

Dear Parishioners,

I ask that you **read this entire message** as it is important.

It has been brought to my attention that a book has been sent to every household in Anacortes, and it seems beyond Anacortes, called "*The Great Controversy – The Untold Story Behind the Vatican's Rising Influence in America*" with "original text" listed by E.G. White. The book is published by Remnant Publication, Inc., 2021. It is a reprinting, with updated notes, of a work by one of the founders of the Seventh Day Adventist movement, Ellen White.

The same day this book was brought to me for review, I received a call from Pastor Sam Millen of the Anacortes Adventist Fellowship, who was calling me from his vacation visiting family in Australia where he was raised. He called to personally apologize in the name of the Seventh Day Adventists of Anacortes for the dissemination of this book, which was not done with consultation with Pastor Sam or his Congregation, nor was it sent in direct cooperation with the Seventh Day Adventist Denominational Leadership. In fact he was quite mortified and shaken by this whole event.

Furthermore, Pastor Millen wanted to make it clear that the subtitle ("*The Untold Story Behind the Vatican's Rising Influence in America*") nor the footnotes, nor the photos (which imply that since the US Capitol was modelled on St. Peter's in Rome that therefore the Church is trying to take over America... or some other strange theory) – none of these were part of the original text by Ellen White. Ms. White's original work, which appears to be the prose of the book, was written during a period in US History when Seventh-Day Adventists were being persecuted through laws at the time that forbade work on Sundays (also known as the "Blue Laws"). It appears the agreements between Protestants and Catholics at the time to protect the Lord's Day – Sunday – had the effect of marginalizing and persecuting people of other faiths who do not observe Sunday as a Day of Rest, like Seventh-Day Adventists, Jews, and others.

I have not read the book yet myself, but I intend to do so just to see what another opinion states, and especially to compare the original work to the modern footnotes. My own cursory reading of some of the footnotes shows a lot of research by non-Catholics who clearly got lost navigating the Tradition, then took it way out of context trying to prove anti-Catholic positions. There's also an ultra-US-patriotism to the commentary that appears to lead to putting allegiance to the USA above or on a par with allegiance to Jesus. Worst of all, the premise in book's cover pages, and explicit subtitle, is that the Vatican is "taking over" the USA ... *I hope you find that hilariously erroneous* - as it seems all we've done in the last 30 years is try to prove the country that we are not criminals for being Pro-Life and pro-Marriage! And then there was covid restrictions.... Which could be argued had the most devastating impact on Catholics – worldwide - especially in terms of access to Mass, Holy Communion, and Last Rites... So much for *Catholics taking over the world!*...

Pastor Millen and I have become good friends before this event: he is upbeat and positive and always anxious to show me pictures of Catholic priests and Churches that he visits in his travels. *As a chaplain at the Island Hospital, Pastor Millen has facilitated priests' access to Catholic patients to receive the Anointing of the Sick and Confession during the pandemic, and has asserted his full support for Catholic Religious Liberty.* Regardless of what happens in the rest of their denomination, you can rest assured that the local Seventh Day Adventists want you to know of their love and respect for all Catholics and all people, and our freedom to follow our own Catholic consciences in religious matters. And I would ask you to pray for Pastor Millen and his congregation that they will find the Lord's loving, gracious will for them in this controversy that has come upon their Denomination.

If you have any other questions or concerns about this book and mailing, please let the parish staff or lay leaders or myself know. Please also know that Pastor Millen and his congregation extend to all Catholics their sincere and heartfelt apology for any hurt, suffering or increased prejudice you may undergo as a consequence of this mass-mailing, that again, happened without their consultation or input, nor with direction from their Denominational Leadership.

I hope that we will take this as opportunity for all of us to try to get to know one another better and to reach out to your non-Catholic neighbors and friends and assure them that Jesus has already conquered the world, and that the Pope and priests have no intentions – let alone capability -- of taking over the USA, except to invite everyone into the Presence of our Eucharistic Lord and His Holy Mother Mary! Amen!

In Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
- Fr. Straz