

Future NEWS

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DRESSER OF THE VINEYARD

“God in His Son had been seeking fruit, and had found none. Israel was a cumberer of the ground. Its very existence was a curse; for it filled the place in the vineyard that a fruitful tree might fill. It robbed the world of the blessings that God designed to give. The Israelites had misrepresented God among the nations. They were not merely useless, but a decided hindrance. To a great degree their religion was misleading, and wrought ruin instead of salvation.

“In the parable the dresser of the vineyard does not question the sentence that the tree, if it remained fruitless, should be cut down; but he knows and shares the owner’s interest in that barren tree. Nothing could give him greater joy than to see its growth and fruitfulness. He responds to the desire of the owner, saying, ‘Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well.’

“The gardener does not refuse to minister to so unpromising a plant. He stands ready to give it still greater care. He will make its surroundings most favorable, and will lavish upon it every attention.

“The owner and the dresser of the vineyard are one in their interest in the fig tree. So the Father and the Son were one in their love for the chosen people. Christ was saying to His hearers that increased opportunities would be given them. Every means that the love of God could devise would be put in operation that they might become trees of righteousness, bringing forth fruit for the blessing of the world.

“Jesus did not in the parable tell the result of the gardener’s work. At that point His story was cut short. Its conclusion rested with the generation that heard His words. To them the solemn warning was given. ‘If not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.’ Upon them it depended whether the irrevocable words should be spoken. The day of wrath was near. In the calamities that had already befallen Israel, the owner of the vineyard was mercifully forewarning them of the destruction of the unfruitful tree.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 216.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The ministry of *Future for America* is to proclaim the final warning message of Revelation 14 as identified within the prophecies of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The end-time fulfillment of Bible prophecy is no longer future—for it is taking place before our eyes. The historic, prophetic understanding of Seventh-day Adventism is now present truth. We are the final generation. Our emphasis on the prophetic word includes all the counsel of God's Word. To know what lies ahead is useless if we do not possess the experience to stand during these solemn times. Through obedience to God's law, and faith in the promises of God's Word, we are to receive that experience.

Coupled with the prophetic message, *Future for America* emphasizes all aspects of the medical missionary work. The "entering wedge"—medical missionary work—must be practiced by those who are to finish God's work in these final hours.

During this time period, country living becomes more essential with each passing moment. *Future for America* upholds and promotes this end-time truth. God's people must prepare for the coming storm, and that preparation includes the experience of learning how to survive in a simple fashion, away from the great centers of population.

Future for America intends to print and distribute truth-filled literature, while helping in parts of the Lord's vineyard where faithful brethren do not have the means to share prophecy and the present truth messages for Seventh-day Adventism today.

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Ministry Update

Preparing the newsletter for this month has been a special privilege. Springtime is here and full of the Lord's greenery. The whole of creation seems to be smiling. Needless to say our gardens have required preparation and planting. We have added two new gardens to the property this year. One contains yellow and white corn and the other bush beans. We planted them from seed and are already seeing the tiny sprigs popping through the ground. Our upper garden is already established and we look forward to tomatoes, cucumbers, squash and a variety of peppers and melons.

Gardening is relatively new to me. I have always enjoyed working with soil just never had opportunity to garden, until now. The process of preparation, cultivation and harvesting is rewarding not only for the table but also from a spiritual perspective. Jesus has woven many lessons into nature and outdoor labors that can be learned by active participation in the gardens and fields. Let's look at a few together.

In *Christ's Object Lessons* we find these words:

"In tilling the soil, in disciplining and subduing the land, lessons may constantly be learned. No one would think of settling upon a raw piece of land, expecting it at once to yield a harvest. Earnestness, diligence, and persevering labor are to be put forth in treating the soil preparatory to sowing the seed. So it is in the spiritual work in the human heart. Those who would be benefited by the tilling of the soil must go forth with the word of God in their hearts. They will then find the fallow ground of the heart broken by the softening, subduing influence of the Holy Spirit. Unless hard work is bestowed on the soil, it will not yield a harvest. So with the soil of the heart: the Spirit of God must work upon it to refine and discipline it before it can bring forth fruit to the glory of God.

"The soil will not produce its riches when worked by impulse. It needs thoughtful, daily attention. It must be plowed often and deep, with a view to keeping out the weeds that take nourishment from the good seed planted. Thus those who plow and sow prepare for the harvest. None need stand in the field amid the sad wreck of their hopes.

"The blessing of the Lord will rest upon those who thus work the land, learning spiritual lessons from nature. In cultivating the soil the worker knows little what treasures will open up before him. While he is not to despise the instruction he may gather from minds that have had an experience, and from the information that intelligent men may impart, he should gather lessons for himself. This is a part of his training. The cultivation of the soil will prove an education to the soul." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 88.

These words are inspirational to me in a number of ways. First we see the preparations of the soil. My dad had already prepared the upper garden before I arrived in Arkansas. The soil was smooth and dark. The rich smell of mulch permeated from the ground and planting was simple. Not so with the bottom two gardens. Each area was filled with rocks. The ground was rough and callused. It became clear that rain water settled unevenly and the ground needed leveling. Through preparation of the soil I better understood what is meant by "the fallow ground of the heart."

So much in our world today is governed by the action of impulse. Television persuades us that now is better than later. Credit card companies cater to the generation of impulse. Modern society touts impulse as a reward to the overworked and undernourished. In Luke chapter eight verse fifteen Jesus says:

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the

word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. Luke 8:15.

Gardens respond with a patient hand and commitment. Impulse has no place in the garden or the heart.

Next, we are offered a blessing from Jesus by working the land. It is interesting to note that we are to gather our spiritual lessons not just from our own experiences in the field but also from others who have experience. If left to my own devices this past month I would have placed the melons plants on flat ground, allowed cucumbers to grow without support, and crowded the squash plants in a small corner. Each time something new is taught there is opportunity to learn for a time when I must share with others.

Wise men lay up knowledge:
but the mouth of the foolish is
near destruction. Proverbs
10:14.

On days when home duties and chores keep me indoors with only brief trips outside I am comforted in the fact that heaven has an entirely different life waiting for me. We find our future dwelling space in *Patriarchs and Prophets*:

“The home of our first parents was to be a pattern for other homes as their children should go forth to occupy the earth. That home, beautified by the hand of God Himself, was not a gorgeous palace. Men, in their pride, delight in magnificent and costly edifices and glory in the works of their own hands; but God placed Adam in a garden. This was his dwelling. The blue heavens were its dome; the earth, with its delicate flowers and carpet of living green, was its floor; and the leafy branches of the goodly trees were its canopy. Its walls were hung with the most magnificent adornings—the handiwork of the great Master Artist. In the surroundings of the holy pair was a lesson for all time—that

true happiness is found, not in the indulgence of pride and luxury, but in communion with God through His created works. If men would give less attention to the artificial, and would cultivate greater simplicity, they would come far nearer to answering the purpose of God in their creation. Pride and ambition are never satisfied, but those who are truly wise will find substantial and elevating pleasure in the sources of enjoyment that God has placed within the reach of all.

“To the dwellers in Eden was committed the care of the garden, ‘to dress it and to keep it.’ Their occupation was not wearisome, but pleasant and invigorating. God appointed labor as a blessing to man, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties. In mental and physical activity Adam found one of the highest pleasures of his holy existence. And when, as a result of his disobedience, he was driven from his beautiful home, and forced to struggle with a stubborn soil to gain his daily bread, that very labor, although widely different from his pleasant occupation in the garden, was a safeguard against temptation and a source of happiness. Those who regard work as a curse, attended though it be with weariness and pain, are cherishing an error. The rich often look down with contempt upon the working classes, but this is wholly at variance with God’s purpose in creating man. What are the possessions of even the most wealthy in comparison with the heritage given to the lordly Adam? Yet Adam was not to be idle. Our Creator, who understands what is for man’s happiness, appointed Adam his work. The true joy of life is found only by the working men and women. The angels are diligent workers; they are the ministers of God to the children of men. The Creator has prepared no place for the stagnating practice of indolence.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 50.

What a delight to think that chores and duties will one day be performed next to our Creator and Friend in a garden like no other. This promise is sunshine for indoor days and incentive for moments of weakness. I'd like to bring to your minds another description of our life with Jesus and the joys that are soon to be ours.

"In the earth made new, the redeemed will engage in the occupations and pleasures that brought happiness to Adam and Eve in the beginning. The Eden life will be lived, the life in garden and field. 'They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.' Isaiah 65:21, 22.

"There every power will be developed, every capability increased. The grandest enterprises will be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations will be reached, the highest ambitions realized. And still there will appear new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects of study to call forth the powers of body and mind and soul.

"The prophets to whom these great scenes were revealed longed to understand their full import. They 'inquired and searched diligently: . . . searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify. . . . Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you.' 1 Peter 1:10-12.

"To us who are standing on the very verge of their fulfillment, of what deep moment, what living interest, are these delineations of the things to come—events for which, since our first parents turned their steps from Eden, God's children have watched and waited, longed and prayed!

"Fellow pilgrim, we are still amid the shadows and turmoil of earthly activities; but soon our Saviour is to appear to bring deliverance and rest. Let us by faith behold the blessed hereafter as pictured by the hand of God. He who died for the sins of the world is opening wide the gates of Paradise to all who believe on Him. Soon the battle will have been fought, the victory won. Soon we shall see Him in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. And in His presence the trials and sufferings of this life will seem as nothingness. The former things 'shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.' 'Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' 'Israel shall be saved. . . with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.' Isaiah 65:17; Hebrews 10:35-37; Isaiah 45:17.

"Look up, look up, and let your faith continually increase. Let this faith guide you along the narrow path that leads through the gates of the city into the great beyond, the wide, unbounded future of glory that is for the redeemed. 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' James 5:7, 8.

"The nations of the saved will know no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving. Over the scene the morning stars will sing together, and the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming. 'There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death.'

“And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord.’ ‘The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.’ ‘The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.’ ‘In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people.’

“The Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord.’ ‘The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon.’ ‘Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called My Delight, and thy land Beulah. . . . As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.’ Isaiah 66:23; 40:5; 61:11; 28:5; 51:3; 35:2; 62:4, 5, margin.” *Prophets and Kings, 733.*

In closing, there is so much to be shared about how gardening and our spiritual life are connected that it cannot be covered in this greeting. I invite you to spend time not only with your garden but with the words of Jesus. His spiritual lessons are to be gleaned from many sources. If we never meet in this world, brothers and sisters, let us instead meet in the gardens of heaven. Bronwyn

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth

forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. Song of Solomon 2:10-13

Readers' Response

Dear Jeff,

This is to express my sincere and heartfelt gratitude for the literature and audio tapes sent to me from Future for America. I am grateful and happy to be in possession of such material, especially the Daniel 11:40-45 expositions. May God abundantly bless you all in your ministry and trade as you go on reaching many throughout the world with present truth.

Indeed the final movements will be rapid ones. May God help us all as we prepare for His Second Advent. I wish you a happy year.

Yours Sincerely, L.S.—Kenya

Jeff and Kathy,

Thank you for making your Daniel tapes available to me. I find their contents worth considering. No one I know listens to them, so I can't discuss them but your ongoing discussions on these subjects in the monthly letter are extremely interesting and help me think for myself.

Sincerely, S.W.—CA

Dear Brother and Sister Pippenger,

My prayer for you is that the Lord will continue to give you strength to choose to serve Him. Brother I called your home a while back asking for some information, immediately I began to be attacked by the enemy; and for months after receiving the information on prophecy I never even studied the information, may the Lord forgive me. We as a people professing devotion to God do not know just how weak we truly are without Him. Thank God for the Holy Spirit who was sent to bring all things to remembrance and for your faithfulness in a time of all-out attack by the devil. I awoke this morning feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit; you know the goodness and conviction of the Spirit, and a true desire to repent. I glanced on

the floor and there was your latest newsletter titled *The Office of the Holy Spirit* talking about the purpose of the Holy Spirit. I knew that (to borrow a phrase from you) was God's signature. I thank you for praying over these letters and being guided by the Lord in all that you do. I believe that the former rain is falling still that we may prepare ourselves to receive the latter rain; the grace of God is all around us, no matter how dark it may seem. Thank you Brother once again.

Love in Christ, T.L.—WC

Dear Jeff,

Thank you for the tape and magazine, which are truth filled and most encouraging in these dark days! There are all kinds of voices seeking to be heard these days and it's only as we deeply pray and study God's powerful word that anyone will be able to detect error which is all too often woven into some truth, just enough to catch the unwary, sad to say.

The signs of Christ's soon return are mushrooming and as never before I appreciate the folks who declare Isaiah 58, which I memorized many years ago. Oh how very many professing Adventists will hear the tragic words, "I know you not," yet who hope to be saved eternally. How I pray for very many precious souls, who appear to be spiritually blind! Thank you for your prayers. You are in my prayers.

In Jesus' Love, A.

Dear Jeff,

Thanks for the *Future News*. We certainly enjoy reading it. It has so much valuable information for these last days at the close of time. We pray for our church in the closing work and the second coming of Jesus. May it be soon, after everyone has been given his chance to be saved. May the Lord be with you. D.H.

Dear Brothers in Christ,

When I came across to learn that you have such good news messages in cassettes, I am convinced strongly to inquire if you may guide me to any information about them. I am the Pastor at this Mission School and I do a lot of evangelism with pupils and local community. The two cassettes dealing with the three woes have been a great help. I have part 3, 6, and 11.

Oh wonderful. God should richly bless your ministry. I am asking for old spiritual used books, picture rolls, used Bibles, or any Daniel and Revelations newsletters and materials.

God Bless You All, S.N.—Africa

Dear Brother in Christ,

I am impressed to write to you concerning your work and a dream I had. While attending the school of evangelism I met a man. I also became acquainted with his wife and another man. K. started speaking about the prophecy of Daniel eleven. I listened but I could only discern about half of what he was saying. That night I had a dream: I was looking for some beautiful rocks. I picked up one ugly, rusty colored rock. This person K. came over and took the rock from my hands and showed me how to get past the ugly outside pieces of the rock by peeling off the edges of the rock and handed the rock back to me. As I began to peel the ugly pieces away, I saw inside the rock. Beautiful crystals began to appear. As I looked the crystals began to shine and rays of light began to shine outward like bright rainbow colors in every direction. Then I woke up immediately.

The next day I again sat with K. and his wife and this other man and we were joined by another man, a recent convert to the Adventist church. I related my dream to those at my table and K.'s friend left immediately. When he returned he brought two books to me and he gave a copy also to the new convert. Now, I am very skeptical about taking literature from anyone, especially someone I hardly know, but out of courtesy I took them. The book was titled *The Final Rise and Fall of the King of the North* and the periodical was titled *The Time of the End*. Well, the books sat around a couple of days before I began to read. Now I know of surety that this is from God, and I know that God is leading you in your work. Romans 13:11 says, it is high time we awake out of sleep. It is sad that the advent people are asleep and many refuse to wake up.

In closing brother, I am impressed to say, please print this dream in your next publication, to encourage the brothers and sisters that have the hope that is burning in our hearts, of the soon coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus said when you see all these things, know

it is near, even at the door. Matthew 24:33. Now, when you hear from me again it will be a question letter about another dream I had concerning the Sunday law. Also may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always and forever amen.

Your Brother in Christ Jesus, J.B.—AZ

Dear Kathy,

Please express my gratitude to Jeff for inviting me to your recent prophecy school. I'm sixty six year old and have several health problems that prevented my attending the school but am thankful the meetings were taped so many will be able to be blessed by the presentations. Would you please send me a set of the VHS presentations as well as a set of the notes? Thank you for the work you and Jeff are doing. I continue to remember you and your ministry in my prayers.

Your Sister in Christ, R.E.—NC

Dear Kathy,

Thank you and Jeff so much for the *2004 School of the Prophets* tapes. My husband and I are watching them together. This is giving him the opportunity to learn these valuable truths. I plan to share them with our son also. The box of tapes did not contain a set of the notes. I would greatly appreciate receiving these notes.

Please tell Jeff he is doing an excellent job in presenting these messages. Many people will be blessed by these presentations. I continue to remember Future for America in my prayers. May God continue to bless each of you.

R.E.—NC

“You ask me why I do not
write something....I think
one’s feelings waste
themselves in words, they
ought all to be distilled into
actions and into actions
which bring results.”
Florence Nightingale

Prophecy School 2004

Contact us at Future for America if you are interested in ordering this brand new series consisting of forty hours of presentations covering the material found in the February & March 2005 newsletter.

Audio...\$112.00

VHS...\$145.00

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There is also the regular 15% plus \$1.00 shipping and handling charge for the materials.

A Dead Formalism

Alonzo T. Jones

Bible Echo

January 28, 1895

“Unbelieving Israel, not having the righteousness which is of faith, and so not appreciating the great sacrifice that the Heavenly Father has made, sought righteousness by virtue of the offering itself and because of the merit of presenting the offering.

“Thus was perverted every form of service and everything which God had appointed to be the means of expression to a living faith and which could not have any real meaning except by the living presence and power of Christ Himself in the life. And even this was not enough. For, not finding the peace and satisfaction of an accomplished righteousness in any of this nor in all of it together, they heaped upon these things which the Lord had appointed for another purpose, but which they had perverted to purposes of their own invention—they heaped upon these things ten thousand traditions, exactions, and hair-splitting distinctions of their own invention, and all, all, in a vain hope of attaining to righteousness. For the rabbis

taught what was practically a confession of despair, that 'If but one person could only for one day keep the whole law and not offend in one point—nay, if but one person could but keep that one point of the law which affected the due observance of the Sabbath—then the troubles of Israel would be ended and the Messiah at last would come.' Farrar, *Life and Work of St. Paul*, 37. See also 36, 83. What could possibly more fittingly describe a dead formalism than does this? And yet for all this conscious dearth in their own lives there was still enough supposed merit to cause them to count themselves so much better than other people that all others were but as dogs in comparison.

"It is not so with those who are accounted righteous by the Lord upon a living faith freely exercised. For when the Lord counts a man righteous, he is actually righteous before God, and by this very fact is separated from all the people of the world. But this is not because of any excellence of his own nor of the 'merit' of anything that he has done. It is altogether because of the excellence of the Lord and of what He has done. And the man for whom this has been done knows that in himself he is no better than anybody else but rather in the light of the righteousness of God that is freely imparted to him, he, in the humility of true faith, willingly counts others better than himself. Philippians 2:3.

"The giving themselves great credit for what they themselves had done and counting themselves better than all other people upon the merit of what they had done—this were at once to land men fully in the complete self-righteousness of Pharisaism. They counted themselves so much better than all other people that there could not possibly be any basis of comparison. It seemed to them a perfectly ruinous revolution to preach as the

truth of God that 'there is no respect of persons with God.'

"And what of the actual life of such people, all this time? O, it was only a life of injustice and oppression, malice and envy, variance and emulation, backbiting and talebearing, hypocrisy and meanness, boasting of their great honor of the law, and through breaking the law dishonoring God, their hearts filled with murder and their tongues crying loudly for the blood of One of their brethren, yet they could not cross the threshold of a Roman tribunal 'lest they should be defiled!' Intense sticklers for the Sabbath, yet spending the holy day in spying treachery and conspiracy to murder.

"What God thought and still thinks of all such ways as this is shown plainly enough for our present purpose, in just two short passages of scripture. Here is His word to Israel—the ten tribes—while yet their day lingered:

"'I hate, I despise your feast days and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer Me burnt-offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.' Amos 5:21-24.

"And to Judah near the same time He said the same thing in these words:

"'Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread

my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.

“Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ Isaiah 1:10-18.

“The Lord Himself had appointed these feast days and solemn assemblies, these burnt offerings, meat offerings, and peace offerings, but now He says He hates them and will not accept them. Their fine songs sung by their trained choirs and accompanied with instruments of music, making a grand display—all this that they got off for wonderfully fine music He called ‘noise,’ and wanted it taken away.

“He had never appointed any feast days nor solemn assemblies nor sacrifices nor offerings nor songs for any such purpose as that for which these were used. He had appointed all these as the means of worshipful expression of a living faith by which the Lord Himself should abide in the heart and work righteousness in the life, so that in righteousness they could judge the fatherless and plead for the widow and so that judgment could run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.

“Songs sung in the pomp and stylish intonation of a vain show are but ‘noise,’ while the simple expression, ‘Our Father,’ flowing from a heart touched by the power of a true and living faith and ‘spoken in sincerity by human lips is music’ which enters into the inclining ear (Psalms 116:2) of the Heavenly Father and brings divine blessing in power to the soul.

“This and this alone is what He had appointed these things for and never, never to be used in the hollow pretense of a dead formalism to answer in righteousness for the iniquity of a carnal heart. Nothing but the washing away of the sins by the blood of the Lamb of God and the purifying of the heart by living faith—nothing but this could ever make these things acceptable to Him who appointed them.

“Even this side of the cross of Christ, which itself should be the everlasting destruction of it, the same dead formalism, an empty profession, has exalted itself, and has been the bane of the profession of Christianity everywhere. Very soon, unconverted men crept into the church and exalted themselves in the place of Christ. Not finding the living presence of Christ in the heart by living faith, they have ever since sought to have the forms of Christianity supply the lack of His presence, which alone can give meaning and life to these forms.

“In this system of perverseness, regeneration is through the form of baptism and even this by a mere sprinkling of a few drops of water. The real presence of Christ is in the form of the Lord’s supper. The hope of salvation is in being connected with a form of the church. And so on throughout the whole list of the forms of Christianity, they have heaped upon this, ten thousand inventions of their own in penances, pilgrimages, traditions and hair- splitting distinctions.

“And as of old and always with mere formalists, the life is simply and continually the manifestation of the works of the flesh—strife and contention, hypocrisy and iniquity, persecution, spying, treachery, and every evil work. This is the Papacy.

“This evil spirit of a dead formalism, however, has spread itself far beyond the bounds of the organized Papacy. It is the bane of the profession of Christianity everywhere today, and even the profession of the Christianity of the third angel’s message has not entirely escaped it. It is to be the worldwide prevailing evil of the last days up to the very coming of the Lord in glory in the clouds of heaven.

“For ‘this know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.’ 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

“This all-prevailing form of godliness without the power, and which even denies the power, is the dead formalism against which we are to fight the good fight of living faith. The living faith which is brought to the world in the third angel’s message is to save us from being swallowed up in this worldwide sea of dead formalism.

“How is it with you individually today? Is yours a dead formalism or a living faith? Have you the form of godliness without the power? Or have you by living faith the living presence and power of the living Saviour in the heart, giving divine meaning, life and joy to all the forms of worship and of service

Therefore say I unto
you, The kingdom of God
shall be taken from
you, and given to a
nation bringing forth
the fruits thereof.
Matthew 21:43

which Christ has appointed and working the works of God and manifesting the fruits of the Spirit in all the life?

“Except as the means of finding Christ the living Saviour in the word and the living faith of Him, even this word itself can be turned to a dead formalism now as it was of old when He was on the earth. He said to them then (Revised Version), ‘Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me. And ye will not come to me that ye may have life.’ John 5:39, 40.

“They thought to find eternal life in the Scriptures without Christ; that is, by doing them themselves. But ‘this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son’—as we find Him in the Scriptures and not in the words of the Scriptures without Him. For they are they that testify of Him. This is their object. Therefore, ‘he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.’ 1 John 5:11, 12.

“‘True godliness elevates the thoughts and actions; then the external forms of religion accord with the Christian’s internal purity; then those ceremonies required in the service of God are not meaningless rites, like those of the hypocritical Pharisees.’” *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2, 219. *A Dead Formalism*, January 28, 1895.

Christ's Example in Contrast with Formalism

“Of the Lord Jesus Christ in His youth, the divine testimony is given, ‘And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.’ After the visit to Jerusalem in His boyhood, He returned with His parents, ‘and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. . . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.’

“In the days of Christ, the educators of the youth were formalists. During His ministry, Jesus declared to the rabbis, ‘Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.’ And He charged them with ‘teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.’ Tradition was dwelt upon, amplified, and revered far above the Scriptures. The sayings of men, and an endless round of ceremonies, occupied so large a share of the student’s life, that the education which imparts a knowledge of God was neglected. The great teachers were continually enlarging upon little things, specifying every detail to be observed in the ceremonies of religion, and making its observance a matter of highest obligation. They paid ‘tithe of mint and anise and cummin,’ while they ‘omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.’ Thus there was brought in a mass of rubbish the hid from the view of the youth the great essentials of the service of God.

“In the educational system there was no place for that personal experience in which the soul learns for itself the power of a ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ and gains that reliance upon the divine word which alone can bring peace, and power with God. Busied with the round of forms, the students in these schools found no quiet hours in which to commune with God and hear His voice speaking to their hearts. That which the rabbis regarded as superior education was in real-

ity the greatest hindrance to true education. It was opposed to all real development. Under their training, the powers of the youth were repressed, and their minds were cramped and narrowed.

“The brothers and sisters of Jesus were taught the multitudinous traditions and ceremonies of the rabbis, but Christ himself could not be induced to interest Himself in these matters. While hearing on every hand the reiterated ‘Thou shalt,’ and ‘Thou shalt not,’ He moved independently of these restrictions. The requirements of society and the requirements of God were ever in collision; and while in His youth he made no direct attack upon the customs or precepts of the learned teachers, He did not become a student in their schools.

“Jesus would not follow any custom that would require Him to depart from the will of God, nor would He place Himself under the instruction of those who exalted the words of men above the word of God. He shut out of His mind all the sentiments and formalities that had not God for their foundation. He would give no place for these things to influence Him. Thus He taught that it is better to prevent evil than to attempt to correct it after it has gained a foothold in the mind. And Jesus would not by His example lead others to place themselves where they would be corrupted. Nor would He needlessly place Himself in a position where He would be brought into conflict with the rabbis, which might in after years result in weakening His influence with the people. For the same reasons He could not be induced to observe the meaningless forms or rehearse the maxims that afterward in His ministry He so decidedly condemned.

“Though Jesus was subject to His parents, He began at a very early age to act for Himself in the formation of His character. While His mother was His first human teacher, He was constantly receiving an education from His Father in heaven. In-

stead of poring over the learned lore handed down by the rabbis from century to century, Jesus, under the Divine Teacher, studied the words of God, pure and uncorrupted, and studied also the great lesson-book of nature. The words, 'Thus saith the Lord,' were ever upon His lips, and 'It is written,' was His reason for every act that varied from the family customs. He brought a purer atmosphere into the home life. Though He did not place Himself under the instruction of the rabbis by becoming a student in their schools, yet He was often brought in contact with them, and the questions He asked, as if He were a learner, puzzled the wise men; for their practices did not harmonize with the Scriptures, and they had not the wisdom that comes from God. Even to those who were displeased at His noncompliance with popular customs, His education seemed of a higher type than their own.

"The life of Jesus gave evidence that He expected much, and therefore He attempted much. From His very childhood He was the true light shining amid the moral darkness of the world. He revealed Himself as the truth, and the guide of men. His conceptions of truth and His power to resist temptation were proportionate to His conformity to that word which He himself had inspired holy men to write. Communion with God, a complete surrender of the soul to Him, in fulfilling His word irrespective of false education or the customs or traditions of His time, marked the life of Jesus.

"To be ever in a bustle of activity, seeking by some outward performance to show their superior piety, was, in the estimation of the rabbis, the sum of religion; while at the same time, by their constant disobedience to God's word, they were perverting the way of the Lord. But the education that has God back of it, will lead men to seek after God, 'if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him.' The infinite is not, and never will be, bound about by human organizations

or human plans. Every soul must have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will and ways of God. In all who are under the training of God is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, its practice, or its experiences. Through study of the Scriptures, through earnest prayer, they may hear His message to them, 'Be still and know that I am God.' When every other voice is hushed, when every earthly interest is turned aside, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. Here rest is found in Him. The peace, the joy, the life of the soul, is God.

"When the child seeks to get nearest to his father, above every other person, he shows his love, his faith, his perfect trust. And in the father's wisdom and strength the child rests in safety. So with the children of God. The Lord bids us, 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved!' 'Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest.' 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.'

"Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 441.

formalism: the doctrine that formal structure rather than content is what should be represented

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Revelation 3:17.

“How plainly is pictured the position of those who think they have all the truth, who take pride in their knowledge of the Word of God, while its sanctifying power has not been felt in their lives. The fervor of the love of God is wanting in their hearts.

“Many are Laodiceans, living in a spiritual self-deception. They clothe themselves in the garments of their own righteousness, imagining themselves to be rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing, when they need daily to learn of Jesus, His meekness and lowliness.

“What is it that constitutes the wretchedness, the nakedness, of those who feel rich and increased with goods? It is the want of the righteousness of Christ. In their own righteousness they are represented as clothed with filthy rags, and yet in this condition they flatter themselves that they are clothed upon with Christ’s righteousness. . . . They may be crying, ‘The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we,’ while their hearts are filled with unholy traffic and unrighteous barter. The courts of the soul temple may be the haunt of envy, pride, passion, evil surmising, bitterness, and hollow formalism. Christ looks mournfully upon His professed people who feel rich and increased in the knowledge of the truth, and who are yet destitute of the truth in life and character.

“Jesus says, ‘I, your Redeemer, know your works. I am familiar with the motives that prompt you to declare boastfully in regard to your spiritual condition, ‘I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.’ Thou ‘knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.’ . . . What a position to be in! They stand in their own light.

“But notwithstanding their willful ignorance, they are not left by the Lord without added warning and counsel.” *Our High Calling*, 349.

“The solemn message for this time has a certain sound which we all should heed. The signs of the times tell us that the end of all things is at hand. Prophecies fulfilled have become facts of history, clearly defining our position. We are standing upon the verge of the eternal world. Because iniquity abounds, the love of many is waxing cold. Instead of this, love for God, love for purity, truth, and holiness, should be increasing in our hearts. The increase of wickedness around us should awaken in us more earnest zeal and stronger determination. The faith of God’s true people, manifested, as was Noah’s, by their works, should stand as a beacon of warning to the world. If our works do not correspond with our profession, we present to the world a false light, and thus lure them on to destruction.

“Our Lord forewarned his people that iniquity would abound in the last days, and would have a paralyzing influence upon true godliness. Wickedness is seen and heard and felt all around us. It seems to permeate the very atmosphere, and affects the faith and love of God’s professed people. It is difficult to hold fast Christian integrity. The fact is, much which is current in our day as Christianity is indebted for its very existence to the absence of persecution. When the test of fiery trial comes, a great proportion of these who profess the faith will show that their religion was hollow formalism. Instead of being strengthened and confirmed by opposition, their faith grows feeble and becomes extinct.” *Review and Herald*, November 29, 1881.

“While priests and rabbis were assuring themselves of their competency to teach the people, and to cope even with the Son of God in expounding doctrine, he charged them

with ignorance of the Scriptures or the power of God. It is not the learning of the world's great men that opens the mysteries of the plan of redemption. The priests and rabbis had studied the prophecies, but they failed to discover the precious proofs of the Messiah's advent, of the manner of his coming, of his mission and character. Men who claimed to be worthy of confidence because of their wisdom, did not perceive that Christ was the Prince of life.

"The rabbis looked with suspicion and contempt upon everything that did not bear the appearance of worldly wisdom, national exaltation, and religious exclusiveness; but the mission of Jesus was to oppose these very evils, to correct these erroneous views, and to work a reformation in faith and morals. He attracted attention to purity of life, to humility of spirit, and to devotion to God and his cause, without hope of worldly honor or reward. He must divest religion of the narrow, conceited formalism which made it a burden and a reproach. He must present a complete, harmonious salvation to all. The narrow bounds of national exclusiveness must be overthrown; for his salvation was to reach to the ends of the earth. He rejoiced in spirit, as he beheld the poor of this world eagerly accepting the precious message which he brought. He looked up to heaven, and said, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.'

"It is the humble in heart that receive the enlightenment of heaven, that is more precious than the boasted wisdom of the world. By faith in the Son of God a transformation takes place in the character. The child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life. The infinite sacrifice of the Son of God is a propitiation for the transgressions of the repenting sinner. He becomes spiritual, and discerns

spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of God's law. This salvation which offers pardon to the transgressor, presents to him the righteousness that will bear the scrutiny of the omniscient One, gives victory over the powerful enemy of God and man, provides eternal life and joy for its receiver, and may well be a theme of rejoicing to the humble who hear thereof and are glad." *Review and Herald*, April 17, 1888.

At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord of hosts. Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of

Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them? Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore

shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. I will surely consume them, saith the Lord: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein. For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the Lord. When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they

provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? Jeremiah 8

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Current events

THE DRAGON

UN's "Loss of Sovereignty to Tyrants" treaty.

"In a disturbing revelation during her recent testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee...Condoleezza Rice expressed her support for President Bush's plan for the US to sign on to the so called 'L.O.S.T.' Treaty ('Law Of The Sea Treaty'). This treaty, which compromises US sovereignty and national defense is backed by the UN's newly created International Seabed Authority (ISA), and is pitting globalist free traders against nationalist isolationists throughout the country and particularly among the Republican Party and conservatives. The bottom line here is the almighty dollar vs. our national security. As such, perhaps this treaty, backed by our good pals at the UN might better be called, 'Loss Of Sovereignty to Tyrants.'" *thefederalist.com*, February 20, 2005.

Countries pledge to mutually fight crime

United Nations member states have proclaimed their political will and commitment to seek and improve international co-operation in the fight against crime, especially those involving money-laundering and terrorism.

They also agreed on the need for a more comprehensive approach to combating crime, including extradition and mutual legal assistance.

United Nations Office for Drug and Crime secretary-general Dr Antonio Maria Costa, who read out the 35-point Bangkok Declaration, urged members to put into practice all the matters agreed upon in the declaration.

"Member countries have expressed their concern on various issues, including kidnapping, cyber crime, witness protection, human trafficking and other forms of serious and organized crime, and have agreed to work closely with one another to combat them.

"We recognize that comprehensive and effective crime prevention strategies can significantly reduce crime and victimization.

"In this context, we need to strengthen international co-operation in order to create an

environment that is conducive to fighting crime, including promoting growth and eradicating poverty and unemployment through effective and balanced development strategies and crime prevention policies," he said at the closing of the eight-day 11th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice here yesterday.

Deputy Internal Security Minister Chia Kwang Chye, who represented the Malaysian Government at the ministerial level, said he was satisfied with the outcome of the congress.

"I am glad that subjects relating to terrorism, drug trafficking, money-laundering, human trafficking and prison issues raised by us and several other countries were adopted in the declaration.

"Everyone must now do their part to ensure that whatever has been planned and discussed here is implemented," he added. *thestar.com*, April 26, 2005.

UN Congress Pledges Closer Global Cooperation Against Transnational Crime

Delegates to a United Nations congress on globalized crime have pledged closer international cooperation. The delegates recognized that such crimes can no longer be fought effectively by nations working alone. The United Nations Congress on Crime and Criminal Justice concluded Monday with a pledge of cooperation and an "integrated approach" to transnational crime prevention and criminal justice.

A draft declaration said new threats were already emerging in areas of economic and financial crimes, which posed threats to national economies and the international financial system.

Burkhard Dammann, a human trafficking expert with the UN Office of Drugs and Crime, said countries recognized they were unable to work alone in responding to such threats. "The Congress has one overriding central theme, and that is we are facing a number of very serious threats worldwide that cannot be dealt with by one single country alone," he said. "They need a coordinated response and they need a response by which all countries take action along the same lines."

More than 130 countries and over 3,000 participants attended the congress, which is held every five years to discuss international cooperation on crime. Indonesia's Minister for Law and Human Rights, Hamid Awaluddin, said new methods of preventing crime had to be found. "Transnational organized crime has... been an increasing global threat and cannot be at all under-estimated," he said. "Dealing with this new phenomenon requires an implementation of new approaches."

The closing declaration expressed "great concern" over such globalized crimes as drug trafficking, money laundering, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, illegal arms trafficking and terrorism.

Participants acknowledged the lack of a universal definition of terrorism, which is delaying international cooperation on combating the phenomenon. The declaration said agreement on such a definition was "one of the key issues to be resolved."

The congress also heard from non-government groups pressing for prisoner reform and calls for ensuring the maintenance of human rights. *politinfo.com*, April 25, 2005.

THE BEAST

Keeping Sunday Holy

Trying to ensure Christians celebrate Sunday as a special day is one of the aims of the Year of the Eucharist the Church is now observing. In his apostolic letter on the year, "Mane Nobiscum Domine," John Paul II wrote: "In a particular way I ask that every effort be made this year to experience Sunday as the day of the Lord and the day of the Church" (Number 23).

The Pope also called upon priests during the special year, which continues through October 2005, to pay more attention to the celebration of Sunday Mass as an event that unites the entire parish. During his homily last Oct. 17 at the Mass held to mark the start of the special year, the Pontiff noted that particularly on a Sunday the Church lives the mystery of the Eucharist. Moreover, through the Eucharistic celebration the Christian community is called to a greater brotherhood and service to others.

The Holy Father's call to reinforce the importance of Sunday Mass has been followed up in a recent meeting of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, held January 18-21. The commission issued a series of pastoral recommendations on how to maintain the Sunday Mass as a central feature of Christian life. When Sunday loses its special meaning, it becomes absorbed into the generic concept of "weekend," the commission observed. Christians, instead, need to keep in mind that Sunday Mass should be at the heart of their religious life. Sunday Mass attendance is also an important means to ensure the Church maintains its missionary fervor, which is strengthened through a regular contact with Jesus in the Eucharist. The commission insisted on the need for a dignified celebration of the Eucharist. This covers everything from the ornaments used by the priest, to the music used in the ceremony, to the way the liturgy is organized. This dignity must be safeguarded even in circumstances that present special difficulties, such as prisons, hospitals and nursing homes.

Another recommendation concerns the need for an active participation by everyone in the celebration. To ensure this, the commission called upon priests and laity alike to meditate on the meaning of Sunday Mass as the central moment of the Lord's Day. The commission urged priests to increase their reverence at Mass, reflecting in their words and acts the great value of the mystery they are celebrating. The panel also recommended that adequate care be given to the preparation of the Sunday homily, basing its content on Scripture, the Tradition of the Church and the magisterium. For those who participate in some way in the liturgical celebration as acolytes, readers, Eucharistic ministers, etc., the commission asked that they be given a careful preparation in the roles they carry out.

Another way in which the Christian community can value better Sunday Mass is through an adequate catechesis. The commission called for an increased effort in communicating the value of the Mass. Part of this involves a greater awareness of the connection between the sacraments, for example, baptism, confirmation and the

Eucharist. As well, a more-frequent participation in the sacrament of reconciliation is suggested in order to ensure worthy reception of Communion.

The commission also noted the importance of ensuring that the whole family participates together in the Sunday Eucharist. Related to this is the need to teach within the family the importance of the Eucharist.

In recent weeks other countries have also responded to the Pope's call to reinforce Sunday Mass during the Year of the Eucharist. A January 20 press release by the Australian bishops' conference announced a program prepared by the National Liturgical Commission. The initiative will get under way during the Sundays of Easter and is linked with a proposal for a period of Eucharistic devotion from Trinity Sunday to Corpus Christi.

In the introduction to the program, the chairman of the episcopate's Committee for Liturgy, Bishop Kevin Manning, recalled the invitation of John Paul II for Catholics to dedicate the current year to the Eucharist. "The Australian bishops have responded to the Holy Father's invitation and now offer the program, 'Sunday: Sacrament of Easter,' to the Australian Church as a means of enlivening our celebration of the Eucharist and to encourage devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament," Bishop Manning wrote.

In Ireland, meanwhile, the Diocese of Down and Connor announced last Monday that it will be starting a series of lessons in its parishes on the meaning of the Eucharist, reported the Irish Independent. Launching the campaign, Bishop Patrick Walsh warned that Sunday is no longer a family day, let alone the Lord's Day, for many people. "The purpose of the Year of the Eucharist is to open the eyes of our faith so that we will come to recognize Christ more fully in the breaking of the bread, in the Eucharist, and stay with him in his presence in the Blessed Sacrament," he explained.

This is not the first time John Paul II has insisted on the need to ensure that Sunday remains a special day for Catholics. In his 1998 apostolic letter, "Dies Domini," he noted that the Church has always given the Lord's Day special attention. On Sunday we recall Christ's resurrection and celebrate his victory over sin

and death. "It is the day which recalls in grateful adoration the world's first day and looks forward in active hope to 'the last day', when Christ will come in glory (cf. Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) and all things will be made new (cf. Revelation 21:5)" (Number 1).

The Pope commented that until recently it was easier to preserve the special meaning of Sunday, because in most Christian countries it was practiced by virtually all the population and was also a part of civil society. Now, however, Sunday is submerged in a series of cultural and sporting activities that can cause us to lose sight of the day's spiritual meaning.

"The disciples of Christ, however, are asked to avoid any confusion between the celebration of Sunday, which should truly be a way of keeping the Lord's Day holy, and the 'weekend,' understood as a time of simple rest and relaxation," the Pope added (Number 4).

Achieving this requires a greater spiritual maturity and for Christians to act in accordance with their faith. Sunday should be a day that is at the heart of the Christian life, the Pope urged. "Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ! Yes, let us open our time to Christ that he may cast light upon it and give it direction" (Number 7). Moreover, he added: "Time given to Christ is never time lost, but is rather time gained, so that our relationships and indeed our whole life may become more profoundly human." A lesson that the Pope hopes many will learn during this year dedicated to the Eucharist. *zenit.org*, February 26, 2005.

US Secretary of State Discusses Middle East, Religious Freedom with Vatican Officials

During her first official diplomatic trip, new United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited yesterday with Vatican Secretary of State Angelo Sodano

Joaquin Navarro-Valls, the Holy See's Press Office Director, published a communiqué about the visit early this afternoon, Rome time.

It stated that on Tuesday, "Condoleezza Rice, US secretary of State, accompanied by an official delegation, visited Cardinal Secretary of State Angelo Sodano who was accompanied by Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, secretary for Relations with States, Msgr. Pietro Parolin,

under-secretary, and other officials from the Secretariat of State."

The document called the meeting, which lasted for almost an hour, "cordial", and said that, "Cardinal Sodano presented the Holy Father's greetings to his guest, asking her to pass them on to US President Bush."

In turn, Condoleezza Rice, in the name of President Bush, of the American people, and in her own name, expressed best wishes for a speedy recovery of His Holiness."

An exchange of opinions followed on various international problems, with particular reference to the Holy Land, to the Middle East, and to the situation in other Asian countries. Attention was also given to the theme of religious freedom in various parts of the world."

"Finally," the document stated, "certain questions concerning bilateral relations were considered, reaffirming the will to collaborate in safeguarding and promoting spiritual values." *EWTN*, February 8, 2005.

Mixing Religion and Politics Always a Disaster

Welcome to another edition of "Crossfire"!

Today, two authorities will face off on a question that was asked by bigots in generations past and was answered—for all time, we thought—in 1960. Yet it arose again last year, raised not by bigots but by believers.

Can Americans ever again elect a Roman Catholic as president with assurance that our president will not govern by taking dictation from the pope?

Let's meet our famous guests.

From Boston, John F. Kennedy. In September 1960, as a presidential candidate, he dealt head-on with this question before the Houston Ministerial Association. He eased concerns and was narrowly elected America's first Catholic president. His words today are taken from his words that day.

From Bavaria, Germany, and now Vatican City, Pope Benedict XVI. In June 2004, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, he dealt head-on with this issue in his role as arbiter of church orthodoxy. With abortion an issue in US politics and John Kerry, a Catholic, running for president, Ratzinger wrote a letter to Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington, DC,

outlining how the Catholic Church will treat politicians who don't conform to church dictates. His words today are taken from his words that day.

Gentlemen, welcome to "Crossfire."

KENNEDY: "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute—where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote. ..."

BENEDICT: "The Church teaches that abortion or euthanasia is a grave sin. ... In the case of an intrinsically unjust law, such as a law permitting abortion or euthanasia, it is therefore never licit to obey it, or to 'take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law or vote for it.'" (His quote cites a church encyclical, or statement of doctrine.)

KENNEDY: "I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish _ where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source _ where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials. ..."

BENEDICT: "Christians have a 'grave obligation of conscience not to cooperate formally in practices which, even if permitted by civil legislation, are contrary to God's law. ... This cooperation can never be justified either by invoking respect for the freedom of others or by appealing to the fact that civil law permits it or requires it.'" (His quote cites a church encyclical.)

KENNEDY: "I ask you tonight ... to judge me on the basis of my record of 14 years in Congress ... instead of judging me on the basis of these pamphlets and publications we all have seen that carefully select quotations out of context from the statements of Catholic Church leaders, usually in other countries, frequently in other centuries. ..."

BENEDICT: "Regarding the grave sin of abortion or euthanasia, when a person's formal cooperation becomes manifest (understood, in the case of a Catholic politician, as his consistently campaigning and voting for permissive abortion and euthanasia laws), his

pastor should meet with him ... informing him that he is not to present himself for Holy Communion until he brings to an end the objective situation of sin, and warning him that he will otherwise be denied the Eucharist."

KENNEDY: "Whatever issue may come before me as president—on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling or any other subject—I will make my decision in accordance with these views, in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be the national interest and without regard to outside religious pressures or dictates. And no power or threat of punishment could cause me to decide otherwise."

In 2004, a presidential candidate's Catholicism was again thrust into campaign controversy by robed men in pointy hats—not Protestant Klansmen, this time, but Catholic clergy. Kerry, a flawed candidate, treaded the path charted by Kennedy. Yet, opposed by his church, Kerry lost the presidency because he lost Ohio—because he lost the state's Catholic vote.

The church, a silent observer in 1960, is an interventionist today. It is no longer certain that even the courageous and eloquent Kennedy, whose independent words so assured Americans 45 years ago, could be elected president today. Not as long as the new pope is determined to pursue those "outside religious pressures" and "dictates" that JFK decried and few of us ever believed would really happen. *capitolhillblue.com*, April 25, 2005.

Pope could play bigger role in politics

The massive media attention paid to the death of Pope John Paul II and the subsequent election of his successor speaks to more than just fascination over the deification of a man or interest in the intrigue of the mysterious papal conclave. It speaks to the broad influence of the Roman Catholic Church in America.

With its 65 million members Catholicism is the largest Christian denomination in the United States. But the church's influence extends into the public square, which affects the life of every American.

This influence was on display in last November's election. President Bush took 52

percent of the Catholic vote, 6 percentage points higher than in 2000. This increase was crucial in Ohio, where the election was decided by 135,000 votes. Here he netted 172,000 more Catholic votes than in 2000, enough to cover the razor-thin margin and win the presidency.

Last week, the College of Cardinals ended their deliberation and decided on a new leader. Pope Benedict XVI has the potential to exert a yet unheard of level of influence in American politics.

There was a time that the impression of papal pressure on a politician was strictly verboten. President John F. Kennedy was forced to address his allegiance to the Vatican during his run for president in 1960.

"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute - where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote," he said.

The relationship between church and state is far cozier now. Witness the Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist's participation in a show broadcast to churches and Christian radio and television networks called "Justice Sunday." Broadcast yesterday, it said that the Democrats, by blocking Bush's controversial judicial nominees, are discriminating against people of faith.

What do you think: Was this more likely a discussion of the viability of certain parliamentary procedures or an attempt to frame the Democrats as anti-God? Either way, it was another date between Frist, a potential presidential candidate in 2008, and the religious right.

Into this environment comes Pope Benedict XVI, who, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was known as "God's Rottweiler." He was responsible for enforcing doctrinal purity and was willing to interfere in American politics to do so. In 2004, Ratzinger penned a letter stating that pro-abortion rights politicians should be denied Holy Communion. At the time, there was a certain pro-abortion rights politician running for president, and this letter was seen as the Vatican's official word on the matter.

Was Ratzinger's interference in American politics enough to throw the Catholic vote to Bush? That might be overstating the influence of the Vatican, but when it comes to the divisive issue of abortion, one can never tell.

As the inquisitor of Catholic orthodoxy, Ratzinger also took conservative stands against birth control, homosexuality, women in the priesthood and allowing priest or nuns to marry.

It is fair to expect a cardinal to take a traditional view on these topics. This is doubly so considering he led the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which until 1908 was known as the Holy Office of the Inquisition. But in his letter Ratzinger elevated the issue of abortion and euthanasia above all others. "There may be a legitimate diversity of opinion even among Catholics about waging war and applying the death penalty, but not, however, with regard to abortion and euthanasia," he wrote. With this letter he created a Catholic litmus test on the most divisive issue in American politics—in midst of a presidential campaign.

Now that Ratzinger has become Pope Benedict XVI, perhaps he will approach such matters differently. As pope, his responsibilities go far beyond enforcing orthodox Catholic doctrine.

However, before the conclave opened, Ratzinger gave a speech condemning individualism, liberalism and the "dictatorship of relativism." This signaled a desire for a more doctrinally pure church, even if it means a smaller flock.

Pope Benedict XVI might continue to exert influence by encouraging his clergy to get directly involved in politics. Or perhaps he'll do it himself, and the next presidential election will be the first where a pope personally endorses a candidate. *dailytrojan.com*, April 25, 2005.

DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER WITH *BREACH BUILDERS* OR JACKIE METZ BY MAY 13TH TO SAVE YOUR SPOT FOR THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS HELD AT CAMP CEDAR FALLS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. MORE INFORMATION IS LISTED ON PAGE 17 OF THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO ATTEND AND BECOME FAMILIAR WITH TODAY'S PRESENT TRUTH MESSAGE.

This month's audio cassette is brought to us by Jamal Sankey. Mr. Sankey attended the School of the Prophets in 2004 and has carried forth the message he learned there.

Thank you Mr. Sankey for sharing this message of prophecy and hope.