

# Josiah Concept Ministries



## Ashleigh's First Birthday a Hit

By **Cory Tucholski**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The party began at 4:00pm, October 4. The guests had all gathered, but the birthday girl was nowhere in sight. Everyone sat with bated breath, awaiting her arrival.

It wasn't for another hour.

Aside from that small snag, Ashleigh's birthday party was a hit.

Opening the presents occupied the bulk of the time. Ashleigh received many darling outfits, including an argyle sweater that her Aunt Aimee would be proud of. Ashleigh kept the stuffed animals by her side, which included a fairy with wings that make a papery noise and a bear.

She gave the stuffed animals kisses and made a sound of joy when she opened them.

Once the birthday girl arrived, the food was served after a prayer by



PHOTO: KATHY HEISINGER

An hour late, the birthday girl finally arrives and is soon put in the waiting arms of her loving mother.

John Heisinger. Sloppy Joes, chili dogs, macaroni salad, potato salad, pasta salad, and deviled eggs made up the picnic-like

menu.

After food and presents, it was time for cake. Kathy Heisinger made an excellent cake for the adults to eat, and a

little one for Ashleigh to demolish. Ashleigh had to be instructed in the fine

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PHOTO: KATHY HEISINGER

Ashleigh "opens" her gifts.



PHOTO: KATHY HEISINGER

Delicious cake, made by Kathy Heisinger.

### Staff

Layout, Design, Editing      Cory Tucholski

Contributing Writers      Nate Reid

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# Letter from the Director

Welcome to our special Halloween issue! We're tackling the controversy over the scariest night of the year, wondering whether it is permissible for the Christian to celebrate it or not.

I had great fun at Ashleigh's birthday party, and I had a blast recalling it as I wrote about it in our lead story. Also in this issue is words of wisdom from the Pope, the Freedom from Religion Foundation's lawsuit against the President, and more articles on atheists trying to destroy the Christian worldview.

I'd like to personally thank Nate Reid, my brother-in-law, for his contribution to the

newsletter. The Halloween feature was his idea and I think that that this newsletter more timely. I hope that my readers will find Nate's insights on Halloween as helpful in the Christian walk as I have.

This will be the last issue on legal-size paper. I have decided to go with letter-size to make it easier for people to print out.

Hopefully my newsletter finds everyone well. Pray for Josiah Concept Ministries as we continue to fight for God's truth in an unbelieving world.

In Christ,  
Cory Tucholski

## Comments from Readers

As do many, I believe the Rapture is a false doctrine. If the Scriptures are read carefully and prayerfully they reveal a different truth. I pray that someday I'm able to suffer for Jesus' sake, as have so many millions of Christians in history. At the hands of Muslims who follow the False Prophet and Catholics who worship saints, relics, statues, and the Mother of Harlots. Many today still confuse Catholics with Christians, which could not be further from the truth.

--Raven

I do believe in the continuation of consciousness after death, near death experiences and out of body experiences are proof of non-locality.

If you seriously look into these experiences you'll find many cases where people have knowledge of things they could not have known about.

As for if there is a god or not? I'm not as certain.

--Schoulayer

I mentioned two vile aspects of that Columbus quote that stemmed

directly from his Christianity: Slavery and the destruction of cultures by way of "spreading the Gospel".

The wholesale destruction of cultures in the name of mission work still continues today and is seen as highly virtuous by almost every Christian I have ever met. I can't even fathom the amount of money (and I can fathom with the best of the fathomers) that Christians spend each year on sending missionaries into the Amazon and into war-torn African nations to bribe the natives and the misplaced into Christianity (and out of their cultural beliefs and practices) with promises of food, technology, peace and eternal life.

Tell me how missionaries today aren't coercing people into Christianity. They even do it on their home soil! Most homeless shelters in the United States are religious organisations and only allow homeless people to eat their food and sleep in their beds if they attend their church services and listen to their pastors! Tell me how that's not coercing people into Christianity when the only

option for food and shelter for many Americans who have lost their homes is to sit and listen to a pastor tell them that they are going to hell.

You didn't even mention the slave trade, but I'll go ahead and address it anyway. I don't know if by your omission of my point on slavery, you implied that you are in favour of slavery or not, but I will give you the benefit of the doubt and just assume that you didn't read half of what I wrote. The slave trade was not religiously motivated but it was propagated and carried out by churches and elected officials, drawing from verses of the Old and New Testaments that proscribe laws on how to deal with slaves. God apparently condones slavery.

OH MY GOD! I just realised you're Cory Tucholski! I had so much fun completely obliterating your arguments last time we met online. So good to see you and smack down your arguments again! Have fun with your six readers!

--Reed Braden

## Comment of the Month

A couple of thoughts: I agree that the reaction by Christians is unfortunate, as it often is. We need even-tempered, well thought out responses that respect others and ourselves. Secondly, I wholeheartedly agree that nakedness was the original intention as it is made evident in Genesis. And thirdly, I agree that naked worship can actually happen without a sexual element. But consider this:

God made Adam and Eve clothing (Gen. 3:21) once they realized their nakedness and were ashamed of it due to their fall. Thus, the purity of nakedness has been tainted for mankind in general, whether there is a small group that has no problem with it or not. Furthermore, we see that in Romans 14:19-21 is says,

"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall." (NIV)

Judging by the overwhelming majority of people in the world who almost certainly equate nakedness outside of changing your clothes or taking a shower (by yourself, of course) as sexual, I would say that nakedness is a potentially huge stumbling block for Christians and non-Christians alike.

I for one, given past and present struggles, could never attend a nudist church celebration and completely block the sexual. I also believe that

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# Party

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art of cake demolition, for she hesitated and didn't eat the cake at first.

There was an excellent guest turn out for the party. Several family members from out of town were able to make it, including Ashleigh's Uncle Chris and Aunt Kelli and cousins Savannah and Allison from Akron, OH.

Cory and Jody felt very blessed to have such an amazing show of support from friends and family. They hope that Ashleigh will continue to be blessed by such amazing people in the future.



PHOTO: KATHY HEISINGER

Ashleigh demolishes her own birthday cake.

## Pope: Millions losing their religion and declaring God is dead

By Lyndsay Moss

THE SCOTSMAN (SCOTLAND, UK)

Modern culture is so devoid of faith that some people are declaring God "dead" and entire nations are losing their identity, Pope Benedict XVI warned yesterday.

The 81-year-old pontiff said that God was being pushed out of people's lives under the "harmful and destructive influence" of today's society.

His comments, made during a Mass at the start of a month-long synod of Roman Catholic bishops from around the world, come amid growing concern about the decline in church attendance and interest in religion in many Western nations.

Pope Benedict is particularly worried about a growing indifference to religion in Europe.

In recent decades, the Catholic Church's influence has seen a decline in developed countries, although it is growing in the Third World.

Both the Church of Scotland and Scottish Catholic Church have seen

a drop in worshippers in recent years – the Church of Scotland has seen numbers fall nearly 60 per cent since 1960, and between 1994 and 2003, Mass attendances fell from 250,000 to 194,728. Earlier this year the Vatican also reported a dramatic fall in the number of Roman Catholic monks and nuns.

Ronnie Convery, spokesman for the Scottish Catholic Church, said Pope Benedict's comments reflected the concerns religious leaders had been aware of for some time.

"What we are seeing is that our culture has changed, subtly but significantly," Mr Convery said. "Many people today, even though they wouldn't declare themselves atheist, behave as though God doesn't exist."

"One of the main challenges of the Catholic Church is to remind people of their Christian roots and the important role that the Church has played in the shaping of our culture."

## FFRF Sues over National Day of Prayer

By Scott Bauer

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADISON, Wis. (AP) -- The nation's largest group of atheists and agnostics is suing President Bush, the governor of Wisconsin and other officials over the federal law designating a National Day of Prayer.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation sued Friday in U.S. district court, arguing that the president's mandated proclamations calling on Americans to pray violates a constitutional ban on government officials endorsing religion.

The day of prayer, held each year on the first Thursday of May, creates a "hostile environment for nonbelievers, who are made to feel as if they are political outsiders," the lawsuit said.

The national proclamation issued this year asked God's blessings on our country and called for Americans to observe the day with appropriate programs, ceremonies and activities.

Wisconsin Gov. Jim

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*The day of prayer creates a "hostile environment for nonbelievers, who are made to feel as if they are political outsiders," the lawsuit said.*

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Doyle is named in the suit because he is one of 50 governors who issued proclamations calling for the prayer day. The foundation is based in Madison.

Shirley Dobson, chairwoman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, and White House press secretary Dana Perino also are named.

The foundation has filed numerous lawsuits in recent years, including one rejected by the U.S.

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# Halloween: The Chri

By Nate Reid  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



For the Christian today, our diverse American culture poses many real challenges in determining what he or she should and should not partake in. There is such a blending of belief systems and melding of cultural practices that for those who try to follow closely to the teachings of Jesus Christ, it can be a daunting task riddled with humanly perceived “gray areas.” In keeping with the season, I would like to address the Christian’s response to the celebration of Halloween.

I do not want to go into an exhaustive background, but Halloween began with ancient Druid beliefs that this time of year the souls of the deceased could and sometimes did come back to pester and possess the bodies of the living. Therefore, many of the customs that are still performed today have roots in actual Druid ritual. Carving Jack 'o' Lanterns and dressing up in frightening costumes was an attempt to scare away evil spirits. Building giant bonfires (derived from “bone-fires”) was intended to do the same and also eradicate anyone who was believed to be possessed by an evil spirit. Furthermore, today the “holiday” is celebrated by neo-Pagans, Wiccans, and even Satanists as somewhat of a high holiday.

So, if this is the case, what is a Christian to do? What’s so terrible about dressing up as a princess or a pumpkin and going door to door begging for candy? What possible harm can come from carving a pumpkin or bobbing for apples? I would venture to say that these things in and of themselves are not wrong and definitely not the point. The bottom line is this: Halloween today in our culture, no matter how any individual celebrates it, glorifies death, evil, and fear. As a Christian, we know that Jesus came to overcome the power of death, defeat evil, and eliminate fear. Why then would a Christian partake in an

event that, no matter what their celebration includes, glorifies the very things Christ came to abolish?

If you argue that our customs for Christmas celebration have pagan roots and therefore would be wrong to partake of according to my argument, then you are right on the first part at least. Many Christmas customs do indeed come directly from pagan practices—the lighting of a tree and the yule log, just to name two. However, I would argue that you are incorrect on the second part of your statement. What, today, does Christmas stand for? Does it not still mark the celebration of the birth of the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ? You would be correct in noticing the need to eradicate the disgusting overemphasis of commercialism and the blatant substitution of the true meaning of Christmas with a certain “Santa Claus.”

Therefore, my analogy goes like this: Celebrating Halloween in the sense of celebrating the harvest and honoring the Saints that have gone before us would in theory be acceptable as a Christian, just as celebrating Christmas as the commemoration of the birth of Christ is acceptable. (The Catholic Church unsuccessfully tried to replace pagan meanings of Halloween, thus “All Hallow’s Eve,” which morphed into “Halloween” with “hallow” having the meaning of one who is hallowed or holy. Think, “Our Father, who art in





# Christian's Point of View

## Should Christians celebrate Halloween?

heaven, hallowed be thy Name...") Both celebrations go wrong when the pagan is celebrated over the Christian. In the case of Halloween, glorifying death, evil, and fear is akin to placing the myth of Santa Claus in place of the real Jesus Christ while prioritizing the giving and receiving of gifts over glorifying the Giver of the Greatest Gift of all at Christmas time. I believe it is simply summed up in the following verse: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 The 5:19-22, ESV)

As a Christian we have the responsibility to ensure we are thinking through everything we do in general, and specifically in this case with celebrations to make sure we are glorifying God, holding to only that which is good, and keeping far away from anything that is associated with evil. I cannot personally get around the fact that Halloween glorifies death, evil, and fear. It should be obvious that this is the clear meaning behind this day. Halloween movies more often than not feature brutal massacres, witchcraft as fun and acceptable, and glorification of the demonic side of the very real spiritual realm. The fiction that has been created about ghosts, zombies, and the like have their roots in reality and can only be demons as described in the Bible. There is a spiritual realm that features very good and very bad spirits. We should not, especially as Christians, make light of this and consequently behave as if the evil is "cute" or "harmless" or anything else other than a terrible offense to God and contrary to everything He is.

We suffer from an epidemic of Christians that behave exactly the same, or at least nearly the same as their non-Christian counterparts without regard for taking a stand for what is pure and holy. We need to not be afraid of looking weird or irrelevant when we speak out against or abstain from celebrating overtly pagan and evil "holidays" such as Halloween. It is time we did as the writer in Hebrews describes when he writes: "...Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin

which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us..." (Heb 12:1, ESV)

I challenge every Christian who reads this article to examine the Word of God, pray specifically, and carefully consider what I present to you even if you initially disagree with my stance. I believe that any Christian absolutely must treat any and all matters of life, not exclusively the "hot button" issues like the celebration of Halloween, in this manner. We cannot afford to slog through life accepting or rejecting doctrine, lists of right and wrong, and in this case celebrations based on our culture at large, what someone we care about or respect said, or whatever happens to fit our personal preferences. There is absolute truth out there, and we all must strive to find it and understand it to the best of our imperfect human ability and live our lives accordingly. Ultimately, we will be held accountable for our actions and what we supported or fought against in the end.

I do not say all this to suggest that a true Christian cannot celebrate Halloween and still be "right with God." There are godly men and women I know and respect and whose salvation I would not question who advocate at least portions of current American Halloween customs. I do not have a problem with disagreeing with them and personally choosing to abstain, but I only continue to respect their opinion if they have demonstrated that they are convinced that they are doing what is pure and holy to the best of their ability. I do, however, strongly infer that a true Christian will examine their hearts and motivations for

*See Halloween, p. 7*





# 'Religulous' filmed at Catholic parish under false pretenses?

Newark, Oct 19, 2008 / 06:19 pm (CNA).- A spokesman for the Archdiocese of Newark has responded to reports that comedian Bill Maher filmed part of his anti-religion documentary "Religulous" at a parish in the archdiocese.

Maher set part of the film at Our Lady of Mercy in Park Ridge, New Jersey. The relevant scenes show his sister and his Jewish mother, who explains why his Catholic father stopped going to church.

Jim Goodness, an archdiocesan spokesman, told The Record that he turned down two requests to use the church property, one from Maher's production company and one from the parish.

"This certainly would not be the kind of project we would have given a green light to," he said.

Goodness explained that the archdiocese doesn't allow church property to be used for commercial purposes.

"And I personally didn't trust Mr. Maher," Goodness told The Record.

"Obviously, our policies were not followed."

According to the Associated Press, Goodness said the parish pastor Father Charles Grandstrand was aware of the policy.

However, according to Goodness, filmmakers told Father Grandstrand that Maher wanted to film his mother there because the Church was such a big part of her life.

Maher has admitted that he didn't tell people his movie would take its name from a combination of the words "religion" and "ridiculous." Instead, he told them the film would be named "A Spiritual Journey."

On Thursday the Star-Ledger reported that Father Grandstrand claims Goodness told the church to reject the production company's request to film a Mass but told the parish's administrative assistant it would be alright to let Maher talk to his mother in the church.

Goodness responded by saying he remembered the events differently and had told the priest not to let the company film anything inside the church.

## Comment

*Continued from page 2*

a male body is designed to seek and appreciate female beauty and that this mechanism has also been tainted, causing men to struggle with objectifying women as objects of their own gratification. In our sex-driven society in this country as well as the rest of the world, I cannot imagine that naked church would bode well with any considerable number of people.

Just because it is possible and perhaps permissible, we are not to do things that will cause our brothers (and sisters) to stumble and thereby destroying the work of Christ on account of our freedom. Therefore, I think that pure nakedness with no sexual connection unfortunately is one of the many casualties of the fall of mankind and consequently, that naked worship sinful, only because it undoubtedly causes many people to stumble in their faith.

Even though I disagree with your stance, I very much appreciate your looking into the issue closer and examining scripture instead of simply rejecting ideas based on Church tradition and norms. It is important to do this in any situation. You are free to disagree with me.

--Nate Reid

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## Bishop's column on abortion prompts IRS review

Paterson, N.J., Oct 23, 2008 / 06:16 pm (CNA).- A New Jersey bishop's newspaper column which criticized Sen. Barack Obama's support for pro-abortion legislation has prompted the activist group Americans United for Separation of Church and State to request an Internal Revenue Service investigation. The group alleges that Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli violated regulations forbidding tax-exempt organizations from tying political issues to the candidates who support them.

In Bishop Serratelli's October 23rd column, titled "A Politician's Promise: No Right to Life! No Freedom!", he examined the status of abortion law in America today, noting that most Americans now favor "some kind of a ban on abortion" and that the number of abortions is in decline.

"There is truly a deep sensitivity to life in the soul of America," he

continued, claiming the proposed Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) would "mortally wound this sensitivity."

According to the bishop, the proposed federal FOCA bill would remove the rights of medical personnel and hospitals which have moral objections to performing abortions.

"Gone the freedom of conscience so essential for a civil society!" Bishop Serratelli predicted.

Further, health and safety regulations for abortion clinics would be removed, as would waiting periods and parental consent laws, Serratelli stated. Under FOCA, he said, taxpayers could be forced to fund abortions and babies who survive abortions could even be left to die.

The bishop then referred to Sen. Barack Obama's support for FOCA. He did not mention Obama by name, instead calling him the "present democratic candidate."

The bishop compared Obama's promise to support FOCA to King Herod's promise to Herodias, which resulted in the execution of John the Baptist.

"In a speech before the Planned Parenthood Action Fund last year," Bishop Serratelli wrote, "he made the promise that the first thing he would do as President would be to sign the Freedom of Choice Act. What a choice for a new President!"

"Today we live in a democracy," the bishop continued. "We choose our leaders who make our laws. Every vote counts. Today, either we choose to respect and protect life, especially the life of the child in the womb of the mother or we sanction the loss of our most basic freedoms. At this point, we are still free to choose!"

Americans United for Separation of Church and State, speaking in a *See AMERICANS UNITED, p. 7*

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## FFRF

*Continued from page 3*

Supreme Court last year that attacked President Bush's faith-based initiative.

The White House and Doyle spokesman Lee Sensenbrenner had no comment on the lawsuit. A message seeking comment from the task force was not returned Friday.



# Americans United

*Continued from p. 6*

Wednesday press release, claimed that Bishop Serratelli's column "clearly sends a message that opposes Obama's candidacy."

Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of the group, sent a letter to the IRS on Wednesday arguing that federal tax law requires tax-exempt

groups to "avoid any issue advocacy that functions as political campaign intervention."

"Bishop Serratelli is essentially telling congregants that they have to vote against Obama or they'll lose basic freedoms," said Lynn, according to the press release. "He went right up to the line and then leaped over it. The IRS should act."

According to USA Today, Lynn also claimed it is "impossible to interpret this passage as anything but a command to vote against 'the present

Democratic candidate' because of his promise to sign a certain piece of legislation disfavored by the Catholic Church's hierarchy."

A spokesman for Americans United told USA Today that the group has filed about 90 similar claims with the IRS since 1996. Of these, four have previously accused Catholic bishops or dioceses of "electioneering."

Earlier this year, the group asked the IRS to investigate Bishop of Providence Thomas Tobin for criticizing former New

York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who was a Republican presidential candidate at the time.

The Diocese of Patterson issued a statement commenting that Bishop Serratelli's column was focused on proposed abortion legislation, not the upcoming presidential election.

"It's absolutely, positively misleading to say that the bishop urged Catholics not to vote for Sen. Obama," the diocese said.

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## Rev. Reed Braden challenges JCM again

**By Cory Tucholski**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

This past Easter, I had a run-in with Reed Braden, an ordained minister and former evangelical Christian who no longer believes in God. Reed proved himself to be too sarcastic to respond to.

Reed, tongue planted firmly in cheek, promoted the idea that the Risen Jesus was a zombie, one of those hulking half-decayed corpses that are a staple in horror movies. He also thanked the Jewish people for killing Jesus, so that we wouldn't have to endure any more of his teachings. I responded that killing Jesus was a good thing

because of the Atonement. This was the fulfillment of Christ's mission, I argued, pointing out that Reed lacks knowledge in the most basic Christian theology.

But Reed retorted that if God is omnipotent, he can simply forgive sins without an Atonement being necessary. That it was I who was wrong. He did this in such a sarcastic way that I refused to respond, which led Reed to believe that he had won the day.

Now, I've taken him on on his Columbus Day post, <http://gaytheist.wordpress.com/2008/10/13/how-the-diseased-mind-of-christianity-sees-new-discovery/>. My response can be found at

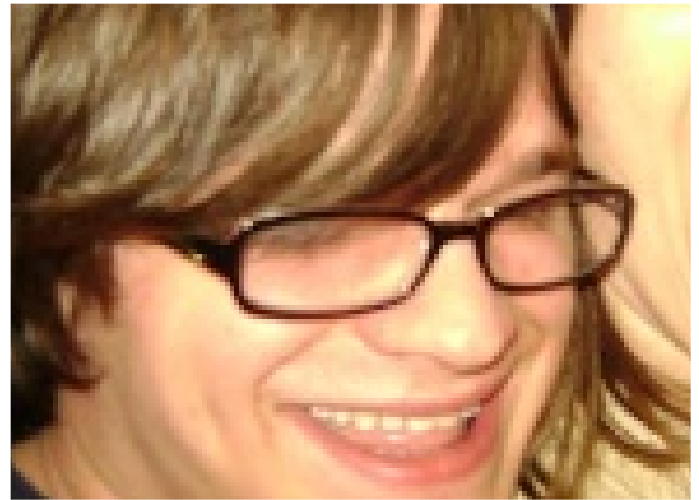


PHOTO: TWO SMOKIN' HOT FREE THINKERS PODCAST

Reverend Reed Braden

<http://josiahconcept.org/2008/10/14/nothing-to-do-with-christianity-chris-columbus-reflects-european-mindset-of-the-time/>. Reed responded almost immediately, and I've reprinted his response

in the Reader's Comment section of the newsletter. My response to that can be found at <http://josiahconcept.org/2008/10/15/reply-to-the-reverend/>.

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## Halloween

*Continued from p. 5*

celebrating it or not celebrating it and ensure that they have a solid set of reasoning and specific purpose for everything they do.

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## Looking forward on the blog

**By Cory Tucholski**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In November, Josiah Concept Ministries looks to glorify God by answering the question of ownership.

The atheist sites God Is Imaginary and Why Won't God Heal Amputees continuously argue that Jesus wants us to sell everything and thus own nothing. I will argue that ownership of property is intended by God for his

glorification.

I will also examine the issue of homosexual marriage and what it means for the church at large. I'm not so sure that we should oppose measures since we live in a secular state. However, I pray that as homosexual marriage becomes more acceptable that we, as churches, may refuse to marry homosexual couples.

Finally, I hope to continue debating both

Reed Braden and Matthew Bellisario for as long as they will entertain the conversation. Mr. Bellisario has't posted anything in over a month regarding our Mary debate. Hopefully that changes soon. Rev. Braden is, hopefully, formulating a reply to the conversation we've already had.

In all, it looks like a busy month ahead. Please keep us in your prayers!