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A PREZ RELEASE

from AGTS

(Monthly commentary from the President of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary)

The governor of Minnesota, Jesse "The Body" Ventura gets a lot of press these days. He's taken some shots at organized religion, calling those involved weak-minded and a sham. Governor Ventura is bigger than I am so I wouldn't say these things directly to him - but he's more than just a novel character on the political scene. He's a self-fulfilling prophecy coming to pass. Back in the 80's, a professor at New York University wrote a book that caught my attention. Dr. Neil Postman wrote *Amusing Ourselves to Death* in 1985, in which he warned that the death of our culture would come not from brutal tyranny, but from the quiet yet steady substitute of entertainment for national public discourse. In other words, entertainment has become a primary way in which people now express their values. Whether on channel surfing cable television - exploring the Internet or choosing what church one attends, all increasingly have to do with the self-centered value of being entertained by novel experiences. Some people may say Ventura is just another populist governor, which has always been typical of Minnesota. Others may say they like him because at least he says what he believes and it's refreshing to hear a politician speaking directly and clearly. All that may be true - but I think Postman needs to be heard here - the idea of a governor who hails from the rings of the WWF (World Wrestling Federation) is just plain cool - it's entertaining. In our world today a most basic influence on our values is the entertainment factor.

Postman poses an even larger question in his volume. He is not a Christian (by any definition), yet he asks the question of how Christians can place any trust in a medium of communication (i.e. TV-film-video) that is expected, by most people, to be simply a means of entertainment. In other words, how can the Gospel that changes people's lives hope to communicate the reality of salvation through a medium most people use simply to be entertained?

I do believe that television and film need to be powerful tools for the gospel. I also think that Postman's rhetorical question points us to a reality that all Christians need to face in communicating the Gospel. Has our culture impacted our presentation of the Gospel to such a point that our message has been domesticated - stripped of its power to "abundantly pardon and save to the uttermost?" I have no 5-step evaluation barometer to offer, but I do think that discerning church leaders for the 21st century need to have a spiritual sense as to when we have domesticated the Gospel in an attempt to be heard.

As a seminary president I really want to see AGTS be a place where we wrestle with those tough contemporary questions. Jesse Ventura is not a mere novelty - he personifies where our culture is headed and to ignore him as just another nasty mouth is to miss a chance for the Gospel (that we need not be ashamed of) to speak clearly to a world that is certainly "amusing itself to death."

As a friend of AGTS, your trust in this institution is of utmost importance to me. That continuing trust necessitates my regular communication of events here at the seminary that will allow you to feel a part of life here even though you may be quite a distance from the seminary.

A. We rejoice that our fall enrollment went beyond projections both in total numbers and in new students enrolled.

B. We recently received word from Eli Lilly Foundation that we have been awarded a \$10,000 planning grant. The Foundation is awarding funding to seminaries for "technology enhancement of classroom teaching." We now are eligible to develop a proposal to receive up to \$300,000 in funds. AGTS is one of 40 seminaries chosen (out of 120 applicants). AGTS is the only Pentecostal seminary in the group that included Yale, Duke and Emory. We will submit our proposal in the spring of 2000.

C. October had 71 doctoral students (D.Min.) on campus doing coursework. We are thrilled with the group of leaders from around the world *who* are studying in our D. Min. program. Our first graduates will be in 2001. Along with AGTS faculty we were privileged to have teaching Dr. Norm Shawchuk - a world-renowned organizational expert and author.

Remember - God is!

Byron D. Klaus

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CHECK IT OUT

The Greatest Generation by Tom Brokaw. 1998. Random House Publishers. ISBN 0375-50202-5

I read this book last Christmas, but I continue to re-read different chapters. The short clear stories of people from the "Silent Generation" (people *who* grew up during the Great Depression and WW II) will give great insight to any leader in church or business as to what makes this age group so unique and such a treasure.

Leadership and Team Building: Transforming Congregational Ministry through Teams. Roger Heuser, Editor. 1999. Published by CMR Press, PO Box 1098, Matthews, NC 28106. 704-841-8066.
www.iclonline.com ISBN# 1-880562-39-1

Experience and research of pastors and missionaries on the hard work of team building. This book moves beyond the rhetoric of holding hands and singing "Kum baya" around a campfire to build a ministry team. Many of the contributions are Pentecostal/Charismatic.

Surf the net to:

www.theooze.com

A group of young church leaders "on the edge." You may not agree with all they affirm but they are quite serious about "doing church" in a post-modern context. I'll admit that these guys were my students a decade ago.