

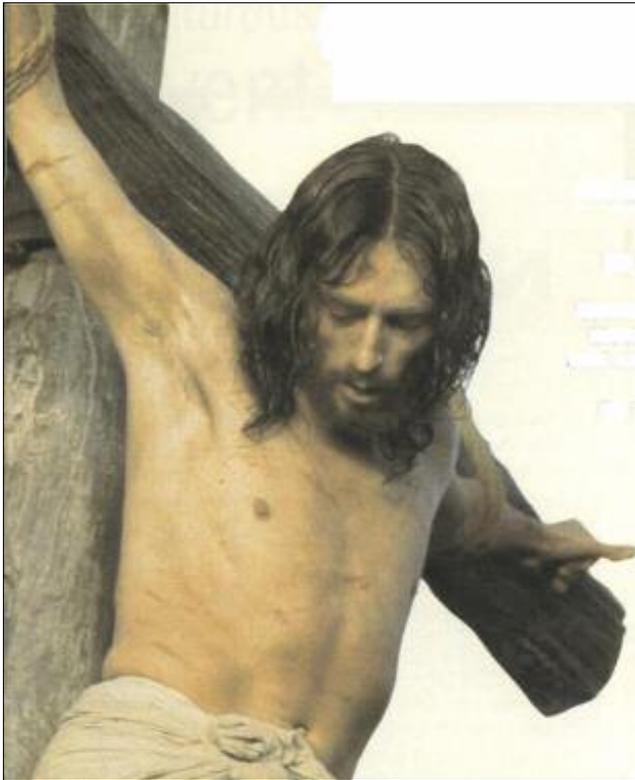
Il-Lehen tat-Tama

"THE VOICE OF HOPE"

47, Mannarino Road, Birkirkara BKR 08, Malta - www.adventist.org.mt. Tel. 00356/21470238

BY THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

JOY TO THE EARTH, THE SAVIOUR REIGNS



People are comfortable with Jesus as a baby in a crib: He is non-threatening. People are fairly comfortable with Jesus as a Teacher: the Sermon on the Mount embodies a wisdom and an insight they feel they can respect. People feel threatened by the Christ on the Cross and, as many did at the time, they turn their faces from Him. They are instinctively uncomfortable. But His outstretched arms nailed to the transverse beam represent an open invitation to all mankind to come and believe, repent and receive salvation.

Those who smile in amusement at Bethlehem's Baby, nod sagely at the Sermon on the Mount, but ignore Calvary, and fail to examine the significance of the Man who conquered death, and left an empty tomb behind as a witness, have rejected the salvation He bought with His life.

You might say, they've missed the point of the story. And that "point" is the most important in all history. For one day every man, woman and child who lives, has ever lived, will ever live, must meet Jesus. And what happens next depends on whether they've grasped the "point" - not of Bethlehem, but of Calvary. . .

David Marshal

FREE FOR YOU!

The lectures on "CAN WE TRUST GOD?" offered by Past. Giovanni Leonardi are over. All the main teachings of the Christian faith have been reviewed and amazing discoveries have been made. To all our friends who couldn't directly enjoy this opportunity, we offer the text of the lectures. You may choose having them printed or as a pdf file. Send your request to Past. G. Leonardi, 47, Mannarino Rd., B'Kara BKR 08, or send an e-mail to "adventis.global.net.mt".

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CHRISTMAS AND US

WHERE DID JESUS GO WHEN SANTA TURNED UP?

I rumbled the Santa Claus myth when I was only 3. It was not that I was a child prodigy or anything. The fat man who tiptoed into my bedroom and placed the pillowcase full of interesting shapes by my bed was unmistakably my father. Even in the dark!

At 5 I became totally disillusioned with the whole idea of Santa. For one thing, the town where we did our shopping was overrun with red-clad, cotton-wool-bearded, sack-carrying, stout parties of the male gender. The first time I saw one up close he was stealing the purse of a lady shopper nearby. (My mother saw to it that he was apprehended by the forces of law and order!)

That story was one a freckled 5-year-old was not about to forget. In class, at school, our teacher was telling the wonderful story of Jesus. The shepherds. The stable. The star. The wise men. The gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Suddenly he added, "And, if you're good, Santa Claus will make sure that you get presents, too . . ."

That was too much for me. I started telling about the purse-stealing Santa! The class was aghast; tears, wailing, chop-fallen bewilderment - and that was just the boys. . . . The teacher was furious; "Marshall, how dare you . . ."

Then a friend came to my rescue with a question that silenced the class - and even the teacher! "Sir, what happened to Jesus when Santa turned up?" Fair question; but he never got an answer. It still is a fair question; and it deserves an answer!

Santa stands for the wish-and-want, must-haves, gottas and gimmees of the Christmas season. The family squawks and squabbles.

Don't get me wrong. I believe in telling the truth, not hitting people over the head with it sledge-hammer fashion. Other people's kids believe what other people tell them. Even as a lad, when Grandad shouted my Christmas present requirements to Santa up the chimney, I went along with it, think-

ing, "poor Grandad. He's 81 and nobody's told him! Too late now!"

But back to the question, "What happened to Jesus when Santa turned up?" Answer: He got lost and forgotten. A "No Room" sign was hung over the planet He came to

long. Wished they'd hurry! And hurry they did - about their own affairs. "Sorry, full up!" said the innkeeper.

"But my wife . . ."

He simply shrugged: "Sorry, no room. In a hurry. No time to spare. All rooms taken!"

Hence the birth in a manger, with the beasts of the field. Messiah's first bed, on straws as sharp to His tenderness as the thorns to come after.

There was urgency and tension, scurrying movements. Pain in cramping knots. Then the thin cry; and Mary calling weakly to Joseph outside the hardened stable yard outside, "Come, Joseph. Come and see Him!"

And there He was ... the Living God had enshrined His glory in human flesh In that birth in an overcrowded city Eternity stepped into Time, visible and invisible combined, spirit and flesh converged, God and man

were brought together. On the tick of prophecy and in the destined place and context of events, need, personnel and circumstances, the Son came to declare the Father. And He came as a tiny, supine Baby.

In that vulnerable form was housed the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Holy God was wholly flesh; and wrapped in swaddling clothes. Eyes accustomed to observe the Earth from end to end could not focus on the faces of the visiting shepherds. Hands that fashioned the Earth and stars could hardly grasp His mother's finger. The "voice that spake and it was done" alternatively cried and gurgled.

For "the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us" that we might behold His glory. More than that, that He might save His people from their sins: to bring us salvation.

Never swap a truth like that for some old Santa.

David Marshall



redeem. And the season of the year Christians call Advent - when we should be recounting the truth of the Incarnation and remembering that the Child born a King will soon return as King of kings - is all about ringing bells, this year's craze toy, impossible pressures, materialism, greed, and war films on telly.

So what exactly is the truth about the Incarnation?

Come with me to Bethlehem. . . .

Joseph and heavily-pregnant Mary had travelled sixty miles from Nazareth so that, in the fullness of God's time, the Son of the Highest could be born. The hour was late of their arrival. All were heedless of the pregnant woman on the tired donkey. . . .

They were at the inn. All was activity, inside and out. Bundles were being carried in. Beasts led to shelter. The two latecomers were ignored.

Now where could that innkeeper be? Mary, still seated on the donkey, felt uncomfortable. She knew it wouldn't be

BIBLE PROPHECY

THE LONG WAITING FOR JESUS

Some times, love must wait long to fully express itself, and God waited a long time before His project of love could be fully manifested.

The Bible story of creation, unfortunately closes with our first parents abandoning God and following their way, searching for an independent life and finding death.

But in this story, we also see God looking and caring for them. The abandoned divine Father didn't abandon His rebellious children. The voice, "Adam where are you?" Resounds with love in the Garden of Eden. And that same Voice says to the Tempter: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Gen. 3:15). This is the first prophecy found in the Holy Scriptures and it promises humanity that, one day, God would send Someone, Who will be part of humanity but having the power to destroy the Tempter, and give rest and salvation to the troubled children of Eve.

In faith all those who believed in God, waited for this special revelation of God's love. Thousand of years passed and they continued to live in a world of pain. But God revived their hope by renewing and completing His promises. One day, about four thousand years ago, God called the Patriarch Abraham and told him: "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen. 12:3). So, some people who cared for God and for His salvation, could know that the Saviour would come, not from among the powerful and glorious people of Mesopotamia or Egypt, but from the small, humble people of Israel.

About eight hundred years passed, and God sent a message to Israel through the prophet Isaiah, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." (Isaiah 9:6,7). Whoever historically this prophecy points to, it transcends

any historic character and points to the long awaited Saviour. It tells us that He will be a King from the family of David, but He will also have such a special relationship with God, that He Himself would be called "God".

In the same time of Isaiah, another prophet, Micah, prophesied from which village in Israel the Messiah Saviour would come: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). Isaiah had called the Mes-

"When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son."

siah "everlasting Father", Micah says that His origins are "from everlasting".

Born in Bethlehem from the seed of Eve, part of humanity through the family of Abraham and that of David, the announced Saviour would be much more than a man. He would be God Himself, the same God that our first parents abandoned in Eden. This God, would come to reveal to His children the greatness of His love and save them.

But other years had to pass. After about two centuries, roughly about 2,500 years ago, God told His people the exact time when the Saviour would come: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks" (Daniel 9:25). In other words, the Messiah had to appear after 69 x 7 years after the Persian king Artaxerxes, in the year 457 B.C., issued a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. This takes us to the year 27 A.D., the exact time of Jesus' baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended on Him, and anointed Him as the Messiah, which means Anointed, and in Greek is said Christos, the Christ.

That time, as the Gospel says, Jesus was "about thirty years of age" (Luke

3:23). This brings the date of His birth to about the years 4 B.C., which is curious for us, but is explained by a mistake made in the calculations of some historical events by the person who, at first, established the beginning of the Christian calendar.

A long time passed since the first promise, many generations were born and died, many people lived in hope of a better world and many did totally ignore it. But, as the apostle Paul says, "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" (Galatians 4:4,5).

And Bethlehem became the place where the most astonishing miracle ever happened became true: God became a man, the son of the Eternal God became the son of a woman, one of the descendants of the seed of Eve; the King of the Universe became a servant, the Most Holy took on Himself our sins and prepared Himself to offer His life to atone for them, so that they could be saved and be introduced again into that communion with God that our first parents had lost.

By that time, the Bible hope of a coming Saviour had spread even into the pagan world. The Magi came from the Orient because they knew that the time of the Messiah had come, and wished to worship Him.

The day when Jesus was born has become so important to us, to become the devising point of human history. All that has happened and will happen in history happens B.C. (Before Christ) or A.D. (Anno Domini, in the year of the Lord's Age).

Jesus also becomes the dividing point of our personal life. It should be divided in what we were and did before Christ entered our life, and what we are and do after we have received Jesus as our Saviour, Friend, and Lord. Jesus should make a difference, shouldn't He? So we have to ask ourselves: What did Jesus change in my life, in my understanding, in my behaviour? In my personal experience, where am I? Am I still living in the B.C. era, or did I fully and joyfully enter the A.D. age of truth, love, obedience, and hope?

With love, and our best wishes for a blessed Christmas and a New Year.

Pastor Giovanni Leonardi

SWEET RECIPES

CHRISTMAS CAKES & POTATO RAVIOLI

A time of joy as Christmas and the beginning of the New Year requires some special dish, doesn't it? This is why we offer you three very special recipes, two cakes and a main course. I'm sure you will like them, and so will your family.

SCHIACCIATA
ALLA
FIORENTINA

This cake is a characteristic of Florence, a city everybody knows. Now you can eat a little bit of it too. The preparation is very simple but the result very smelling and tasting.

INGREDIENTS: 300 gr. of self-raising flour, 150 gr. of sugar, ½ a glass of oil, ½ a glass of milk, the fresh juice of an orange and its grated rind, 1 egg.

PREPARATION: Mix all the ingredients together and pour the compound into a cake tin of about 25 by 30 cm. previously buttered and floured. Leave it in the electrical oven at the temperature of 180° C. (350° F.) for about 25 minutes. Before serving sprinkle with some icing sugar (this is the traditional way) or some Nesquik powder.

CHRISTMAS
CAKE

This is a longer recipe but the result is superb.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE CAKE'S BASE: 9 egg whites whipped until stiff; 9 egg yolks; 200 gr. of sugar; 3 full spoons of bitter cacao; 120 gr. of flour; the juice of half a lemon; a few drops of rum essence (please, do not use alcohol).

PREPARATION OF THE CAKE'S BASE

First: Begin by whipping the yolks with the sugar and the cacao. When the cream is soft, while continuing to whip, add, little by little, the self raising flour, the lemon juice, and the rum essence.

Second: Whip the egg whites until stiff and forms peaks. Add it to the previous mixture mixing from the bottom to the



top. Pour the result of your work into a 28 cm. cake tin previously buttered and floured. Leave it in the electrical oven at the temperature of 180° C. (350° F.) for about 30 minutes.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE CREAM: 6 egg yolks, 100 gr. of sugar; 80 gr. of corn flour, some drops of rum essence, the grated rind of an orange, and 1 litre of very hot milk.

PREPARATION FOR THE CREAM: Whip the egg yolks with the sugar and, while you continue whipping, little by little, add the corn flour, the rum essence, the grated orange rind and, at the end, the hot milk. Put the mixture on the heat some minutes while you continue to mix.

PUTTING ALL TOGETHER: When you see that the cream thickens, pour it (still hot) inside the cake previously cut in three layers. Leave it in the fridge overnight. The day after, decorate the top of the cake according to your taste. You can use whipped cream, Christmas decorations and, if you wish, some candied green or red cherries, or even slices of fresh fruit.

Do not eat too much. I know that the temptation will be too great.

POTATO RAVIOLI

FOR EIGHT PERSONS

TIME NEEDED: About two hours.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE PASTA: 380 gr. of flour size 00 and 120 gr. of semolina, 4 eggs, 1 spoon of olive oil, a cup of water, and an egg white.

PREPARATION FOR THE PASTA: Mix everything together except the egg white. Work well the dough until it becomes elastic and glossy. Let it rest, wrapped in a kitchen towel, for about 30 minutes. In the meantime, you can work on the filling.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE FILLING: 700 gr. of potatoes, 2 egg yolks, 50 gr. Of grated Grana or Parmesan cheese, a little grated nutmeg, salt and pepper (If you wish you may add 10 gr. of dried porcini mushrooms: soften them in warm water and mince them in very small pieces).

PREPARATION FOR THE FILLING: Before you start preparing the pasta, start boiling the potatoes together with their skin. Once cooked, peel them and mash them. Add the 2 egg yolks, the cheese, the salt, the pepper, the nutmeg (if you like so, even the mushrooms).

PUTTING TOGETHER THE PASTA AND THE FILLING: Spread the dough with the rolling pin into 2 very thin (about 1 mm. thick) sheets and brush them with the egg whites. Upon one of the sheets, at the distance of 4 cm. from each other, distribute the filling you have prepared in many small portions. When all the surface of the first sheet has been filled, cover it with the other sheet and press both together all around the portions of filling. Cut the pasta in many pieces so that each portion of filling will be isolated from the others inside its own square. The ravioli are ready to be cooked when the moment comes.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE SAUCE: 1 small carrot, the stem of 1 soft celery, 1 leek, 200 gr. of fresh tomatoes cut in small cubes or a can of tomato polpa, fresh parsley; 4 table spoons of olive oil, 20 gr. of butter, salt and grated Grana or Parmesan cheese.

PREPARATION OF THE SAUCE: Mince the vegetables and cook them on low heat with the oil, the salt, and a little water. When they are soft, add the tomatoes and keep all on the heat for about another 15 minutes. Turn the heat off and add the butter, the minced parsley. Mix all together.

CONCLUSION: Cook the ravioli in salted boiling water. When they are cooked enough to meet your taste, drain them and flavour with the sauce. Serve in the dish with a generous sprinkling of cheese. Buon appetito.

Gianna Russo Leonardi

NEWS FROM THE WORLD

ITALY: LECTURES ON BIBLE ARCHAEOLOGY

Wednesday 1st December, at 20.30 P.M., the first of two lectures on Bible and Archaeology has been offered by Luigi Caratelli at the Sala dei Marmi owned by the Province of Pescara. The title was, "Moses and the Exodus, Myth or Reality?" Organized by the local Seventh-day Adventist Church, the initiative enjoyed the patronage of the Province of Pescara and the Archdiocese of Pescara-Penne. Among the participants, the president of Provincial Council of Pescara, the mayor of the close city Scafa, and the general vicar of the archbishop. All of them have expressed their appreciation, praising the high cultural and spiritual level of the initiative. The vicar also said that it was the first time he had the opportunity to meet the Seventh-day Adventist Church and argued that the co-operation could continue to publicly preach the Word of God.

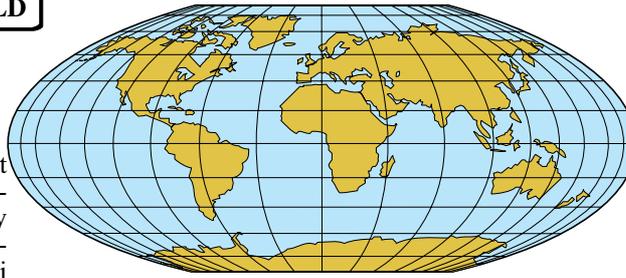
Paolo Todaro

IRAQ: ADRA DELIVERS MEDICINES TO 770,000.

An estimated 770,000 people in the Western Ninewa province of Iraq will benefit from eight tons of essential medicines delivered Oct. 24 by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Turkey. Three major hospitals and 37 primary health clinics in the cities of Telafer, Sinjar, Al-Ba'aj and surrounding areas received the supplies. The shipment is part of a larger project in which ADRA shipped more than 45 tons of medicines and other supplies to the country.

"These drugs were very much needed and arrived at the right time," wrote Dr. Fawzi M. Mohammad, director of the Telafer Hospital.

ADRA Turkey staff are coordinating the project from Istanbul, but travelled to Iraq to hand over the drugs. Under tight security, the medicines were passed to Iraqi health officials at the border of Iraq and Turkey. Sixteen representatives from the region and five workers came



to receive their share of drugs. The Ministry of Health (MoH) Facility Protection Service (FPS) escorted the medicines to the project area.

The project grant came from the German Government and ADRA Germany and is valued at U.S. \$192,000. ADRA Turkey worked with ADRA Germany and ADRA Iraq in organizing the project. The MoH granted ADRA special permission to send medical support to the Western Ninewa Province.

"We appreciate, by all means, ADRA's...and [the] German Government's humanitarian efforts toward our people. We hope your support will continue for us to pass this hard time for our country. God bless you," Wrote Dr. Mohammad.

In a letter of thanks, Dr. Keffah Katoo, director of Sinjar Hospital wrote, "The people of Sinjar and I will not forget [ADRA's] humanitarian acts for us, our children, and for our future."

The number of outpatients served by the three hospitals receiving the medicines exceeds 37,500 people and 3,425 inpatients. The recipient primary

health clinics care for some 92,600 outpatients.

ADRA is present in more than 120 countries providing individual and community development and disaster relief without regard to political or religious association, age, or ethnicity.

Simona and Alex Balint
[ADRA/ Adventist News Network]

GHANA: ADRA UNIT FACILITATES DONATION OF CARDIAC EQUIPMENT

A machine that allows doctors to more accurately and efficiently diagnose heart and blood disorders was donated to the Cardiothoracic Centre at the Korle-bu Teaching Hospital in Ghana by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). The machine, called the Biplane Angiogram, is the first of its kind in the West Africa region.

The Biplane Angiogram, valued at US\$1.6 million. will also be used to train cardiac surgeons throughout the region.

Todd Reese [ADRA/Adventist New Network]

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MISSION STORY

GEORGE GOES TO SCHOOL

George never knew his parents. He lived with his grandmother in Kenya until she died. Then he was taken to his great-aunt's home to live. When life became unbearable, George ran away. He was 9 years old. For five years he lived on the streets of Nairobi, Kenya, begging for money and searching for food in garbage cans.

Then something happened that turned George's life around. A Pathfinder Club [Pathfinders are, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the equivalent of the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts] was having an outing. Each Pathfinder had brought along three extra lunches, planning to share them with the homeless children of Nairobi.

The club members went into the poorest part of town and invited the street children to join them in a city park for lunch and games. The programme included a spiritual talk. This was the first time some of the children had heard about Jesus. Then the children played games together.

George heard shouts and laughter as he sifted through the trash for food. Curious, he went closer. Wow, he thought, those kids look sharp in their uniforms. Someone invited George to join in the fun. How good it was to enjoy a decent, fresh meal and play games with other children. For a few hours George forgot his troubles.

As the party wound down, George said, "I wish that I could become a Pathfinder." When someone asked why, he answered, "I want to be like them—and I want to go to school." The Pathfinder leader told George, "Meet me here in this park in two days."

When the leader returned two days later, he told George that he had arranged for him to enrol in the Adventist school as a boarding student. George, now 14, could not believe his ears. He had not yet completed the fourth grade, so he had a lot of catching up to do. Life was so different at the school. Good food replaced garbage scraps, and he slept on a mat in a warm room, not on the sidewalk. He no longer had to run away when a police officer came by.

"I am so happy," George said. "Life is good; I can go to school." George has joined the baptismal class. George is studying hard and ranked second in academic standing in his class. He has made friends, and recently was elected to a student body office.

Some 5,000 children live on the streets of Nairobi. George is a lucky one, for he has found his future, and it includes a loving church family.

J. H. Zachary (Co-ordinator of international evangelism for THE QUITE HOUR)

BEATITUDES FOR ALL TIMES & AGES

BLESSED are those who laugh at themselves: they will never stop having fun.

BLESSED are those who can distinguish a pebble from a mountain: they will avoid many annoyances.

BLESSED are those who are able to listen and keep silent: they will learn many new things.

BLESSED are those who look after the others' needs: they will be dispensers of joy.

BLESSED are you, if you are able to look with attention to the small things, and quietly to those important: you will go far in life.

BLESSED are you, if you can appreciate a smile and forget a discourtesy: your path will always be full of sun.

BLESSED are you if you learn to interpret with benevolence, even against the appearances, the attitude of the others: you will be judged simple-minded but this is the cost of love.

BLESSED are those who think before they speak, and pray before they think: they will avoid many stupidities.

ESPECIALLY BLESSED are you when you see the Lord in all those that you meet: you have found the true light and peace.

Anonymous



Please, send without obligation, and free
(Mark what you wish)

Next issues of *Il-Lehen tat-Tama* (if you do not already receive it regularly).

The illustrated Bible Correspondence Course "Discover" in 26 lessons.

I would like to have a personal meeting with Pastor Leonard to know better about your faith and/or discuss some problems.

■ You can use the space below for a question or an opinion. (Card n° 35)

Mr./Mrs./Miss _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Tel. (optional): _____

BE COURAGEOUS -
BE HONEST - BE
HUMBLE - LOVE
TRUTH - SEARCH
FOR TRUTH -
STUDY THE BIBLE -
RECEIVE JESUS -
FOLLOW JESUS -
DO NOT BE
SCARED BY
PREJUDICES -
LOVE ALL - TRUST
GOD - OBEY GOD'S
COMMANDMENTS -
WAIT FOR JESUS'
RETURN - BE
READY TO ENTER
GOD'S KINGDOM -
BE SIMPLE AND
WISE - BE A TRUE
MAN - BE A TRUE
WOMAN - BE A
CHRISTIAN.

We suggest that you may take this page out of the magazine and place it in a visible place

APPOINTMENTS WITH THE BIBLE AND CULTURE

Seventh-day Adventist Church, 47 Mannarino Road, Birkirkara - ☎21 470 238

SPECIAL SPIRITUAL EVENT

CELEBRATION OF A BAPTISM THE WAY CHRIST TAUGHT

Share with us the joy of a soul giving her heart to Jesus, and discover the true meaning and the form of what a Christian baptism should be according to Jesus' example and teaching.

Saturday 1 January, 4.00-5.30 P.M.

BIBLE ARCHAEOLOGY

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Six great lectures on an exciting subject every learned person and informed Christian wish to know.

**February 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, 25
7.30 P.M.**

SPECIAL SEMINAR AND DEBATE

ON

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND WAR A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED

Many Christians feel very uncomfortable with all the wars and the violence they find in the Old Testament, and wonder how all this can be compatible with Jesus' love. Come to find a solution to this serious problem.

Saturday 22 January, 4.00 P.M.

(A refreshment will be served between the lecture and the debate. The program, all included, is supposed to last two hours. If the time is too long, you can come only for the lecture that will finish not later than 5.30 P.M.)

SERMONS

A solid basis for our future.

Saturday 1 January, 11.00 A.M.

Holy Communion celebration: What does it mean to receive Jesus?

Saturday 8 January, 11.00 A.M.

Can I trust God without becoming poor? The Bible principle of tithing.

Saturday 15 January, 11.00 A.M.

Christian martyrs: Can you be one?

Saturday 22 January, 11.00 A.M.

My ways are not yours (Isaiah 55:8)

Saturday 29 January, 11.00 A.M.

How should the saints worship God?

Saturday 5 February, 11.00 A.M.

Our glory is in Jesus.

Saturday 12 February, 11.00 A.M.

Our Purgatory lives.

Saturday 19 February, 11.00 A.M.

What did God take from paganism?

Saturday 26 February, 11.00 A.M.

HOT ISSUES

DIVORCE IN MALTA

Has the Gospel anything to say?

A word of hope for all the people facing this widely spread drama.

Sunday 30 January, 10.00 A.M.

New Year's Eve

Thanksgiving and Prayer Service

Friday 31 December
05.30-06.30 P.M.

ALL PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL ARE WARMLY WELCOME

CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

MY DISCOVERY OF GOD

From my fathers' faith to my personal relationship with Jesus.

Last part: My actual experience - Born again Christian.

I was 35 years old at the time when my wife and I, after much study and counselling, decided to make a stand for Jesus, living not by what people can say, but by God's Word and keeping His commandments.

This by far was the greatest and hardest decision in our lives. There were close friends who told us that no one can live according to the Bible teaching. "It's totally impossible" they said. Yes, with men it may be impossible, but with God everything is possible if we trust Him.

Knowing how God wants us to live and worship Him was a truthful loving experience. Keeping His commandments as He ordained them from the beginning of time was a privilege. Our Christian faith and the love for God and His son Jesus Christ became our first priority. Studying the Bible (the Word of God) was wonderful. Seeing and understanding God's message for me and for mankind was very rewarding. I learned by experience what the Psalmist said: "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man" (Psalms 118:8). Maybe it isn't by chance that this Psalm is the middle chapter and the quoted verse the middle verse in all the Bible).

When I surrendered to Jesus, I surrendered the pride of the world, the self way of thinking. The apostle Paul became blind when he saw Jesus' light on the way to Damascus. "laying on the ground and blinded be the light, Paul said 'who are you Lord?'" The reply came back, "I am Jesus" (Acts 9:5). I was not blind because of Jesus' light, but because of my ignorance, but when I asked God to help me understand where I could find truth, the same answer came to me, "I am Jesus." I didn't know what Jesus wanted from me. I didn't know His calling. But Jesus helped me know.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

We studied the Bible privately in our home, and with a little group of people and their families. We spent God's time together in worship on the Sabbath day rest. Even our children had their own studies on Bible characters and stories, for the Bible is for every one, young and old.

KEEPING THE SABBATH

We did not work on the Sabbath day, and some of us even had to give up

their jobs because the Lord God in the fourth commandment says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work" (Exodus 20:8-10). However, those who changed their jobs because they wanted to obey, trust, and please God, found a better job with better conditions. God promises that if we trust in Him, He will deliver, and this is true.

We kept the faith and stood up for what is right in God's sight and we were never ashamed to talk about what we had learned. We wanted to tell all around us how we found the God of the Bible. We still feel the same way today as we did in 1986: our love for God keeps getting stronger, and we know that there are many people out there who want to change the way they are living and surrender to God.

KEEPING FORGOTTEN COMMANDMENTS

We kept God's law on eating healthy foods as they are specified in Leviticus chapter eleven, and did away with what the Bible calls "unclean meats" for we understood through the Word of God that not all foods are good for human consumption.

Those of us who were in the habit of smoking had to denounce it along with drunkenness, swearing, blaspheming, and the use of filthy language, for breaking any of the commandments separates and defiles us before God. The changes weren't easy, but we encouraged each other and trusted and prayed for strength to overcome these problems. Again, trying on your own is impossible, but with Jesus living within you it can be done. Wherever we went, we went as a church family. Whatever we did,

we did as a family, and people saw the difference in our life style. Some even said to us personally how we have changed and that we were an encouragement to them.

EQUIPPED FOR TESTIMONY

The group grew slowly as we trusted in the Word of God. We learned how to give public speaking through a spokesman's course. We attended once a month evening classes for some years. The Bible tells us that we have to be ready to give an answer to all those who ask of our faith, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). So we had to be prepared and ready, having some knowledge in public speaking. Of course, we had also to know God's Word since we had to preach the Gospel.

We kept Communion as the early Christians did by washing each others feet as a sign of humility towards each other, and eating unleavened bread as a symbol of Jesus' body, and drinking the wine which represents the blood that Jesus shed for us when he died for the sins of the world.



Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

And as Jesus commanded us, we celebrate it in love for one another.

All these changes and many more we did to honour our God. Since my youth, I never had seen God's calling. I had listened and obeyed what people were telling me without ever questioning. Unfortunately, at the same time, I had never really understood what I was taught at that young age. God says that we must trust in Him, and the truth will set us free. When I accepted Jesus, then I could understand that I have to give up the way I was living.

Peter says in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized." As a child, I could not have done this. As a child I had no knowledge of what sin was. Repentance is for sinners, and that is what I was. Jesus came for the sick (sinners) that they should repent from their sinful nature. He told the adulteress woman and tells us today, "I do not condemn you" but "go and sin no more". Knowing what Jesus had done for me on the cross, how He had shed His blood and broken His body for me a sinner, how could I not love Him with all my heart? What had I to do? I gave myself to Jesus and I asked Him to wash away my past life of self and sin.

MY BAPTISM

In 1986 I was baptized into the family of God, by total immersion in water as

the Bible teaches. When I came up from the watery depth (a type of grave) I felt I was a new "born again" person. I knew that from that moment onward God's grace would be over me, and would lead me.

Before my conversion it wasn't so. Before I had understood that we are saved by our works. But the Gospel says that we are saved by grace: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

When Peter addressed the Jews, and told them how they rejected the Christ and put Him to death because of their traditions, the people present were cut to the heart and in a desperate plea they all shouted at Peter and the other disciples, saying, "what shall we do?" These people knew that they had done wrong and sinned against God, they were willing to change and ask for forgiveness, but they understood that they lacked something and they wanted to know what to do next. Peter gave them the answer to their question: "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-for all whom the Lord our God will call.'" (Acts 2:38-39 NIV)

CONCLUSION

I came a long way searching for God and the Gospel teachings, but I'm now very happy for how and where God has led me. I do not believe I am a perfect man, but I know that God loves me as I am, and will help me improve my Christian experience to give Him glory and, for myself, enjoy a better life. I would have much more to say but, for now, I just wish to encourage you to search the Scriptures to know what God wishes to give you, how He wishes to work for your own salvation. Do not be afraid of discovering the Truth of the Gospel, for Jesus is THE TRUTH and we cannot love Him without searching for His true teaching.

One day, the apostles Paul and Silas were obliged to flee from Thessalonica because of the opposition of some Jews who, in the name of their traditions, refused the Gospel and tried to kill them. When they went to Berea, they insisted in preaching the Gospel to the Jews, but "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). May you accept as my wish for you, that you may follow the example of these believers in Berea and receive the same praise they receive in the Word of God?

Anthony Stagno

A PSALM OF GRATEFULNESS

(Psalm 103:1-14. Of King David)

Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, 5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The LORD executes righteousness And justice for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.

The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the East is from the West, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

DEAR LORD

Dear Lord,

**Be my life and my guide
All the day through;
Show me and teach me
Your will to do.**

**A wretched sinner, oh that I am,
Full of myself,
Brought down to naught
By Jesus Himself.**

**He suffered and died
A death so cruel
To save and lift me
From where I lay in ruin.**

**Thank you Lord Jesus
For all you have done
For me and my brethren That
we may be one.**

[Mrs. Dora Stagno]

FAMILY LIFE

HOW TO FACE MARRIAGE PROBLEMS AND BE HAPPY

Sermon preached in the Seventh-day Adventist Church on November the 27th.

I am sure that all of you would like that I may really offer you a handbook with a solution for all possible family life problems. Unfortunately, this is neither possible nor desirable.

I have just found in a magazine a very interesting article: **Emergencies under control: A complete guide to find and solve problems and failures that do not let the PC work properly.** But you are not a computer. You are not a mechanical device obeying physical or mathematical laws.

The life of a machine depends exclusively on something else. Even your life depends on others, but it also depends on you, in an all special way, on God. You are an extraordinary living being, called to be a child of God, and receiving from God, intelligence, love, freedom, responsibility.

God would like that all of us may be happy, and happiness depends in a special way on the happiness of our marriage life. Either we are happy together or we are both unhappy for nobody can be happy alone.

How can we have a happy, satisfying marital life? Has God something to say about our marriages? Can our experience teach us something good? Let's consider just a few but important issues.

1) A good marriage begins before we get married.

Usually, you do not buy an old car and pretend you never go to the mechanic. Maybe you need to have a car at once and you think that your money is not enough to get a new better car, so you buy what you can. Or maybe you simply like that old car because of its special look and feeling. Yes, you may be right, but you must be ready to pay the consequences of your choice: you have to know that the mechanic will become one of your best friends, and you must be ready to pay for his friendship.

So, if you wish to enjoy your car at the best of its possibilities, buy a new car and from a good brand.

What does it mean? When we look for a partner with whom we can share a joyful and rewarding life, we have to look for the best. It is better to wait than to get married just because we have to. Also, sometimes it happens that we are not enough self-confident and we think that we must be satisfied with what we can get with our poor qualities. The Gospel says that we should not evaluate ourselves more than we are, but sometimes we evaluate ourselves much less than we deserve and after we suffer for the consequences of our choices. So, look for the best partner, for on your choice depends all your future life. Only, consider that



the qualities of the best partner - however important they may be - are not just appearance, social success, external beauty. As a Christian and a wise person, try to understand which qualities God, Who doesn't consider the appearance but the heart (1 Sam. 16:7), would like to find in your partner. Can you consider qualities such as honesty, kindness, ability to care for the family, wisdom ... ?

2) But what if our partner is not what he/she had to be? Is your marriage condemned to be a total failure? Not at all. God's grace is there to help and support if we ask for help.

The Gospel is the good news for people who have problems. God's love can help us to get out of them, or give us wisdom and strength to stand them.

Even the best car needs assistance, and an old car can be rewarding even more than a new one. Only that it needs more care ... more love and patience.

3) Love one another with all your love. But what is love?

In the Bible and in our life too - there are three sorts of love. They are eros, philia, and agape. All of them are important in marriage.

EROS is love as desire. In our modern language we refer eros only to sexuality, but this, even if it constitutes a great part of the meaning of the word, is not all. Eros, in the original Greek language, is all that we desire for ourselves. We can translate it as "desire." In a marriage, eros is what we look for ourselves. It is the "egoistic" part of love. In a marriage we look for something for ourselves, for something that we need. It may be security, support, communion and also satisfaction of our sexual urges. We have not to be ashamed of eros, not even of the very important element of sexuality. Marriage is not a benevolent association and God created it for the benefit of both partners. Also God created sex as something good and profitable, and we are invited by the Word of God to live it as a joyful experience in the framework of God's laws.

We have to positively evaluate the marital sexual experience, and keep it alive. Being nice, clean, in order, well dressed is a must for all Christian partners. At the beginning eros is so strong that it burns even the rocks, but later on, with age, it becomes a very sensitive fire and just a small wind can extinguish it. It must be supported with care and interest. Honour your partner's physical needs and do not be ashamed of yours.

It's true that sometimes ladies may have a headache, and gentleman are too busy, but when it happens too often it becomes the sign of a refusal, not just of a momentary refusal of a physical intercourse, but of the person altogether. Our body, is not just an accessory: we are our body. And when we love our partner we love all his/her reality, and we love with all ourselves.

Even the apostle Paul wrote: "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." (1 Corinthians 7:14)

PHILIA. Philia is love as friendship. From this word comes "philosophy," love for wisdom, or "philanthropos," a person loving humanity. We can understand it as a human reciprocal love.

By time, the power and the function of eros-erotism lessens but love doesn't lessen, for the second form of love, philia, develops and compensate for the first.

By the time, we learn to know each other; we learn to share, to support one another, to co-operate. We develop common goals, we take care of the same children, we face together the same problems and enjoy the same joys. We become friends.

Our partner should be our best friend. We have to talk together, we have to open our hearts to the other and listen to the other.

Television and the Internet may be interesting and useful. Sometimes they can also help a relationship for they give subjects to talk about (especially when we share the experience), but they risk also to isolate the partners, as it happens more and more frequently in many families.

The television and the Internet risk to become the safety-valve of our depression and loneliness.

We live in the age of communication, but our generation is losing the ability to communicate, at least with true human beings. In front of the television we are just passive and if we protest against what we see and hear, nobody is there to answer. The television doesn't help us to communicate responsibly. On the Internet we meet people who are just nicknames, people that we do not know and who don't really know us. Many boys spend time in front of video games: there they are the absolute heroes, the winners. If they have to talk, they just need to say "yes," "no," or very small sentences. This may be a reason why, parents have often difficulties to communicate with teenagers, and a conversation seems an interrogatory made at the police station.

This shouldn't happen in our families. We cannot be satisfied with artificial presence. The Bible says that "Just as water reflects the face, so one human heart reflects another" (Proverbs 27:19), which means that human beings can find a rewarding communication only with other true, real human beings. A heart needs another heart. We need to look in the eyes of the people to whom we talk. We need to know that they are really talking to us and listen when we talk.

Man needs man to know himself. We need to communicate with other human beings. In which other being can we reflect ourselves, at the best, if not in the person we have chosen to be one with us, our other self?

We need to talk together, pray together, read the Word of God together, consid-

er life together ... without exaggerating. We need silence too and even the best engine can break down if it works all the time.

Friendship is also respect for the intimacy of the partner. Even in marriage there is space for a secret corner in the heart of both. Without this secret corner the other would lose even his/her fascination. Our partner must keep a little bit of mystery: he/she needs it and we need it too.

Will all this avoid all problems? Not really, and we haven't to be scandalized. Even the best adventure presents difficulties and problems, but they add charm.

I do not like walking in artificial channels. I like wild wadies (valleys), where you have to jump and be careful. But you will see flowers there, and trees. And if there is water it doesn't flow down with a silent monotonous course. Instead it forms cascades, curves. You never know what you will see after the next rock, behind the next curve. You never get bored and tired.

Only, in a wild wadi, or on a mountain, it sometimes happens that you get into the wrong path, and have to go back to find the right one. It may happen that you slip down and bruise your skin, but a little alcohol and a kiss can solve the problem. So it is in our marriages.

What if a more serious accident happens? We must go to the hospital. What may be the hospital of our marriage?

AGAPE. If eros is the starting point of our love adventure, and **philia** the sign of our increasing joy, **agape** is what supports all the experience, gives it a meaning and a purpose, repairs the damages of life and keeps all new again and again.

Agape is love at its highest level, is love which gives all without pretending nothing. It is totally unselfish and generous. In the Bible, God's love for us is described as agape.

Without agape, eros would become caprice and egoism.

Without agape, philia would become a habit and marriage an association for reciprocal support.

Agape is love for the other's sake, forgiveness, grace, gift of ourselves, patience, kindness.

Jesus said: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34)

Lets' ask two questions.

1) Who is the other that we have to love as Jesus loved us? We have to love all, but in an all special way the one we chose to dedicate our life to him/her. If we have to love our neighbour with all our heart, isn't our partner our closer one?

2) We have to love as Jesus loved us. So, let's ask, "How did Jesus love?" The cross is the symbol of His love: and the cross is the giving all even when we are not receiving anything!

In all marriages there must be a great cross. Not a crucifix on a wall, but a cross in our heart, a sign of an endless love, of a love that is unselfish, always ready to forgive, always ready to look with hope to the other; a love always ready to appreciate the best the other can offer us without pretending anything. A love that may be silent and quiet, but strong and enduring.

A love that may be expressed by such simple words like: I love you, I would give my life for you.

Pastor Giovanni Leonardi

A PASTORAL PRAYER

My dear Father Who are in heaven,

Thank You for caring for me and my brothers and sisters, in our daily earthly journey.

Bless all the people who love and support my ministry, and also those who do not care or do not understand.

Give me enough love and wisdom to help all those who accept my help, and take care in a special way of those who do not think they need any.

Help me receive the fullness of your love and teaching, so that I may share them with the people you give me the opportunity to meet. But, please, work Yourself in their hearts, for only if Your Spirit waters the soil of our souls, the seeds we can plant can bear abundant fruits of conversion and holiness.

[Past. Giovanni Leonardi]

CHRISTIAN HEALTH

HYDROTHERAPIC TREATMENTS

The word “hydrotherapy” means “therapy through water.” Water is very abundant and all of us can enjoy it. The Ancients soon discovered that water can be used not just to drink, cook, or wash, but also to help us be healthy. “All primitive peoples use it even today in the treatment of wounds, and even wild animals know its benefits. A story says that Priessnitz, the father of hydrotherapy, received his first lesson just from an animal. One day, while sitting at the border of a stream, in a mountainous region, he saw a wounded deer going, slowly slowly and limping, into the cold water; the animal was not there only to drink but also to wet its wounded limb in the cold water. For many days the observer saw the animal returning to the same place and could witness the progressive improvement of its health, until the day when the animal went to the stream only to drink.” (Dr. H. Muller and Eunice Noualy, *La nostra salute*, Florence 1964).

Everybody knows how a warm bath has a relaxing effect and is useful before going to bed, if we are anxious or nervous. On the opposite, a shower with, alternatively, cold and hot water

has a very exciting and reinvigorating effect. It is useful in the morning when we get out of bed ... And it hasn't the negative effects of coffee.

HEADACHE

A very simple hydrotherapeutic treatment is that against headache when it is due to congestion. It happens that you feel the blood pressure hitting your head. In this case, the problem is due to a too high blood pressure and you can easily reduce it following these simple instructions:

Sit on a chair or at the border of the bed and put your feet in a basin with some warm water in. Slowly add some very hot water till when you are able to stand it without feeling distress. This way, the blood vessels of the feet and of the legs will open wider and the blood will come more into them reducing the pressure on the head.



At the same time, to accelerate the process, put on your forehead a towel previously soaked in cold water and wrung. This way the blood vessels will shrink sending away the blood to the feet and the legs now ready to receive it.

The treatment can last from five to a maximum of thirty minutes and it is evident that the help of another person makes it much more comfortable and useful. In case the person is sick it is useful to keep him/her warm with a blanket on the shoulders and on the legs.

The Best Holiday Provisions Are Love And Forgiveness.



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