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Editorial

Away with the old, welcome to the new.....

Standing at the threshold of a new Millennium people young and old are reflecting on what has been, while simultaneously projecting some vivid imaginations into the future.

- It is natural for young people to focus more on things to come while the elderly will tend to reflect on times past. They may even remember that 1999 was dedicated in their honour with the slogan 'celebrating old age'. As far as I am aware this happened with few highlights in our 'old country Switzerland' as well as in our country of adoption New

Zealand. - No need for us oldies to feel cheated, after all don't we know that such is the 'way of the world', it belongs to the young and to the young at heart..!

- The one thing that the dawning of the new Millennium for young and old alike has deepest meaning for, is the fact, that for all mankind this new timespan contains the passage from life to eternity. To think of death may well be regarded as morbid especially at millennium celebration time, but it forces men and women to ask themselves the fundamental question about the meaning of life itself; what is on the other side of the 'shadowy wall' of death? Does death represent the finite end of life or does something lie beyond that?

Let me share with you the following explanation I came across recently; *For people with Christian beliefs the answer is contained in Christ's resurrection making Him the first witness of eternal life. In Him human hope is shown to be filled with immortality. Christian faith can give light to the mystery of death and it brings serenity to old age as shown by many. Thus the latter years of man's stretch on earth do not have to be lived as the expectation of a calamity but rather with a sense of trusting abandonment into the hands of God. Blessed people, that can use the time of 'old age' to further deepen their spiritual life as an example to others*

In a practical way we must be grateful for all social institutions which attend to old people's physical well-being, their intellectual development and their personal relationships as well as enabling them to make themselves useful and to put their time, talents and experience at the service of others. In this way the capacity to enjoy life reflects the gift from God that it is. The lives of 'good people gone before us' bear witness to the fact that such a capacity to enjoy life in no way conflicts with the desire of eternity, a passage from old life to new life as Christian death represents.

Such people have cast no doubt on the value of earthly life which is beautiful despite limitations and sufferings.

Besides reflecting in the past and looking into the future, the Millennium celebration contains the Birthday celebration of the One whose birth we have traditionally come to mark on the 25th of December. It is opportune to remember that it is the Birthday of Christ himself that gives rise to our Millennium celebrations. What do you think would the 'Birthday-Child' Jesus Christ wish for the world as a Birthday gift to himself in our day?

- Would it not be His desire that we love each-other as He has demonstrated to love us on the cross?

Would He not wish us to remember more often that prayer He taught his followers and directed to His Father, the prayer we know as the "Lord's prayer"?

You may think otherwise, but I do believe that implementing the effects of His prayer into our world would

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change the way we live.
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Humbly we would recognise the infinite power of God as creator of all. We would not abuse the name of that supreme source of goodness and by not doing so we would elevate mankind once again above all other creatures as it befits man's capacity to live life to the full, to love and to forgive. - We would remain humble and thankful for having our daily needs met - the desire to share the worlds wealth with all our fellow humans would grow - wars would not start as readily as they have in the past and the request to have transgressions forgiven would bear fruit in due time. Recognising God's providence in His plan of salvation brought by the One whose birthday we celebrate at Christmas would enable us to practice forgiveness in a way that has not been practiced enough in the past. The hidden evils of hatred would not burden relationships between individuals or different races of people.

- With so much more happiness, the kind induced by God's ways rather than man's ways, we couldn't but praise the source of all goodness and humbly begin the new century with hope and joy!

Utopia ? - In God's name let's try and make it possible !

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In the earlier stages of this century, many Swiss were emigrating to foreign lands in search of a better or different way of life. New Zealand was among one of the more popular destinations, but was also very far from home.

And so, some 65 years ago, several of these Swiss immigrants came together and founded the Swiss Benevolent Society in New Zealand - which has since been renamed to what we now commonly know as the Swiss Society.

Officially, the Benevolent Society was created to "conserve and promote the cultural standards of Swiss citizens in New Zealand; to provide moral support and even financial aid if required".

But it also played a more practical role. Without the luxury of today's

faster forms of transport, and in most cases also lacking the finances, these earlier immigrants were not easily able to return home. So the Benevolent Society's most useful and popular purpose was of course the variety of social functions held by the regional Clubs - here people were surrounded by familiar language, and could enjoy each other's company, as well as traditional homemade food. At these gatherings much homesickness was temporarily forgotten, and many lifelong friendships were created. And now, as we head into the 21st Century - and a new millennium - many of the original purposes of our Society remain basically unchanged as we continue to strive to uphold our Swiss culture and traditions.

Today, our current membership is much more diverse. It still includes new immigrants, but is now also made up of many second, third and even fourth generation descendants of the Society's founding members and later immigrants.

But although the composition of our Society has changed over the years, and a large number of our members have been born and raised in this country and are New Zealanders, myself included, we are still Swiss. We acknowledge our Swiss heritage and its importance to us and our identity.

So I sincerely hope that we will all go on to cherish our inherent Swiss culture, and also continue to support the Swiss Society, and participate in local Club functions and activities well into the new century.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Swiss Society Committee, to wish all our members a joyous Christmas, together with a very happy, safe and prosperous New Year - and please all take care on the roads.

My thanks to everyone for your support of the Society over the past year. I very much look forward to sharing more information with you next year in 2000!

With my kindest regards to you all,
Beatrice.

SOCIETY SUBSCRIPTIONS

There are still a number of Society members who have not yet paid their 1999/2000 subscriptions this year.

A notice is enclosed to all unpaid members, and I look forward to receiving your payment shortly.

(Please note: this does not apply to members belonging to any North Island Clubs)

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