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Charismatics

Articles of Spiritual Enlightenment for Christians
The San Francisco *Charismatics*, Volume 8, Number 12
December 2001

Twelve Words

By Luigi Santucci

... they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger.

Twelve words. That's all. The twelve-worded Christmas crib story comes from Luke the evangelist who never saw it himself, any more than his master Paul of Tarsus saw it: only those nocturnal shepherds pulverized into nothingness. Three names and a piece of farm equipment. Let us, too, make the crib small and real. We read and reread those twelve words--as we pore over a diamond until we tarnish it

with our breath. There lies our whole Christmas. The words were written by a doctor from Antioch whose pen never trembled with the temptation to say more.

But we'll say more. We'll dance with our mad words round the baby. We'll go and find him and those nearest will buzz around him like bees, and those farthest away will press their mouths to the ground and chew the grass. We'll be a crowd of condemned men cut down from the scaffold at the very last moment.



Each of us will say his twenty or thirty words giving a précis of his life--the names of living people and dead, horrible fears and stubborn hopes--each will give birth to himself. It'll be a huge business, stripping ourselves naked and looking at ourselves on that hillside. The murderer and the saint, the old man and the boy, the rich and the poor, he who thought himself wretched and he who said he was happy. All will measure out with dismay the short step separating them: the fear of death, the hunger for salvation that made them equal.

The salvation born that night among our rocks makes us laugh and tremble. We feel we have a well-

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The Prophet Muhammad by Ruqaiyyah Maqsood

As a mark of respect, Muslims may add "Peace be upon him" when they refer to the Prophet Muhammad.

The Prophet Muhammad was born in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, in

around 570 CE, a member of the Hashim clan of the Quraish tribe. His father, Abdullah, a merchant, died before he was born, and his mother, Amina, died when he was only six years old, leaving him an orphan. He was reared first by his grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, a man famous for his saintly life, and then by his merchant uncle, Abu Talib.

At this time, the people of Arabia were mainly superstitious pagans with a few notable monotheist exceptions, such as Abd al-Muttalib. Many Arabs lived nomadic lives on traditionally claimed territories, and there were only a few key cities such as Makkah, Yathrib and Taif. Makkah was a wealthy trading post that also happened

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Fr. Joe Landi
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Why Not Try The Gospel by Hubert van Zeller, O.S.B.

From almost any book or play that has been written within the last twenty years by any except positively religious writers you could choose a dozen quotations to illustrate the prevailing disillusion and lack of hope. Noel Coward who always puts his finger on the mood of the moment

makes his weary decadents sing: "Chaos and confusion. . . . People seem to lose their way. . . . What is there to strive for, love or keep alive for?" And we answer, "What indeed for those who face the wrong way?"

Has the world lost its bearings? By the skin of its teeth it has been saved from toppling over one of the worst precipices that have ever threatened its safety. And now, are we heading straight towards another? It is time that the world went back and looked up a better route.

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to be the most important shrine for the Arab idols.

The cube-shaped Ka'aba temple claimed a very ancient history; it was said to have been built in the first place by Adam, the first created human being, and then rebuilt by Abraham the Prophet, and his son Ishmail. Originally, it had been a temple dedicated to the One True God, but over the centuries the Baal cults had predominated and at the time of the Prophet it was said to have contained no less than 360 statuettes and cult objects to minor deities.

The Prophet grew up a particularly devout and honorable man, a believer in One God, like his grandfather. He worked first as a shepherd, and then as a merchant, working for his uncle, Abu Talib. He became well known and well liked, and earned the nickname `al-Amin' ('the Trustworthy One') for his piety, honesty, fair dealing, and practical common-sense.

Later, he was employed by a wealthy widow, Khadijah, who, after a short while, offered herself in marriage to him, although she was in her forties and he was about twenty-five years old. Despite the age difference, they were very happily married and had six children. Even though polygamy was normal among Arabs at this time, the Prophet never considered any other marriage while she lived.

His call to be a prophet

His new position gave him security and much more time to devote to prayer and meditation. It was his habit to go off alone to the mountains around Makkah, and be close to God for long periods of time. Sometimes he would stay away for several days. He particularly used to favor the Cave of Hira on Jabal Nur (the 'Mount of Light') over-

looking Makkah. On one of these occasions, in the year 610 CE, when he was around forty years old, something happened that changed his life entirely.

A presence he identified as the angel Gabriel was suddenly there with him, and he was shown words and ordered to recite them.

لا إله إلا الله
محمد رسول الله

He protested that he was not a learned man and could not read them, but the angel insisted, and

“There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God”

suddenly the Prophet knew what the words said. He was ordered to learn them, and repeat them to others. Thus came the first revelation of verses of the Book now known as the Qur'an (the Recitation).

The night this happened was towards the end of the month of Ramadan, the month of fasting, and is known as Lailat ul-Qadr. It is celebrated on the 27th of the month, although the exact date is not known. From this moment of calling, the Prophet's life was no longer his own, but in the hands of Him Who had called him to be a prophet, and spend the rest of his days in His service, repeating His messages.

After this vision, the Prophet had no further revelations for some time, and went through a period of trial and testing when he was not sure of the implications of what had happened to him. Then, after around two years, the messages began again, and continued for the rest of his life, a period of twenty-three years from the first revelation to the last.

His first converts were his wife, Khadijah, his nephew, Ali, a slave-boy, Zaid (both around ten years old and living in his household), and his friend, the merchant Abu Bakr.

The revelations

The Prophet did not always see the angel Gabriel when he had his revelations, and when he did, the angel did not always keep exactly the same form. Sometimes the angel was huge, fill-

ing the horizon, and sometimes the Prophet was only aware of eyes watching him. Occasionally, he just heard a voice speaking to him. Sometimes he revealed that the message did not come through clearly, but there was a sound like muffled bells, and this gave him a headache. At other times, the message was as clear and direct as if another person was just standing by him. Sometimes he received the revelations when he was in deep prayer, but at other times they occurred spontaneously while he was engaged in everyday life, out riding, or involved in conversation concerning the subject.

Every time he received a revelation, there was no doubt either in his mind or the minds of those observing him - he would suffer physical symp-

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It was an unfortunate offhanded remark that President Bush used on the Sunday following the September 11 terrorist attacks when he said, “this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a long time.” While the President quickly apologized, it was the opening of a Pandora’s Box for those with their own agendas against Western civilization and particularly the United States. And once out, it became fodder for the extremists to dupe people to their cause. In Muslim countries, the “Crusades” brings back memories of savage medieval conflicts. Unfortunately, in too many places those medieval conflicts are still raging.

In Islam’s many national languages, the defense against the crusaders is called “the war against the cross.” It was a holy war. So, Muslim extremists look to Osama bin Laden as the new Saladin, the Muslim leader who retook Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187, to lead them in this new holy war against those “signed with the cross.”

Fr. James Fredericks, a professor at Loyola Marymount University (LA) and a Priest for the Archdiocese of San Francisco whose field is comparative religion, comments in the National Catholic Reporter (October 26, 2001):

“We Americans are so concerned with the violent {Islamic} fringe, we miss what’s going on at a deeper level.”

Christianity and Islam are the basis of entire cultural outlooks he notes. But Christians became at ease with an immoral secular society, albeit sometimes begrudgingly, whereas secularism is an anathema to most Muslims, except perhaps in the United States.

The lapse of Christian moral values and cultural values built around honor-shame produced our materialistic, consumer-driven, anything goes, “me” society. A recent ad on the side of a SF Muni bus reads, “Sin is in...” It is more than that, it has become the norm. The separation from a guiding principal of Christian morality in both

the public and private sectors of this country is alarming. Values that the Founding Fathers held in high esteem are scoffed at, ridiculed as “old fashioned” and insulted by trivial court suits.

Whereas, Islam from its beginnings meant renouncing the secular culture that was sinful and violent. According to Fr. Fredericks, “Islam wants to be a very public force, a very public reality. Islam wants of its very character to be the basis of society.”

Fredericks argues that because Christians “slowly and begrudgingly, and with a great deal of violence” more or less worked out a *modus vivendi* with the secular nation notion, Muslims will not necessarily follow suit. “Why should we presume that that’s normative?” he asked.

What the world may be witnessing, contends Fredericks, is not just a violent fringe, but manifestations of religious nationalism that from Egypt to Iran to Indonesia “May have more in common with the theology of liberation than we’ve recognized. Both are a critique of Western secular, capitalist, consumerist, materialist, globalist secularism.” Like Islam, liberation theology seeks to put religious values, such as a preferential option for the poor, at the center of culture.



Joe Landi

Unfortunately for Islam, there is not a central authority or person who can speak with the moral authority of the Pope. For example, the Encyclical of Pope John Paul XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (“Peace on Earth”) on the rights of the human person. Instead, the Islamic world has been given Osama bin Laden who is calling for a holy war against Christians.

There is no question that we have moved away from the cultural values built around honor-shame, which for much of the Islamic world, is still the dominant framework for values.

The NCR cover story quotes Scott Bartchy, director of the Center for the Study of Religion at UCLA on American society, who observes, “Certainly we have very little sense of honor,” he said. “Most Americans will say honor is nice, but give me the check instead. And if we had any shame, we wouldn’t have had the last 20 years of U.S. politics.”

Yet there is still hope for people of faith; faith that the man-God whose birth we celebrate this month will show us the way to righteousness. And that the One God of the Cross, Crescent and Magen David will help us to live in harmony. For the “form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away, and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men.” (*Gaudium et spes* 39 # 1.)



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Twelve Words (From Page 1)

caulked ship beneath our feet and the sea can't swallow us up. We feel the salt of incorruptibility beneath our skin. We exchange unshaven embraces.

All's afire tonight in this straw hut. And the unendurable blaze makes us seek refuge and defense in childlike happiness. Only one person can hold out in the happy pyre. He looks at us and repeats an ancient promise fulfilled by himself: 'It's my joy to be with the sons of men.'

Once Jesus had been born, magi or astrologers from the East appeared in Jerusalem saying, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the East and have come to adore him." Why had he made them come from such a distance? He had made their camels bellow as they crouched in their stalls in Transjordan and in the stables of Persia and Mesopotamia; he had made them struggle to their feet at the hoarse cry of the camel-drivers at night; he had pricked their flanks with the spur of that star galloping towards the West.

Why did he want them? Weren't the Judean shepherds enough, poor and ignorant like their sheep, with whom his mother could exchange homely words without shyly hiding her breast?

These men were so rich that they wouldn't have stooped to pick up a pearl, so wise that no book would have made them raise an eyebrow. They spoke a foreign tongue that his mother couldn't understand when they entered the kitchen at Bethlehem—where she had found refuge with her tiny son—and the stamping feet of their retinue in the courtyard frightened her, and their mantles of woven silk trailing over the rough floor put her to shame.

Why had he given them the in-

convenience of traveling from their luxurious closets hung with tapestries impregnated with resin, and why stirred hearts that had hitherto beaten evenly beneath robes flawlessly embroidered? Why had he shaken them out of their lethargy of wisdom, now that their calculations had counted the stars in the heavens and the grains of sand in the desert?

So it isn't even true that he hated the rich, though he was to say that it's harder for the rich to win him than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. And it isn't true either that learned men bored him, though he was to say that the kingdom of heaven was for the simple.

What repels him is the rich man who can't get up at night, open his coffers and bring gifts to an unknown baby; and the doctrine of those who think it's stupid to follow the caprices of a star, of those who have wiped the word 'adore' from their vocabulary.

Whereas the astrologers, by a very rare miracle wrought by his angels, had become holy despite their wealth and learning. Their cheeks perfumed with myrrh and spikenard were fit to press his innocent cheeks, and their hands were fit to caress him without their having to remove a single ring.

Christmas is where the good news begins for Jew and Gentile, for those of any faith or none.



Condensed from *Meeting Jesus—A New Way To Christ* by Luigi Santucci. ©1969 Arnoldo Mondadori Editore. English Translation by Bernard Wall. English Translation © 1971 William Collins Sons & Co Ltd, London and Herder and Herder, New York.

Books

Islam by Ruqaiyyah Maqsood. This Teach Yourself World Faiths Series aims to present all the essential information about Islam for those who have no previous knowledge of it, but who want to understand the practical details of their culture, ceremonies, diet and moral views.

The Four Witnesses by Robin Griffith-Jones. Why the Gospels present strikingly different visions of Jesus—the rebel, the Rabbi, the Chronicler, and the Mystic—a thoroughly credible historical setting for early Christianity.

Imagining the Catholic Church—Structured Communion in the Spirit by Ghislain Lafont. In his foreword to the book, Archbishop Weakland calls attention to what makes this book about the Church, its laity and the challenges of Vatican II, different: "Father Lafont does not think in words, sentences and paragraphs, but in centuries."

Choosing Mercy by Antoinette Bosco is a first person story of a mother who suddenly found herself struggling to cope with the murder of her son and daughter-in-law while opposing the death penalty for the murderer.

Is this movie suitable for Children?



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Youth BEAT

Furnished by *You!* Magazine

This picture was so powerful to the staff at YOU! that we wanted you to have it. So go on, hang it up on your wall and start prayin'! "For I am convinced that neither

God is in control
by cam gonzales

death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing can separate us from

the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39

NOTHING can separate us from Jesus, not even death. As four commercial airplanes crashed and the once mighty edifices of the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon crumbled to the ground, Jesus was there.

All of us, in different ways and in varying degrees, were part of it, from the residents in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, to the rescue workers who risked their lives and to those of us who stood in shock and horror in front of the television. Smoke and dust filled the sky and thousands lost their lives—it was as if we were forced to witness a cruel sport,



like watching human beings being fed to the lions in the Ancient Roman arenas.

Yet during this horrible, unforgettable day, September 11, 2001, our God was not a mere spectator. He was with us, for NOTHING can separate us from the love of God.

Only one day after the attack, a young girl from Pennsylvania drew this picture. It was circulated on the internet as a reminder of hope and of God's love. We still don't know who she is, only that the picture she drew reminded us that God was with us that day and every day since, now at nearly two months after the tragedy. When our loved ones were dying, the Lord was taking them into His arms, for NOTHING can separate us from the

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Dear Jenny-

I want to find ways to help the victims and the families of the September 11th tragedies, what can I do? —Reaching Out

Dear Reaching Out:

That is so great that you want to reach out and help those in need during this time in our country. There are many things you can do, and in our high tech world today, the internet can be a great source in finding ways to help.

One website to check out is www.washamerica.org. This program was put together by a group of teens who are raising money for those in need by holding car washes in their area. Check out the website to see how you can get involved. You can also do a search on the internet to find more sites like this.

Another way to help, which is good for your spiritual life, is to set up a weekly prayer meeting with some of your friends, or your youth group. Write a prayer together that you will all

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A Heavenly Experience

Excerpt from the article "Marquis' Great Adventure: An ongoing saga of Marquis' amazing trips through Heaven" with the Patron Saints of TV: Clare and Gabriel

Marq: So you two are the patron saints of TV, huh?

Clare and Gabriel: (Just staring ahead at a screen.)

Marq: Hello? Yo? What are you watching?

Gabriel: I'm watching "Survivor" and Clare's takin' in "ER."

Marq: You're kidding me! You guys watch that stuff?

Gabriel: Actually Marq, we watch everything on TV everywhere in the world—usually at the same time.

Marq: Cool. So that's it? That's the whole thing about bein' patron saint of TV? Just sit around watchin' it?

Clare: Shhh!

Gabe: No, that's not all we do.

Clare: As a matter of fact, if TV had been around in my

time, I wouldn't have had anything to do with it.

Marq: What happened to "Shhh?"

Clare: Commercial break. But seriously, in the order I founded, The Poor Clares, things were pretty limited.

Marq: You mean no TV time?

Clare: We were lucky to have food.

Marq: So, how did you end up being a patron saint of TV?

Clare: Well, I'm trying to make sure that TV serves humanity (in its journey toward God), not the other way around.

Marq: Right on, and what about you Gabe?

Gabe: I'm on the multi-media-news end of things. I was the Dan Rather of the Bible Times. I was the angel sent to Daniel in the OT, to Zechariah in the NT



and the one to announce the birth of Jesus to Mary.

Marq: So you guys are trying to help broadcasters keep the Lord in the front of their minds instead of big bucks.

Gabe: You got it Marq. Trouble is we have to draw straws to see who has to watch B_____ & B_____.

Marq: Sorry, Gabe, had to edit that out. Even I have my standards! Lord protect us from bad TV.

Clare and Gabe: Amen!



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When a man is not sure of his road, he can either go on and trust to luck or else retrace his steps till he comes to a signpost or a guide. The modern world has decided to trust to luck. It does not want to begin again. All right. But don't let it say that there were no signposts or guides. There are.

If the world would risk being bored by the subject, it could hardly do better than investigate the purpose of life. In the rush of supplying our material needs, this matter has been overlooked. The nearer we approximate to the idea as originally conceived, the more fully is our chief need—the need for happiness—realized. So long as a civilization is under the delusion that its members are created for success or pleasure, or even for such noble ends as intellectual good, family life, peace among men—ideals certainly to be aimed at—it is doomed to disappointment.

In the ordering of mankind there is more than mind and body to provide for, and unless progress means progress towards God it can never mean more than prosperity, which is a very doubtful good indeed.

So during periods when the destinies of nations lie in the hands of people whose vision is limited to what is temporal, the universe has every reason to feel alarmed.

Economic and social ideals cannot carry a continent far when the ultimate ideal is ignored. There can be but one security, and we have come to the stage now when the grounds of this se-

curity are denied. The outlook is not rosy.

Like travelers who have missed their way let us get back to the beginning and examine the map. Our map-reading powers have been prejudiced since first we took the wrong turning in the garden, but this is no excuse because in the shape of the Gospel a signpost has appeared out of the mist. Or rather it is the Gospel in the shape of a signpost, because in this particular instance it happens to look like one. There is nothing that so resembles a signpost as a gibbet. There is no way so unmistakable as the way that is pointed by the arms of the Cross. But that is just the way that the world refuses to go.



Forgetting the world for a moment we can take that member of it with whom we are most intimate. I call myself a Christian. My standards, principles, ideals—all my approaches in fact—take not only their colors but their meaning and inspiration from the Gospel. At least that is the theory. Right. I am familiar with the Cross. I know what it stands for. I live in the shadow of it. Christ whose name I bear as Christian was most Himself when hanging from the Cross.

In the last analysis the Cross is the test. It is what a signpost is there for: it marks the parting of the ways: it is literally the crux of my life. All this sounds very fine, but probably very few of us believe it; we write it off as a preacher's flourish. The words of the Gospel are not a preacher's flourish. Listen to this: "He that is not with me is against me . . . he that taketh not up his cross is not worthy of me."

Whatever the guilt of the world in by-passing the Cross, there is no mistaking my own responsibility. I am a Christian. I ought to know my obligations down to the last full-stop. I do, and this

makes it worse: I have not so much ignored it as wrapped it up in cotton wool and carried it on padded shoulders. I, within the Church, have made a greater mistake than those outside it: where the purblind leaders of the world have relied upon social ethics without Christianity, I have experimented in Christian ethics without the Cross.

To conclude: the whole Christian must be surrendered to the whole Christ. As Christians we may not select what of the Gospel we wish to follow and what we prefer to leave alone. "I believe in forgiving people, but of course chastity makes no appeal to me whatever." Nor may the Christian say what of ourself we wish to give to God and what we want to deny Him.

It is not only the religious who belong to God. We are not bound to give up our possessions, but we are at least expected to acknowledge that they are God's before they are ours.

To be a Christian in anything but name, the whole of life—as we enjoy it, or suffer it, or merely drift through it, must come under the cover of our religion. Our working life, social life, family life, our intellectual, sporting, artistic, sleeping and waking life, the whole thing is referred with greater or lesser conscious direction back again to God. In a litany we might ask ourself, "What is there of me that I hide from God? What pleasure? What person? What desire?" Only if we can run right through the litany and say that God is Lord of all, are we in any real sense a follower of Christ.

Condensed from *We Die Standing Up* by Dom Hubert van Zeller, O.S.B. © 1949 Sheed & Ward, Inc., New York.

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Follow the Market? by Fr. John S. Rausch

Faced with few possibilities for employment in her area, Linda considered moving from her mountain home to a distant city to earn her livelihood. She lived on land in her family for three generations and she wanted to raise her granddaughter in the splendor of Appalachia. The conventional wisdom of the marketplace says the unemployed should move to find work, but Linda understood place, tradition, history and community. The market promises rewards to the faithful, but Linda wanted connectedness to her roots. In the end she did with less, made do with local opportunities, and stayed on the land.

The market system strongly influences people's decisions about their lives and what they do. Families move hundreds of miles away from relatives and supportive friends for the sake of a job. Workers endure undesirable employment to maintain a modest standard of living, and people work harder and longer to keep up with their neighbors. In this perpetual motion few hit the pause button to examine the economic forces on their lives.

Writing in the March, 1999 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Harvey Cox, a professor of divinity at Harvard University, reflects about society's unquestioning respect for the invisible hand of business and commerce. His article, "The Market as God," compares the market as a source of power and understanding for society with attributes usually associated with God. He claims society bestows on the market the divine abilities of being omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omnipresent (existing everywhere). Follow the argument.

Divine omnipotence can do anything, and hence displays the power of creating. Whereas God creates the universe, the Market creates commodities. The Market seemingly possesses a limitless ability to convert a part of creation into a product for sale. Sacred places like ancient burial grounds or holy mountains can wear a sticker price as real estate. The human

body not infrequently displays a price tag for blood or bodily organs. The Market's omnipotence can sell whole towns or disrupt vast areas of nature when it decrees the need for more commodities.

While God knows the secrets of the heart, the Market knows the cost of crude and the price of potatoes.

The fluctuations of the stock market signal the prophetic truth about buying or selling. And, if some government policy interferes too dramatically with the potential of profit making, the Market cries heresy. The Market knows all and acts best.

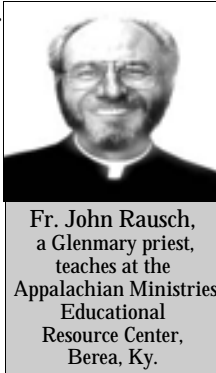
Finally, believers walk confidently with God by their side.

Comparably, disciples of the Market proceed knowing an awareness of financial consequences will in-

fluence nearly all social decision-making, whether in business, in government or in the individual. A simple appeal to budget considerations reminds combatants of the omnipresent Market and stops many an argument.

Linda represents someone whose values challenge an uncritical acceptance of the market's authority. If Linda had followed the market's wisdom, today she would be working (hopefully) in some office or factory. Instead, as an alternative she remembered that her grandparents in the Appalachian tradition dug herbs in the forest for health and medicine. Linda now makes her modest livelihood with some of her neighbors in a co-op selling herbs.

While the market represents a marvelous mechanism for allocating most goods and services, it has its limitations. Ultimately for believers the market is a device, not a dogma. The sacredness of life, the stewardship of creation and the respect for community supercede the market's promised rewards of lucrative employment, cheap prices and expanded choices. These spiritual considerations temper the uncritical acceptance of market wisdom.



Fr. John Rausch, a Glenmary priest, teaches at the Appalachian Ministries Educational Resource Center, Berea, Ky.

Muhammad (From Page 2)

toms, like heavy sweating or a trance-like state, and he reported that he frequently felt as if he was going to 'have his soul snatched away'. Those who were with him could tell quite clearly when his revelations started and when they finished.

Many of those who rejected belief in what was happening to the Prophet accused him of being mad, or suffering from a disease, such as epilepsy; but there is no evidence whatsoever of that. A study of his life as revealed in the *hadith* (his own sayings, and reports of his teachings and way of life) show him to have been an immensely sane, kind, warm-hearted, down-to-earth person, and later an eminent and astute leader of his nation.

His early mission

At first, the Prophet did not preach in public, but spoke privately to those who were interested, or who had noticed the change in him. The particular way of Muslim prayer was revealed to him, and he began to practice this daily, which again drew comment from those who saw him.

When he was given the instruction to begin preaching in public, he was ridiculed and abused as people scoffed at what he was saying and doing. Many of the Quraish tribesmen - who had a vested interest in the Ka'aba shrine, since they provided the many pilgrims with food, water and lodging - were seriously alarmed as they realized his insistence on the One True God would undermine the prestige and credibility of the Temple worship, if people were converted to the Prophet's ways and began to abandon the worship of idols.

The way of life Muhammad taught became known as 'Islam', which means 'submission to the will of Allah', and his followers were known as Muslims, 'those who submit'.

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Finding Strength in Faith by Melinda Parangan-Chu

“The times when you have seen only one set of footprints is when I carried you.” These words from the poem *“Footprints in the Sand”* by Mary Stevenson always reminds and

offers me strength when I am faced with life’s trials. My sister recalled that several years ago, before our conversion, our family would not have been able to face negative events in positive perspectives. In the past, when faced with tragedies or trials, I didn’t know where to turn. I always thought that our God was of love, and didn’t understand how this was possible if I was allowed to suffer.

Being Catholic back then was just a name. I didn’t have a relationship with God. Praying, going to church on Sundays, and all other rituals we associ-



ate with our faith were routine tasks I performed like waking, brushing my teeth, and going to work. They were superficial acts with no sincerity in prayers and application to my life. When I was disappointed or in desperation, I often thought, “Where was

God when I needed Him?”

Seeing that I never got the answers that I wanted, you could see why I, as many others, strayed away from our faith. If I didn’t receive instant gratification, it was so easy to give up. What I didn’t understand was that I was bound to a material world, where only physical things and pleasure that I could grasp were real. God didn’t will tragedies or trials. I allowed them to happen because I had fallen. He allowed them to test my faith, like He did with Abraham, to see where my devotion truly followed. As for trials beyond my control, God has a reason for everything, and as I said God tests us, so does the other side. They all served in strengthening my faith and spiritual growth.

When introduced to the Charismatic Renewal, my life changed. Communication with God strengthened, as I learned to talk to Him by building a closer relationship.

Good and bad, I could praise and thank Him. Prayer wasn’t only reciting the ones learned as a child; now I had conversations with God and found answers to my questions and requests by learning new perspectives of interpretation. I recently experienced the most challenging event in my life that tested my faith, my mother’s illness and death. I recall truth in her teaching, “The adversary will always try to destroy your faith as you get closer to God.”

My mother had been battling with breast cancer for 3 years, yet not once did she question God or lose faith. She never asked God to take it away and even praised Him for the cancer. She believed it was necessary as a purification process for her and our family’s sins. This was a cross that God gave her. She felt privileged to share in Christ’s sufferings. “It is your special privilege to take Christ’s part—not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him” *Philippians 1:29*. Everyone prayed for her healing, but also accepted God’s will, whatever His decision. In fact, it was this illness that gave her encouragement to endure. Cancer wasn’t a curse to her... it was a blessing.

Her total surrendering to God’s will is an exemplary example of how we Christians should lead our lives. Her faith in God was so strong; that she never felt abandoned, no matter how much pain or suffering she had, and was able to feel His powerful love.

Now I understand that God is always with us. As strong as my mother was, when she could no longer endure her sufferings, He called her.

“God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength. But with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it.” *1 Cor. 10:13*

Maybe physical healing wasn’t His plan, eternal life was. Death isn’t the end. It’s the beginning! I see death more optimistically now. If I didn’t have faith, I would have been devastated. But learning from her, I do believe in God even more so now than ever before. I know that Jesus did not die on the cross in vain. There is truly eternal life and happiness in Heaven. I’ve seen many healings, both physically and spiritually; miracles that some skeptics may say are coincidental. However, it’s my faith that tells me they are from God regardless of any explanation that unbelievers give. God makes everything possible.

It hurts to lose someone you love. Her physical presence is no longer here to hold and talk to, but I am consoled knowing she is with the Lord and is no longer in any pain, which gives me inner peace. “Life on earth is only temporary. You can’t take anything with you when you die except your merits done on earth”, as my mother would say. She longed to be with her Maker. She was prepared and fearless of death, feeling she had led a good life. Her strong devotion assured her Heaven would be a beautiful place. That is why she evangelized to spread her enthusiasm in converting people, especially her family.

(Continued on page 15)

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A father and his son were looking at a Nativity scene in a London gallery. It was Titian's world-famous painting of the scene at Bethlehem. The boy asked: "Dad, why is the baby Jesus lying in such a cruddy cradle in a pile of straw?"

"Well son," explained the father, "they were poor and they couldn't afford anything better."

Said the boy: "Then how come they could afford to have their picture painted?"



News

media will shortly start heralding a CIA report that a major plot might be perpetrated on an unsuspecting public in December—alligators are to be added to the list of things for which we should be fearful. The report indicates that an organized group of militant alligators are planning to rise up and bite Americans draining swamps during December.

A reliable source at CIA, who did not want to be named, said that the information came from a friend of a friend who was dating a girl whose brother knows this guy who buys crocodile hides in South America and claims to have overheard the plot from two guys talking in a men's room in a bar in San Paulo, Brazil. Therefore, the CIA recommends that anyone draining a swamp in December should exercise extreme caution.

"A joyful heart is the health of the body..."
Proverbs 17:22



His wife was a little loaded on brandied eggnog, and she said, "My Christmas gift to you is that tonight you can do with me whatever you want."

The husband thought it over and then sent her home to her mother.

—Milton Berle

My brother-in-law was disappointed last Christmas. I asked him if he wanted a large check or a small check. He didn't know I meant ties.

When you toss out the Christmas tree, be careful you don't throw out the Christmas spirit with it.



Last year I told Santa what I want, and he said, "Me too."

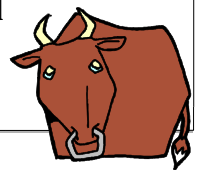


No Bull

This farmer has a prized bull he adores, but his pasture runs through some railroad land, and at the same hour daily, a train whizzes by. One wintry day the bull is missing so the farmer sues the railroad. Before the case goes to the judge, the farmer agrees to settle for half.

The railroad lawyer says, "You had us worried. You could have held out for it all."

The farmer says, "You had me worried, too. The bull came home this morning."



There are three periods in a person's life:


1. When you believe in Santa Claus
2. When you don't believe in Santa Claus.
3. When you are Santa Claus



I went to lunch with a friend to a new restaurant that advertised "We grow our own—Fresh Range Chicken" and asked how they prepared their chickens. The waiter replied, "We just tell them they are going to die."

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A man went to a Gypsy for a reading but he noticed that her crystal ball had two holes in it. The man asked, "Why the two holes?"
The Gypsy answered, "When business is bad, I give bowling lessons."

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"...My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught... fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me."—Ps 55:2,5

What does the fear feel like? Frightened, scared, terrified, tormented, apprehensive, alarmed, worried, uneasy, disquieted, tense, troubled, distraught, nervous, panicky, edgy, anxious, suspicious, overwhelmed, timid, indecisive, unsure, in turmoil, anxious, impending doom. What else?

Invite the Holy Spirit into the fear: Father God, in humble trust I ask You to send Your Spirit of love into these fears and my childhood anxieties. What do You want me to understand? What do You want to heal? Help me acknowledge the fear and respond in a way that pleases You. I give You permission to heal me. In Jesus' Name I pray.

Amen.

Scripture reflection: Peter started walking on the water to Jesus, but "when he saw the wind, he was afraid..." (Mt 14:30). When he took his eyes off Jesus he was tormented. Jesus spoke to the storm, "Quiet! Be still" (Mk 4:39) and it obeyed. When Jesus is with us, the storm is calmed. There is always a storm when we entertain fear, but we can choose what we entertain in our minds.

Linda's story: Once when I was flying to the Philippines to speak at a conference, I was overcome with fear of failure. My mind was like a runaway horse. I said to myself, "Linda, you're old. You're fat. You're ugly. They will find out how much you don't know and you will go home in disgrace." God penetrated my fear, saying, "Rise up into who you are and fill the assignment I have given you!" Bolting upright, I exclaimed, "Yes, Lord!" The moment I obeyed, the grace was released. Jesus says, "If you love Me, you will obey what I command" (Jn 14:15). I love Him, and I obeyed. The enemy controls us when we surrender to fear. As we offer the fear to God, choosing to obey Him no matter what, we are liberated from the enemy. "I sought the Lord and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears" (Ps 34:4).

Bring your feelings to God: Father God, I'm so afraid. I repent of this fear and refuse to surrender to it. [Identify specific fear.] Calm the storm in me, God, and teach me how to control my thoughts. Thank You for guiding me past my feelings into Your truth. [Keep talking.] In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen. "...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Co 10:5).

Listen to what God might say: "Beloved, trust and obey Me. I forgive you, and I will show you what to do. I am interested in everything about you. How does that make you feel? Come, let Me calm the storm and take you beyond the fear into the truth of My love." [Keep listening.] "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15).



Pray for others: Lord God, thank You for helping others to trust in You when they are afraid. Their fear may come from abuse, molestation, crime, guilt, losing control, intimidation, feeling inferior, or fear of failure. Maybe they are alone and dying or having a panic attack. Maybe they, like many of us, have a fear of suffering. Please calm their storm. Forgive everyone involved and help others as You are helping me. [Keep praying.] Thank You for Your goodness. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.

Linda's prayer for your needs: Powerful God, You are the Love that drives away the fear. In the Name of Jesus I come against any evil influence that would hold them captive to fear, and I break its power. Thank You, God, for driving away the enemy and helping Your people to trust in You. If there is a family pattern of fear, let it stop now. Touch deeper levels of fear, God. If unhealthy vows were made in fear, please bring them to

light to be reversed. If they have self-defeating thought processes, help them change. Come, Holy Spirit, expose the lies and reveal Your truth. Thank You, God, for settling them in Your love. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God... will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Php 4:6-7).

Begin to praise: Let God's love flow over you now. Stand if you can, raise your hands, turn your eyes on Jesus and welcome the Holy Spirit. Let your soul be wide open and accessible to God. Let the place of fear now be a place of safety in God. Sing out loud to Jesus, and welcome His presence.

Something to think about: Once in a time of mental confusion Mom prayed, "Lord, think through me today." Her thoughts were gently brought into order. We need to be aware of the content of our minds. Our thoughts create emotions and affect our behavior. As we ask God for help (to think through us), we can gain control of our thoughts and emotions. Without His help, the enemy will work in our minds to create a stronghold of wrong attitudes, desires and thoughts. On our own, we can become isolated, arrogant and stiff-necked. We can harden our hearts (see Heb. 3:7). Every time we choose Jesus our minds clear and the enemy loses power.

Condensed from *True Confessions* © 2001 by Linda Schubert. Copies of *True Confessions* may be purchased for \$3 at Miracles of the Heart Ministries (408) 734-8664

Catholic Radio Hour
KEST 1450AM
7:00 pm

Calendar of Events

Clip & tape to your refrigerator door.



Dec 1 FAMILY CHARISMATIC MASS
7:30 pm, Epiphany Church-O'Keefe Hall,
845 Vienna St, SF
Contact :Emmie Yabut 650/756-4315

Dec 6 HEALING MASS—Every Thursday in December, 8:00 pm
Immaculate Conception Chapel, 3255 Folsom St., SF
Rev. William Lavriola, Principal Celebrant
Contact: Jeannie Macchello 415/824-1762

Dec 7 FIRST FRIDAY MASS—of the Sacred Heart
—a Healing Mass, 7:45 pm Rosary, 8:00 pm Mass
St. Cecilia Church, 17th Ave. at Vicente St., SF
Fr. Joe Landi, Principal Celebrant
For information, phone 415/564-PRAY

Dec 16 HEALING MASS— With the Sacrament of
Anointing of the Sick, Sunday, 12:15 pm
St. Cecilia Church, 17th Ave. at Vicente, St., SF
Fr. Joe Landi, Principal Celebrant, with Msgr. Mike Harriman,
Msgr. John Foudy, Fr. Vito Perrone, & Fr. Heribert Duquet.
Music by the Gospel Jubilation Singers

Dec 16 SUNDAY CHARISMATIC MASS— 2:00 pm
St. Patrick's Church, 756 Mission, SF
Contact: Judy Labaria 415/826-7827

Dec 20 HEALING SERVICE—Thursday, 7:30 pm
Holy Angels Church Hall, 107 San Pedro Rd., Colma
Contact: Dulce 650/992-0717

Dec 24 CHRISTMAS MASS AT MIDNIGHT with choir &
orchestra under the direction of Russell Ferreira—
(Carols & Music at 11:30 pm)
Msgr. Mike Harriman, Principal Celebrant
with concelebrating priests.
St Cecila Church, 17th Ave. at Vicente St., SF
Broadcast live at www.stCecilia.com

Dec 25 CHRISTMAS DAY MASS 11:00 am with choir &
orchestra under the direction of Russ Ferreira
Fr. Joe Landi, Principal Celebrant
St Cecila Church, 17th Avenue at Vicente, SF
Broadcast live at www.sfSpirit.com

Jan 4 FIRST FRIDAY MASS—of the Sacred Heart
—a Healing Mass
7:15 pm Rosary, 7:30 pm Mass
St. Paul of the Shipwreck Church
Jamestown Ave., at 3rd St., SF
(Use 3rd St. East Off Highway 101)
Fr. Peter Sanders, Orat., Principal Celebrant
For information, phone 415/564-PRAY

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- Across**
1. His name is hidden.
 2. One name only, but usually depicted as two in the game of hide-and-seek.
 3. Title.
 4. Father of David (John 3:26).
 5. "As I have sown seed, so will I sow corn in the field." (1 Sam 1:4)
 6. Old Testament event.
 7. Part of a copulation.
 8. "Go up at the window and preach the good news to all." (Matt 10:13)
 9. "Son of Shichem" (Gen 26:34).
 10. "The Lord directs the steps of the just; He does not allow them to slip." (Prov 10:6)
 11. City name.
 12. "The only person who has ever been born to a woman is first." (Matt 7:8)
 13. "Step on Paul's heels and crush him." (1 Cor 15:20)
 14. "King of Sardinia."
 15. "I have not sinned against you, but you have lied against me." (Matt 4:27)
 16. Computer network address.
 17. Name.
 18. Temple.
 19. "I am the God of my Father and of my Father's God." (John 8:19)
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We shall never understand the real meaning of Christian prayer until we have learned to love and to pray for our enemies. St. Augustine asked, "What is love's perfection? To love our enemies and to love them to the end that they may be our brothers. Love your enemies, desiring them for brothers; love your enemies, calling them into fellowship with you." Let our enemies also be drawn to God. "Draw, draw your enemy. By drawing him he will not be an enemy. "It was of the perfection of love for enemies that the Lord said: In a word, you must be made perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). He, therefore, who says that he abides in him ought himself to walk as he walked. What does it mean to walk as Christ walked? Does it mean walking on the sea? No! It means walking the way of righteousness. Nailed fast to the cross, he was walking in the way—the way of charity. Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34). So then, when you have learned to pray for your enemy, you will walk the way of the Lord," says Augustine.

Following the example of Jesus, we too must pray for our enemies and not against them.

Evil must never be an object of our prayers. "Let men not pray that their enemies may die, but that they may be reclaimed; then will their enmity expire and they will be enemies no longer. " This is what the psalmist meant when he said, With a deadly hatred I hate them (Psalm 139:22). That is, "I have hated their iniquities but I have loved the work of your hands, O God. This is what it means to hate with a perfect hatred: that you neither hate the man on account of the vices, nor love the vices on account of the man."

We must never attempt to turn God into an executioner, or to make him a minister of misfortune to our enemies. That would mean casting reflection on him. "For when you call on God to destroy your enemy, or when you would take pleasure in another's misfortune and call on God to bring it about, you are trying to make him a partaker of your own malice. And, if you make him a partaker of your own malice, you call on him, not to praise him, but to cast reflection on him, for you think that God is like yourself. So is it said to you in another place: When you do these things, shall I be deaf to it? Or do you think that I am like yourself?

(Psalm 50:21). Call on God, therefore, to praise him. Do not think that he is like unto you, so that you yourself may become like unto him." Let God please you as he is; not as you would like him to be.

"The Lord Jesus Christ himself loved his enemies, for as he hung upon the cross he said, Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34). Stephen followed his example when stones were being cast at him and said: Lord, do not hold this sin against them (Acts 7:60). The servant imitated the Lord so that no other servant might be slow to follow suit and think that this was something that could be done by the Lord alone.

If, then, it be too much to imitate the Lord, let us imitate our fellow-servant, Stephen. "He offended those whom he was rebuking and was stoned by them. And as he was being overwhelmed by his furious persecutors and bruised to death by the stones, he first said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit (Acts 7:59). Then, having prayed for himself standing, he knelt down for those who were stoning him and said, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. Let me die in my body, but do not let these men die in their souls. His last prayer was for his enemies.

We too must reach forward to this perfection of love, hoping and praying that our enemy, whoever he may be, may enjoy everlasting life together with us. So let progress be made; so let charity be cherished, that having been cherished it may become perfect; in this way the likeness of God in which you are created will be engraved anew upon your soul.

Condensed from *Augustine on Prayer*, by Thomas A. Hand, O.S.A. (c)1986 by Catholic Book Publishing Co., N.Y.

All quotes not otherwise indicated are from St. Augustine.

God Bless America—Our Prayer at Christmas



Almighty and Ever-Loving God, in you we place our trust and hope. Violence and cruelty can have no part with you. You guide everything with wisdom and love. Hear the prayers we offer for those who lost their lives in the attack on America.

May your love and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ bless and console us and gently wipe the tears from our eyes and remove the fear from our hearts.

Look also with favor on the families and friends who mourn the victims and comfort them in their loss. Console them in the hope that all who trust in you will find peace and rest in Your Eternal Kingdom. Bless them with Your presence and surround us all with Your love.

Guide those in authority, O Lord. By the wisdom of our leaders and integrity of our citizens may harmony be restored and justice be served. Allow our leaders to strive in this time of despair for what is right and just. Calm this terror that threatens us. Grant that the peace that Jesus brought by his birth may reign in America and throughout the world. **Amen**

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Dear Families by Pope John Paul II

The riches of faith and love of the husband and wife Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi, are a living proof of what the Second Vatican Council said about *the call of all the faithful to holiness*, indicating that spouses should pursue this goal, "*propriam viam sequentes*", "following their own

Way" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 41). In their life, as in the lives of many other married couples who day after day earnestly fulfill their mission as parents, one can contemplate the sacramental revelation of Christ's love for the Church. The first couple to ever be beatified, Luigi and Maria lived in Rome in the first half of the 20th century, a century in which faith in Christ was harshly tried, and gave a positive reply.

Indeed, "fulfilling their conjugal and family role by virtue of this sacrament, spouses are penetrated with the spirit of Christ and their whole life is permeated by faith, hope, and charity; thus they increasingly further their own perfection and their mutual sanctification, and together they render glory to God" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 48).

Today we have distinctive confirmation that the path of holiness lived together as a couple is possible, beautiful, extraordinarily fruitful, and fundamental for the good of the family, the Church and society.

This prompts us to pray to the Lord that there be many more married couples who can reveal in the holiness of their lives, the "great mystery" of spousal love, which originates in creation and is fulfilled in the union of Christ with his Church (cf. Eph 5,22-33).

Like every path of holiness, yours too, dear married couples, is not easy. Every day you face *difficulties and trials*, in order to be faithful to your vocation, to foster harmony between yourselves and between your children, to carry out your mission as parents and participate in social life.

May you be able to find in God's word the answer to the questions that arise in everyday life. St Paul, in the Second Reading, reminded us that "all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness" (II Tm 3,16). Sustained by the force of these words and acting together, you will be able to insist with your children "in season and out of season", convincing, rebuking, and exhorting them, "unfailing in patience and in teaching" (II Tm 4,2).



Married and family life can also experience *moments of bewilderment*. We know how many families in these cases are tempted to discouragement. I am particularly referring to those who are going through the sad event of separation; I am thinking of those who must face illness and those who are suffering the premature death of their spouse or of a child. In these situations, one can bear a great witness to fidelity in love, which is purified by having to pass through the crucible of suffering.

I entrust struggling families to the providence of God and to the loving care of Mary, the outstanding model of wife and mother who knew the suffering and the exhaustion of following Christ to the foot of the Cross. Dear married couples, do not be overcome by hardship: the grace of the Sacrament supports you and helps you *constantly to raise your arms to heaven*.

The Church is close to you and helps you with her prayer, above all, in hard times.

At the same time, I ask all families to *hold up the arms of the*

Church, so that she may never fail in her mission of interceding, consoling, guiding and encouraging.

Dear friends, the Church has confidence in you to confront the challenges that await her in the new millennium. Among the paths of her mission, "the family is the first and the most important" (*Letter to Families*, n. 2); the Church is counting on it and calling it to be "a true subject of evangelization and the apostolate" (*ibid.*, n. 16).

May the Holy Spirit, who filled Mary's heart so that, in the fullness of time, she might conceive the Word of life and welcome him, together with her husband Joseph, support you and confirm you. May he fill your hearts with joy and peace so that every day you may know how to praise the heavenly Father, from whom come every grace and blessing.

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¿Qué es un sacerdote? ¿Cuál es la identidad del sacerdote? Estas son preguntas que han generado mucho debate y reflexión. Como cristianos creemos que en última instancia las respuestas a estas preguntas se encuentran en la Palabra de Dios, en las Escrituras. El autor de la carta a los Hebreos nos da un buen punto de partida cuando presenta la figura del Sumo Sacerdote que culmina en Jesucristo: "Porque todo Sumo Sacerdote es tomado de entre los hombres y está puesto en favor de los hombres en lo que se refiere a Dios para ofrecer dones y sacrificios por los pecados". (Hb 5, 1). Un examen minucioso de estas palabras nos ayudan a comprender el carisma del sacerdocio y su estrecha relación con la

Renovación Carismática.

En primer lugar, vemos que el sacerdocio depende de una llamada de Dios. El sacerdocio es una vocación específica en la vida de la Iglesia. Nadie puede llamarse a sí mismo a ser sacerdote. Un sacerdote no puede inventar su propio camino, porque su identidad y su misión es el resultado de una llamada particular de Dios. "Y nadie se arroga tal dignidad, sino el llamado por Dios..." (Hb 5, 4). Al ser una llamada, sólo Jesucristo puede decir algo definitivo sobre la identidad y el ministerio sacerdotal. Si todos los cristianos están llamados a la santidad, cuanto más esto se refiere al sacerdote. Ser santo significa reservarse para Dios, estar totalmente inmerso en los valores e ideales de Jesucristo. Ninguna persona humana puede conseguir esto a menos que él o ella esté completamente vivo por el poder del Espíritu Santo. Sólo cuando el sacerdote está inflamado con un corazón ardiente incitado por el Espíritu Santo puede comprender totalmente su identidad.

Es aquí donde la gracia de la Renovación Carismática es importante para la vida del sacerdote. La oración al Espíritu Santo por la liberación ha demostrado ser un medio poderoso para cambiar las vidas y el ministerio de incontables sacerdotes al hacerse totalmente conscientes de la presencia viva, sanadora del Espíritu Santo dentro de ellos. Como resultado de orar al Espíritu Santo por la liberación, muchos sacerdotes han experimentado gozo, felicidad y satisfacción en su ministerio, y sobre todo han llegado a la comprensión de su identidad como sacerdotes de Dios.

En segundo lugar, Dios le ha "puesto en favor de los hombres en lo que

se refiere a Dios para ofrecer dones y sacrificios por los pecados" (Hb 5, 1). El sacerdote ha sido puesto al servicio de otros ejerciendo un ministerio en las cosas que tienen que ver con Dios. Este servicio alcanza su plenitud en la predicación de la Palabra y en el ministerio sacramental. "El pueblo de Dios se hace uno en primer lugar por su Palabra del Dios Vivo que busca adecuadamente de la boca del sacerdote". (Presbyterorum Ordinis N. 41).

La predicación de la Palabra es vital para la vocación del sacerdote. La Palabra de Dios transforma los corazones de la gente. Como sacerdotes estamos llamados a estar en la primera línea con una proclamación valiente de que Jesucristo es el único Salvador del mundo. La Palabra de Dios predicada con convicción transforma los corazones de la gente y les mueve a decidir y tomar la decisión de tener una relación más profunda con Dios. La predicación que transforma vidas no es meramente un asunto de habilidad, sino que es el resultado del poder transformador, vivo, del Espíritu Santo que está presente en cada uno de nosotros. Pablo es muy consciente de esto: "*Y mi palabra y mi predicación no tuvieron nada de los persuasivos discursos de la sabiduría, sino que fueron una demostración del Espíritu y del poder*" (1Co 2, 4). **Sólo en el poder del Espíritu Santo, y sólo a través de una experiencia personal de la realidad del Espíritu que habita en nuestros corazones, podemos los sacerdotes ser anunciadores poderosos de la Palabra de Dios.** Uno puede entonces comprender fácilmente cómo la oración al Espíritu Santo por la liberación es de especial necesidad en este ministerio. Finalmente, además de predicar la Palabra, los sacer-

dotes se ven también específicamente llamados a ser ministros de los sacramentos y de la Eucaristía. (Presbyterorum Ordinis, No. 5). Los sacramentos son el medio por el cual Jesucristo continúa Su ministerio vivificante durante las diferentes etapas de nuestras vidas. Jesús no sólo proclamó con palabras, el Reino de Dios. Su predicación se acompañó por signos y maravillas, por sanaciones y milagros. Resulta que a través de los sacramentos también experimentamos el toque sanador y la presencia de Jesucristo. La Renovación Carismática, especialmente a través de la oración al Espíritu Santo por la liberación, ayuda al sacerdote a celebrar los sacramentos con fe expectante; siendo completamente consciente que es el Jesús Resucitado el que está ministrando en ese momento en particular. Como resultado, se puede ayudar a la gente a abrirse completamente a la gracia de cada sacramento.

La Exhortación Apostólica del Papa Pablo VI finaliza con esta gran declaración dirigida a todos los creyentes. "Y ojalá que el mundo actual – que busca a veces con angustia, a veces con esperanza- pueda así recibir la Buena Nueva, no a través de evangelizadores tristes y desalentados, impacientes o ansiosos, sino a través de ministros del Evangelio, cuya vida irradiaba el fervor de quienes han recibido, ante todo en sí mismos, la alegría de Cristo, y aceptan consagrar su vida a la tarea de anunciar el reino de Dios y de implantar la Iglesia en el mundo". Las palabras tienen un especial significado para todos los sacerdotes. La gracia de la Renovación Carismática es un medio de lo más poderoso para conseguir lo que Pablo VI y la Iglesia han expresado con tanta esperanza y anhelo.

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Feliz Navidad



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In your faith, you will find all answers. So, “Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Luke 11:9 Good or bad, there are reasons for everything. Trials, disappointments, hurt, and pain are only reminders that our world is not perfect. There is a better place than earth—this is just a preparation it.

I have learned so much about faith from my mother. Sometimes it wasn't even words, but her example alone. Even in her death, I still learn, by remembering what she would have done or said. I hope that being able to share a little of her life has touched you. If I have, her mission of evangelization continues. I see her importance of believing in Christ our Savior. My faith is so alive because of this realization. The bible comes to life not as a fictional book, but as our history continuing on today. In the bible, I can apply all aspects of my life and find God's response on how I should deal with problems.

No matter how bad life may seem, I feel God's presence. As a learning experience, God lets us make mistakes, but like a good parent, He picks us up. Nothing is dark in Christ's path. It's well lit and easy, for He doesn't make it hard to follow Him. At times, detours and roadblocks may misguide us, but every time we

stumble, God will lead us back.

So in our lives, when we don't know where to turn to, surrender everything to God, and say “Father, I offer everything up to You, my life is in Your hands and will”. Then you will feel the comfort of the Lord's embrace. He will give you the strength to cope and the answers to your prayers. He is just waiting for you to ask and call upon Him for help.

“He gives strength to the fainting; for the weak he makes vigor abound. Though young men faint and grow weary, and youths stagger and fall, they that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles wings...” Isaiah 40:29-31 Faith is not learned by words, nor do we gain strength by holding it in. Practicing and believing in our faith is where we become strong. Realizing that with God we can accomplish many things that don't seem possible. My realization has helped me with every crisis by believing my mother's motto, “Don't worry, God will provide!”

Brothers and Sisters, walk in His path and you'll find your way, and the difficult road will no longer seem hard to follow. God will provide.

Dedicated to my mother, Erlinda G. Parangan. By her love and example, inspired me as a model of how to live a good Christian life.

—Melinda Gavino Parangan-Chu

God Is In Control (From Page 5)

love which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

What do we do now? Pray! Change our lives so that prayer is a priority in our days. Pray the Rosary to end terrorism as the Pope has asked us to do. Pray for the political leaders and the military leaders as they make their decision and take action to deal with terrorism in our world.

Pray that God has mercy on us. Pray with our friends and families, to help build stronger bonds between all of us and strengthen our relationship with God. Pray that all those in a position of control in this country give their free will back to God, so that His will can be done, and not that of human reaction. Always remember—God is in control!

Questions about life or faith? E-mail us at publications@flpi.com.

Life Questions (From Page 5)

pray daily, and select a time each week when you can gather to talk about the latest events in the news regarding the tragedy and pray for the positive outcome of everything.

Prayer is our weapon against evil. Never underestimate the power of prayer.

God Bless,
Jenny



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