“Daughters of Christ”: Finding Language to Talk about Women and Priesthood

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“We are not accustomed to speaking of women having the authority of the priesthood in their Church callings, but what other authority can it be? When a woman—young or old—is set apart to preach the gospel as a full-time missionary, she is given priesthood authority to perform a priesthood function. The same is true when a woman is set apart to function as an officer or teacher in a Church organization under the direction of one who holds the keys of the priesthood. Whoever functions in an office or calling received from one who holds priesthood keys exercises priesthood authority in performing her or his assigned duties.”

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF RELIEF SOCIETY

KEY DOCUMENTS IN LATTER-DAY SAINT WOMEN’S HISTORY
“...without the female all things cannot be restor’ed to the earth it takes all to restore the Priesthood.”

Bishop Newel K. Whitney, Minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society, May 27, 1842, in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook and Grow, eds., The First Fifty Years of Relief Society, 75-76.
“You, my sisters, if you are faithful will become Queens of Queens, and Priestesses unto the Most High God. These are your callings.”

“An Address by Miss Eliza R. Snow, Delivered in the Tabernacle, Ogden, August 14, 1873” in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, eds., The First Fifty Years of Relief Society, 388.
“Office and priesthood carry heavy responsibilities requiring constant labor and time. No woman could safely carry the triple burden of wifehood, motherhood and at the same time function in priestly orders. Yet her creative home labor ranks side by side, in earthly and heavenly importance, with her husband’s priestly responsibilities. His in the market place—hers at the hearthstone…. That he would bungle and spoil home life if he sought to enter woman’s sphere is as sure as it is that she would emasculate his affairs if, or when, she attempts to prove her equality by crowding man out of his place.”

Leah Dunford Widtsoe
“Motherhood can be exercised as universally and vicariously as can Priesthood… All intelligent worthwhile work for social betterment in private life or in organized activity is but an enlarged Motherhood acting for the uplift of mankind.”

Leah Dunford in the chemistry lab at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, 1896
John and Leah Widtsoe with their children, Anna and Marsel
John and Leah Widtsoe in Sheffield, England, 1929
“When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a full partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be silent partners or limited partners in that eternal assignment! Please be a contributing and full partner.”

President Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” Women’s Fireside, 16 September 1978.
“Just as worthy men were foreordained to hold the priesthood in mortality, righteous women were endowed pre-mortally with the privilege of motherhood. Motherhood is more than bearing children, though it is certainly that. It is the essence of who we are as women. It defines our very identity, our divine stature and nature, and the unique traits our Father gave us.”

“No woman in the Church may say that since she cannot hold the Priesthood it is no concern of hers…. It is just as though she were to sit in a dark house refusing to turn on the electricity because she is not an official… of the electric company. She would better rejoice that she can use all the benefits of electric power without carrying any of the burden of administering the electric plants.”

• Because motherhood is common to women throughout the world, motherhood itself does not give Latter-day Saint women a spiritual identity that signifies their commitment to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.
• The model of priesthood and motherhood as spiritual alternatives for men and women can leave unmarried women and those who are not biological mothers feeling uncertain of their own spiritual identity and value.
“Latter-day Saints and others often mistakenly equate priesthood with religious office and the men who hold it, which obscures the broader Latter-day Saint concept of priesthood.”

“Like faithful sisters in the past, you need to learn how to use the priesthood authority with which you have been endowed to obtain every eternal blessing that will be yours.”

1. How do women act with priesthood authority and power as missionaries, in the temple, and in their Church callings?

2. How do women function as priestesses in the temple?

3. How do women become queens and priestesses; that is, how are women spiritually transformed?

4. How do men and women share divine authority to establish and guide their families when they enter the eternal covenant of marriage?
1.
How do women act with priesthood authority and power as missionaries, in the temple, and in their Church callings?
2.

How do women function as priestesses in the temple?
SACRED TRIANGLE

- I will prepare to be worthy of participating in the sacred triangle of eternal marriage.

GOD

Husband

Wife
“Most simply, a priest is one who has the right to access the powers of heaven and to mediate or exercise those heavenly powers for the benefit of others on earth.”

3.

How do women become queens and priestesses; that is, how are women spiritually transformed?
Being in the Image of Christ

“And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.”

Moses 2:27
Becoming Daughters of Christ

“And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters: for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.”

Mosiah 5:7
Becoming Joint-Heirs with Christ

“... Jesus Christ... that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

Revelation 1:5-6
4.

How do men and women share divine authority to establish and guide their families when they enter into the eternal covenant of marriage?
“When a man and a woman are sealed in the temple, they enter together, by covenant, into an order of the priesthood.”

LDS Gospel Topics Essay: “Joseph Smith’s Teachings about Priesthood, Temple, and Women,” lds.org
“They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace. And he makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion.”

D&C 76:94-95