



American Union Conference Update

See the updated Reservation Form below. Two hotel options have been added. Please check the nights for which you wish to stay at the chosen hotel

or at Camp Ithiel. The address for each hotel is given. You can go on the Internet and find pictures, descriptions, facilities, and maps for the hotels, as well as for Camp Ithiel. Feel

free to call AU Secretary Larry Watts, 916-834-2195 (email: larry.watts@sda1888.org), for questions concerning your reservation and transportation. God bless you!

RESERVATION FORM American Union Conference

Friday, December 20, to Wednesday, December 25, 2019
Camp Ithiel, 2037 Hempel Ave, Gotha, FL 34734

Deadline for Registration and Payments: October 31, 2019 (A late fee of \$20 will be charged after this date)

Send this Form with payment to: AU Secretary, 9999 E. Mississippi Avenue, Denver, CO 80247-1927

Make checks payable to: Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement, American Union

CONTACT INFORMATION/LODGING (Submit one Reservation Form per family)

Last _____ First _____ Phone # (____) _____ Email _____

Please check the nights for which you wish lodging (Calculate # of nights X # persons X rate per person for Camp Ithiel Lodging Fees):

Friday, December 20 Sabbath, December 21 Sunday, December 22 Monday, December 23 Tuesday, December 24

CAMP ITHIEL:

Adults # ____ X \$25 Ages 14-18 # ____ X \$18 Ages 5-13 # ____ X \$15 Infant-4 # ____ (FREE) LODGING FEES = \$ _____

Fee for Bedding (if desired): \$9 per person X # ____ BEDDING FEES = \$ _____

FAIRFIELD MARRIOTT (10971 West Colonial Drive, Ocoee, Florida 34761):

Per room, per night (up to 6 persons per room) \$127.00 HOTEL FEES = \$ _____

RED ROOF INN (11241 West Colonial Drive, Ocoee, FL 34761):

Per room, per night (up to 4 persons per room) \$100.00 HOTEL FEES = \$ _____

If you are lodging elsewhere (e.g., at a hotel) and wish to have meals, give number of persons: ____

Registration fee: \$5 per person X # ____ REGISTRATION FEES = \$ _____

PUBLIC OUTING (Holy Land Experience)

Adults (ages 18+) # ____ X \$45 Children (ages 5-17) # ____ X \$30 Infants (ages up to 4) # ____ (FREE) = \$ _____

Transportation: Total Persons X \$10 = \$ _____

TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED = \$ _____

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Arrival: Airport _____ Airline _____ Flight # _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Departure: Airport _____ Airline _____ Flight # _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

From the International Youth Conference ...

Finding Your Place

Athai Ramirez
American Union Newsletter Editor
Valencia, California

Have you ever felt lost? Have you ever wondered what purpose you serve here in this world? Have you ever asked yourself, What can I do for Christ? Maybe you have, and maybe you have not. But have you ever felt weak in faith and perhaps depressed? Have you felt the need to be spiritually revived but did not know what to do or whom to turn to for spiritual guidance? It could be that you are baptized, or you may be contemplating baptism but are frightened and unsure.

Perhaps you were as I once was in my personal life—praying day and night for an answer to a petition made to God while years passed without an answer. I can tell you now that I have experienced this. I have asked myself these questions and have contemplated over and over different things that have happened to me. But the one answer to all of these questions is to be patient and keep moving forward by seeking Jesus in prayer. If you feel like He does not hear you, I can assure you He does. If you have lost your way, read Jeremiah 29:11-13: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.” This was the central theme of the International Youth Conference held in Valencia, Spain, August 11-18. The spiritual experience I came home with greatly encouraged not only me but every individual who attended. Being raised in the faith, I have attended several conferences; however, this one was a very different experience.

I booked my flight in early January after hearing that the Youth Conference that

was planned to be held Washington, DC, had been canceled. At the time, I was feeling that I needed to be with my friends in the faith and wanted a spiritual revival for motivation, so hearing about the cancellation left me a little discouraged.

However, my childhood friend, Sister Ixzelt Aldana, told me about the conference planned in Spain; she happened to be one of the directors. I accepted the invitation, thinking that it would also be nice to see her sisters and parents, whom I was close to as a child. In addition, I wanted to support my friends’ dedication and hard work for this International Youth Conference at El Taularet Camp in Valencia, Spain. I want to share some of what I experienced.

During this conference, there were testimonies that filled my eyes with tears, messages of hope in the workshops, instruction to young people about dating and marriage, and also praise and worship. Youth from a good number of countries came together for an amazing experience. Young men and women from the U.S., South Korea, Germany, Italy, Poland, and other surrounding countries filled the camp with one language—the language of love and friendship. Despite the language barriers, brotherly love and joy were present everywhere. Some even said that they felt like they were in a celestial place.

A few months before the conference, Sister Ixzelt messaged me and asked if I could hold a workshop. I was hesitant about this for many reasons, the main one being that in the university I am in an accelerated Bachelor’s program. This meant that while I was traveling, I would still have to complete all of my assigned due dates for homework and exams; it would be difficult with the time difference, so I was not really eager to take on another task.

I also had in the back of my mind the fact that this *Newsletter’s* deadline was coming up, and I had been behind, trying to catch up so it could be sent out on time as it should be. This was another reason not to accept responsibility for a workshop at this Youth Conference.

However, I asked what type of workshop the conference planners had in mind, and Sister Ixzelt mentioned health. We talked about it briefly. Since I am studying Public Health, I presented to her the idea of holding a workshop on chronic disease

and how preventable this epidemic is if we adhere to health reform, including a healthful, mindful diet.

A few days after I presented this, I received a message from Sister Ixzelt that the planners liked the idea and wanted me to present the workshop for the 12 to 17 age group. I accepted to be put on the program and decided to do this for God’s honor and glory, regardless of how much other work I had to do. God first, I told myself. Actually, when Sister Ixzelt told me the ages, 12-17, I thought, Oh no! This age is a rebellious age!! I thought of myself in workshops at that age and remembered how rebellious I was—too cool to “sit and listen to an old person speak.” Immediately I prayed about this and messaged our local church group to pray for me. I was already nervous about how to reach the minds of the young ones in a spiritual way without getting eyes rolled at me, or risking them being bored by statistical information. Then I thought that it would not be difficult, because I already had several research papers and Power-Point Presentations on chronic disease and nutrition. The greatest challenge was that the research was primarily statistical, including quantifiable research studies, cohort studies, charts, graphs, news from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), and information that 12-17-year-olds could not begin to comprehend; it would be a complete snoozer!

I thought long and hard about what I had enjoyed when I was that age and what teaching methods others had used to hold the attention of adolescents in my days growing up in the church and attending conferences. The minds of young people this age have only a certain attention span for a short amount of time before



(Left to right) Sisters Manuela Di Franca, Jinhee Woon, Daisy Vaccaro, Jennifer Campos, Athai Ramirez, and Elizabeth Krause

they mentally check out. Suddenly it came to me that ALL the youth of this age are into electronics. Trust me, by all means I am I against this, but I decided to use it for an advantage. There would also be a language barrier. All of my research is in English, and the young people would mainly speak Spanish. What else could be a challenge? I prepared a PowerPoint with points to speak on, and included what was best to use, VIDEOS! There are YouTube videos that explain in an animated, easy-to-understand way what sugar does to the brain as well as why sleep is so important in preventing chronic disease.

When the day arrived when I was to hold the workshop, the young people had just had a workshop with Elder Tzvetan Petkov. Once that workshop was over, as any adolescent would, they fled the scene as I was setting up. It was a challenge to get them together again to sit through another 45 minutes of someone speaking. I found one of the young ladies and asked her please to come back in 10 minutes and to ask the boys to come as well.

To my surprise, they all came and sat together. As I presented the workshop—explaining the long-term detrimental effects of drinking and eating sugary foods and sodas; eating too many soy and gluten meat substitutes; emotional stress; and the negative effects on the body of overconsumption of such things—they were fascinated by the subject matter. I closed with a reading from Sister Ellen G. White about health reform.

When I showed them the YouTube videos, they were even more excited. That could have been due to the fact that there was no WiFi at the camp, so they could not check their social media during the time that they were there. The YouTube videos must have been entertaining to them, or maybe it was the fact that I prayed a lot before giving this workshop. I choose to believe that God worked in their young hearts so they would listen. They even had comments and some questions. Furthermore, a really dear sister in Christ, Lorena Ajucum, was present to help with any translation needs. In all, the workshop was a blessing to me. My heart rejoiced and was thankful for the opportunity to present something that I am passionate about. I was also very glad that I had not refused to take advantage of such a wonderful opportunity. It was an honor for me to see my name on the program booklet for the workshop.

This was the first time that I had traveled to Europe without my family, so I felt a little homesick. However, to my amazement, I

shared a room with wonderful friends from long ago who also had traveled alone. This made me feel more at home, for when I saw them, I hugged them and immediately felt better. I purposed in my heart to attend as many workshops as possible along with the morning and evening worship services. One never knows when someone's testimony will change how he has felt lately in his personal spiritual life. I also prayed a lot for God to touch my heart in a special way so that I could take everything I learned to the young people in our local church. God answered these prayers during the 5 days at camp El Taularet.

Trusting Jesus

One night, I heard a testimony that touched my heart and made me cry, for I could understand the suffering it caused to this member of our faith and how courageous it was for him to share a personal, emotional testimony.

Brother Silas Teixeira, from Portugal, conducted the evening worship service every night. One evening he gave a very touching testimony to encourage the young people spiritually and to motivate them to continue on the safe path.

Truly it is no coincidence when someone attends a spiritual conference such as this. One can see that the young people are there for a reason, whether they came on their own or with their parents; but there is a reason a young soul is moved to hear words of love, encouragement, and wisdom from God's divine word. As I grow older, it is increasingly clear to me how God uses His people to give a message to others. This testimony brought tears to my eyes and filled my heart with a spark that made me say in my mind, "God, no matter what comes, even if it hurts, I don't want to let You go!" I hope that Brother Silas' message touches you, the reader, in a special way, as it did me. Here is his story.

When Brother Silas was 17 years of age, his father suffered a gunshot wound to his head. After he received a phone call telling him about this, Brother Silas immediately rushed to the hospital, where he was at his father's bedside for the last moments of his life. When his father was pronounced dead, Brother Silas remembers not feeling



Brother Silas Teixeira

that he was standing firmly on the floor; he felt as if he were floating and numb. He felt as if his own life had ended.

Confused, angry, and hurt, Brother Silas fell into Satan's web, grieving his father's death with alcohol, cigarettes, and hard drugs to forget the painful loss. His mother attended church every Sabbath and would always tell him, "Silas, come to church," but he never heeded this advice. He would go with his friends every weekend, stay up all night, and at times overnight away from home. Again, his mother would say, "Silas, whatever it is that you are doing, do not come home at 2:00 a.m., especially on Friday night." Brother Silas then spent Fridays with his friends and would not return home until Sunday or Monday. He never realized the pain and anguish he was causing his mother, on top of the pain and suffering she was carrying because of the loss of her beloved husband.

One day it all changed for the young man as he was realizing how sick and tired he was of this dark road to nowhere. Alcohol and drugs were consuming his life and not soothing any kind of pain. When he felt the deep love of Jesus, he gave his life to Him and also realized the suffering he had caused his mother by spending countless nights on the street and not sleeping because of the drugs. The realization of how a parent suffers for his or her child came not only when he understood how God suffered as Jesus paid for man's sins on the cross, but also when his two-year-old son became severely ill with a bronchial infection two years ago at the General Conference in Tortoreto, Italy.

Brother Silas' son Pablo was hospitalized in Italy and attached to IV tubes giving him hydration fluids. At one point, being only two years old and not understanding why it was necessary to be hooked up to IV lines, the toddler looked at Brother Silas with big teary eyes as if to say, "Help me, Daddy; take this pain away." Brother Silas explained how that moment showed him what a parent suffers in his relationship with his child. He learned that his son, who was so little and fragile, lost all trust in his father, who could do nothing to take the pain away. He realized at that moment that trusting Jesus is the only way a person can get through pain. When little Pablo became well, Brother Silas' faith in Jesus as his personal Saviour was restored, following hours of grief and hardship.

Brother Silas' used this touching experience to urge the young people not to let go of Jesus. No matter how much something you are suffering hurts, no matter how

much it feels like your soul is being taken from you, look to Jesus and tell Him, "I will not leave You." Brother Silas also reminded the youth—and myself as well—that we cannot think that, just because someone has been in the faith for several years, nothing can happen to them or that they will have it easy. No! Do away with that mindset. Every single soul, baptized or not, encounters pain, difficulty, and suffering; it is only through the merciful, tender Saviour that he is upheld and strengthened. Brother Silas advised everyone to make the most important decision today—to give himself to Jesus and trust in Him, no matter what. Pour out your heart to Him, cry to Him, and tell Him to search every corner of your heart. Brother Silas closed by saying that it is his desire and prayer that each one learn at a young age to put complete faith in Jesus and make Him his Friend, for He will never leave anyone who does that.

How Jesus makes a person whole

Brother Kevin Barrios is a member who is just 20 years old in the church of Providence, Rhode Island. Meeting him in Spain and hearing his testimony was also a wonderful uplift. He was baptized very young, at the age of 17. When one gives his life to Jesus, difficulties and temptations come hurling at him. Sometimes these are tests of faith; sometimes, like Job, God allows things to happen so that one may demonstrate to others the power of God when his will is given to Jesus. Brother Kevin told about suffering a period of severe depression. I do not know if anyone reading this has ever experienced severe clinical depression. Personally, I have not, but because of my education in school, I have learned about it.

Depression is a very dark mental state of mind. It is not just feeling down and hopeless with tears; it is literally a state of one's mind and body in which one cannot get out of bed and has no will to do anything at all. When the mind is not healthy, it is easy for the rest of the body to give up. Depression can be defined as a mood disorder that causes severe symptoms that occur most days and last for at least two weeks, if not longer, affecting how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities, such as



Brother Kevin Barrios

sleeping, eating, or working. It involves low mood and loss of interest or pleasure in activities that one usually enjoys. It can affect all aspects of a person's life, especially one's spiritual life. According to the World Health Organization, more than 300 million people worldwide suffer from depression. It's also the world's leading cause of disability. If the effects of this can be understood, one can see that depression is of Satan, for God does not want us, His precious children, to suffer emotional wounds. He wants everyone to take his burdens to Jesus for help and healing.

While attempting to plan a youth conference during a year of study at the university, Brother Kevin's plans for the conference were not going well; and no matter how hard he tried, his academic goals were also unmet. As a result of a series of unfortunate events, he fell into deep depression and decided to go away and spend time with his sisters so he could recover and feel whole again.

He began to pray for strength where he had none, and he read the book of Lamentations, finding chapter 3 of great meaning. He knew that Jesus was his only hope, so he took time off from school to change his mental state into a healthy one of depending on Jesus. When he felt strong enough, he invested his time and energy in planning the youth conference referred to earlier at his local church.

Brother Kevin and his team did fund raisers and put out word that a conference was being planned to take place in Rhode Island; they also successfully completed one in Tennessee. To the honor and glory of God, these conferences were successful, and the number of attendees was a blessing to him, as there were several young people from other states who attended these conferences. Brother Kevin felt richly blessed in doing God's will and putting Him above everything else. He will return to school this year. I assured him that my prayers and those of others who read about his experience will be sent to heaven for him and his academic goals. God bless this young man!

A missionary experience

To my surprise, I was asked to accompany six young people from South Korea on an outing because I knew the language of Spain—Spanish. I had no idea how to commu-

nicate with them, as they spoke Korean. Fortunately one of them spoke English fairly well, and we were somewhat able to communicate. I must say that it was a challenge as the 7 of us travelled together for four hours from Barcelona to Valencia via charter bus. We were all in a new country, traveling to a far-off city away from the church members who were hosting us. It was a special experience for me and an opportunity to learn not to be afraid of anything.

These young people had only recently been baptized when they heard about the International Youth Conference. Without any financial resources but eager to learn more about God's word and to meet others in the faith, they prayed for a blessing to be able to travel to Spain. Their prayers were answered when the believers in South Korea donated the funds for them to be able to travel to Spain and enjoy the blessings that God would bestow upon every attendee. Always willing, I helped as much as I could and made new friends. The wonderful thing about escorting them through train stations and in taxis and speaking and asking questions for them was that God did not leave me alone. On this bus trip, we ran into the mother of someone who was very dear to me and was once a member of my local church but now lives in Cedartown, Georgia—Sister Raquel Orce. It was a great blessing for me to meet her mother, Sister Aracely Orce. When she told me who she was, I astonished for joy, because it was reassuring to have the help of someone who lived in Spain and was the mother of someone whom I hold close to my heart. Our group of 7 turned into a group of 9, and we reached our destination safely.

Looking back, everything connected with the Youth Conference was a blessing. I



Brother Daniel Kang



The young people from South Korea presented a special song

believe everyone went home filled with the Holy Spirit and revived with hope and assurance in Jesus Christ. We were blessed by all of the presentations. I can definitely

say that God called me to this conference, because He knew that I needed it. The theme, "Finding your Place," helped me to find mine—serving God in the one true faith

of our Saviour Jesus Christ! This is where I belong. May anyone who feels lost give himself to Jesus and find his place, too. A life with Christ is the best life to live!



International Youth Conference in Spain

New Birth

*Athai Ramirez
American Union Newsletter Editor
Valencia, California*

On Sabbath, August 17, 2019, at only 18 years of age, Maria Giner was baptized by her father, Elder Jose Vicente Giner. It was an honor for me to witness the happiest day of her life. Being born again is a miracle by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

In Acts 8:26-39, the apostle Philip was sent by an angel to meet with a eunuch of great authority, who believed with all his heart in Jesus after he learned the meaning of the book of Isaiah, particularly chapter 53. He was converted and baptized. Philip's experience with the eunuch is one example of a new birth miracle.

In Acts 16, the apostle Paul was used by God to minister to Lydia, and she too was converted and baptized. Furthermore, the same chapter tells what happened when Paul and Silas were in prison. The prison

keeper witnessed the miracle of their deliverance; and when Paul preached Christ to him, the jailor was also converted, along with his family.

Through these miracles and many more, Christ touches hearts, leading to the new birth. Thus, Maria Giner, as well as any other individual who gives his life to Christ in baptism, receives a new heart ("... I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh," Ezekiel 11:19), and a new mind ("... Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,..." Romans 12:2). There will also be different interests, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit," Romans 8:5. The law will be written in their hearts ("... I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts:..." Hebrews 8:10), and they will receive the best of all love—love for their fellowmen ("We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren,..." 1 John 3:14). May God bless



Sister Maria Giner in her new life with Jesus Christ!



John— The Lord Has Given Grace

*Athai Ramirez
American Union Newsletter Editor
Valencia, California*

Elder Francesco Domenico Caputo has been on the General Conference Committee for many years, and he is currently the President of the European Division. On August 10, 2019, the American Union was privileged to have him preach at the local church in Washington, DC. I pray that this summary of his sermon will be a blessing to you. To watch the video, you can copy and paste the following link into your browser window: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=9&v=tzOYWH2.

Elder Caputo presented God's word from the book of John. The title of his sermon was "John—The Lord Has Given Grace." Every individual, regardless of his or her title, profession, or accomplishments, needs God's help. One can have everything in this life, but without His presence in our lives, we are nothing. The divine word of God says that all have sinned and do not have God's glory. We do not have the character of Jesus Christ, and the number one goal of every individual should be to obtain it.

Every person has a story, and Elder Caputo told a little bit of his story. When he was a young boy, he wanted to have his entire life recorded and be able to see it in the form of a movie when he became older. However, when he came to know the message of Jesus Christ, he thought, I would not want to see my life recording at all. Why? In life we have the light, but we also have many mistakes and a lot of darkness that we want no one else to know about; but God knows.

In Luke 9:51-56 is the story of Jesus during His last days on earth. It was almost time for Him to return to heaven, and He was on His way to Jerusalem. He asked His disciples, John and James, to go on ahead, and they entered a village of the Samaritans to find a place to stay overnight. But the Samaritans did not welcome

Jesus, because they knew He was on His way to Jerusalem. The two disciples were told that there was no place for Jesus in the village.

Because of this, James and John asked Jesus if they should ask God to send down fire to destroy the village, as in the time of Elijah. What did Jesus answer? Verse 55 says: "But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." The question was more disrespectful of Jesus than it was of the Samaritans. The Saviour said in verse 56: "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Elder Caputo asked the congregation, "What is Jesus saying here?" He came to earth not to hurt people but to save the world. You and I are included in this. In Matthew 4:21, 22, we find these two characters, James and John, sons of Zebedee. They are recorded as having a very particular character, one that would destroy people because of an offense to Jesus. Such a character is a picture of the sinful human nature, and it is the story of John.

Elder Caputo asked, "Do you know what the name John means?" It means, "the Lord has given grace," and John needed the grace and forgiveness of God. He revealed the opposite of a Christian character and lacked a Christ-like spirit. Furthermore, in Mark 3:17, Jesus ordained the twelve and surnamed these two brothers "Boanerges," meaning "the sons of thunder." Thus John and James bore characters like thunder. How is it possible that Jesus called these two young men with such difficult characters to become His disciples? They had hard hearts. We can compare and contrast this picture of John and James and apply it to ourselves.

Elder Caputo explained that Jesus does not look at our current situation; instead, He sees what the grace of God can do inside of us individually. We can be changed. Even though we are evil and have problems and difficulties, our current condition can change! "This story of John," Elder Caputo said, "was written for you and for me, because this gives us hope that our lives can change."

In Luke 9:49, there was a person who was casting out evil spirits in the name of Jesus; but the man did not belong to the group of Jesus and His disciples. When John heard about this, He told Jesus, and in fact told Jesus that this person was doing missionary work but was not following Jesus and the disciples, so John told the man that he should not use the name of Jesus.

Elder Caputo asked, "Did he [John] do the right thing in telling this man not to preach in the name of Jesus?" What did Jesus say? "... Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us." Luke 9:50. Our task is to go and work for Jesus. Even though this man was not affiliated with Jesus and His disciples, one day he would be with them. We must not have a dominating spirit or a controlling doctrine. We need to share God's word with others, while allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us and them.

Another highlight showing the character and temperament of John is found in Matthew 20:20-24. John's mother came to Jesus to ask a favor for her sons: "... Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom." Verse 21. The thing was that the two disciples' mother asked Jesus for this favor publicly, and the other disciples heard what she said. They were made to feel as if they were nothing, although it was understood that Jesus and the twelve were united as a family. They were upset and believed that John and James' mother was wrong to make such a request. Whom was this petition for? James and John. It demonstrated ambitious characters, and such ambition shows that an individual does not care about others. In the case of John and James' mother, it showed that they wanted to hold a high position next to Jesus. They thought they were more worthy than the other ten.

Let us look at this incident a little more closely. What if Jesus had said, "Yes," to the petition of John and James' mother? In a few days, they would have been crucified, one on Jesus' right and one on the left! We can thank God that sometimes our petitions are not answered in the way that we would like. Often we do not really know or understand what we are asking for. Something that we may think is good for us to request may lead to death! We need to think very carefully about what we are requesting. Let us realize that when John was facing the cross at Calvary and Jesus was about to be crucified, John still did not have a sanctified character.

We also learn some beautiful things from John and Jesus' common ministry. When Jesus needed to go somewhere and perform a miracle, He would always call three of the disciples to go along—Peter, James, and John. Why? This is because these three had the most need to witness Jesus' miracles.

Thirty-five years ago, Elder Caputo thought that God had called him to do His work, because he considered himself one of the best. But one day he read a testimony that



Baptism in Washington, DC: (left to right) Elder Pablo Hunger, Sister Sonia, Brother Chapiloid, Elder Francesco Caputo

ed to obey God before men. Elder Caputo mentioned that John was about 20 years old when he began to follow Jesus, and he was the last disciple to die—on the isle Patmos. Leading a life as a defender of the Master, at every moment he wanted to be close to Jesus. “Let us not lose time by being far from Jesus,” said Elder Caputo. “The further you are from Jesus, the more problems you will have.” This world does not give anyone anything, but it asks for many things from an individual, giving the illusion that one may have a lot; but this world will take far more than what it could ever offer.

John held a major responsibility—to evangelize the world. In the book of Revelation, where is John found? On the isle of Patmos, a very small island. When he was condemned to death, the apostle was put into a cauldron of boiling oil, but nothing happened to him. He could not be condemned again for the same thing, so he was exiled to Patmos, where the worst criminals were sent. What was John’s crime? He had the character of Christ. What did John do while exiled on Patmos? He wrote, “God is love,” “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,…” “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” 1 John 4:16; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8. How is this possible? Once known as a son of thunder and wanting Jesus’ enemies to die, the apostles now spoke of love. The change that took place in John, and in anyone, is possible only through the actions of the Holy Spirit. John’s character was transformed and polished by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

As I was reading Matthew 26 and watching the video of Elder Caputo’s sermon, I grieved that Jesus asked the three disciples three times to watch and pray, and then He went a little distance away and prayed all by Himself. His disciples—His companions and friends who saw Him transfigured and witnessed the miracles that He performed throughout His ministry—He loved deeply and unconditionally. But, sadly, they could not keep their eyes open and pray for their Saviour as He carried the weight of the whole world’s sin.

I have tears in my eyes and pain in my heart as I think about His being unsupported and deserted by His beloved disciples, who could not stay awake and pray for Him. How He suffered! He was already sorrowful and heavy, and in Gethsemane He was the only one who was pleading for the cause of salvation! “Oh Jesus! I am nothing without Your intercession in heaven!” and “amazing love” should be our thoughts as we think of Him. May God bless all who read about this sermon and watch the video.

completely took away his pride and this assumption. The statement said that the Lord calls us before others because we need more sanctification than others. That is, if the Lord called me before someone else, it is because I need more time to be sanctified. This is why Jesus always tarried with Peter, James, and John; they needed more time with Jesus to learn of His character. Matthew 17:1 tells about Jesus taking these three disciples to the mount of transfiguration, where they saw Him glorified. If you want your character, your temperament, and your life to be transformed, you need to come closer to Jesus, just as Peter, James, and John did. The closer you are to Jesus, the more opportunity you have to be sanctified.

In Matthew 26:37, it is recorded that when Jesus went to Gethsemane, he called Peter, John, and James to be close to Him and to pray with and for Him. Were they able to do this? No. All three fell asleep. This same verse tells how Jesus began to be “sorrowful and very heavy.” This was when He was deserted by those He loved the most.

It is also possible for us to miss the opportunity to be with Jesus so that He can help us realize that He gave His life for us. John had a unique characteristic, something that was different from the traits of the other eleven disciples. John needed physical touch, and he loved to be with Jesus. Where did John like to put his head? On Jesus’ chest. He liked hearing Jesus’ heart beat and feel His life close to his own. This is why his life was changed and why

as a protagonist he was always next to Jesus. In fact, when Jesus was arrested and came before the high priest, John was the one who was the closest, and at the same time the furthest away. John was not afraid to say, “I am a Christian.” He openly manifested himself as a follower of Jesus.

Elder Caputo referred to the most important person in our lives, apart from Jesus, to emphasize that even on the cross Jesus took care of someone who was very important to Him—His mother, Mary. “When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother!…” John 19:26, 27. As Jesus was hanging on the cross, He thought of His mother, and He told John to take care of her. From that moment on, John took Mary to his home, and it was a blessing to him to have Jesus’ mother with him. John had the sensitivity to care for Mary as if she were his own mother.

Yes, at first, John had a very difficult character; but as he spent time with Jesus, listened to what came from His heart, observed the Master’s conduct, and had constant daily contact with Him, John’s life was changed. He was no longer known as a son of thunder but became known as the disciple of love. How is such a transformation possible? To be able to hear the heart of Jesus, we must open our lives to Him. John was willing to die for Jesus, and no matter what happened to him, no matter what difficulty he faced, he always want-



Our Present Duty and the Coming Crisis

Ellen G. White

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Matthew 24:12.

The very atmosphere is polluted with sin. Soon God's people will be tested by fiery trials, and the great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal. Instead of being strengthened and confirmed by opposition, threats, and abuse, they will cowardly take the side of the opposers. The promise is, "Them that honor Me I will honor." Shall we be less firmly attached to God's law because the world at large have attempted to make it void?

Already the judgments of God are abroad in the land, as seen in storms, in floods, in tempests, in earthquakes, in perils by land and by sea. The great I AM is speaking to those who make void His law. When God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, who will then be able to stand? Now is the time for God's people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason. The nation will be on the side of the great rebel leader.

The days of purification of the church are hastening on space. God will have a people pure and true. In the mighty sifting soon to take place, we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel. The signs reveal that the time is near when the Lord will manifest that His fan is in His hand, and that He soon will thoroughly purge His floor.

The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be gods

many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing.

With unerring accuracy, the Infinite One keeps an account with all nations. While His mercy is tendered with calls to repentance, this account will remain open; but when a certain limit which God has fixed is reached, the ministry of His wrath commences. The account is closed. Divine patience ceases. There is no more pleading for mercy in their behalf.

The prophet, looking down the ages, had this time presented before his vision. The nations of this age have been the recipients of unprecedented mercies. The choicest of Heaven's blessings have been given them; but increased pride, covetousness, idolatry, contempt of God, and base ingratitude, are written against them. They are fast closing up their account with God.

But that which causes me to tremble, is the fact that those who have had the greatest light and privileges have become contaminated by the prevailing iniquity. Influenced by the unrighteous around them, many, even of those who profess the truth, have grown cold, and are borne down by the strong current of evil. The universal scorn thrown upon true piety and holiness, leads those who do not connect closely with God to lose their reverence for His law. If they were following the light, and obeying the truth from the heart, this holy law would seem even more precious to them when despised and set aside. As the disrespect for God's law becomes more manifest, the line of demarcation between its observers and the world becomes more distinct. Love for the divine precepts increases with one class, according as contempt for them increases with the other class.

The crisis is fast approaching. The rapidly swelling figures show that the time for God's visitations has nearly come. Although loathe to punish, nevertheless He will punish, and that speedily. Those who walk in the light will see signs of the approaching peril; but they are not to sit in quiet, unconcerned expectancy of the ruin, comforting themselves with the belief that God will shelter His people in the day of visitation. Far from it. They should realize that it is their duty to labor diligently to save others, looking with strong faith to God for help.

The command is, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." Ezekiel 9:4. These sighing, crying ones had been holding forth the words of

life; they had reproved, counseled, and entreated. Some who had been dishonoring God repented and humbled their hearts before Him. But the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel. Although many still continued the forms of religion, its power and presence were lacking.

In the time when His wrath shall go forth in judgments, the humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished from the rest of the world by their soul anguish, which will be expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs, and warnings. While others try to throw a cloak over the existing evil, and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent, those who have a zeal for God's honor and a love for souls will not hold their peace to obtain favor of any. Their righteous souls will be vexed day by day with the unholy works and conversation of the unrighteous. They will be powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity, and hence they will be filled with grief and alarm. They will mourn before God to see religion despised in the very homes of those who have had great light. They will lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church....

All heaven is interested in our welfare, and waits our demand upon its wisdom and strength. Neither wicked men nor evil spirits can hinder the work of God or shut out His presence from His people, if they will, with subdued, contrite hearts, confess and put away their sins, and in faith claim His promises. Every opposing influence, whether open or secret, may be successfully resisted, "not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." If the Lord had a company of workers who would rely wholly upon Him, He would accomplish a great work through them. One could chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. God is just as willing now as anciently to work through human efforts, and to accomplish great things through weak instrumentalities. We shall not gain the victory through numbers, but through full surrender of the soul to Jesus. We are to go forward in His strength, trusting in the mighty God of Israel. —*Review and Herald*, January 11, 1887.

The *American Union Newsletter* is published monthly by the International Missionary Society, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement, American Union. It is complimentary for members and friends and carries items of interest submitted by believers. We reserve the right to make changes as necessary and to refuse to print certain items. To submit news, send your item in an email to atramirez829@gmail.com.

9999 E. Mississippi Avenue, Denver, CO 80247-1927.
Email: info@sda1888.org / Website: sda1888.org.