



April 1, 2007

Volume V

Holy Week: Past and Present

As we approach Holy Week, my mind is filled with the memories of the Holy Weeks of the past. I am transported back in time to my childhood. I can remember, as a boy, the liturgy of Palm Sunday, which signaled the beginning of Holy Week. Mainly, I remember the procession carrying the palms. That Palm Sunday Procession always took me back to that very first Palm Sunday, when Our Lord, Jesus Christ, made His grand entrance, riding into Jerusalem in procession, as the King He truly is. How all the crowds hailed Him, waving the palm branches and shouting: “Hosanna in the Highest, Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.” How wonderful it must have been, to see the people lining the streets and waving the palm branches to welcome their King and their God. Little did they know, how the atmosphere of Jerusalem would change in just a few days.

It always struck me how the beginning of the most solemn and somber week of the Church year could begin on such a festive, positive note. I can't help but wonder what the Apostles must have been going through, on that first Palm Sunday, so many years ago. To see their Lord and Master treated so well, they must have thought that the Kingdom, which Jesus had spoken of, was actually becoming a reality. Finally, after all this time, the Jews would have their King, their Messiah, and the Kingdom, which God had promised to Israel. Just think of it! No more Roman Soldiers; no more Pontius Pilate; no more subservience to invaders. The Apostles saw it all coming together, just as they imagined it would be. They must have been on “cloud nine” on that first Palm Sunday. The memory fades and I am brought back to the present.

In the present, to the impartial observer, there is nothing so special about Palm Sunday. For many folks, it's just another day off from work, to sit at home and watch T.V., or to get together with family and friends. One more week until Easter Sunday, and there is so much to do: We have to color the



Easter eggs; buy all the candy for the baskets; the candy bunnies, chocolate eggs, jellybeans, etc. Don't forget to tell the children about the real important things concerning Easter: the Easter Bunny and the Easter Parade. The girls have to get their new clothes for Easter. On Easter Sunday everyone gets together with family and friends for some great food and a good time. During all of this festivity, a small child asks his father a sobering question: "What does Easter mean? And, Where did it come from?" That short glimpse of reality, raised by the question of a young child, brings back the memories of Easter Sunday of yester-year. Oh! There was still the celebration with the food, the Easter baskets, and all the rest, but the real meaning of Easter, which seems to have been lost in today's world, can only be explained, and appreciated, if we travel back to the past; to recall it all, the way it actually happened, and the way the liturgy of the Church, reverently brought it to us.

After the procession on Palm Sunday, the entire atmosphere of the Church seemed to change. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy week were pretty quiet. The Masses on those days were longer than most because of the length of the Epistles and Gospels, but most people didn't go to Church again until Holy Thursday.

Holy Thursday is the celebration of the institution of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and of the Holy Eucharist, which was instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the first Holy Thursday, at the Last Supper.

The Liturgy for Holy Thursday was spectacular! I can remember serving the Mass on Holy Thursday. It was a Solemn High Mass with Three priests: The Deacon; The Sub-Deacon; and the Celebrant. The Mass was sung, and the choir singing the Gregorian chant, simply added to the beauty of that Liturgy. The Celebrant washed the feet of twelve men chosen from the congregation, the same way that Our Lord washed the feet of the Twelve Apostles at the Last Supper. At the Gloria of the Mass, all the bells would ring for the entire prayer. Once the Gloria was finished, the bells would stop ringing, and remain silent until Easter Sunday. During that time, the wooden Clackers would take the place of bell ringing during the Masses until Easter Sunday. The Clackers added to the somber mood of the Liturgy and were used as a reminder of the Passion, which Our Lord was about to undergo. Looking around the Church, you could see that all the Statues and Pictures had been covered since Passion Sunday and will remain covered until Easter Sunday. This was done to remind us of the absence of Our Lord from this earth, and the absence of the Apostles, who abandoned Jesus, to suffer His Passion, all alone.

After the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was over, the Celebrant, assisted by the Deacon and Sub-Deacon, carried the Blessed Sacrament in Procession to a side Altar, which was converted into the Altar of Repose. The Blessed Sacrament would remain there until Easter Sunday. The Altar of Repose represented the Sepulcher. After the Procession, the priests returned to the main Altar and stripped it, leaving the Altar bare and the

This Issue

Holy Week:
Past &
Present-----1

Fr. Martin's
Sermon-----4

Catechism:
The Real
Meaning of
Jesus-----5

The
Following of
Christ-----9



Tabernacle empty, with its door left open. This was to show that Jesus physically left this world when He died on the cross, and was gone until His Resurrection on Easter Sunday. This left the Church, and the congregation, prepared for the events, and the Liturgy, of Good Friday.

Good Friday's Liturgy was usually done in the afternoon (between 12p.m. and 3p.m.). This was the time when Our Lord hung on the Cross. There is no Mass said on Good Friday. The Liturgy consisted of: the reading of the Passion; The unveiling of the Crucifix, followed by the veneration of the Crucifix; Prayers for various groups of people; Reception of Communion; and the Stations of the Cross. The Blessed Sacrament was replaced in the Altar of Repose, after Communion. The main Altar remained bare.

I always felt very sad on Good Friday. We never spoke during the hours of 12-3p.m. We would reflect on what a tremendous thing Jesus did for all of us. What He had to go through because of our sins. Good Friday is a reality check. It really puts things into perspective. Good Friday was always very difficult for me. It seemed to last a lot longer than 24 hours. I was always glad when Holy Saturday dawned. We could look forward to Easter Sunday, which was the very next day.

The Liturgy of Holy Saturday consisted of : The Blessing of the water; The Blessing of the Fire; The Blessing of the Paschal Candle; The reading of the Prophecies; The Chanting of the Litany of All the Saints; The lighting of the Paschal Candle; and, the celebration of the restored rites of the Vigil of Easter.

Easter Sunday was finally here. The long days of fast and abstinence of lent were over. We have been given another chance at salvation by Our Lord, Who paid the debt to Divine Justice for sins committed. Hurray! Thank You, God, for loving us so much. Jesus conquered sin and death by rising from the dead. We can do the same by following in His footsteps and carrying our crosses to Calvary behind Our Lord. What a great day, Easter Sunday.

The Church was beautifully decorated. The Statues and the Holy Pictures were uncovered, and the Main Altar was adorned with Easter Lilies. The vestments for Easter were white or gold. The Mass for Easter was a time of rejoicing. The music and the mood in the Church was full of glory and joy. The alleluia antiphon was said all through the Masses that were said during the entire octave of Easter

The memories of past Easter Sundays, serve as a reminder to us of just how important our relationship is with the Good God. We can never take anything for granted. We must cooperate with the grace that we receive from God. Our salvation depends on it! May you have a Blessed and Happy Easter! Rejoice, for Our Lord is truly Risen!

“ Good Friday is a Reality check. It really puts things into Perspective”

Taken from “Holy Week: Past and Present”



*Sermon from Fr. Martin Stepanich: Prayer, Part V;
“Thy Kingdom Come”*

In the Our Father, we pray: “Thy Kingdom come”. This is the second of seven petitions found in the Lord’s Prayer. It is, of course, no surprise that Jesus should mention God’s Kingdom in His official prayer that He has given to us.

The Archangel, Gabriel, had foretold the establishment of the Kingdom of the Messiah, when he said to Mary at the Annunciation: “He shall be King over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:32,33).

When John the Baptist began to preach penance to the people, he cried out: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” (Mark 1:15).

He kept on speaking of His Kingdom throughout His earthly sojourn and He often made comparisons between it and earthly things and earthly events.

And though it did not dawn on them right away, the Apostles eventually realized that the Kingdom of Christ was strictly a spiritual Kingdom, “My Kingdom is not of this world,” Jesus let Pontius Pilate know in clear and unmistakable terms. (John 18:36).

The spiritual Kingdom of God, which is Christ’s Church, has been established on earth for many long centuries. So, at first glance, it may seem strange for us to pray for the coming of something, which is already here. But it should be easy for anyone of us to understand that we are praying that God’s Kingdom might become a reality among all men, that His Reign in the souls of all men might become an established fact.

The plain truth is that all men have not accepted the Kingdom of God, either because they do not want to do so, or because they do not know about the Kingdom. So, to them, it is as if God’s Kingdom were not yet established on earth. It is as if it were not yet a reality. So, it is because of this sad fact that we pray, “Thy Kingdom come.”

The Kingdom of God will be accepted only by men of good will, men who do not refuse to do what the King desires and commands. He is the one who is to say what we are to believe, and how we are to live, and how we are to worship. He is the one with the say-so about how the Church should be governed and who is to possess supreme authority and who is to be given Sacred Orders, and so on.

In our times, we have some especially urgent intentions, which we want to include when we pray that God’s Kingdom may come. Following the example of Our Holy Church, we pray for unity—true unity, not just union—especially among all Christians. This, in fact, is the predominant intention of the Chair of Unity Octave.

We pray, further, that all men may turn to God and acknowledge Him as the Supreme Lord. That means that we pray for the destruction of

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pray: ‘Thy
Kingdom
come’.
This is the
second of
seven
petitions
found in
the Lord’s
Prayer.”*

*Taken
from Fr.
Martin’s
Sermon.*



“The Kingdom of God will be accepted only by men of good will, who do not refuse to do as the King commands.”

Taken from Fr. Martin’s Sermon.

atheistic communism, with its godlessness and materialism, its brutality and bestiality. We pray, therefore, for the conversion of Russia, as Our Lady requested at Fatima.

We pray for peace—true peace among men—above all, that men may be at peace with God, for without that, they cannot possibly be at peace with each other. Peace is one of the characteristics of the Kingdom of God.

The final phase of God’s Kingdom will, of course, be eternal. So, we pray also that the eternal Kingdom of God in Heaven may be ours one day whenever we pray: “Thy Kingdom come.”

(given in Chicago, Ill. On January 19, 1964)

What is the Real Meaning of Jesus Christ?

After the Ascension of Jesus to His Father in heaven, the Apostles returned to Jerusalem. St. Luke tells us that they returned “with great joy. And they were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God,” (Luke 24:52,53) At first sight it seems strange that they should have rejoiced at the departure of Jesus, their Lord and Master, from this world. By His going, they had lost the physical presence of their Friend, their Master, indeed, their God. But, they rejoiced, they praised and blessed God. What explains their joy, their praise of God? It must be that in the interval between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus, they learned, through the instruction of Jesus Himself, the real meaning of Jesus, the significance of His Life, His Death, His Resurrection, and His Ascension into heaven. This new knowledge was so important, so filled with blessings for them and for the world, that, in spite of their sadness at the departure of Jesus Himself, they rejoiced, and, in turn, praised the God they had known in Him. At last they knew the mystery of Jesus, and they believed in Him, hoped in Him, and loved Him. They would spend their lives giving to the world this belief, this hope, and this love.

What was this new understanding of Jesus, which so filled them with joy and with the desire to communicate this joy to the whole world? First of all, we must remember that the Apostles were Jews, members of God’s Chosen People. They saw Jesus against the background of the sacred history of their own people, His own people. Thus they saw in Jesus the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel and, through Israel, to the whole world. In Jesus, they saw the salvation, which God had promised to mankind.

The Apostles, like their contemporary fellow-countrymen, knew that God had promised to bring blessings to them, and, through them, to the rest of the world. They knew, that the channel of these blessings had been narrowed down by God, from Abraham through Isaac, Juda and David to some one individual, a descendant of David, who would extend



the Kingdom of God to the whole world. They knew that this promised king, this Anointed One of God, would be born of a virgin in Bethlehem.

Thus when they met Jesus and followed Him, they were ready to accept Him as the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. His doctrines and His miracles enabled them to see in Him the Promised One for whom, they had been waiting.

But like their countrymen, they had expected a royal Messiah who would lead them to worldly glory. Hence, when they saw Him refusing to become a temporal king, when they saw Him arrested, tried and put to death like a common criminal, they were bewildered and confused, and they lost heart.

The Resurrection of Jesus, however, and the instructions which He gave them during the forty days He remained with them on earth, opened their eyes to the unperceived riches of their own scriptures. After His Resurrection, Jesus showed them that they had attended only to the glorious aspects of the Messiah they expected. They had ignored the more difficult prophecies about the sufferings and death of the Messiah. Jesus recalled to them the words of Isaias about the “Servant of Jahweh”, Who as the Messiah, would bring blessings to all men, but who would suffer and die. Far from being a man the people might admire, he would be despised. He would take upon himself the sins of men: He would be bruised and pierced for the sins of men so that men might be saved. He would be led to death like a lamb to the slaughter.

Faced with the Risen Jesus, perceiving Him to be very much alive, the triumph of man over sin and death, the Apostles, under His instruction, finally saw the true meaning of their own scriptures, the true meaning of God’s promises. The Messiah, the Christ, would be a king indeed, but a king in the world of the spirit of man. He would rule, not an earthly kingdom, but the hearts of men. He would gain His kingdom, not by military or political conquest, but by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross for the salvation of mankind. His triumph would be achieved through humiliation and death. His triumph would not be over the kingdoms of earth, but over the devil, sin and death. The evils brought into the world by the disobedience of Adam—sin, disease, and death, the rule of the devil over the souls of men—these evils would be overcome by the obedience of the Anointed One of God. By his sin, Adam had preferred his own advantage to God, and so, had lost the Kingdom of God for himself and for all his children. By His obedience, and obedience unto death, Jesus had preferred God to His own human life, and so had won back for all men, the Kingdom of God.

The Apostles knew that the sacrifice of Jesus was successful and effective for they saw with their own eyes, that Jesus had risen from the dead, now immortal and glorious. Thus they were able to reconcile the two apparently contradictory descriptions of the Messiah, given in the scriptures

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Taken from “What is the Real Meaning of Jesus”



“For Jesus, Whom the Apostles recognized as the Messiah, was not only a man, He was God Himself, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. In Him they saw God Himself.”

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of their people. The Messiah would be a glorious, triumphant King; He would also be a servant. Despised and humiliated, put to death by His enemies. In Jesus, in the glorious Risen Jesus, the Apostles saw these contradictions merge with one another, and vanish. And the picture of the Messiah, which emerged from this merging of contradictions, was even more glorious than had been their former dreams of worldly glory. For Jesus, whom they recognized clearly as the Messiah, the Christ, was not only a man, He was God Himself, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. In Him, they saw God Himself. He had come into this world not to establish simply an earthly kingdom filled with earthly peace and blessings. He had come to give to men the far greater blessing of eternal life, the blessing of sharing in the life of God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Through Him, and in Him, and with Him, they would conquer sin, death, and the devil. By His grace, they would rise with Him to the Father, to rule gloriously in heaven. In the mysterious love and providence of God, they had been chosen, to bring this great blessing of eternal life, to the rest of men. They had been chosen to assist the Son of God in establishing the Kingdom of God among men. It is no wonder, then, that they returned from witnessing the Ascension of Jesus, with hearts filled with joy and thankfulness to God. For them the mystery of human existence had been solved. Man had been bound over to death and the devil through sin. In Jesus, sin had been overcome, and with sin, death and the devil had been conquered. They rejoiced as men truly reborn, and born not now just to a passing existence here on earth, but born to eternal life.

Under the tutelage of the Risen Jesus, they now saw that all human history up to that time was but a preparation for the coming of Jesus, and His work of Redemption. Jesus was the center of all history, the center, which gave meaning to the growing circle of human history. Without Jesus, human life on earth was doomed to the ever-recurring cycles of human events; to the repetitive beginnings, flowerings, and decay of human civilizations and cultures. But with Jesus, human life could be raised above these earth bound cycles, to the eternal Now of God. God Himself had descended into the world of man, became a man, to raise men to God. Without Jesus, all men had been doomed after this present life, to the eternal boredom, frustration, and pain, which is hell. Through Jesus, it became possible for all men to rise to the perfect satisfaction of all human desires, which is life with God in heaven.

Because all human history, up to that time, was but a preparation for the coming of Jesus, it was only fitting that previous persons and events, foreshadow or prefigure Jesus Himself. Thus the Apostles were able to see even Adam, the first man, as a figure of Jesus. As the first man, it was the function of Adam, to bind men to God by obedience. Adam, it is true, failed. But, Jesus the Christ, the First Man of the New Covenant, succeeded. In the eyes of God, Adam represented the whole human race. His



obedience would have brought inconceivable blessings to all men. In God's eyes, Jesus represented the whole human race. His obedience has brought blessings to all men. The Chosen People were, in God's eyes. As His "son", a son through whom the whole world would be blessed. Jesus is Himself the very Son of God, the Son through Whom mankind is really and fully blessed. The Chosen People, God's "son", were exiled in Egypt before they entered, for good, the Promised Land. Jesus, the Son of God, was exiled in Egypt before He returned to the Promised Land to carry out His work of Redemption. The Chosen People, God's "son", were saved from destruction in Egypt, by the shedding of the blood of a lamb, done in obedience to God's Will. Jesus is Himself the Lamb, whose Blood washes the world from sin, done in obedience to God's Will. In the annual Passover celebration, the Chosen People were forbidden to break any of the bones of the lamb, through whose blood they were saved from the angel of death in Egypt. On the cross at Calvary, God saw to it that the bones of Jesus, the true Lamb of God, were not broken. Thus all of the realities of the Old Testament prefigure Jesus, and the life and deeds of Jesus sum up the realities of the Old Testament, and give them new dimension, new depth of reality; for the Old Testament is but a shadow of Jesus, Jesus Himself is the substance of God's plans for the salvation of mankind.

All these things, the Apostles came to see clearly after the Resurrection of Jesus, either through the tutelage of Jesus Himself before His Ascension, or through the light of the Holy Ghost, which they received on the day of Pentecost.

More than this, they finally saw their own role in God's plan. They saw that they had been chosen by Jesus to bring the blessings of salvation to all men. They were to be the instruments of Jesus in establishing the Kingdom of God among men. From Jesus Himself they had received the commission to make disciples of all nations. These disciples were to be baptized into the Kingdom of God. That Baptism would expel sins from their souls and introduce the divine life of grace, which Jesus had won for them, by shedding His Blood on the cross. Once baptized, these disciples were to be guided in their moral lives, by the instructions and commands of the Apostles. From Jesus, the Apostles received this three-fold power: to teach men the truths of salvation; to give men the grace, through the Sacraments, by which they could achieve salvation; and to rule the human conduct of men in order to lead them to eternal salvation. Among the Apostles themselves, even though all of them shared in this three-fold power, Peter had been chosen by Jesus to be the Head of the whole Kingdom; the Head of the whole Church. In the Kingdom of God, Peter was the absolute Head, the Supreme Pontiff.

The Apostles also knew that while the Kingdom of God would be in the world, it would not be of this world. It would be as observable to men as light from a mountaintop. It would have a structure, an

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organization. It would make use of perceptible signs to transmit the life of God to men: of Baptism; Of the Body and Blood of Jesus; of the anointing of the sick and the dying; of the laying on of hands for the transmission of the power of the Priesthood and of the Episcopacy; of the elevation of marriage to the level of a Sacrament; as a sign of unity of the Church. All of these would be external signs of an incomparably greater invisible reality, the union of men with God, through the union with Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God on earth would be the union of men with Jesus, a spiritual union whereby Jesus would be the source of divine life for those who united to Him, the only way for men to reach God. By grasping this Truth, it would make men free, free of sin and free from the downward drag of sinful human history.

Filled with thoughts such as these, the Apostles and the disciples of Jesus, one hundred and twenty in number, waited in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Ghost of God, which was promised to them by Jesus. It is no wonder that they spent their time praising and blessing God. For, they finally knew the real meaning of Jesus Christ.

(Taken from *The Whole Story*: written by Martin J, Healy S.T.D., Published by *The Confraternity of the Precious Blood; Nihil Obstat & Imprimatur*, March 12, 1959)

The Following of Christ: Book III, Chapter 47.

“That all Grievous things are to be Endured for Eternal Life”

So, let not the labors which you have undertaken for My sake crush you, neither let tribulations, from whatever source, cast you down; but in every occurrence let My promise strengthen and console you. I am sufficient to recompense you beyond all bounds and measure. It is not long that you have to labor here, nor will you always be oppressed with sorrow. Wait a little, and you shall see a speedy end of suffering. The hour is coming when all labor and trouble shall be no more. All is little and short which passes away with time.

Be mindful what you are about: labor faithfully in My vineyard: I will be your reward. Write, read, sing, and lament. Keep silence, pray, bear adversities manfully: eternal life is worth all these, and greater combats. Peace shall come one day, which is known to the Lord. And it will not be day or night, such as it is at present; but light everlasting; infinite brightness, steadfast peace and safe repose. You will not then say: Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Neither will you cry out: Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged; for death shall be no more, but never failing health; no anxiety, but blessed delight, and a society sweet and glorious.

Oh! If you could see the everlasting crowns of the Saints in heaven, and in how great glory they now triumph, who appeared contemptible



heretofore to this world, and as it were even unworthy of life, doubtless you would immediately cast yourself down to the very earth, and would rather be ambitious to be in subjection to all, than to have precedence over so much as one. Neither would you covet the pleasant days of this life, but would rather be glad to suffer tribulations for God's sake; and esteem it the greatest gain to be reputed as nothing by men.

Oh! If you did but relish these things, did they penetrate deep into your heart, how would you dare so much as once to complain! Ought not all painful labors to be endured for life everlasting? It is no small matter to lose again the kingdom of God. Therefore, lift up your face to heaven; behold I and all My Saints with Me, who in this world have had a great conflict, now rejoice, are comforted now, are now secure, are now at rest; and they shall for all eternity abide with Me in the Kingdom of My Father.

“Nothing will afford us such consolation at the hour of death, as the good use we have made of sufferings;”

“ Practical Reflections ”

How hard is this saying: That salvation is only to be obtained by a life of continual suffering, by constantly fighting against and by ever renouncing and dying to ourselves! But how are we encouraged to submit to such a course, by the hope and assurance of eternal happiness, which will be the reward we shall receive in exchange for the disappointments and miseries of this present time! Nothing will afford us such consolation at the hour of death, as the good use we have made of sufferings; then shall we find that we have done nothing purely for God, but what we have done contrary to ourselves, and that a truly Christian life must necessarily be a life of crosses and self denials.

Prayer

Taken from “The Following of Christ”

As, O God, we believe and hope for the good things of eternity, grant that we may so use the transitory miseries of this life as to obtain the permanent felicity of the next. At the hour of death what shall we not wish to have done, to have suffered, and renounced for the sake of attaining heaven! Instill, O Lord, into our hearts something of the desires we shall then entertain to no purpose, that we may now really renounce and die to ourselves. Grant we may never consider anything as great but what is eternal, and regard all that passes away with time; as little and contemptible. O happiness! O joy! O Eternal Felicity! Console us under the afflictions of our mortal course. And since we must of necessity repent either in time or for all eternity, suffer either in this life or in the next, grant us, we beseech Thee, O Jesus, patiently to endure all present evils, in hopes of obtaining future bliss and happiness. Amen.

The Explanation of Our Mission and of Our Logo.

Since this is the first year of the “Mystical Rose”, it would seem only prudent that we explain why we call our newsletter, “Mystical Rose”, and why we have designed this Logo at the top of the first page.

The title, “Mystical Rose”, is taken from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Logo of the crown of thorns, with the roses attached, symbolizes Our Lady’s suffering during Our Lord’s Passion and Death. It also symbolizes Her suffering for us, her spiritual children. The seven roses affixed to the crown of thorns represents the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady.

We dedicate this work to Our Blessed Mother and we ask Her to help and guide us, so that we may be able to serve God’s people by printing material that will be spiritually edifying: bringing those who read it to a better knowledge of their faith; a better understanding of what God requires of them in order to achieve salvation; and a more sincere desire to serve the Living God to the best of their ability.

Information about Catholicism is so very necessary in order to live a good life. The world in which we live today is in dire need of that information, in order to save mankind from its own self-imposed ignorance. We hope, by the grace of God, that our newsletter will help to inform.

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