

The Battle for Helm's Deep has been won; the world of Men is now safe from the tyrant wizard Saruman. Yet now the battle turns to Gondor and the world of Men is once again in great peril – this time at the hands of the Sauron, an even stronger foe! Gandalf has come to warn Gondor and give much needed counsel to Denethor, the Steward of Gondor. Yet Denethor has been doing virtually nothing to stop the advance of Mordor. Indeed, he is more concerned about his own power and rule of Gondor than about the peril of all Middle-earth. Gandalf – on the other hand – has concerns that are universal:



"But I will say this: rule of no realm is mine, neither of Gondor nor any other, great or small. *But all worthy things that are in peril as the world now stands, those are my care.* And for my part, I shall not wholly fail of my task, though Gondor should perish, if anything passes through this night that can still grow fair or bear fruit and flower again in days to come. For I also am a steward. Did you not know?"<sup>1</sup>

Many people very insightfully hold that these words of Gandalf point to the office of the papacy. They certainly seem to be true of the world of today. I speak of the time period in which the world saw Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI at the helm of the Church, that is, the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

In our day, the most basic unit of society, the family, is in peril. It is under attack on every side. Pope John Paul II knew this and had the good of the family ever in his care. By his teachings (specifically his addresses that have come to be called *The Theology of the Body*) and in his pastoral activities, he came to the defense and upheld the true goodness and beauty of human sexuality and the family. John Paul and his predecessors have pointed out the way to make the family "bear fruit and flower again": modesty, obeying the natural moral law, and the generous mutual self-donation of the spouses.

*Yet the reverent celebration of the Sacred Liturgy also has been in peril!* For Vatican II had been misunderstood by some and thus some priests were saying Mass in a less-than-proper manner. (We do not presume to judge the conscience of any priest; that is for God alone; the editor of *The Dunedain* judges no one.) Yet thanks be to God for John Paul's successor: Benedict XVI. Pope Benedict has generously given so much attention to the proper celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. His recent *Motu Proprio* is evidence of this. By it, while not ignoring the need for reverent celebration of the Mass of Paul VI, His Holiness has granted the broadest possible implementation of the Mass of Blessed John

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<sup>1</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994) 16. Emphasis mine.

XXIII, popularly known as "the Tridentine Mass." Thank you Pope Benedict!  
Brothers and sisters, let us give thanks to God and let us please pray for our Holy  
Father. May God bless you always!