

# The PRIESTHOOD

## *A Lifetime of Service*



***One who worthily uses his priesthood in service to others can magnify his calling in the priesthood.***

BY ELDER M. RUSSELL BALLARD  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

**A**lthough we speak of the Melchizedek Priesthood as the greater priesthood, we must not misunderstand the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood. The service given by a faithful bearer of the Aaronic Priesthood is just as important in the eyes of the Lord as the service given by one holding the Melchizedek Priesthood.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “if a Priest understands his duty, his calling, and ministry, . . . his enjoyment is as great as if he were one of the Presidency” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 111).

As part of what is known as the oath and covenant of the priesthood, the Lord declared: “For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining [of] these two priesthoods [Aaronic and Melchizedek] . . . , and the magnifying [of] their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit” (D&C 84:33; see also D&C 84:32–46).

To honor our priesthood, and to magnify our callings in both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods, is to receive the power of God in our lives.

### Understanding the Offices

We need to understand the reason for offices within the Melchizedek Priesthood. Priesthood offices are not status symbols but opportunities for service. High priests and elders are equally responsible to serve faithfully in the offices to which they have been called. All priesthood holders assist our Heavenly Father in accomplishing His divine purpose: “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” (Moses 1:39.)

Consider these words of the sixth President of the Church, Joseph F. Smith: “There is no office growing out of this Priesthood that is or can be greater than the Priesthood itself. It is from the Priesthood that the office derives its authority and power. No office gives authority to the Priesthood. No office adds to the power of the Priesthood” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 11th ed. [1959], 148).

The priesthood itself cannot be magnified nor diminished. However, one who worthily uses his priesthood in service to others can magnify his calling in the priesthood.

All who hold the priesthood of God are joined together in a common bond of service. The resurrected John the Baptist expressed this concept on that sacred



**T**he resurrected John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, the same priesthood that continues to be conferred upon young men today.



**A**fter receiving the priesthood from John the Baptist, the authority to baptize was returned to the earth.

*The organization of the Aaronic priesthood with offices such as deacons, teachers, and priests was also restored.*

occasion when he restored the Aaronic Priesthood to men on earth. This angelic messenger from God, the same who had been privileged to baptize the Savior, addressed the Prophet Joseph Smith and his associate in the work, Oliver Cowdery, as “my fellow servants” (D&C 13:1). What a marvelous model for humble service in the kingdom of God!

Each man or boy who holds the priesthood, regardless of his priesthood or his ordained office, is a fellow servant in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although I hold the ordained office of Apostle in the Melchizedek Priesthood, my associates in that office and I are fellow servants in the work of the Lord with the most recently ordained deacon or elder in the Church.

While the Apostle Paul stated the truth

that “God hath set . . . first apostles [in the Church]” (1 Corinthians 12:28), he also stated the truth that each member of the body is necessary. No one in any priesthood office can say of those in other offices, “I have no need of thee,” because we all are fellow servants in the service of the Lord (see 1 Corinthians 12:14–28). Our common and most important objective is to do His work. Each priesthood bearer, acting within the duties of his calling, is needed to accomplish the work of the Lord.

I repeat, a priesthood office is bestowed not for status but for service. You and I are fellow servants in the Church of Jesus Christ.

#### **Sharing Opportunities to Serve**

In addition to holding an ordained office in the priesthood, most priesthood bearers also are called to a specific position in their



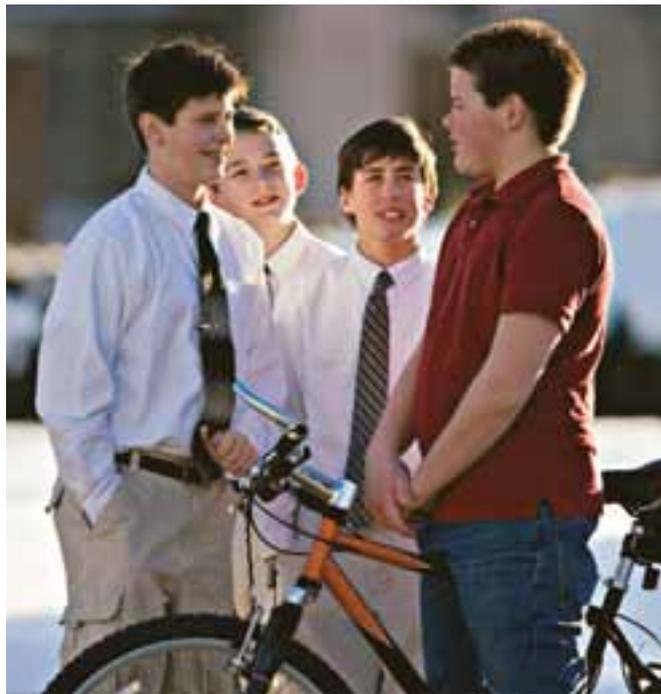
ward or stake. For example, you priesthood brethren may be called to serve in a quorum presidency, as a teacher in a Sunday School or Primary class, as a member of a ward or quorum committee, or as a stake officer. In each of these callings, you will serve for a time and then be released to give another an opportunity to serve where you have labored. You then will receive other opportunities for further service. Your callings may change, but the need for your constant and committed service in some Church capacity will continue. Remember, brethren, your responsibility to honor and magnify your priesthood is an eternal obligation. As we serve together, we must serve in humility, always being kind and considerate of one another.

Each of us, as holders of the priesthood, is under covenant to serve faithfully in any assignment to which we may be called. Remember the admonition given by the Savior: “And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:44–45). He who was the greatest of all came to be the servant of all.

From the time one is first ordained to any office in the priesthood, he should be committed to a lifetime of service in the kingdom of God. Young men should be taught by loving and sensitive fathers, bishops, and priesthood advisers that priesthood means service. One of the most meaningful service opportunities you young men will have will be to serve as a full-time missionary.

Shortly after returning from my first mission, I heard our faithful stake patriarch bear his testimony in our ward fast and testimony meeting. He was just over 90 years of age; he said, “I pray every night that God will see me safely dead with my testimony burning brightly.” Seeking to comfort this righteous patriarch, I said to him, “Patriarch, I know of no one more prepared than you are.” He responded, “My boy, no one is safe until he has endured to the very end of his life.” To receive the priesthood is to make an eternal commitment to serving others.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY

President David O. McKay declared: “Priesthood means service. This is true even in its divine source, as we may infer from the sublime declaration: ‘This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.’ Emanating from Deity is the service that leads to the redemption of God’s children” (*Pathways to Happiness*, 231).

### Where Can We Serve?

One major item of discussion on the agenda of every presidency meeting of Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood leaders should be service needs and opportunities. This also should be a regular item to consider in quorum business meetings. The question should be asked frequently: “Who among quorum members, ward members, or our neighbors is in need, and how can we, the brethren of the priesthood, assist?”

Individual quorum members do not need to wait for an assignment to serve. You priesthood brethren should be actively aware and should be looking for opportunities to reach out and help others.

We must always remember those stirring words of King Benjamin: “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

To hold the priesthood is to be engaged actively in God’s work.



**It is a cherished blessing to bear the priesthood of God and to have the opportunity of unlimited service to our fellowmen.**

I invite you to ponder the following words of President Marion G. Romney: “Service is not something we endure on this earth so we can earn the right to live in the celestial kingdom. Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the celestial kingdom is made.

“Knowing that service is what gives our Father in Heaven fulfillment, and knowing that we want to be where He is and as He is, why must we be commanded to serve one another? . . . Service is what Godhood is all about” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 93).

It is a cherished blessing to bear the priesthood of God and to have the opportunity of unlimited service to our fellowmen. I know that the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and I pray that God may bless you, young and old, with a deep appreciation for the priesthood you bear and with an increased desire to serve your fellowmen and your Heavenly Father. **NE**

*From an address given on May 3, 1992, at a satellite fireside commemorating the 163rd anniversary of the restoration of the priesthood.*

## THE RESTORATION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

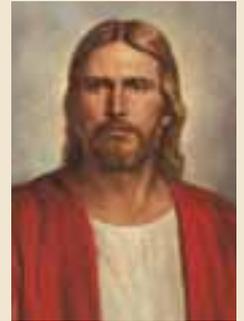
**W**hen Jesus Christ was on the earth, He established His Church. After His Crucifixion and the deaths of His Apostles, the fulness of the gospel was taken from the earth because of widespread apostasy.

**May 15, 1829.**

Having learned about baptism from the gold plates, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery went to a secluded area to ask the Lord about it. There, on the banks of the Susquehanna River near Harmony, Pennsylvania, John the Baptist, a resurrected being, came to them as “a messenger from heaven . . . in a cloud of light.” He conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood. Then, obeying his instructions, Joseph and Oliver baptized and ordained each other. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72; see also D&C 13.)

**May 1829.** The ancient Apostles Peter, James, and John conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. (See D&C 128:20.)

**From *True to the Faith* (2004), 137–38.**



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY, JOSEPH SMITH INSTRUCTING AND THE SAVIOR BY DEL PARSON