

Church of God, The Eternal

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April 2000

Dear Brethren,

Another privilege has come again for me to address you all around the world from Luzon, in the Philippines. My warmest greetings to all!

To the world the year 2000 began at midnight of December 31 marking the beginning of the much anticipated new millennium. As that time arrived in every part of the globe, it was met with a jubilee of fireworks and much merriment. Millennium watchers in the Philippines established TV footage at different strategic areas to watch the first rays of the rising sun, only to witness a thick overcast and drizzle until late that morning.

To us, however, year 2000 only begins on the eve of Wednesday, April 5. The new secular millennium will only start on the evening of March 24, year 2001. Are you anxious, my brethren, over the coming millennium because of the tremendous prophesied events that are to come with it? Are you troubled because of the coming tribulations (Matthew 24:21–22) and the fearsome cosmic and environmental turmoil (Matthew 24:29, Revelation 6:12–14) that will usher in the new age to come? Are you yet prepared to suffer if need be, just to be with our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? (Matthew 24:9). On whom will you put your trust and confidence? Will you lose composure in the face of severe trials and persecutions?

Brethren, our trust and confidence is not in ourselves, neither is it in any human person or human capabilities, but on one who has already undergone all possible sufferings, trials and temptations and has now the power and authority over all things. He has shown us His example and has empowered us with the same capabilities that He had while on this earth. We are united with Him—He in us and we in Him through His Spirit (Romans 8:9, John 17:21). This concept is difficult to understand and to actualize in our daily lives.

May the Passover that will soon come upon us enable us to realize this truth. As we partake of the Passover at the precise time appointed within this month let us realize its impact on our personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ and our brethren. It is this personal relationship, maintained continuously, that will give us the will and confidence to

cope with whatever the coming millennium brings. It is "Christ in you [us] the hope of glory" that enables us to be ready for the Second Coming of Christ.

Christ Our Passover

As we commemorate the sacrifice and death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the evening of the Passover, do we realize that we are coming to a direct union with Him? Can we look beyond that ritualistic reenactment of the so-called "Lord's Last Supper" and the ceremonial foot washing activity and come to the reality that Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us, giving us his flesh and blood for our healing and cleansing for eternal life? Jesus said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *dwelleth in me, and I in him*. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, *even he shall live by me*" (John 6:53–57, emphasis mine). The bread and the wine we partake of during the Passover are the symbols of His flesh and blood, but they are physical realities whereby we come in contact with Christ as He comes in the flesh; He dwelling in us and we in Him. What a real union, what a concrete unity in the Church, His Body!

Our Need to Prepare for the Passover

It behooves us therefore brethren, that we prepare for the Passover. Before partaking of it we need "deleavening"—a personal scrutiny and a careful self-examination as Paul said, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:27–29). Spiritual discernment such as this is the power of the Spirit in us. By our own personal and human faculties we might only assume but never discern the presence of the Lord in the Passover emblems. And so Paul said again in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you . . . ?" Notice also 1 Corinthians 5:7–8, " . . . For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Our preparation, which is symbolized by the removal of all leaven from our habitations, constitutes self-evaluation and analysis without rationalizing or justifying ourselves as being "still human," and thereby justify living after the weakness of flesh. When we see in ourselves a habit in speech or action or even in the trend of thinking that does not

conform with the will of God it is time to get rid of it—the Holy Spirit in us helping us to overcome. If we have offended someone or someone has offended us, it is time to go to him/her and make amends (Matthew 5:24, 1 Corinthians 6:1–11). If we still harbor beliefs and the influence of this world, such as practices of superstition and prognostication, let us thoroughly "put off" (Ephesians 4:22–24) that old habit or inclination.

Our preparation includes a definite purpose to be present at the definite time and place of the Passover. In the Philippines in particular, lack of provisions and travel requirements are hindrances to keeping the Passover in one place. Our provisions and even our physical health should be long prepared before the coming event. Let us be free from all worries or problems as the most solemn time comes; that includes the preparation of the home and children we might leave behind to observe the Passover. Only a genuine and severe illness should hinder our attendance.

The Other Coming Feast Days

That which follows the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread is equally important to put into practice our constant union with Christ. Brethren, let us continue our zeal in preparing for the following feast days. The Holy Spirit in us—which is the real presence of Christ in us—should be a daily exercise. It is likened to living water flowing in us, thus a conscious, continuous activity of our whole being. Can we do this amidst the hustle and complexities of our daily activities? Can we daily use that divine power in us whether we are in our homes or in our jobs? Not to use that power, or not to be conscious of its presence, is one of the many ways we can "grieve . . . the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 4:30). The secret of the power that Christ possessed while living in the flesh was the presence of the Father in Him through the same Spirit (John 14:10–11). In the same manner, without the Holy Spirit in us we can do nothing. We cannot even be aware of the deep significance of the feast days of God. With our minds focused on the coming Pentecost we are always reminded of Christ's presence in us—providing power to overcome and be prepared for His coming millennial reign. When we commemorate that event, it is impressed upon us that we are a part and parcel of the one true Church of God, where His Spirit resides. It is having the real faith in the Son of the living God. Our Lord Jesus said, " . . . when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Certainly it is only where the Spirit is that true faith will be found on that day.

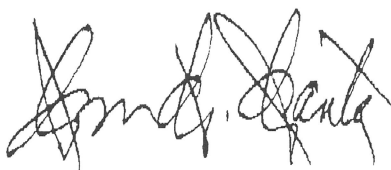
Then there is the Feast of Trumpets, sounding warnings and at the same time heralding the good news of His coming. Do you realize brethren, the sounds "like as of a trumpet" that is warning us—as well as the world—today? Like the clear sound of trumpets Jesus says: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). And again in Matthew 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

How else can we obey His voice and do the Father's will except we have His Spirit in us? For the natural man does not the will of God, not knowing, neither comprehending, for it is foolishness to him. Only with the Spirit can we really comprehend spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:11–14). Again, the Feast of Trumpets reminds us of preparing for the impending events of the millennium. The Feast of Trumpets keeps us reminded of the Second Coming of Christ, when many will no longer be watching and expecting it, and others will be saying "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:4). Through the feast of God, the trumpets are blaring to our spiritual hearing, keeping us awake and watchful until the last trumpet sounds (Luke 12:37–40).

Then comes the Day of Atonement when Christ, our Lord, is actually one with us. He is coming to exile our common adversary and cleanse all our filthiness—our sins and everything that hinders us from serving Him and our Father in the millennium. We fast to weaken the flesh that the Spirit becomes strong. Actually, it is a day of preparation for the final step of our salvation when the dead in Christ will be resurrected and we who are alive at His coming will be changed suddenly into immortality. What a glorious event will come upon us as we enter that final Sabbath—which all these annual Sabbaths are foreshadowing for us each year!

Brethren, are we all keeping the seven feasts every year without fail? With the Passover as our starting point of reference, let us renew our commitment to the faith once delivered to us, in preparation for the coming millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the day of that grand Feast of Tabernacles that will soon come, our daily preparedness today will not be in vain.

A solemn and meaningful Passover to all,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corsino C. Canta'. The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops and a prominent 'C' at the beginning.

Corsino C. Canta