

Rhode Island Christian Bulletin

December 2013, Vol 2, No 2

FREE

Published by Firm Foundation Christian Church, Woonsocket, RI

JESUS CHRIST THE REASON FOR THE SEASON



"Native", By Susan Kirwan-Keen

"God sent forth His Son" (Galatians 4:4b)

Immanuel: God came Down in the Flesh over Two Thousand Years ago for You

By Gerard Lachance

This is the season when we celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus. The prophet Isaiah prophesied of His birth several centuries before it happened (Isaiah 7:14). "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, 'God with us' (Matthew 1:23).

What should our response be? David writes, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart. I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly; Indeed, I do not restrain my

lips. O LORD, You Yourself know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great assembly" (Psalm 40:8-10). David also writes of the blessed state of the righteous in Psalm 112. David delights in doing God's will, which is speaking God's Word, and telling people of God's greatness, truth, and loving salvation. Jesus says that the Scriptures "are they which testify of" Himself (John 5:39). The

words of David, "In the scroll of the book it is written of Me", are applied to Christ Jesus (Psalm 40:7; Hebrews 10:7). The sacrifices of the law are ineffectual in taking away sins. "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year" (Hebrews 10:3). Under the law, every year there is a Day of Atonement, but "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4).

(continued on page 8)

***Donate to help children affected by the typhoon in the Philippines through Compassion International: visit <http://www.compassion.com/philippines-typhoon.htm> or call 1-800-336-7676

Inside this Issue!!!

Page 2: Wisdom for Women

Page 3: Marriage and Family

Page 4: Articles of Interest

Page 5: News and Notes

Page 6: Q&A About Christmas

Page 7: Digging Deeper

Page 8: Wrapping Up

Obamacare to Force Christians to Pay for Abortions

By James Moriello

"For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13). Do you hear the faint sounds of the heartbeats of the unborn children? The sound will grow dimmer if the ungodly continue to have their way in Rhode Island, and across our great country.

According to lifenews.com and other sources, the RICB staff has learned that all 28 plans under the state run Obamacare program in Rhode Island force plan participants to pay for free abortion coverage for others. In order to circumvent existing laws that prohibit the government from providing free abortion coverage to all citizens under sponsored health plans, President Obama, Governor Chafee, and others have tacitly endorsed a mandate that the enrollees pay the premium. This is to provide a defense in court that since the plan participants are paying for it, the government is not in violation of statute. It should be noted that not one of these plans under the Rhode Island state exchange allows people to opt out of the "free abortion fee". There is no room for conscientious or religious

objection, and this from those who claim to stand for religious liberty. Apparently the big business of Planned Parenthood is more important than the business of mankind. I would bet that Jacob Marley would disagree. What can we the people do? We can pray for those in authority, that they will repent of the state sponsored murder of unborn children that they so loudly endorse. We can avoid the exchanges in peaceful protest. We can spread the news and the truth regarding this. We can lobby our legislators, and vote them out of office if they turn a deaf ear not only to us, but to those unborn babies who are crying out from the womb for the right to live and for justice.

"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

New TV Bible Study Begins

Study the Bible in the comfort of your home!

By RICB Staff

On October 15th, the Firm Foundation in Christ TV Bible Study began. The first program explained how we can have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The next week, we began our study in Genesis. The show airs in the Northern

Rhode Island area on Cox channel 18 and Verizon channel 23 every Tuesday and Saturday from 10:00-10:30 am. If you are out of area, email your address to firmfoundationri@verizon.net, and we would be happy to send you a free DVD

copy of the study. Each week begins a new show. We will go through the entire Bible if the Lord allows on a weekly basis over a period of years. We are taking our time, so that you can understand the Bible and gain life application.



Credit: RICB Staff

"For the word of God is living and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12a)



Artwork by Cindy Camelli

"It is good to give thanks to the LORD" (Psalm 92:1a)

Scriptures to Live by this Thanksgiving and Christmas Season

Submitted by RICB Staff, the Ladies

Genesis 50:20: "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive"

Psalm 100:4: "Enter into His gates with Thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him and bless His name"

Luke 2:14: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men"

2 Corinthians 9:7: "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver"

Colossians 3:13: "bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do"

Hebrews 12:2: "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"

Rhode Island Christian Bulletin

Contact and Publication Information

James Moriello, Editor
Publishing and Distribution:
Firm Foundation Christian
Church of Woonsocket
Phone: 401-765-0107
Email:
firmfoundationri@verizon.net
Website:
www.firmfoundationri.com

Visit us at 84 Cumberland
Street, Woonsocket RI 02895,
Sundays at 10 am and Fridays
at 7 pm.

All Scripture quotations are
taken from the New King James
version of the Holy Bible,
Copyright Thomas Nelson,
1982, unless otherwise noted.

It's Christmas Once Again

By Susan Moriello

The Christmas season is upon us once again. Let us remember the reason for the season: the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Beginning with His miraculous conception and birth, Jesus was sent by His Father to walk among us for approximately thirty-three years. He taught, prayed, loved, wept, and underwent many trials. He truly was a "Man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3). He suffered a cruel death on the cross for our sins, but we Christians celebrate His glorious resurrection most of all. He had made us a home in heaven. Wow! Can you imagine?!

So at this season, let us remove ourselves from all our wants and instead remember all the blessings we have received from Him at no cost to ourselves. Furthermore, let us remove all obstacles standing in our way of the joy and peace we should have. Let go of old resentments, and reconcile our hearts to forgive and give grace to that person who has hurt us! In so doing, we become free at last!

For those of us who have an abundance of money, let's share our good fortune with others. We can choose to adopt a family at Christmas, give to a homeless shelter, bring groceries to a food pantry, or help a family member who is struggling financially through no fault of their own.

If you are not able to do these things, you can give the gift of time. Spend time with a lonely family member, help a neighbor in need, visit an ill person, spend time in a nursing home or a private home with a 'shut-in', or volunteer to care for the children of a single mom. Come up with some ideas and a plan to put them into an action and follow it!

I hope that you have a joyful, peaceful, and blessed Christmas! Give thanks for all you have received from God!

Until next time, Happy Thanksgiving, and have a most blessed Christmas, and wonderful and peaceful 2014!

God is Always in Control

By Gerry Bettencourt

God's sovereignty is clearly seen in three instances; Squanto, Joseph, and Jesus. The story of Squanto shows us how important "little places" are to God. Squanto was taken from his home and sold as a slave. Many years before, Joseph had the same experience as a result of his brothers' jealousy of him in the 'coat of many colors' chapter in the Bible (Genesis 37). But God had a plan. Through both Joseph and Squanto, God was able to save many people from starving. What man intended for evil, God intended for good (Genesis 50:20). Through the hard times of Squanto, as through the hard times of Joseph, God had a plan. God's plan for Jesus is stated in Hebrews 12:2: "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross". He made a way to know God and be with Him eternally.

The 'little places' where Joseph, Squanto, and Jesus came through were the places God really used them, as part of His plan. Who but the glorious God of heaven could so miraculously weave together the wandering lives that they would bless the whole world? When we say, "God, where are you?", He answers, "In the little places". With a thankful heart to God, we praise Him!

Little Places:

Master, where shall I work today?

My love flowed warm and free.
He pointed out a tiny plot
And said: "Tend that for me."

I answered quickly, "Oh no, not there;

Not anyone could see.

No matter how well my task was done--

Not that little place for me."

His voice when He spoke it was not stern,

He answered me tenderly,

"Little one, search that heart of thine.

Are you working for them or for Me?

Nazareth was just a little place
And so was Galilee."

Fireproofing your Marriage and your Family

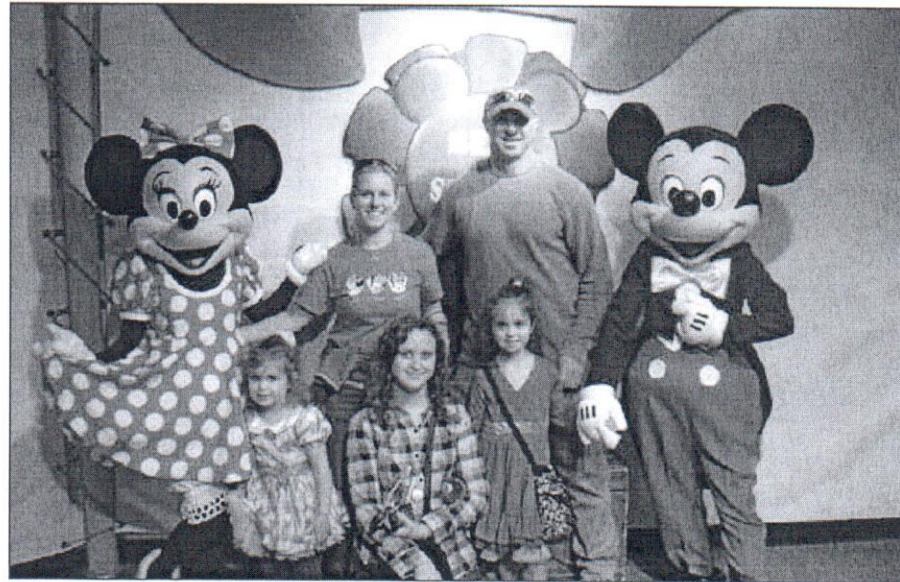
By Tanya Hay

I recently borrowed a few movies from a Christian friend at church. He highly recommended that I watch these movies as family movies. So I, along with my husband and two daughters, watched. I found one of the movies to be particularly captivating. The name of the movie is FIREPROOF; it was released in 2008. It's a story about a woman who is married to a firefighter. The husband lives by the motto



Invite Christ into your home!

"never leave your partner behind" at work with his fireman brotherhood, but his marriage is falling apart and his wife wants a divorce. Without revealing the whole story and all of its details, I'll cut to the part where the husband's father in the movie challenges him. He urges him to try a 40 day "Love Dare". I found out after some internet research that "The Love Dare" is a real program. It's a Christian-based devotional program formulated to strengthen marriages. The Love Dare is a book written by Stephen and Alex Kendrick, with Lawrence Kimbrough. The marriage strengtheners are all based on Love. Love is patient, love is kind... just as we are directed in the Bible in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13. Whether you have a solid or rocky marriage, I think anyone can learn from this 40-day program. I encourage you to give it a try! If you are not married but have children, they have also published a book called The Love Dare for Parents that may be helpful in strengthening your relationship with your child/children of any age! A Prayer (taken from The Love Dare for Parents by Stephen & Alex Kendrick with Lawrence Kendrick)



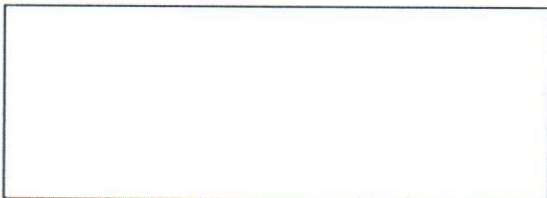
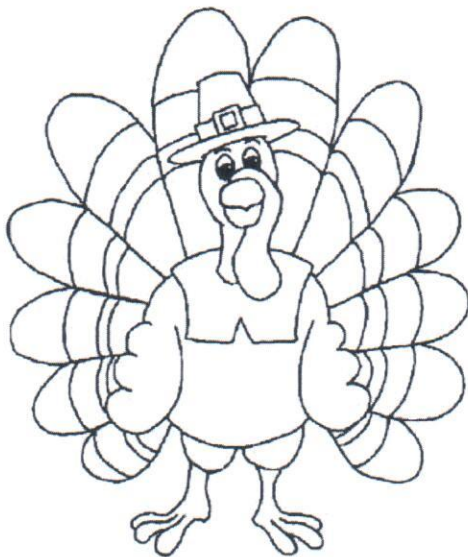
"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psalm 127:3)

Lord, open my eyes that I may see truth and my ears to hear truth.
Open my heart to receive it by faith.
Renew my mind to keep it in hope.
Surrender my will that I may live it with love.
Remind me that I am responsible when I hear it.
Help me desire to obey what You say through it.
Transform my life that I may know it.

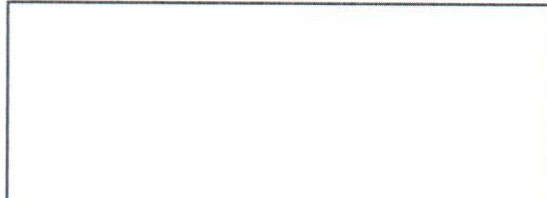
Burden my heart that I may share it.
Speak now, Lord.
Give me a passion to know and follow Your will.
Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing else.

***Attention children 10 and under: Complete the coloring pages below and bring them to the church in person by Sunday, December 15th to win a prize!

Coloring Contest



Coloring Contest





Credit: RJC Staff

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1)

Moments: Times of Excellence or Importance

By Craig Greenslade

We have all been filled with a lifetime of moments. One of the definitions of the word moment is "a time of excellence or importance". Now that could mean good or bad moments. The birth of my daughter and the first time I ever laid eyes on the woman I was meant to marry were both excellent and important. They were moments I wanted to live in forever, and they were life changing.

As crazy as it sounds, coming to prison was both excellent and important. It took prison to bring me to God. Better yet, it took God to bring me to prison. We know He has a plan for all of us, and maybe, just maybe, He saved my life by doing so. He knew that I had to lose everything to gain it all; now that's a life changing moment. Some moments can be as small as a perfect sunset at the end of a perfect day, or it could be as big as standing in front of our Lord—watching Him smile at us because we've made it. That will be the 'moment of moments', and we will not want that one to ever end. I cry when I think about that. What will I say? What will I do? I think I'll just kneel down and weep! The Bible tells us: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

So the only thing for us to do will be to love and embrace Him as He loved and embraced us. This will be the moment that will be both excellent and important. This will be the moment that we will never want to end. We will live in this moment forever. This is the mark we are pressing towards, this is the prize. "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

We should all live in the moments of the Bible daily.

Job 23:12: "I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

So you are a good Person?

By Paige Noelle Braley

What is good? What's the standard? Isn't everyone right in their own eyes? I'm sure there are pedophiles, murderers, and adulterers who still think they are good people. I'm sure Hitler thought what he did was good. We aren't good, no one is good. The best we can do is filthy rags. God's version of good is absolute perfection. How do you measure up to that standard? Truth is, we can't be good,

none of us, we're all imperfect. Therefore we're all sinners. We need a Savior, we need Jesus Christ, because your "good" isn't even close to being good enough. Put down your pride, repent, and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ while there's time. Your window of opportunity closes a little bit more each day. Life is 100 years if you're lucky, eternity is forever. Choose LIFE!

Stumped for Holiday Shopping?

By Tanya Hay

With Christmas right around the corner I've been thinking about gift giving. I have two girls and every year they get a ton of gifts. I recently read an article that mentioned a gift giving idea based on Jesus. Jesus was given 3 gifts by the Wise Men. Their gifts symbolize Christ's identity and mission: gold for a King, incense (frankincense) for God, and myrrh, used to anoint the dead. The article suggested giving each child on your gift giving list something they want, something they need, something to wear and something to read. I love that idea. If three gifts were sufficient for Jesus, four should be more than sufficient for us and our children. The focus of Christmas should be the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of our Lord and Savior, not how many gifts are under our Christmas tree. Rather than making presents such a priority, keep Jesus at the center of Christmas this year. After all, Jesus is the Reason for the Season.

The Wise Men story can be found in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 2.

One Solitary Life:

He was born in an obscure village
The child of a peasant woman
He grew up in another obscure village
Where he worked in a carpenter shop
Until he was thirty

He never wrote a book
He never held an office
He never went to college
He never visited a big city
He never travelled more than two hundred miles

From the place where he was born
He did none of the things
Usually associated with greatness
He had no credentials but himself

He was only thirty three

His friends ran away
One of them denied him
He was turned over to his enemies
And went through the mockery of a trial
He was nailed to a cross between two thieves

While dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing
The only property he had on earth

When he was dead
He was laid in a borrowed grave
Through the pity of a friend

Nineteen centuries have come and gone
And today Jesus is the central figure of the human race

And the leader of mankind's progress
All the armies that have ever marched
All the navies that have ever sailed
All the parliaments that have ever sat
All the kings that ever reigned put to

gether
Have not affected the life of mankind on earth

As powerfully as that one solitary life

Dr James Allan © 1926.

Living Waters/ The Way of the Master

Blog By Ray Comfort 10/24/13
Submitted By Brian Violette

Before you became a Christian, you floated downstream with the other dead fish. But now, God has put His life within you, and you will find yourself swimming against a threefold current: the world, the devil, and the flesh. Let's look at these three resistant enemies.

Our first enemy is the world, which refers to the sinful, rebellious, world system. The world loves the darkness and hates the light (John 3:20), and is governed by the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). The Bible says the Christian has escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. "Lust" is unlawful desire, and is the life's blood of the world—whether it be the lust for sexual sin, for power, for money, for material things. Lust is a monster that will never be gratified, so don't feed it. It will grow bigger and bigger until it weighs heavy upon your back, and will be the death of you (James 1:15).

There is nothing wrong with sex, power, money, or material things, but when desire for these becomes predominant, it becomes idolatry. We are told, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"; whoever is "a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (1 John 2:15; James 4:4).

The second enemy is the devil, who is the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). He was your spiritual father before you joined the family of God (John 8:44; Ephesians 2:2). Jesus called

the devil a thief who came to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).

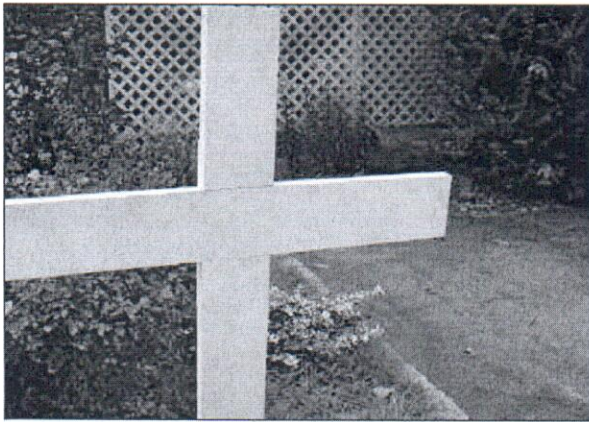
The way to overcome him and his demons is to make sure you are outfitted with the spiritual armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20). Become intimately familiar with it. Sleep in it. Never take it off. Bind the sword to your hand so you never lose its grip. The reason for this brings us to the third enemy.

The third enemy is what the Bible calls the "flesh." This is your sinful nature. The domain for the battle is your mind.

If you have a mind to, you will be attracted to the world and all its sin. The mind is the control panel for the eyes and the ears, the center of your appetites. All sin begins in the "heart" (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 15:19). We think of sin before we commit it. James 1:15 warns that lust brings forth sin, and sin when it's conceived brings forth death. Every day of life, we have a choice. To sin or not to sin—that is the question. The answer is the fear of God. If you don't fear God, you will sin to your sinful heart's delight.

Did you know that God kills people? He killed a man for what he did sexually (Genesis 38:9,10), killed another man for being greedy (Luke 12:15-21), and killed a husband and wife for lying (Acts 5:1-10). Knowledge of God's goodness—His righteous judgments against evil—should put the fear of God in us and help us not to indulge in sin.

If we know that the eye of the Lord is in every place beholding the evil and the good, and that He will bring every work to judgment, we will live accordingly. Such weighty thoughts are valuable, for "by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" (Proverbs 16:6).



Credit: RICB Staff

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16a)

Woonsocket City Day of Prayer: Why I Chose not to Participate

By James Moriello

On October 26th, 2013, the Woonsocket City Day of Prayer took place. At least 17 churches took part. The makeup of these churches range from those who deny the Trinity (Oneness Pentecostals), to those who add tongues to the gospel (Assemblies of God), to those who pray to Mary and the saints (Roman Catholic).

The argument given for Christian ecumenism is based on John 17:20-23. This encourages unity of true Christians, not professors of all stripes of false doctrine. It assumes Trinitarianism and orthodox doctrine in accordance with 2 Timothy 3:16, as many Scriptures teach separation from unbelievers and professed Christians who are apostates.

Biblical separation may be unpleasant and unpopular, but it is loving as it esteems people enough to tell the truth and stand for God's truth. Today the ecumenical movement is towards the 'least common denominator'. The result is groups like Rhode Island Council of Churches, who no longer even affirm the exclusivity of Christ. Bible believing Christians have separated from all of these. The doctrine of Biblical Separation is grounded in the holiness of God (Lev. 19:2). Believers are commanded to avoid unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-17) and also to avoid fellowship with apostate Christian professors (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thes 3:6, 14; 2 John 10-11). We are to keep ourselves pure in conscience and in appearance for testimony's sake before the world (1 Tim 5:22). The Christian is to exercise discernment (Phil 1:9-10), knowing that one is known by the company they keep. "Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Cor 15:33). To illustrate, as if we hang out with the troublemakers in the school yard, we become known as a troublemaker. Applied, if we hang out with the Pentecostal crowd at public events, we become associated with them and their doctrine. From my standpoint, this is an incompatible union. "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). It would be hypocritical to do so and weaken our ability to expose the truth.

Ecumenism of any brand leads to compromise through entangling alliances. A biblical example of compromise is Jehoshaphat and his entangling alliance with the Northern Kingdom, which weakened his spiritual effectiveness (1 Kings 22:41-44, Cf. 2 Chron 19:2).

Part of my pastoral charge is helping the congregation discern truth from error, and teaching them to walk in that truth (Acts 20:28-31). I am also personally responsible to a great degree not to compromise but to contend for the truths of the Christian faith (Jude 3). Firm Foundation is known as a place where these truths are firmly held, and this will not change. The first step to compromise is never the last. What we accept and participate in, we promote. For all of these reasons, I will neither participate in nor endorse participation in this event or similar events such as interfaith services.

Gay Couple Denied Communion in Woonsocket Church

By RICB Staff

As we have predicted in past issues, the 'gay agenda' does not stop with the legalization of 'same sex marriage'--itself an oxymoron, since Genesis 2:24 states that marriage is the union of one man and one woman. The authority of the church to administer communion was challenged by two men, who attempted to receive communion at Sacred Heart Church in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, knowing the position of the church and its priest regarding their

sin. We have a lot of differences with the Roman Catholic doctrine, but we fully agree with their stand on moral issues such as marriage and the natural use of God's gifts relating to that institution (Genesis 2:24; Romans 1:26-27). Kudos to Fr. Brian Sitaric for upholding the holiness of the communion table!

This story was reported throughout the press, on LifeSiteNews.com and other places.

Live out your Christian Faith!

By Brian Violette

Galatians 5:25: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

We serve a great God! We serve an awesome loving God. God provided a way out for mankind's problems. We are all born sinners in need of forgiveness, and because of our sins we are spiritually dead, lost! God's solution to all of our problems is that He provided a Savior, His only begotten Son: Jesus, the one and only sinless perfect person to walk this earth. Two thousand years ago, Jesus was crucified on the cross to pay the penalty for all sins. The only thing people need to do is BELIEVE!! Believe in Jesus, put your trust and faith in Him and His work on the cross, have faith in Jesus our Lord and Savior.

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Ephesians 1:13: "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Through this free relationship God and man unite in the spiritual life. This relationship allows us to walk daily with God, who desires to live through us. Repent!! Turn from your ungodly ways. Christ suffered for us. We need to suffer for Him. Our trust in God does not give us a license to sin. Romans 12:2a: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Christ did not come to improve the flesh. He came to give us a clean slate, a new life. 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." For example, as an unbeliever, you are like a caterpillar crawling around in the dark, but as a believer God transforms you into a butterfly from the inside out. The redeemed sinner is free, no longer in bondage to the law, "that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:2). Ephesians 5:8: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." As humans, we tend to give in to our own desires. We want to crawl back into those dark places, walk our own way, rather than walk in the Spirit and listen to God. It is like at times we're babies whining, kicking in order to get our way. Meanwhile God is telling us, "This is not good for you, I have something better planned for you". But because of the free will God graciously gave us; at times God will get out of our way. And then what happens; we stumble, we fall, and then we crawl back to God. For example: It is like not listening to your parents, then you wonder why you find your self in the predicaments you get yourself in. If only you would have listened to them the first time!

(continued on page 8)

Masonry from a Christian Perspective

By James Moriello

The purpose of this article is to address whether or not Masonry, or Freemasonry, is compatible with Christianity. The goal is to define the movement and bring the light of truth upon it, and not to critique individuals. We will begin by defining Masonry. Then we will examine it in light of what the Bible says. For the Christian, the Bible is the authority in all matters relating to spiritual faith.

Masonry is a fraternal men's organization which can be traced back to the early eighteenth century in Europe. Today, there are Masonic Lodges throughout the world and in every state in the United States. Freemasonry is best described as a religion based upon the fundamental "landmarks" that are taught within it. They are belief in a god, immortality of the soul, and the death and resurrection rite (a.k.a. Hiram legend). What is affirmed is essentially a faith in a universalist god, and a works based salvation. There are two primary requirements for membership. The first is that one must believe in what is called a supreme being, god, or architect of the universe. The second is that the four cardinal virtues of temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice must be held in highest regard. There are also two secondary requirements for membership. The first is honoring the culture of secrecy. The second is that one is not allowed to profess specific religious belief (i.e. Jesus Christ) in the meetings and communications with other members of the lodge. We will take each of the four in turn.

First, Masons believe in a supreme being. However, one can believe in any 'supreme being' of his own choice. This violates the First Commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Christians are admonished not to have fellowship with those who worship other gods. Because of the fact that the Masons perform certain rites under the auspices of an organization that requires a belief in (any) god as a prerequisite for membership, the following biblical injunction applies: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" (1 Corinthians 10:21-22). This, by the way, is the basis for the Roman Catholic Church considering one who is actively practicing Masonry in grave sin and out of communion with the church. The contradiction is clear. Christians affirm Jesus Christ as the only way to heaven, and the Masons affirm the opposite.

(continued on page 8)

Facts about Christmas from the Bible: Common Questions Answered, By RICB Staff

Q1. Was Jesus born in the year zero? A1. No. Jesus was probably born between 7 BC and 5 BC. We have reliable records from history of the events that occurred around that time in history alluded to in the Bible (Luke 1:5, 2:1-7, 3:1). The census decree was given after 8 BC based on the records of Rome and the timing of the reign of Augustus and the governorships of Quirinius and Pilate. Herod the Great left Jerusalem in 5 BC and died in either 4-5 BC. He was the one who decreed the massacre of the children two years and under, and Jesus had already been born at this time (Matthew 2:16).

Q2. Was Jesus born on December 25th? A2. Possibly. We do not know. The shepherds are out in their fields to this day in Israel at this time of year, as they are year round (Luke 2:8). Those who say that the date is impossible do not understand the climate and shepherd culture of Israel.

Q3. Where exactly was Jesus born? A3. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-6). The exact location was probably a stable or converted cave a short distance outside of the town itself.

Q4. Was Mary a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus? A4. Yes. Both the Hebrew and Greek language is clear on this (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:26-35). The virgin birth is one of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, because Jesus would not otherwise have been born without sin nature since the sin nature is transmitted through the male who provides the "seed" (Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:12-21). The gospels make reference to four broth-

ers and at least two sisters of Jesus (Matthew 13:55-56). These were probably children that Joseph and Mary had together after Jesus was born and their marriage finally consummated.

Q5. Who was there at Jesus' birth? A5. The Bible records that Joseph, Mary, shepherds, and angels were present at Christ's birth (Luke 2:6-20). The magi were not present; they came to Jesus later in a house, not in a stable or a cave (Matthew 2:11-12).

Q6. Who were the magi? A6. The magi were wise men in the sense that they came to see the Christ Child after having realized His true identity. They were astrologers and astronomers

by trade from the east, probably Persia, which is modern day Iran (Matthew 2:1-8).

Q7. Should Christians celebrate Christmas? A7. Christians are free to celebrate or to not celebrate any day they wish, so long as the motive is to glorify God (Romans 14:5-6). A good rule of thumb is to celebrate the day according to its redemptive purpose, and not for any worldly reasons.

Q8. Where in the Bible can I read the Christmas story? A8. Matthew chapters 1-2 and Luke Chapters 1-2 record the Christmas story. Mark and John do not give us any details about it.



Artwork: By Al Hay
"And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid" (Luke 2:9)

"God with Us", excerpted from the sermon by Charles H. Spurgeon, delivered 12/26/1875.

I must leave this delightful theme when I have said two or three things about OUR PERSONAL APPROPRIATION of the Truth of God before us. "God with us." Then, if Jesus Christ is "God with us," let us come to God without any question or hesitancy! Whoever you may be, you need no priest or intercessor to introduce you to God, for God has introduced Himself to you! Are you children? Then come to God in the Child Jesus who slept in Bethlehem's manger. Oh, you gray heads, you need not keep back, but like Simeon come and take Him in your arms, and say, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation."

God sends an Ambassador who inspires no fear—not with helmet and coat of mail, bearing lance, does Heaven's Herald approach us—but the white flag is held in the hand of a Child, in the hand of One chosen out of the people—in the hand of One who died, in the hand of One who, though He sits in Glory, still wears the nail-prints. O Man, God comes to you as One like yourself! Do not be afraid to come to the gentle Jesus! Do not imagine that you need to be prepared for an audience with Him, or that you need the intercession of a saint, or the intervention of priest or minister! Anyone could have come to the Babe in Bethlehem. The horned oxen, I think, ate of the hay on which He slept and feared not. Jesus is the Friend of each one of us, sinful and unworthy though we are. You, poor ones, you need not fear to come, for, look, He is born in a stable, and in a manger He is cradled! You have not worse accommodation than His! You are not poorer than He! Come and welcome to the poor man's Prince, to the peasants' Savior! Stay not back through fear of your unfitness—the shepherds came to Him in all their rags. I read not that they tarried to put on their

best garments, but in the clothes in which they wrapped themselves that cold midnight they hastened, just as they were, to the young Child's Presence. God looks not at garments, but at hearts, and accepts men when they come to Him with willing spirits, whether they are rich or poor. Come, then! Come, and welcome, for God is, indeed, "God with us."

But, O, let there be no delay about it. It did seem to me, as I turned this subject over yesterday, that for any man to say, "I will not come to God," after God has come to man in such a form as this, were an unpardonable act of treason! Perhaps you knew not God's love when you sinned as you did. Perhaps, though you persecuted His saints, you did it ignorantly in unbelief. But, behold your God extends the olive branch of peace to you. He extends it in a wondrous way, for He, Himself, comes here to be born of a woman that He may meet with you who were born of women, too, and save you from your sin!

Will you not listen, now that He speaks by His Son? I can understand that you ask to hear no more of His Words when He speaks with the sound of a trumpet, waxing exceedingly loud and long, from amidst the flaming crags of Sinai. I do not wonder that you are afraid to draw near when the earth rocks and reels before His awful Presence! But now He restrains Himself

and veils the splendor of His face, and comes to you as a Child of humble bearing, a carpenter's son. O, if He comes so, will you turn your backs upon Him? Can you spurn Him? What better Ambassador could you desire? This Ambassador of peace is so tenderly, so gently, so kindly, so touchingly put, that surely you cannot have the heart to resist Him?

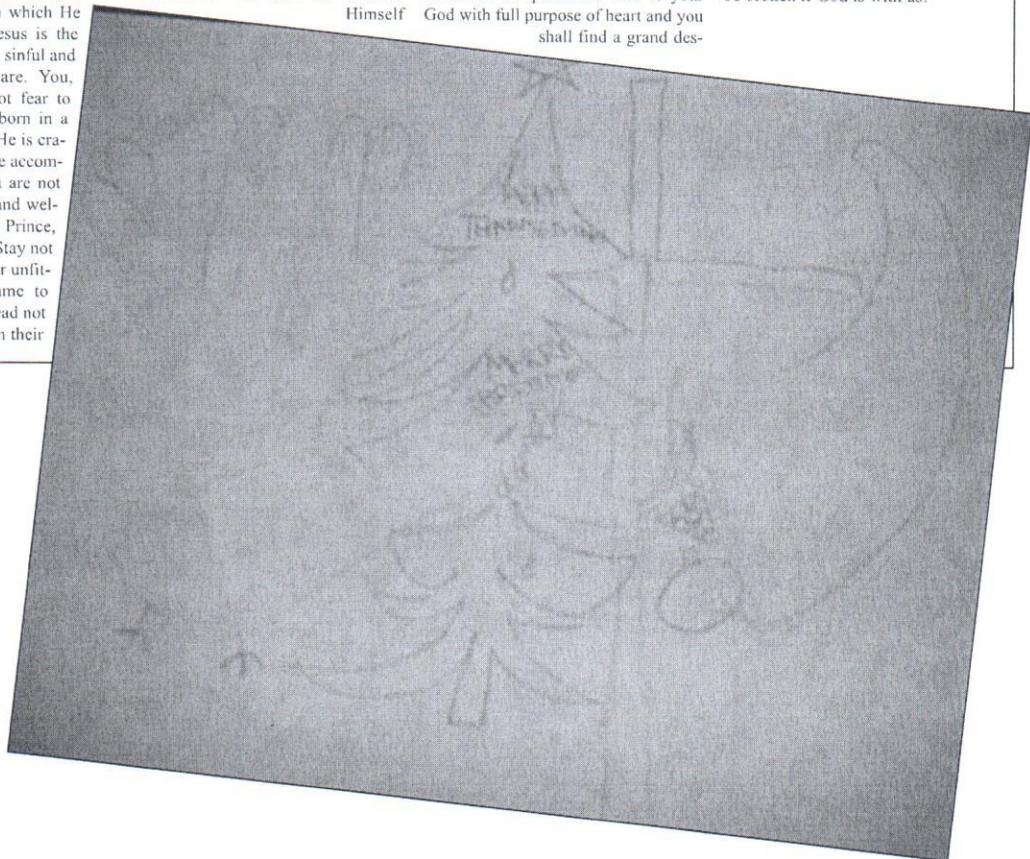
No, do not turn away, let not your ears refuse the language of His Grace, but say, "If God is with us, we will be with Him." Say it, Sinner! Say, "I will arise and go to my Father and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned." And as for you who have given up all hope. You who think yourselves so degraded and fallen that there can be no future for you—there is hope for you yet, for you are a man—and the next being to God is a man! He that is God is also Man, and there is something about that fact which ought to make you say, "Yes, I may yet discover, perhaps, brotherhood to the Son of Man who is the Son of God. I, even I, may yet be lifted up to be set among princes, even the princes of His people, by virtue of my regenerated manhood which brings me into relation with the Manhood of Christ and so into relation with the Godhead." Fling not yourself away, O Man, you are something too hopeful, after all, to be meat for the worm that never dies and fuel for the fire that never can be quenched. Turn to your God with full purpose of heart and you shall find a grand des-

tiny in store for you!

And now, my Brothers and Sisters, the last word to you is, let us be with God since God is with us. I give you for a watchword through the year to come, "Emmanuel, God with us." You, the saints redeemed by blood, have a right to all this in its fullest sense. Drink it in and be filled with courage! Do not say, "We can do nothing." Who are you that can do nothing? God is with you! Do not say, "The Church is feeble and fallen upon evil times" no, "God is with us." We need the courage of those ancient soldiers who were desirous to regard difficulties only as whetstones upon which to sharpen their swords!

I like Alexander's talk—when they said there were so many thousands, so many millions, perhaps, of Persians. "Very well," says he, "it is good reaping where the corn is thick. One butcher is not afraid of a thousand sheep." I like even the talk of the old Gascon, who said when they asked him, "Can you and your troops get into that fortress? It is impregnable." "Can the sun enter it?" he asked. "Yes." "Well, where the sun can go, we can enter." Whatever is possible or whatever is impossible, Christians can do at God's command, for God is with us! Do you not see that the word, "God with us," puts impossibility out of all existence? Hearts that could never be broken will be broken if God is with us!

Artwork: By
Alexandra Hay
"And she will bring
forth a Son, and you
shall call His name
JESUS"
(Matthew 1:21A)



Recipes for Spiritual Growth

Psalms for the Season, By Tanya Hay

Are the holidays bringing you down? It is very common to feel a mix of emotions during this time of year. Try reading the Book of Psalms this holiday season to help you with what you may be feeling today. The Book of Psalms is a collection of poems that are full of real life prayers about every day struggles and celebrations that are relatable to everyone's life.

Suggested Bible reading for when you feel:

Tired, Psalm 23
Depressed/Discouraged, Psalm 42
Lonely, Psalm 25
Happy, Psalm 95
Guilty, Psalm 51
Afraid, Psalm 27

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Living out Your Christian Faith, from page 4

It's the same with our Heavenly Father. As believers walking in the Spirit, we need to get out of God's way. He knows what is best for us. 2 Corinthians 5:15: "And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you thirst for more things of God. You honor God - in all you do, and care less and less about the things not pleasing to God. It's like God shines right through you. When you walk with God, your character becomes like His. 1 John 2:6: "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." Jesus is our example, our Lord and Savior. Let us therefore walk in unity (Ephesians 4:1-6).

Prayer, the World's Greatest Wireless Connection

When life gets too hard to stand, KNEEL!
(How is it then that prayer meetings are the least attended meetings in almost every church?)



Immanuel, continued from page 1

The Old Testament sacrificial system has been abolished. "Previously saying, 'Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them' (which are offered according to the law), then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:8-10). There is no need for further sacrifice. Christ's death is entirely sufficient to take care of all previous sins and those sins we may commit in moments of weakness in our daily lives. God can now forgive, and will forgive, those who place



Photo credit: RICB Staff

their trust in Christ (1 John 1:9). Let us therefore take hold of Christ. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23). He, and He alone, is our Hope and our Savior.

The thought that prompted me to write this article is the fact that I used to believe that I had to make sacrifices (to do penance) in order to be forgiven of my sins.

God's truth set me free from this wrong teaching. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:32,36).

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:4-7).

Masonry from a Christian Perspective, continued from page 4

The second point we will mention is the cardinal virtues of Masonry: temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice. These are all wonderful things, and they lead to many charitable works. However, practicing them is of no eternal value without Jesus Christ, who said: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). The Lord is taken out of the masonic equation. Those who do good deeds for their own sake and not for

the Glory of Christ Jesus will not be rewarded in the eternal state because all they will have succeeded in doing is reforming the outer man, and not the inner man (Luke 11:24-26). The truth remains that salvation is by the grace of God through Christ alone, and not of works (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Third, we will address the culture of secrecy. Masons take oaths of secrecy to the point where their activities are cloaked

in darkness. Jesus is the Light of the World, and we are called to be lights—transparently reflecting our faith to others (Matthew 5:14-16). Christians are not called to participate in a culture of secrecy, and Scripture is clear on this point. "Walk as children of light and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:8-11). There are no secrets before the all-present and all-knowing God we serve. Further, too many secrets will erode trust in our marriages and families over time.

Finally, there is the fact that we are not allowed to profess specific religious belief in the Masonic

lodge. An essential part of Christian salvation and the Great Commission is that we both affirm our faith and share our faith with others. "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:9,14). Masonry demands that we act in disobedience to the Living God, who is Jesus. The Bible also says that "every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:3). How many people are going to hell because the gospel is prevented from being

preached in Masonic meetings and circles?

Here is the conclusion. Because Masonry has a religious dogmatism (universalism) about it and yet denies the claims of Jesus Christ to be God, and enforces specific conduct amongst its members in a secretive way, it is properly classified as a cult. If you are involved in this, you are being deceived. Come to the Light, which is Christ Jesus, and find your purpose in God's perfect plan, and cease seeking to find it in other ways. May the Triune God of heaven bless you, the reader. Amen.