

Only the new pope knows what changes will be made

And so the world pauses to applaud a new pope. Everyone wonders what will change. The short answer is, not much. The long answer, everything. The world's watchers have been studying every paper and speech penned by the man known for 78 years as Joseph Ratzinger. They hope to predict what he'll do. But when a man becomes pope, he takes on more than a new set of clothes. The job is for life. In that way, it's like being elevated to the Supreme Court. As Benedict XVI, the pope may look to his fellow cardinals for advice, but he will turn also to God. And God may be less easy to predict. His final sermon as Cardinal Ratzinger was conservative and orthodox. Yet his first acts as pope have been to reach out to the world — to Jews, Muslims, the Orthodox church and others. The world's leaders went to Rome, first for the funeral of John Paul II, then for the installation of Benedict. It's amazing, the awe inspired in all the world, and not just Roman Catholics, by the office of pope. Far from being "just" the leader of a billion Catholics, the pope inspires reverence throughout Western civilization, indeed, throughout the world.

The man who presides over the Holy See stands, tradition tells us, in a direct line from the Apostle Peter as Bishop of Rome. His office makes him the most prominent Christian leader, though he heads a church that is fractious and, as some see it, ridden with problems.

Don't forget, though, that the 2,000-year-old Roman church is also the world's oldest bureaucracy. Change does not come quickly to such a venerable organization. But change will come. Only the pope, and his chief adviser, know what it will be.

Here's a guess. I don't expect to see a woman priest in a Catholic pulpit, not in my lifetime. That tradition is too well ingrained. I think we might see married priests. The celibate clergy is a relatively new rule, only a few centuries.

I think the church will respond more to the need to clean up its own act. The child-sex scandal has cost the American church too much in terms of money, respect and members to ignore.

While the American church is a small part of the whole, the Cardinals surely can't condone any of what happened.

Whatever happens won't satisfy many, and it won't make the church any more perfect than it has been throughout history.

We expect perfection in matters of God, but we forget that the church is made up of men — members, priests, bishops, popes — who are as all sinners, imperfect beings doing their best in the service of the Lord.

Like us all, to struggle on, doing the best they can. The new pope has a great opportunity, in the next year, or the next decade, to advance the work of the church and the cause of world peace and solidarity.

Let us all — Catholic, Protestant, Jew, the unchurched and even the unbelieving — say a prayer for Benedict XVI, that the Lord will lead him down whatever path he has planned for him.

The world likely will be a better place. If nothing else, it'll be a fascinating trip. — Steve Haynes

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Man agrees with tax money editorial

To The Editor: I thoroughly agree with the editorial by Steve Haynes in the April 19 *Norton Telegram*, "Tax Money Shouldn't Be Used To Sue State". It is my understanding, also, that the legislators make the laws and the courts should interpret and enforce the laws. I'm afraid too many want, and are trying, to be the boss. W.A. White Norton

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Sheep make fine lawnmowers

It's been three weeks, two days, six hours and 39 minutes since the satellite television was cut off at our house. But, who's counting?

To say I don't miss it at all would be a lie. But, the truth is, we're getting along very nicely without it. We are using the television set to watch good, wholesome videos without the danger of being ambushed by advertising that borders on the edge of soft porn.

We are reading more. Jim is devouring material on creationism, playing his guitar and working on his sermons.

I finished a book by Dr. Laura, "The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands," a book I would highly recommend; have started another on financial independence; and caught up on my past issues of "Reader's Digest."

We are getting to bed earlier, which helps both our dispositions. And my co-workers have noticed that I've been clocking in a few minutes earlier, which helps my boss' disposition.

—ob—
We went to Lawrence last weekend and by the time we got home, recuperated, and

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



took a look around the place, weeds had just about taken over.

The back lot, where we "pasture" our calves when they get big enough, looked like it needed a baler.

When I called my friend Patsy to see if she would be interested in "renting out" a couple of her sheep, I don't think she thought I was serious. But, we were.

Sheep are the best four-legged lawn mowers you can have. The lucky two we got from Patsy think they have landed in the middle of "cheat-grass heaven." And, they're just big ol' pets. When we walk to the fence, they come running, hoping to get their heads scratched.

Grandchildren of one of our neighbors came over to see the sheep and our two

baby calves. They are town kids who love to play on our swing and see what new animals we might have.

Jim was building a storage shed inside the sheep pen that day and was only half listening when they told him they were going to feed the calves. "Okay. Whatever," was his comment.

Later that night, long after the kids had gone home, Jim went out to feed the calves and wondered why their pellets wouldn't go into the feeder. He came back in the house, laughing. "I guess they really did feed the calves," he said. "The feed trough was packed solid with grass." No harm done, except for a few calf pellets on the ground.

—ob—
My daughter and her family moved to a new house over the weekend. Kara called me last night and said she thought she had found all the food boxes. I talked with my 6-year-old granddaughter, Taylor, and found out she likes the house and really likes the idea of having a big back yard to run and play in. Even if it doesn't have a swimming pool like her old house.

Tolerance isn't the same as doing

A woman I admire very much accused me of promoting tolerance in my recent columns. I have given much thought to that accusation and I do indeed plead guilty.

To me tolerating others behavior does not mean I have to adopt that particular behavior as my way of life nor do I have to feel it as a threat to my life.

The analogy was made of one going down the street shooting others as unnatural. No argument there; but in a war situation, such as Iraq, is that unnatural or are we justified?

Jesus did not take up arms to convert; He did so with example and love.

Is capital punishment natural law or murder? Is a life only a life when we make the determination it is an innocent one? Or is capital punishment, as one of our law enforcement friends used to state, retroactive abortion?

Is gay marriage "unnatural"? I have been blessed throughout my life with gay and straight friends. The issues

Phase II

Mary Kay Woodyard



that separate them have little or nothing to do with their sexuality. I value who they are, not what they are.

Should gay marriage be legalized?

I don't know. I tend to believe it, like medical matters are personal issues not in need of government intervention. I do believe everyone is entitled to have a "person of contact" as a beneficiary or as a partner on a group health policy. Whether that person is a partner, a spouse or a parent matters little to me. What matters to me is for each person to be entitled to share their life in the fullest according to their definition of the relationship.

These individuals who value the recognized presence of God in their life, want the validation of a ceremony. I can give the gift of acceptance, God can decide its appropriateness.

A mere 40 years ago, inter-racial marriage was considered "unnatural". Over the years, the definition has shifted.

My mother, in her many years of witnessing changes in society, was always quick to remind me each person held equal value in God's eyes. Judgment is his, she would tell me; tolerance is mine.

I used to have an ad from our church newspaper hanging on the back of my front door so I could see it as I went out into the world.

Below the portrait of Jesus', face were the words, "Remember, Jesus died to take away your sins, not your mind."

Whenever I start to falter and think I have all the answers I am reminded that, although created in His image, I am a long way from understanding the many intricacies of this God-given life.

WRITE:

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous should be submitted to

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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

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