

His question was the confirmation of President Joseph F. Smith's counsel. My grandson had come to the point where he not only understood the principle of the fast, but it had also been planted in his heart. He had come to feel that his fasting and prayers would lead to a blessing from God for someone in need. If he lives the principle often enough, it will bring the wonderful effects in his own life, as promised by the Lord.

We do not know all the reasons why Jesus Christ went into the wilderness to fast and to pray. But we know at least one of the effects: the Savior completely resisted Satan's temptations to misuse His divine power.

The brief time we fast every month and the small amount we offer for the poor may give us only a small part of the change in our natures to have no more desire to do evil. But there is a great promise, even as we do all that we reasonably can to pray, to fast, and to donate for those in need:

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am."13

I pray that we will claim those great blessings for ourselves and for our families.

I bear my witness that Jesus is the Christ, that in His Church we are invited to help Him as He cares for the poor in His way, and that He promises everlasting blessings will come from our helping Him. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## "Is Not This the Fast That I Have Chosen?" *President Henry B. Eyring*

My dear brothers and sisters, it is a joy for me to extend my love to you in this general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That joy comes from the witness of the Spirit that the love of the Savior reaches out to each of you and to all of Heavenly Father's children. Our Heavenly Father wishes to bless His children spiritually and temporally. He understands each of their needs, their pains, and their hopes.

When we offer succor to anyone, the Savior feels it as if we reached out to succor Him.

He told us that was true when He described a future moment we all will have when we see Him after our life in this world is complete. A picture in my mind of that day has grown more vivid in the days that I have prayed and fasted to know what to say this morning. The Lord's description of that future interview was given to His disciples, and it describes what we want with all our hearts to be true for us as well:

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."1

You and I want that warm welcome from the Savior. But how can we deserve it? There are more hungry, homeless, and lonely children of Heavenly Father than we can possibly reach. And the numbers grow ever farther from our reach.

So the Lord has given us something that we each can do. It is a commandment so simple that a child can understand it. It is a commandment with a wonderful promise for those in need and for us.

It is the law of the fast. The words in the book of Isaiah are the Lord's description of the commandment and the blessing available to those of us in His Church:

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

"Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

"And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”<sup>2</sup>

So the Lord has given us a simple commandment with a marvelous promise. In the Church today we are offered the opportunity to fast once a month and give a generous fast offering through our bishop or branch president for the benefit of the poor and the needy. Some of what you give will be used to help those around you, perhaps someone in your own family. The Lord’s servants will pray and fast for the revelation to know whom to help and what help to give. That which is not needed to help people in your local Church unit will become available to bless other Church members across the world who are in need.

The commandment to fast for the poor has many blessings attached to it. President Spencer W. Kimball called failing to follow that law a sin of omission with a heavy cost. He wrote: “Rich promises are made by the Lord to those who fast and assist the needy. . . . Inspiration and spiritual guidance will come with righteousness and closeness to our Heavenly Father. To omit to do this righteous act of fasting would deprive us of these blessings.”

I received one of those blessings just a few weeks ago. Since general conference falls on a weekend that would normally include the fast and testimony meeting, I fasted and prayed to know how I should still obey the commandment to care for those in need.

On a Saturday, still fasting, I woke at 6:00 and prayed again. I felt impressed to look at the world news. There I read this report:

Tropical Cyclone Pam destroyed many homes as it made a direct hit on Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu. It killed at least six people in Vanuatu, the first confirmed from one of the most powerful storms ever to make landfall.

“Hardly a tree stood straight [as the cyclone] bellowed across” the Pacific island nation.

World Vision’s emergency assessment team planned to view damage after the storm died down.

They advised residents to seek shelter in sturdy buildings such as universities and schools.

And then they said: “‘The strongest thing they’ve got is cement churches,’ said Inga Mephram [from] CARE International. . . . ‘Some of them don’t have that. It’s hard to find a structure that you’d think would be able to withstand a Category 5 (storm).’”<sup>5</sup>

When I read that, I remembered visiting little homes on Vanuatu. I could picture in my mind the people huddled in homes being destroyed by winds. And then I remembered the warm welcome to me of the people of Vanuatu. I thought of them and their neighbors fleeing to the safety of our cement chapel.

Then I pictured the bishop and the Relief Society president walking among them, giving comfort, blankets, food to eat, and water to drink. I could picture the frightened children huddled together.

They are so far away from the home where I read that report, and yet I knew what the Lord would be doing through His servants. I knew that what made it possible for them to succor those children of Heavenly Father was fast offerings, given freely by the Lord’s disciples who were far away from them but close to the Lord.

So I didn’t wait for Sunday. I took a fast offering to my bishop that morning. I know that my offering may be used by the bishop and Relief Society president to help someone in my neighborhood. My small offering may not be needed near where my family and I live, but the local surplus could reach even as far as Vanuatu.

Other storms and tragedies will come across the world to people the Lord loves and whose sorrows He feels. Part of your fast offering and mine this month will be used to help someone, somewhere, whose relief the Lord will feel as if it were His own.

Your fast offering will do more than help feed and clothe bodies. It will heal and change hearts. The fruit of a free-will offering may be the desire in the heart of the recipient to reach out to others in need. That happens across the world.

It happened in the life of Sister Abie Turay, who lives in Sierra Leone. A civil war began in 1991. It ravaged the country for years. Sierra Leone was already one of the poorest countries in the world. “During the war, it was unclear who [controlled] the country—banks . . . closed, government offices were shuttered, police forces [were ineffective against rebel forces], . . . and there was chaos, killing and sorrow. Tens of thousands of people lost their lives and more than two million people were forced from their homes to avoid the slaughter.”

Even in such times, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints grew.

One of the first branches was organized in the city where Sister Turay lived. Her husband was the first branch president. He served as a district president during the civil war.

“When guests visit Sister Turay’s home [now], she loves to show them two [treasures] from the war: a blue-and-white striped shirt [she got] from a bale of used clothing [given by members of the Church] and a blanket, now worn and riddled with holes.”

She says, “This shirt is the first . . . clothing I [received]. . . . I used to wear it to go to work—it was so good. [It made me feel so beautiful.] I didn’t have other clothes.

“During the war, this blanket kept us warm, me and my children. When the rebels [would] come to attack us, this is the only thing I [could] lay [my] hands on [as we fled to the bush to hide]. So we [would] take the blanket with us. It would keep us warm and keep the mosquitos away from us.”

“Sister Turay speaks of her gratitude for a mission president who would make his way into the war-torn country with [money] in his pocket.” Those funds, from the fast-offering donations of people like you, allowed the Saints to buy food that most Sierra Leoneans could not afford.<sup>9</sup>

Sister Turay, speaking of those who were generous enough to donate for them to survive, says, “When I think [of] the people who did this . . . I feel that [they were] sent by God, because ordinary human beings made this kind gesture for [us].”<sup>10</sup>

A visitor from the United States sat with Abie not long ago. During his time with her, he found his eyes “drawn to a set of scriptures that were on the table.” He could tell that they were a treasure, “well-marked with notes in the columns. The pages were [worn;] some were torn. The cover was detached from the binding.”

He held the scriptures in his “hand and gently turned the pages. As [he did, he found a] yellow copy of a tithing donation slip. [He] could see that, in a country where [a dollar was worth its] weight in gold, Abie Turay had paid one dollar as her tithing, one dollar to the missionary fund, and one dollar as a fast offering for those who, in her words, were ‘truly poor.’”

The visitor closed Sister Turay’s scriptures and thought, as he stood with this faithful African mother, that he was on sacred ground.<sup>11</sup>

Just as the receipt of the blessing of your fast offering and mine can change hearts, so does fasting for the good of another. Even a child can feel it.

Many children, and some adults, may for personal reasons find a 24-hour fast difficult. It can be, in the words of Isaiah, felt that the fast has “afflicted [their] soul.” Wise parents recognize that possibility and so are careful to follow the counsel of President Joseph F. Smith: “Better to teach them the principle, and let them observe it when they are old enough to choose intelligently.”<sup>12</sup>

I saw the blessing in that counsel recently. One of my grandsons had found a 24-hour fast beyond his powers of endurance. But his wise parents still placed the principle in his heart. One of his school friends recently lost a young cousin to accidental death. My grandson asked his mother on fast day, at about the time he had always felt the fast was too hard to continue, whether it would make his grieving friend feel better if he continued his fast.

So we declare to the world that the priesthood has been restored, God's government is on the earth, His pattern is established that will lead us back to His presence. We believe we have the best answer to the question, What seek ye? As the Savior taught, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

Just as a building is constructed one brick at a time, the Savior's true Church is built one conversion, one testimony, one baptism at a time. May we all seek, find, and build His Church wherever we may be in my humble prayer, in the name of Him whom we seek, even Jesus Christ, amen.



# WHAT SEEK YE?

*By Elder L. Tom Perry*

It is always difficult to follow this magnificent choir. Thank you, choir, again for your beautiful music.

"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

"And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

"And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

"Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?" (John 1:35–38).

We find a world today looking for answers to the question, What seek ye? in so many different ways. Too many are sowing seeds of a fruit that will not nourish an eternal soul.

Let me illustrate with an experience the Europe Central Area Presidency had while traveling by train to a meeting. We were taking advantage of the time together by discussing our assignment. A man seated across the aisle became curious about our conversation. He finally asked, "Are you Protestant or Catholic?" We replied, "Neither. We are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." He acknowledged that he had heard of the Church, but then went on to say: "You'll never get very far in this country. The government only recognizes the Catholic and Protestant churches. They are the only ones who receive government financial support. A church cannot exist without government financial support."

We tried to explain that our Church manages very well without government help—that we use the Lord's system of tithing. He insisted our Church would not get very far in his country and suggested that perhaps we should place our efforts in some other part of the world. Of course, we testified that the Lord's system does work and told him about all the chapels and temples we are constructing throughout the world without having to resort to borrowed funds to build them. He seemed very surprised but still unconvinced.

Seeing that we could not persuade him that a church could exist without government support, we tried to change the subject. I asked, "What will happen in your country with the changes that are occurring? The declining population and the influx of an increasing number of immigrants will eventually make you a minority in your own land."

With great national pride, he replied, "This will never happen."

I countered, "How can you support such a position with immigration exceeding your country's birthrate?" He kept insisting this would never happen in his country—"why, they would close the borders of our land before they would allow it to occur."

I pressed on, "How can you prevent it with your current trends?"

His next statement shocked me: "I'm 82 years old. I will be long gone before we have to face that problem."

A major problem we face in preaching the gospel in this area of the world is the general apathy toward religion, toward things spiritual. Too many are very comfortable with their present lifestyle and feel no need to do more than "eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19). They are not interested in anything but themselves—here and now.

Developed nations of the world are becoming so secular in their beliefs and actions that they reason that a human being has total autonomy. An individual does not have to give an account to anyone or anything except to himself and, to a limited extent, to the society in which he lives.

Societies in which this secular lifestyle takes root have a deep spiritual and moral price to pay. The pursuit of so-called individual freedoms, without regard to laws the Lord has established to govern His children on earth, will result in the curse of extreme worldliness and selfishness, the decline of public and private morality, and the defiance of authority.

Such secular societies are described in Doctrine and Covenants 1:16: “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world.”

For this reason, the Lord’s Church was instructed to follow the prophet and seek something different from what the world is seeking. Continuing on with verses 17–18 from section 1:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

“And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets.”

It was through the Prophet Joseph Smith that the Church of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth—“line upon line, precept upon precept” (D&C 98:12). With divine assistance he translated and published the Book of Mormon. The Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were conferred upon him and Oliver Cowdery, and sacred ordinances were reinstituted for the saving of mankind.

We boldly declare that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provides answers to the question, What seek ye? Our Church is the means by which men and women find our Savior and His gospel. You who are gathered here in this vast congregation, and the even greater numbers of Saints viewing this conference throughout the world, are richly blessed, for you have sought and found the restored Church.

The Church came into being as the result of a restoration and not a reformation. My recent experiences in central Europe certainly have deepened my respect for the role of those early Christian leaders who instituted a reformation. It began with their efforts to correct some of the errors in doctrine which had come into being during the long period of apostasy from the Church that had been established by our Savior during His earthly ministry. Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, the Lord’s mouthpiece, and the restorer of all things important to building the kingdom of God and preparing for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we seek our Savior, it is important that we seek Him through His Church. It is through His restored Church that we receive all the saving ordinances necessary to return to Him.

I want all the members of the Church to know that I have learned from my current assignment that sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ involves challenges I had never before imagined. Yet every day I see new signs of hope, due mostly to the Lord’s blessings, but also to the efforts of the leaders, members, and missionaries in that area of the world. Honest seekers of truth are finding answers to their questions—they are finding the Lord through His restored Church. Of the many examples I could give, let me give you three: a father, a young single adult, and a single sister who have found a new faith and a new hope in their lives.

A family of four was initially contacted by sister missionaries, and from the very beginning the mother and her children often read in the Book of Mormon, prayed daily, and wanted to attend church. The father, however, resisted—unlike his wife, he was not of a Christian faith, and he did not yet feel prepared to reevaluate his beliefs.

The sister missionaries were inspired to focus their teachings on Jesus Christ. In their words:

“We taught about Joseph Smith, of his faith on Christ, what we learn about Christ from the First Vision, and the Prophet’s testimony of our Savior. Everything we ever read together or challenged them to read as a family out of the Book of Mormon was teaching them more about our Redeemer. That is when we started seeing the progress. They displayed a framed picture of Christ proudly in their family room—it was one we had given them as a gift.”

The father’s change of heart occurred when his wife announced that she wanted to be baptized and his sons decided to pray to know whether they should also be baptized. From that moment on, he read

regularly in the Book of Mormon and prayed about baptism. His sincere desire to know whether the Church was true changed him, and he became a spiritual leader in his home. Just before he and his family were baptized, the father asked for a tithing slip and an envelope. He did not want to delay keeping the commandments for even one second.

In another case, a young brother was reactivated as the result of the establishment of the outreach initiative to bring into activity young single adults ages 18 to 30. On the first night of activities in one of our Church buildings, this brother was the only nonmissionary attending, but within a few weeks, he had brought about 30 people to family home evening and other activities.

This brother is a Web site designer—he and a partner started their own Web design business. He currently lives with two nonmembers, both of whom work at his Web design company. He is very bold about sharing his testimony. One of his coworkers previously had studied Christian theology, and this brother referred him to the missionaries working in the young single adult program. Now his coworker is a regular attendee of the activities, and this reactivated brother assists the missionaries as they teach him, by adding his testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel to theirs.

In still another case, a young woman from Hamburg, Germany, was struggling to find spiritual meaning to her life. She began to pray and ask God what she should do. One morning, after three days of some fasting and much prayer, she walked from her home to the bus stop. As she arrived, she realized she had left some keys at home that she needed that day. She returned home, picked up the keys, and walked again to the bus stop. She was quite distraught as she realized she had missed the bus she would have normally taken.

Meanwhile, two missionaries were traveling on a bus near the city of Hamburg. As they were traveling, they suddenly had an impression that they should talk to the first person they met after exiting the bus. The two elders got out of the bus and instantly saw this young woman. They spoke to her briefly about the Church and set up an appointment to teach her. She had an immediate feeling that somehow the elders were sent to her as an answer to her prayers. The good members of the Church joined with the missionaries in teaching her and helping her feel a special part of their ward. She accepted the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and was baptized. Now she is working in the ward Young Women program.

The Lord, during His earthly ministry, recognized the need to have a structure in place to build faith in the hearts of the members of His Church and to keep them growing in His gospel. This family, this brother, and this sister all found the Savior through finding and being strengthened by His Church.

After the death of the Apostles, without central leadership to guide and direct it, the Church drifted into apostasy. This particular lesson of history is clear: It is necessary to have a centralized Church government, under the direction of the Savior, that provides the necessary doctrines and ordinances for salvation and exaltation.

The Bible gives abundant evidence that the Lord during His earthly ministry established His Church with the proper authority and organization. For example, Paul declared:

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:11–15).

We state in our sixth article of faith [A of F 1:6], “We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.”

# THE LAW OF THE FAST:

## *A Personal Responsibility to Care for the Poor and Needy*

BY BISHOP DEAN M. DAVIES  
SECOND COUNSELOR IN THE PRESIDING BISHOPRIC

My dear brethren, I love the priesthood, and I love being with you. I am so deeply grateful that we can serve together in this great cause.

We live in remarkable times. Miraculous advances in medicine, science, and technology have improved the quality of life for many. Yet there is also evidence of great human suffering and distress. In addition to wars and rumors of wars, an increase in natural disasters—including floods, fires, earthquakes, and disease—is impacting the lives of millions worldwide.

Church leadership is aware of and vigilant regarding the well-being of God's children everywhere. When and where possible, Church emergency resources are provided to respond to those in need. For example, last November, Typhoon Haiyan hit the island nation of the Philippines.

A Category 5 super typhoon, Haiyan left in its wake extensive destruction and suffering. Complete cities were destroyed; many lives were lost; millions of homes were severely damaged or destroyed; and basic services such as water, sewer, and electricity ceased functioning.

Church resources were made available in the very early hours following this disaster. Church members living in the Philippines rallied to the rescue of their brothers and sisters by providing food, water, clothing, and hygiene kits to members and nonmembers alike.

Church meetinghouses became places of refuge to thousands of the homeless. Under the leadership of the Area Presidency and local priesthood leaders, many of whom had lost everything they had, assessments were made as to the condition and safety of all members. Inspired plans began to take shape to help restore members to acceptable living conditions and self-reliance.

Modest resources were provided to help Church members rebuild their wood-frame shelters and homes. This was not just a free handout. Members received training and performed the needed labor for themselves and then for others.

One resulting blessing was that as members developed carpentry, plumbing, and other construction skills, they were able to secure meaningful work opportunities as nearby cities and communities began rebuilding.

Caring for the poor and needy is a fundamental gospel doctrine and an essential element in the eternal plan of salvation.

Prior to His mortal ministry, Jehovah declared through His prophet: "For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."

In our day, caring for the poor and needy is one of four divinely appointed Church responsibilities that help individuals and families qualify for exaltation.

Caring for the poor and needy contemplates both temporal and spiritual salvation. It includes the service of individual Church members as they personally care for the poor and needy, as well as formal Church welfare, which is administered through priesthood authority.

Central to the Lord's plan for caring for the poor and needy is the law of the fast. "The Lord has established the law of the fast and fast offerings to bless His people and to provide a way for them to serve those in need."



As followers of the Savior, we have a personal responsibility to care for the poor and needy. Faithful Church members everywhere assist by fasting each month—abstaining from food and water for 24 hours—and then giving to the Church a financial fast offering equal to at least the value of the food they would have eaten.

Isaiah’s words should be prayerfully considered and taught in every home:

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

“Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

Isaiah then went on to list the wonderful blessings promised by the Lord to those who obey the law of the fast. He says:

“Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.

“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. ...

“And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought.”

Regarding this scripture, President Harold B. Lee had this to say: “The tremendous blessings that come [from fasting] have been spelled out in every dispensation, and here the Lord is telling us through this great prophet why there is fasting, and the blessings that come from fasting. ... If you analyze ... the 58th chapter of the book of Isaiah you will find unraveled why the Lord wants us to pay fast offerings, why he wants us to fast. It’s because by qualifying thus we can call and the Lord can answer. We can cry and the Lord will say, ‘Here I am.’”

President Lee adds: “Do we ever want to be in a condition where we can call and he won’t answer? We will cry in our distress and he won’t be with us? I think it is time we are thinking about these fundamentals because these are the days that lie ahead, when we are going to need more and more the blessings of the Lord, when the judgments are poured out without mixture upon the whole earth.”

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has shared his testimony of these principles—a testimony borne of personal experience. He said: “No member of the Church who has helped provide for those in need ever forgets or regrets the experience. Industry, thrift, self-reliance, and sharing with others are not new to us.”

Brethren, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are a covenant-making, commandment-keeping people. I cannot think of any law, any commandment, which, if kept faithfully, is easier to keep and which provides greater blessings than the law of the fast. When we fast and give an honest fast offering, we contribute to the Lord’s storehouse what would have been expended on the cost of the meals. It does not require monetary sacrifice in excess of what would be expended normally. At the same time, we are promised the extraordinary blessings, as previously noted.

The law of the fast applies to all Church members. Even young children can be taught to fast, beginning with one meal and then two, as they are able to understand and physically keep the law of the fast. Husbands and wives, single members, youth, and children should begin the fast with prayer, giving gratitude for blessings in their lives while seeking the Lord’s blessings and strength through the fast period. Complete fulfillment of the law of the fast occurs when the fast offering is made to the Lord’s agent, the bishop.

Bishops, you direct welfare in the ward. You have a divine mandate to seek out and care for the poor. With the support of the Relief Society president and Melchizedek Priesthood quorum leaders, your goal is to help members help themselves and become self-reliant. You minister to the temporal and spiritual needs

of members by carefully using fast offerings as a temporary support and as a supplement to extended family and community resources. As you prayerfully exercise priesthood keys and discernment in helping the poor and needy, you will come to know that the correct use of fast offerings is intended to support life, not lifestyle.

Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidents, you hold keys and have the power to administer in outward ordinances. You work with the bishop and instruct quorum members regarding their duties in the priesthood and in seeking out Church members to give them the opportunity to contribute to the fast. As you Aaronic Priesthood holders magnify your priesthood responsibilities and extend this opportunity to all Church members, you frequently facilitate the promised blessings of the fast to those who may need them the most. You will witness that the spirit of caring for the poor and needy has the power to soften otherwise hardened hearts and blesses the lives of those who may infrequently attend Church.

President Monson has said, “Those bishops who organize their Aaronic Priesthood quorums to participate in the collection of fast offerings will find increased success in this sacred responsibility.”

Bishops, remember that circumstances vary widely from one area to another and from country to country. Door-to-door contacting by Aaronic Priesthood quorum members may not be practical in the region where you live. However, we invite you to prayerfully consider the prophet’s counsel and seek inspiration on appropriate ways in which the Aaronic Priesthood holders in your wards can magnify their priesthood by participating in the collection of fast offerings.

In chapter 27 of 3 Nephi, the risen Lord asked, “What manner of men ought ye to be?” He responded, “Even as I am.”<sup>9</sup> As we take upon ourselves the name of Christ and strive to follow Him, we will receive His image in our countenance and become more like Him. Caring for the poor and needy is inherent in the ministry of the Savior. It is in everything He does. He reaches out to all and lifts us. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. I invite each of us to become more like the Savior by caring for the poor and needy, by faithfully keeping the law of the fast, and by contributing a generous fast offering. I humbly testify that faithfully caring for the poor and needy is a reflection of spiritual maturity and will bless both the giver and the receiver. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.