standard, Joan of Arc liberated the besieged city of Orleans in 1429 and



defeated the English in four other battles. Twice she was wounded, but each time she recovered and went on fighting. Her orders seemed to be those of a military genius.

She was captured by English allies and burned at the stake in 1431. Although this is a sad ending, it does not take away from Joan's greatness. She was courageous enough to follow the personal inspiration to which all of us are entitled.

To other girls in the fifteenth century, Joan of Arc seemed to be very different. Don't be afraid to be different in our century! Sometimes we have to be different in order to maintain Church standards.

So I repeat, don't be afraid to be different, but be as good as you can be. ●

From an April 2006 general conference address.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. People laughed at Joan in the beginning. Why did they come to respect and follow her?
2. What are some ways in which you might need to be different from others in order to follow your conscience and obey the Lord?
3. Joan of Arc suffered death for following her beliefs. What are some things you fear you might suffer for following yours? How can you find courage to follow them anyway?