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Photo by Father James Fawlicki, SVD

CAN WE BE SAVED WITHOUT JESUS?

by Father Jerome LeDoux, SVD

“She stood about 4’11”, just barely over the heads of those sitting down. Mrs. Schwartz raised her voice as loud as possible and put forth her query: ‘Bishop, you have talked all morning about Christians going to heaven... What about the others? The Muslims, Jews and Buddhists? There are faiths we never heard of, and you only talk about your circle of friends. Who is going to heaven?’”

My cousin, Randy “Duck” LeDoux, who has been a preacher for decades, was describing a town hall meeting which he had attended recently in Los Angeles where a visiting Bishop spoke. Duck took the lady’s question and emailed it straight back at me.

“The Bishop was silent and pondered his response for a moment, and I could see some folks were actually leaning to hear his answer. He stalled even the more and finally he blurted out the answer... ‘I REALLY DON’T KNOW!’

“It brought a good laugh. I had been asked that question in a similar setting many years ago, and my response was, ‘Can we all know Jesus?’ I know some Jews who do and a Buddhist once asked me couldn’t Buddha be the one. I simply pointed out that Buddha was supposedly a prophet. Who is his God? That was that.

“The Bishop’s answer reminded me of the new church system Oprah Winfrey is promoting, and that is their mantra: ‘Who says you can come to the Father only by Jesus? Don’t we all have the right to go to heaven?’

“If she, and they, spent some time in the Bible they would see clearly that it was Jesus himself who put it out there. Backed up by the Jewish Bible and seen in the folklore of some religious camps, the Savior will come to save the world from sin.”

It would seem that Oprah is unaware that “A little knowledge is a dangerous thing,” which was probably gleaned from Alexander Pope’s statement: “A little learning is a dangerous thing; drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.” Evangelist or theologian Oprah is a title that ill suits one who has little grasp of the Bible or its interpretation.

First of all, Jesus does say in John 14:6 that he is the unique route to the Father: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

So, Oprah struck out here. However, she would counter that, since she has rejected Biblical Christianity, John 14:6 means nothing to her. She believes there are many ways, millions even, “to get to what some call God. It does not matter what you call him.”

Teaming up with Eckhart Tolle, author of “A New Earth,” Oprah jointly presents weekly online webcast classes exploring the ideas and principles expressed in the book. Predictably, she has made the book a best-seller by knowingly or unknowingly becoming a figure-head for the teaching and disseminating of anti-Biblical, anti-Christian diatribes.

Misquoting Jesus and sundry parts of the Bible, Tolle does not stop there, but speaks of Jesus as just another rare person, equates Christianity with Buddhism et al., and heaven with nothing more than an “inner realm of consciousness.” He is obviously trying to cobble together a new religion composed of the mystical aspects of all major religions.

But he has omitted and spurned the blood and guts of Christianity: resurrection and eternal life with God. Instead, he offers no future life, but an insipid consciousness of the present time in which the only divinity is oneself. This clashes with the ultimate desires of us all, that we will live and love our dear ones forever with God in the real heaven.

Is Oprah delving into and becoming part of the unthinkable phenomenon mentioned in Matthew 24:9-14? “You will be hated by all nations because of my name. And then many will be led into sin; they will betray and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and deceive many; and because of the increase of evil-doing, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.”

False prophets, hey? Oprah and Eckhart are flirting with the dubious distinction of being on the wrong side of history as facilitators of that awful prophecy of Jesus.

Catholics have taught since the earliest apostolic times what scholastics later picked up and distilled into: “God does not deny his grace to one who does what is in his power to do.” The difference is that scholastics tied this in with free will which Martin Luther eventually denied.

Thus, even people without baptism were invested with the Holy Spirit as soon as they got to the point of baptism of desire. “While Peter was speaking these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles.” (Acts 10:44,45)

This accounts for our constant conviction down through the centuries that, although we must work hard to evangelize all who do not know Jesus, we teach that God accepts the belief of the primitive bushman who raises his mind to God in the only way he knows.

So, our Christian belief ever since Jesus has been that salvation comes through Jesus, but that can be explicitly through knowing and embracing Jesus or implicitly through believing in God and desiring whatever God wants us to know and have. Surprisingly, then, Oprah is right for the wrong reason in saying that one does not need Jesus.

*God paints a
beautiful world.*



Summer 2009

It's been a year of economic anxiety and for many of us a vacation seems a luxury. Yet we urge everyone to take some time wherever we live to see, hear and experience in nature the beauty of our Creator God.

*(all photos seen here have not been retouched or altered.
All credit given to God the Creator)*



*Take time to pray and
notice the
paintbrush of God.*



in a word or two

Front cover is of Kourtney Francis of Dallas, Texas and Melvin Ellis III of New Orleans who were married April 4, 2009 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Archbishop Lyke Conference will be held June 18 to 21, 2009 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The theme of the Conference will be “*In Christ All is New*”. The conference features music and liturgical dance workshops. The Lyke Conference is a spiritually uplifting experience that is a must for those ministering our parishes. For more information go to: www.LykeConference.com

A ministry workshop, *To Have and to Hold: Forming a More Intimate Relationship with Scripture*, will be held on Saturday, June 20 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the African American Catholic Center for Evangelization parish hall in Los Angeles.

The workshop is designed to teach ministers new ways of understanding scripture through the lens of Depth Psychology, in order to enhance proclamation and other liturgical practices. Depth Psychology, often referred to as “the psychology of the soul,” emphasizes the metaphoric and symbolic language of the soul or Unconscious. It aims to bring the unconscious and conscious aspects of the psyche into wholeness and balance. Both lay and ordained ministers can benefit from the workshop. Instructor Sharon D. Johnson created the workshop in two-hour, eight-hour, and weekend retreat models. Johnson was certified in Lector ministry in 2001 by the Los Angeles Archdiocese. She has taught workshops at regional Religious Education Congresses and she headed the Lector ministry at Holy Name of Jesus Church from 2002-2004. Johnson was the Editor of the print version of the African American Catholic Center for Evangelization Newsletter from 2003-2005, and has contributed articles to *The Tidings*. She holds a BA from Barnard College, an MA from the New School for Social Research, and is ABD in Depth Psychology, Pacifica Graduate Institute.

The African American Catholic Center for Evangelization is located at 9505 South Haas Avenue, Los Angeles, California, 90047; (323) 777-2106. Registration for “To Have and to Hold” is \$30, advance registration required. For further information, contact Ms. Johnson at fiveFifteen@juno.com.

Congratulations to the Katrina Graduating class. Four years after the devastation brought by Hurricane Katrina the young people who entered high school in the Fall of 2005 have graduated from High school. Congratulations!



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Have a great summer!

IN A WORD returns in September 2009.

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 6,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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