

A CHANCE TO WRITE

History can be an unrelenting teacher. Regretfully, it finds us to be reluctant students. The philosopher George Santayana (1863-1952) once said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Can we say that the year 2005 has taught us anything? We can, if we allow ourselves to be taught.

I believe that the year, which we have just concluded, should have taught us much about ourselves. As I ponder a few of its lessons, they seem to have a common thread. It should come as no surprise to anyone that the thread appears to be our relationship with God.

A good example of that was the debate in Pennsylvania over whether or not Intelligent Design should be mentioned in public schools, along with evolution. Understanding how we may have come to be is important in terms of who we are and what is expected of us. Through the courts and the electoral process, it was decided that, in this regard, only evolution is to be taught, something that continues to be simply a theory. What appears to be a fact (that the universe is orderly, which cannot be without an Intelligence) is not to be presented to students.

We continue into the New Year with the confirmation process of another justice for the Supreme Court. It troubles me greatly that many expect judges to legislate in their favor rather than be impartial in interpreting the law, regardless of where the conclusion might fall. I am encouraged by those judges who understand what their role is to be. If we had had more such justices on the nation's Supreme Court, the Establishment Clause of the Constitution would not have ended up prohibiting the public practice of religion, nor would we be fighting for the lives of the unborn, as their consciousness of God's wonderful gift of life begins.

Then, we had the hurricanes. Whatever the cause of those many hurricanes might have been, we do have the ability of predicting with some accuracy as to who could be affected by an imminent storm. Nevertheless, there appeared to be a lack of preparedness, resulting in the suffering of a multitude of people. While the enormous and historic outpouring of charity on the part of the American people helped to alleviate that suffering, the helplessness in the face of such natural phenomena continues to be a reality in our lives. We need to have a greater awareness of our dependence on God.

It appears to me that these and other events teach us more about ourselves than they do anything else. What is remembered and celebrated in the course of human history is not so much what has occurred as it is the response on the part of those affected. That continuing saga is the ongoing battle between good and evil, truth and falsehood, and ultimately, between God and Satan.

Historian Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) concluded: "History is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind." That resonates with our condition as a sinful people. Each new year is a reminder that God offers us time in which to reform.

"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it." Those are the words of the celebrated political leader Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965). The New Year of Grace 2006 can be better than was 2005. However, that very much depends upon us as members of our communities and this nation, and upon how we go about "writing it."