

# "A Monumental Omission"

By Chaplain Todd DuBord, M.Div.





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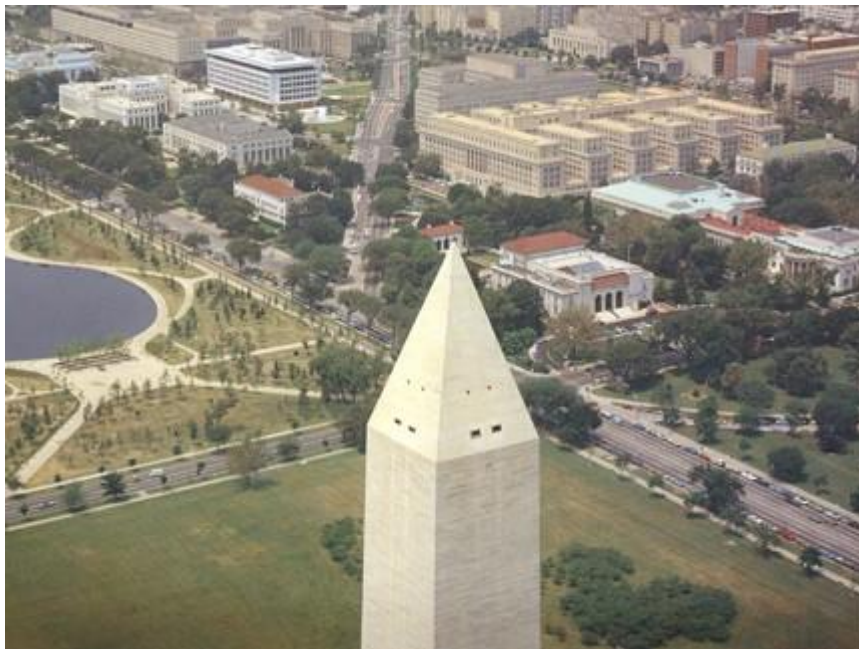
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10/20/07

Dear Mrs. Bomar:

My wife and I led a tour group of 55 Californians to the Washington, D.C. area in early June of 2007. One of the sites we visited on June 4 was the Washington Monument, in which we beheld what we believe to be, at very least, an unnecessary withholding of information to the public or, at most, an intentional one about its religious history and dedication.



(Source of photo unknown)

I apologize for my delay in writing, as I wanted to respond to you as soon as we returned to California, but I was caught up in several summer emergency situations with my pastoral position, then I was invited on a trip to Iraq with Chuck Norris in September during which we visited 15 bases there.

Before going to the Washington Monument, I read online all about it at the National Park Service (NPS) website. (<http://www.nps.gov/archive/wamo/home.htm>) Particularly of interest to me was the capstone, about which the NPS website (<http://www.nps.gov/archive/wamo/history/chap5.htm>) says the following, as quoted from "A History of the Washington Monument (1844-1968)" by George J. Olszewski (1971):



Setting the aluminum capstone (from NPS website) on Dec. 6, 1884

### **SETTING THE CAPSTONE**

*To complete the obelisk, the aluminum capstone weighing 100 ounces, the largest single piece of aluminum cast to that time, was placed atop the pyramidion on Saturday, December 6, 1884. Colonel Casey was elated at meeting his deadline for completion of the Washington Monument.*

*Prior to delivery of the capstone in Washington, it was placed on exhibit at Tiffany's in New York City where it was placed on the floor and persons could have the dubious prestige of "jumping over the top of the Washington Monument." Engraved on the four sides of the capstone was the official record of the construction of the monument.*

*The west face read: "Corner Stone laid on bed of foundation, July 4, 1848. First stone at height of 152 feet laid August 7, 1880. Capstone set December 6, 1884"; and the east face read "LAUS DEO." [Praise be to God] The north and south faces contained names of the commission and the key men in the work of completion. Although weatherbeaten, the inscription is still visible.*



*The laying of the capstone was appropriately celebrated. At the top of the monument, a special scaffolding had been constructed where the principals involved with the construction of the monument could stand. As thousands of eyes were trained upward toward the pinnacle, a 60-mile—per—hour wind was blowing, and the footing was dangerous. According to S. H. Nealy's sketch of the ceremony, P. H. McLaughlin, project superintendent, placed the tip on the pyramidion as the rigger, James Hogan, released an American flag to signify the completion to the cheers of the crowd below and the booming of cannon brought from Fort Myer, Va., especially for the occasion. Also on the top platform were Bernard R. Green, civil engineer, Capt. G. W. Davis, assistant project engineer, Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey, Chief project engineer, and Lewis O'Brien, foreman.*

Specifically those highlighted or thanked on each side of the capstone were the following ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington\\_Monument](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Monument))

The four faces of the pyramidal point all bear inscriptions:

North Face	West Face	South Face	East Face
JOINT COMMISSION AT SETTING OF CAPSTONE.  CHESTER A. ARTHUR. W. W. CORCORAN, Chairman. M. E. BELL. EDWARD CLARK. JOHN NEWTON. Act of August 2, 1876.	CORNER STONE LAID ON BED OF FOUNDATION JULY 4, 1848.  FIRST STONE AT HEIGHT OF 152 FEET LAID AUGUST 7, 1880.  CAPSTONE SET DECEMBER 6, 1884.	CHIEF ENGINEER AND ARCHITECT, THOS. LINCOLN CASEY, COLONEL, CORPS OF ENGINEERS. found here Assistants: GEORGE W. DAVIS, CAPTAIN, 14TH INFANTRY, BERNARD R. GREEN, CIVIL ENGINEER. Master Mechanic. P. H. MCLAUGHLIN.	LAUS DEO. [Praise be to God (Latin)]

### The replica of the capstone

Obviously one cannot view the capstone atop the Monument, so the NPS has made a replica and placed it for all to see within the Monument on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor from the top, where there is a mini-museum and one catches the elevator to descend to the ground. I somehow walked right by the replica in my first visit to D.C. (2006) so was anxious to check it out in my second visit (2007).



## The replica of the capstone



(Source of photo unknown at time)

One of four sides of the capstone etched with dedication words



A view of two sides of the capstone

Upon reaching the top of the Monument and joining another part of our group already up there, the Principal of our school rushed to me and said, "You must have been mistaken about one side of the capstone reading LAUS DEO ("Praise be to God") in Latin." I asked puzzled, "Why's that?" She replied, "Because it's no where on the replica."

I took a quick look around and out the four windows looking toward the White House (north), Lincoln Memorial (west), the Jefferson Memorial (south), and the Capitol (east). Then I walked downstairs and began to stare intently at the replica. I looked through the glass box that encased the capstone, and I read the inscriptions on all THREE visible sides—with the names of the engineers, architects, builders, words of dedication, etc.



As the capstone replica sits today (2007) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor from the top of the Washington Monument

I then realized the fourth side of the capstone base was pressed so tightly up against the wall that one could no way read what was inscribed upon the 4<sup>th</sup> side of the capstone facing the wall. So I pressed my head firm against the wall above the replica and tried to catch an angle of light, while squinting to see any writing at all. I could barely make out some etching looking down from that bird's eye view, but there was simply no way I would have known what it said unless I already knew the saying was there--"Laus Deo." So surely I thought, if the one side of the replica is hidden from public sight, they have certainly written something about it. There was no description of "Laus Deo" on the front side of the replica stand. There was also no description of "Laus Deo" on the large information display on the wall in back of the replica. There was nothing there, absolutely NOTHING—no way for any visitor to ever know that the words, "Laus Deo" ("Praise be to God"), were inscribed on the original capstone!

So I sought a ranger with the National Park Service in the Monument and asked, "Why are the words 'Laus Deo' on the replica of the capstone hidden from view?" She smiled at me and said, "It's not a conspiracy or anything." Interesting first answer I thought! I replied, "I didn't say anything about conspiracy. I was just wondering why all the sides of the replica are not shown to the public?" She got more serious and responded, "Two reasons. First, the replica is directionally positioned inside the Monument as it is positioned outside-atop the Monument." (Therefore, I was to conclude, the side with the Latin inscription, 'Laus Deo,' faces the U.S. Capitol building on the outside and therefore is justified to be smashed up against the same directional wall on the inside.) So I commented further, "But you can't even see or read the inscription when it's pushed right against the wall. Why not move it out a little so people can read it?" She replied, "There's not enough room" (In reality it would not hinder any flow of foot traffic whatsoever or create any congestion if it was out even 2 feet—people would merely walk around it). So I asked further, "Why not pull the replica out just a few inches and put it on a pole so that one can turn it and see its sides?" She said nothing in response. "Or how about placing a small mirror in the back of it, so people can at least see the inscription facing the wall?" She said nothing still. "Or why doesn't the wall information display about the capstone in back of the replica say anything about the

hidden inscription?" She finally broke her silence, "I don't know." Then with a small bit of frustration I added, "And why isn't the replica placed on any of the other three walls inside the Monument, so that the other sides of it with their inscriptions (with the builders, architects, etc., names) are pressed up against those walls? (The answer is obvious that people would complain if their ancestral loved one's name was hidden from view. So should it be any different if "God" is hidden?)



A close up of the capstone replica today (2007)

Is it merely a coincidence that the one side with the inscription, "Laus Deo," just happens to be pressed against the wall for no one to read it? Was that really an accident? Absolutely unintentional? Did someone not think anyone would care? Well I care! And I know tens of thousands of others will too once they find out about this revisionism in the Monument. I don't know why more have not cried injustice, but I'm not going to just sit back and watch one more "unintentional" covering of America's religious history at our historic sites. Just as people would never tolerate the sides of the replica with the Monuments architects or builders' names being unreadable against the wall, so I do not like the title of my Creator, "God," hidden from everyone's view—especially when those who created and placed the capstone were clearly thanking Him for its completion.

As I finished dialoguing with the NPS ranger and began to walk away, I asked one more quick question, "Are you asked very often about the phrase 'Laus Deo'?" She said, "No." I asked, somewhat sarcastically in retrospect, "How could they if they couldn't see or read about it?" (But then again, is that the goal??). I told her that I would be writing the NPS, asking them to please rectify the position of the replica so that the public can see and read about those who were thanked on *all* sides of the capstone, including God. If the creators of the Monument were so grateful for their Heavenly Father (God) that they inscribed a praise specifically to Him alone on one side of the capstone, shall we then show disrespect to them and God by covering it up? If the National Park Service is seeking to preserve such historic sites with integrity and dignity as their creators intended them to be understood, then it seems only right that a full



disclosure and education of the capstone's inscription be known to the public inside the Monument, just as it is on the NPS website.

### An unexpected additional discovery

When I arrived back in California and did some research, I discovered that the replica display had been repositioned and its signage changed sometime after A.D. 2000, when the below photo was taken and the replica was actually slightly turned out so that one could see “Laus Deo” on the back side—though still with some effort.



(Source of photo unknown at time)

Capstone replica display in A.D. 2000 slightly turned out so one could see “Laus Deo” inscription on back side





(Source of photo unknown at time)

Close up of capstone replica turned out (A.D. 2000 photo)  
with descriptive plaque citing and describing, “Laus Deo.”

If you look closely at the photos, you can see the descriptive plaque immediately underneath the capstone replica. What is amazing is what it contained—the wording and description of “Laus Deo”—which was entirely removed from the new description we viewed in June 2007. The new sign leaves off the entire last sentence, “*The casting was inscribed with the phase, Laus Deo, (Praise be to God).*”

From **A.D. 2000** description under the capstone replica (Bold mine)...

#### APEX OF THE MONUMENT

##### *Reproduction*

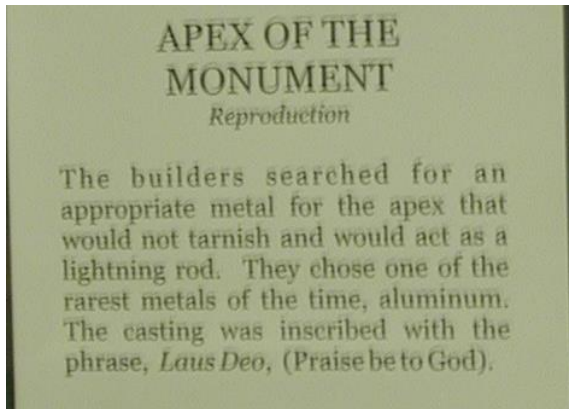
The builders searched for an appropriate metal for the apex that would not tarnish and would act as a lightning rod. They chose one of the rarest metals of the time, aluminum. **The casting was inscribed with the phase, Laus Deo, (Praise be to God).**

From **A.D. 2007** description under the capstone replica...

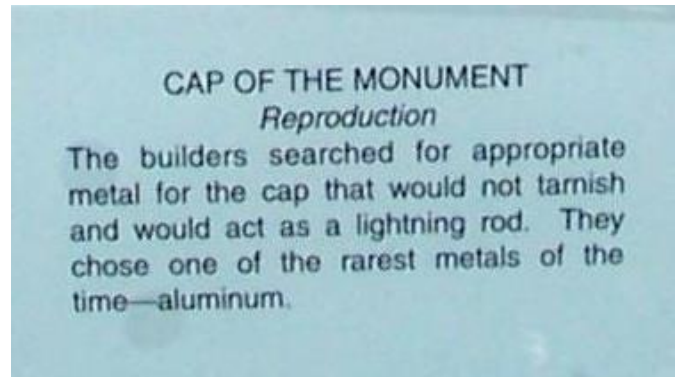
#### CAP OF THE MONUMENT

##### *Reproduction*

The builders searched for appropriate metal for the cap that would not tarnish and would act as a lightning rod. They chose one of the rarest metals of the time—aluminum.



Description under capstone replica in 2000



Description under capstone replica in 2007

What is just as bad as the description of “Laus Deo” being removed is the fact that the capstone replica was turned flush with the wall so that a visitor cannot even see the etching “Laus Deo.” Add to that the fact that the display behind the replica says nothing about nor defines “Laus Deo” and it sure seems like someone is trying to intentionally hide its builders’ thanks and praise to God for the completion of the Washington Monument. It is clear that the American society that both created the Washington Monument and placed the description on the capstone did not fear any negative consequences from the public or government--or think it a violation of Church and State relations to place the phrase, “Laus Deo” (“Praise be to God”) on the Washington Monument.

I estimate by at least mid-2006 the capstone replica had been repositioned so that the side with the etching “Laus Deo” was flush against the wall so that visitors could not read it, and the replica was also set upon a new stand or one with new dressing, complete with a new description underneath it eliminating the reference and explanation of “Laus Deo.”

Because there is no longer any way for the public to learn about “Laus Deo” at the Washington Monument, and so as to preserve its history for future generations, I am respectfully requesting the National Park Service to do either 1, 2, or 3,...**(1)** Pull out the replica from the wall far enough for it to be seen on all sides; **(2)** Place the replica on a pole that turns, so that the public can spin it and see each side, within its glass container; **(3)** Place a mirror behind the replica and lean it so that people can be encouraged to see the 4<sup>th</sup> side inscription which is now hid. **AND...** please add some wording back on the descriptive display at its base or on the wall behind it that interprets and explains “Laus Deo” so the public can both see it and understand what it means.

I genuinely appreciate your response to this inquiry and I offer any assistance I can to help you, including a monetary donation to help make constructional changes.

Respectfully,

Todd DuBord (M.Div.)  
Senior Pastor  
Lake Almanor Community Church

## NPS restores LAUS DEO to capstone replica!

*With the revision story being reported by World Net Daily news and over 500,000 complaints levied against the National Park Service, FOX News broadcasted a live news report at the Washington Monument. Within just five days of the report on WND, the FOX News broadcast was made and the reporter discovered that the LAUS DEO display and signage had miraculously been changed by the time their reporter reached the top—see FOX News live coverage at the top of this webpage. It makes one wonder just how quick government can move when they need to! The National Park Service and Washington Monument personnel not only rectified the religious and historical revisions and corruptions to the LAUS DEO display, but the famous urban legend debunking website, [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com), even created a new article on Todd's research because so much is being sent around the website about the truth or fiction aspects of this Monumental omission! See "Laus Deo" at [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com) or <http://www.snopes.com/politics/religion/lausdeo.asp>*

*The NPS faxed me the following copy of a press report to my office:*

### National Park Service Office of Communications News Release

2007 15:13 2022190910		NPS PUBLIC AFFAIRS	
		National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior	National Capital Region Office of Communications Washington, D.C.
		Department of the Interior National Park Service 1100 Ohio Drive, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20242 202 • 619 • 7400 phone 202 • 619 • 7302 fax	
<b>Office of Communications News Release</b> <i>Pastor Todd DuBord</i>			
Release Date: Tuesday, October 30, 2007 For Immediate Release Bill Line, Toni Braxton 202 619-7400; David Barna 202-208-6843			
<b>National Park Service Explores Methods to Make Replica of Washington Monument Capstone Visible From All Angles</b>			
<p><b>Washington, D.C.</b> — In recent days, it has been brought to the National Park Service's attention that a replica aluminum capstone representing the top of the Washington Monument that is on display on the Monument's 490-foot level has not been fully visible to the public.</p> <p>As a result, the National Park Service is exploring methods to make the replica capstone visually accessible from all angles so that all visitors may be able to see and read both the replica capstone and any related interpretive material in display cases that would be situated near the replica capstone.</p> <p>Currently, the replica capstone is oriented in a display case on the 490-foot level to mirror the position of the actual aluminum capstone sitting outside and on top of the 555-foot, 1/8-inch obelisk. In its current position, this replica aluminum capstone is visible on three sides, with the fourth side currently not visible to visitors.</p> <p>Additionally, the National Park Service will provide new interpretive information that will feature all of the capstone inscriptions in full, giving visitors the opportunity to fully understand the display.</p> <p>"We appreciate this information being brought to our attention and we agree that the public should be able to learn as much as possible about the monument," said National Mall &amp; Memorial Parks Superintendent Peggy O'Dell. "This was clearly an oversight in this exhibit and we will take measures so all visitors are able to see this exhibit."</p>			
-NPS-			
E) EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.			



Though changes to the capstone display were rectified immediately (as the FOX News live broadcast documented), sometime in 2009 the display was moved to the other side of room, and the platform on which the capstone replica was resting was removed the display was permanently mounted to the wall (off the ground), so that the display base could not be moved. Also, the actual capstone replica was turned so that one could see all sides of it. And of course the new display sign once again added or returned the words describing the etching on the east side of the capstone, “Laus Deo”!

I returned to the Washington Monument in July 2010 to take these photos of the new display, so now millions of visitors (including students from all over the world) will once again know that the 19<sup>th</sup> century political world “praised God” for the completion of the Washington Monument!

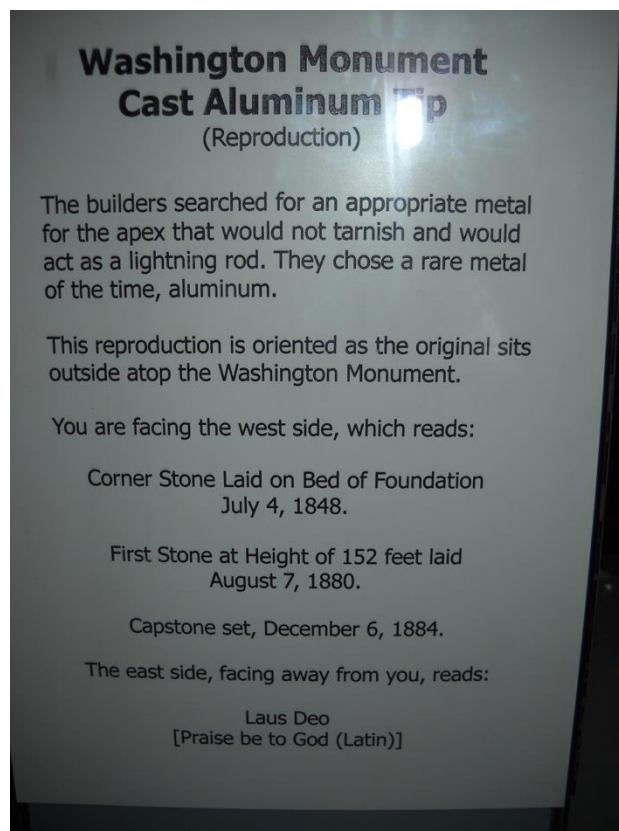
In July 2010....



Me in July 2010 standing by new, permanently mounted capstone replica display turned so visitors can see “Laus Deo” etched on one side and explained on new display sign.



Turned capstone replica now displays “Laus Deo” so visitors can see it



The new display sign re-adds the description of “Laus Deo”