**QUESTION BOX**

by Michael Halm

[from *My People* newspaper]

Q: I had been thinking about getting into Christian television, but after the truth coming out about so many of the televangelists I'm having second thoughts. Is there such a thing as Christian TV?

A: Yes, there is. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." There is, iut seems, a purification going on among the most well-known preachers. The recent events require more forgiveness and more true brotherly love from all Christians..

The Holy Spirit is moving, bringing together the broken body of Christ.

Don't give up on television. Don't give it over to the enemy. Pray. If the Lord is calling you in that direction, go. Without Christians in the media there won't be Christian television -- or Christian newspapers.

Q: You encourage your readers to pray the news. But how? It's not like praying the Lord's prayer. How does one pray for Bork's confirmation? Or should I rather pray for some better, less controversial nominee? How do I know how to pray?

A: Your questions show that you are now re-examining your prayer life. Praise God. Praying the news, rather than just being discouraged by it, is a new experience for nearly all of our readers.

A good place to begin is to seek the Lord's will in Scripture, Does the Lord tell us to pray for our leaders? Does He want us to value life? Does He want each person to make moral decisions freely?

If you seek such answers prayerfully, you will find them. If you knock on your Friend's door persistently and without doubting, He will open the door and grant your request. Perhaps your prayer will be different from someone else's. Perhaps it will be different from any other prayer you have ever prayed. Maybe it's frightening, but isn't it better than just doing nothing and letting the news of the world overwhelm you? Seek. Knock. Pray.

Q: You had an article on organizations helping people with and without AIDS out of the homosexual lifestyle and that was good. But I know a victim of AIS-phobia personally and I want to help him out. He has been abused by his gay "friends" and beaten up by a gang of kids accusing him of spreading AIDS. How do I embrace this "leper"?

A: There is a great deal of fear about today, fear of gays of other gays, gays of straights and straights or gays. "Gay" is said to stand for "Got AIDS yet?" Some are terrified of death, but can't find their way out like your friend. Some do not care if there is a second death in hell after this one and will not change. Others pretend, but are beginning to doubt if it's really worth giving one's life for.

There can be no blanket answer for all situations, except that Someone thought it worth dying for and died in the place of all of us sinners, the active homosexual, the adulterous heterosexual, the selfish, the confused. We are all searching for love. All the places we search are the wrong place until we look to Jesus. For a specific answer as how best to help a particular person out of such bondage pray for Jesus to send His Holy Spirit, pray for the gift of love.

Q: As I see it, AIDS is an answer to prayer. It is God's doing what man has been unable to do, curb the abuse of drugs and sex. It's justice -- yet innocent children are dying from it, too. Do you have an explanation?

A: AIDS deaths, like all death, is the result of sin. All fall short of the glory of God, all born will die.

One way AIDS seems to be a blessing is that it is a slow death. Many are turning to the spiritual, discovering true love before they die, turning from the false loves they once held so dear.

Some like you, are asking questions they never asked before. Some are finding the Answer.

Q: My doctor says there's no more he can do. He says I may live out the new year, but the pain will keep increasing. Why shouldn't I end it all now?

A: You shouldn't end it all because you don't have the right. You are not your own. You have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus. You may not even have the power to end it all. You could put a gun to your head, but unless your Maker wills it it cannot fire. He knows what pain is. He understands death. Give up your life and let Him begin it all.

Q: Your article on corporate tithing last month has me questioning my whole financial system. Thinking of God as a ten percent shareholder in our business is new to me, but interesting. How do I get my partners to see it that way? Or my family?

A: The first thing to do is to change your own habits, Deduct the titrhe first, even before taxes, social security, etc. Your step in faith will be a witness to your partners. They will ask you why would you do such a thing. Tell them.

You may be thought a fool. Not everyone, even in a corporation of Christians, will see that everything they have actually belongs to God and He is giving us a whopping ninety percent deduction.

Pray for your partners. Ask the Lord to open their hearts and minds to the idea as He has yours. Pray about where to put that "extra" money, how to invest it in His business of saving the unsaved.

You will probably find yourself praying also for direction on how to better invest the rest of your profit. The inspiration He will give you will also witness to others. He is only a silent partner, if you're not listening.

 Q: The article "Grandma's Lesson" has me rethinking the relationship I have with the elderly in my life, with my own aging. How can I teach my children that deeper meaning of life?

A: One need not have a live-in relative as the author of that article did to practice unconditional love. Showing respect for older people in the supermarket, on the street, in the hospital or nursing home will teach children. The command "Honor thy father and mother" is is only one with a promise, "that you might have long life."

Respect for life without regard to old age begets respect for life without regard to young age as well. Love begets love.

Perhaps this year you could start a family tradition of visiting "grandma" in place of what you had been doing for Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Years. Happy Old Year.

Could you please find out if this is true?

Anxious

A; The appearances to the children in Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, which have been constant for over six years do not have the official recognition of the Catholic Church. Millions have visited there, however, and many have changed their lives for the better.

Though the longest reported series of Marian visions, our sources tell us they have not yet ended. Even when they do end, even if we do see the signs in the heavens and hear of wars a rumors of wars, we ought not look forward to the Day of theLord with anxiety, but with anticipation.

The message from these visionaries has been the same as the children of Fatima and Lourdes, "Repent. Be ready. There's not much time left."

It's not new, yet it is news, the good news. You yet have time t leave the sinking ship of this world and get into the Savior's life boat.

Q: I saw your article last month on the pharmacist who no longer sells "the pill". My wife has been using "the pill" for two or three years. Last year I accepted Jesus into my life. Since then I have felt the Spirit telling us not to use "the pill". I asked two Christian couples about this. They told me to do what I thought best. I asked them if using "the pill" was right or wrong. They didn't give me an answer. What do you say?

Looking for the Truth

A: Brother, the Spirit is talking to you. "The pill" has nothing to do with our denomination, biology or psychology. "The pill" has to do with the Lordship of Jesus. Can we trust Him to plan our families? If not, He's not Lord of our lives. When we have sex, as with everything else, we must simply obey Jesus. He will give us the right number of children at the right time. We may not recognize this a t first, but the future will prove Jesus right. Only our disobedience can ruin it. If we have already ruined our family by disobedience, we should simply repent and begin to obey. God will then take over even if only one person in the marriage is obedient to Him. Thank the Holy Spirit for revealing to you His life-saving and life-changing truth.

Q: The Bible study at work during lunch started out great, but now we are losing, not gaining , people because of doctrinal conflicts. I don't want to "abandon ship", but what can I do to halt this disputing over mere words?

A: To fight the battle you need to know who the enemy is, not our Christian brothers and sisters, but "the principalities and powers, the rulers of this world of darkness, the evil spirits in the regions above." (Eph 6:11-12) You need to use the right weapon, not dogma or theology or tradition. "Profess the truth in love and grow to full maturity of Christ the Head." (Eph4:15)

Before, during and after the Bible study, gather others to pray for the situation and take authority over the devil. (Eph 6:11-19) Join Jesus in His continual prayer for unity. (Jn 17:21)

Q: My daughter has put her son, my grandson. He is going from one of his so-called friends to another now, but I expect him to come to grandma soon. This bunch he has been hanging around with look like they could be into anything -- drugs, homosexuality, satanism even. What do I do now?

A: Pray for you grandson. He will then have a grandmother praying for him. Pray too for your daughter. Ask God to deliver the boy from whatever trap the evil one has set for him. Ask Him for the words to say and the love with which to love him.

It would be good too to learn what resources you have available to you should you need more help than you can give. The Lord has delivered many prodigal sons, many of whom have ministries to people with the same bondage.

Thank God for that communications link between you and your grandson. Take confidence in His promise to turn all things to the good for those who love Him. (Rom 8:28) Look in faith to the celebration when the lost grandson is found. (Mt 15:24)

Q: Bishop McHugh's article made some interesting points about the family's place in American society. It gave me hope. It challenged me. How might I as a member of the Church family act for justice? How could I assist this adjustment process, the strengthening of the family?

A: As the business world and the government devaluate the family, we as the Church must stand firm. Paul, by the power of the Holy Spirit , gave good advice on this. He said to pray for and give thanks for those in authority (1 Tm 2:1-2), not to rely onso uncertain a thing as wealth, but to share what you have. (1 Tm 6:17-18)

\We are told, "Never censure an older man, but appeal to him as a father. You should treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity." (1 Tm 5:1-2) We should honor the claims of those alone as if we were their family. Christians should provide for their own family members -- grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren -- and be taught and encouraged to do so by the Church.

Whatever you could do along these lines would help. You could volunteer at a church pantry, babysit, hold studies in the Scriptures, organize a church home support group. Let the Holy Spirit lead you.

Q: It's encouraging to read about God's people and what they're doing in *My People*, but I don't see anything like that happening in my own life. Am I blind to it? Is it my lack of faith? Do I need to repent of something first?

A: You don't write what it is you expect to happen, but perhaps James' insight applies, "What you desire you do not obtain ... You do not obtain because you do not ask. You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly, with a view to squandering what you receive on your pleasures." (Jas 4:2-3)

Are you praying the news? If not, try it. If you are, try keeping a prayer list or prayer journal. It will help you to feel more a part of what God is doing. To become one of His people you need to become one with His will.

If you are already praying, keep praying. Pray always -- whether or not you can see the prayers being answered. However little faith you have, if you use it, it will grow.

Perhaps we'll be reporting on how the Lord is working in your life soon.

Q: St. John says of the risen Christ in the *Book of Revelation* that His hair was "white like wool, whiter than snow". Why, then, is He portrayed in religious art with brown hair as He had on earth?

A: Looking at Revelation as the apocalyptic book it is, we need to ask, "What did John mean?" His description of a visionary Jesus parallels Daniel's: "As I watched, thrones were set up and the Ancient One took His throne. His clothing was snow bright and his hair on his head white as wool." (Dn 7:9) Proverbially "the hoary head is a crown of glory" (Prv 1:31) and "dignity". (Prv 20:29)

It fits the vision's theme of Jesus as "The Alpha and Omega, rhe First and the Last, the Beginning and the End". (Rv 1:8, 17; 2:8; 21:6: 22:13) with the statement by Jesus, "Before Abraham was I AM." (Jn 8:58) It also fits with the post-Resurrection appearances to Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:14) and the disciples (Jn 21:4), who did not immediately recognize Him.

We need to ask, "Would I recognize Him as my King and my God, not only as my Savior? We need to answer, "Amen!"

Q: Your front page story on violence in the November issue got to me. Especially that "self-basting" turkey phrase. It made me see how I really am cooking my own goose. But how can I get myself out of this culture of violence I'm stuck in?

A: If your reading My People, you're in the world but not of it, especially if you're praying the news. You've seen prayer change things in the Philippines, in Poland and in the Soviet Union. You've read how Jesus is changing the lives of sports figures, businessmen, drug addicts and families.

Working on your own spiritual self-improvement can be a good start. You can't forget, however, that you are not just an individual but part of the Body. "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy." (1 Cor 12:26)

You may be led to join groups lobbying for or against one or more issues or you may not. You may "just" find a prayer partner and pray. "I am sure of this much, that He Who has begun the good work in you will carry it through to completion." (Phil 1:6)

Q: We have been invited to spend a Christmas Day with my new in-laws. I have no problem with most of my husband's relative. They are good Christians. However, his brother, the drug addict, is out of prison and will be there. The family has not talked to him in five years. What should I do? Politely refuse the invitation? Say we have other plans?

A: True, when you made your marriage vows you promised to love your mate and not his family. When you made you commitment to the Lord, however, you promised to love as He loves, to love your enemies, to love the unlovable.

Perhaps you have been called into this family to be used by Him to heal it. Even if the day seems a total disaster, He could use your unconditional love for your brother-in-law to mend old wounds.

Pray with your husband about the situation. Honor his insight. Obey his decision. Know God does not ask more than He is able to enable us to do. Choose to have a hopeful Christmas and a thankful new year.

Q: Every year I resolve to break an old bad habit -- overeating, smoking, wasting time before the TV. Usually within a week I'm into it stronger than ever. How can I make this year new?

A: You need to admit that you can't. You need to give up trying to make it happen. "Seek first His Kingship over you, His way of holiness and all these things will be given you besides. (Mt 6:33)

You need to replace the void of old habits with new ones. Pray. Serve. Whatever the King wills.

"Enough then of worrying about tomorrow. Let tomorrow take care of itself. Today has troubles enough of its own." (Mt 6:34) Soon the days will get better. If you fall into the old habit, don't quit trying, try quitting again.

It would likely help if you try this with a friend burdened with the same problem. Support one another.

Q: Our family has a problem communicating. Every discussion, no matter what the subject, seems to turn into an argument. I admit I'm caught up in this as much as anyone. I'd like to make a change. Any advise?

A: The Bible has many practical proverbs on when to speak and what to say. "Where words are many, sin is not wanting, but he who restrains his lips does well." It takes two to keepan argument going. Another is, "Even a fool, if he keeps silent, is considered wise." If you at least keep your peace, at least that's a bit more peace in the family. Perhaps it will spread.

There are time to keep silent, but also times to speak out. "Answer not the foo according to his folly lest you too become like him. Choose not to play the arguing game. It may take time to change the family tradition, but you can start a new one. How far could an argument get if you begin answering foolish statements with "I love you."?

Q: I am curious about the Charismatic Renewal outside the United States, especially within the Catholic Church. Would you say that the movement is readily accepted and if so what percentage of churches has this renewal?

A: According to David B. Barrett's The 20th Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal in the Holy Spirit, the total for all Charismatics in 1988 numbered 123,342,710. Ant an annual growth rate of 6.98%, there would now be some 132 million.

Catholic Charismatics accounted for only 8.19% but are growing faster than the world average at 8.44%/year. They would thus now number some 11 million or 8.33%. The fastest growing group of Charismatics is the Messianic Jews. The only other faster than the Catholics is what Barrett calls radio/television Charismatics.

We would say that the movement is being accepted by many Catholics readily. It is approved and encouraged by the Pope.

What you are asking, however, is how did non-Charismatic accept the others in the Church who have experienced the renewal? Charismatics have not had to leave their churches like the Pentecostals had to do some years ago. The percentage of Charismatics varies from the less than 1% in the USSR to 45% in Latin America. The acceptance or rejection of renewed members too would likely vary accordingly.

Barrett does not break down his data into churches but groups: churches, prayer groups and house groups. He does write of a Third Wave renewal, the renewal of parishes rather than individuals. This would include only about 30 million of the world's 1.6 billion church members, less than 2%. "It is like the yeast which a woman took to knead into three measures of flour until the whole mass began to rise." (Lk 13:21)

Q: Our church has become a battlefield. The gossips, hypocrites and troublemaers seem to have taken over. I don't want to become a rat leaving a sinking ship like my friends from school who have left. What can I do? Can I do anything?

A: You can. Try to bind up the wounds made by others -- like the Good Samaritan. Pray. Ask for the wisdom and love needed to heal the hurts. "Be a continuing example of love, faith and purity to believers." (1 Tm 4:12) It's much the same message Mary is said. You can do all things through Him Who strengthens you. You will do greater things than He Himself did.

Q; Some are saying the Church is meddling in politics over the positions taken by some in politics and also in the Church. What is the place of the Church in politics? Should Christians avoid it? Pray for it? Change it?

A: Jesus calls us not to judge others, even those in the public eye and on the public payroll.

He told us to wait until the harvest to sort the weeds from the wheat.

In His own dealings with the political leaders of His day, Herod, Pilate and the Sanhedrin, Jesus emphasized that His Kingdom was not of this world and that the things of God are God's. If political decisions conflict with God's law or the Spirit's law of love, they are simply wrong.

We cannot avoid involvement with the world, but we can change it for the better. We can pray. We can do what the Church has been told to do. Spread the good news of the reign of God to all the world.

Q: Your articles critical of religious activism in Nicaragua and Poland got me wondering. Faith without works is dead, but how can we know if we're working for the good? Our faith might be misplaced in leaders or groups who turn against the people in need.

A: As the article pointed out, it is the mission of the Church, that is us, to transform the world. As governments change and economies readjust, we need to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit rather than what has been done in the past. "He will guide you to all truth." (Jn 16:13)

Eastern Europe, Central America, indeed the whole unfree world wants what God has blessed America with -- freedom to think, speak, write, vote as one chooses. The best thing we can do is live up to our motto, "In God we trust." The Church's prayer for and justice toward Noreiga was an example to the world. Let us remember Jesus' promise and His challenge: "Because you have kept My plea to stand fast, I will keep you safe in the time of trial which is coming on the whole world, to test all men on Earth." (Rv 3:10)

Q: AS I read your paper about Christians persecuted in Nepal and Vietnam, I am not so surprised. When I read about the misreporting of the rally of pro-lifers in Washington, it hits closer to home. What surprises me most is My People's confidence that truth and justice will triumph. Where does that come from?

A: It's called faith and it comes from hearing and believing God's word. We hold firm to His promises: "This Jesus Who has been taken from you will return, just as you saw Him go up into the heavens. (Acts 1:11) "When Christ appears, then you shall appear with Him in glory." (Col 3:4)

We have also been told: "Note this first of all: in the last days, mocking, sneering men who are ruled by their passions will arrive on the scene. They will ask: 'Where is that promised coming of his?' ... So beloved, while waiting for this, make every effort to be found without stain or defilement and at peace in His sight." (2 Pt 3:3-4, 14) Do not worry about the mockers, but about your own readiness. Read the Word. Grow in faith.

Q: Gus Morgan's article on the mentoring program, on the needs of students and teachers inspired me to volunteer. Now I'm having second thoughts. Will I be able to have and maintain the right motivation? Can I love an unlovable, unloving juvenile delinquent? Can I really make any difference?

A: Yes, you can make a difference, your love can make all the difference. Remember Jesus said, "See that you never despise on of these little ones. I assure youtheir angels in heaven constantly behold My heavenly Father's face." (Mt 18:10)

Keep your eyes on the Father. Don't forget you are not alone -- the angels and the Church are with you.

"Just so, it is no part of the Father's plan that a single one of these little ones shall ever come to grief. (Mt 18:14) You are certainly in God's plan if you work to save children from the grief of ignorance, lack of love and bad examples. We must urge and teach hope in Jesus Christ, the Savior, the one and only Way. (1 Tm 4:10-11)

Q: Media bias and political apathy -- it seems as if decent, traditional people are losing ground on all fronts. Why can't we get anywhere? I write Washington bu they don't listen. I write the papers and they don't print what I write. What am I doing wrong?

A: Cardinal John O'Connor gave an answer at the recent pro-life rally in Washington. He said, "We're not putting out a fraction of the prayer power we could. It would work miracles."

Those other things, the activism, the speaking out, are good, but not enough. As Christians, we need to call on supernatural help. We need not more solutions but the Solver.

We need to confess our sins and the sins of our nation. (Dn 9:2)) We need to petition, intercede and give thanks for those in authority. (1 Tm 2:1-2) We need to persist in prayer.(Lk 11:5-8) Let us pray.

Q: The passage from John 20:-8 proves to most Christians that the Shroud of Turin is not Jesus' burial cloth because the shroud is one piece, whereas verse seven clearly states that the napkin covering His head was separate. If I am wrong please let me know. Thanks.

A: John uses two separate words to describe the cloths used to wrap the body of Jesus, *soudarion* and *othonia*. The other evangelists use the word *sindon* (Mt 27:59, Mkn15:46,Lk 23:53), from which sindonology, the study of the Shroud of Turin comes.

John also uses *soudarion* in the story of the raising of Lazarus (Jn 1:44) for the chin band holding his mouth closed. Mark uses *sindon* for the cloth left at Gethsemane (Mk 14:51-52), so it does not necessarily mean shroud. The plural *othonia* seems to refer to all the wrappings other than the napkin and may include Joseph of Arimathea's cloth.

Paul writes "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tm 3:16, KJV) The Scriptures seem more clearly to teach that the wrappings whatever and wherever they were, do not prove anything. One either sees and believes as did "the other disciple" (v. 8) or sees only as Peter did (v. 6).

John wrote what he did "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing ye might have life through His name." (v. 31) "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." (v. 29)