

April 2009 - Vol. 29



[What Happened on the Cross?](#)

by John of Damascus

quotes from early Church fathers

Feature Articles

- [The Redeemer Who Died](#), by Steve Clark
- [The Good News of Easter](#), by Herb Schneider, SJ

Disciples on Mission

- [The Challenge of Mission in Ireland Today](#), a report by Louis Power
- [Quotes from Bishop McKeown and Bishop Good on Mission](#)

Kairos Moments

- [To Faithful Warriors Cometh Rest: calling the next generation](#), by Miguel Vargas
- [The Hope That Does Not Disappoint: advice for parents](#): by Dave Touhill

Way of Life

- [Losing Justin](#), by Daniel Propson
- [Reflections on Serving Others](#): Ashley Martin on Mexico mission trip

Invite a Friend

- [Invite a Friend](#) to a free monthly subscription to Living Bulwark today!

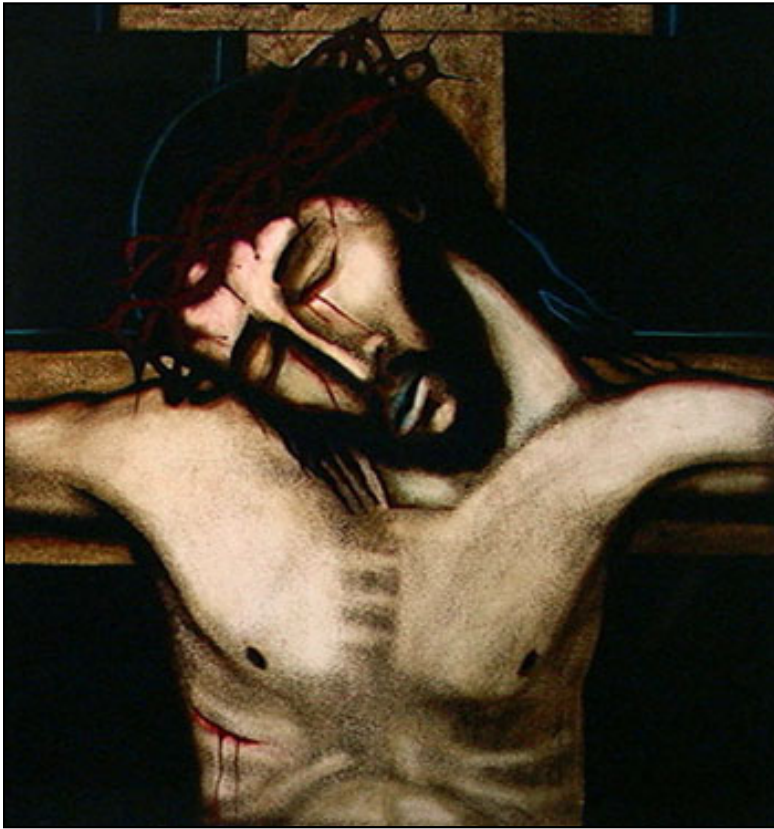
Living Bulwark is committed to fostering renewal of the whole Christian people: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. We especially want to give witness to the charismatic, ecumenical, evangelistic, and community dimensions of that renewal. Living Bulwark seeks to equip Christians to grow in holiness, to apply Christian teaching to their lives, and to respond with faith and generosity to the working of the Holy Spirit in our day.

copyright © 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#) | email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)

Quotes From Early Church Fathers on Christ's Death



Crucifixion by [Michael O'Brien](#)

What Happened on the Cross?

by [John of Damascus](#)

By nothing else except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has death been brought low:

The sin of our first parent destroyed,
 hell plundered,
 resurrection bestowed,
 the power given us to despise the things of this world,
 even death itself,
 the road back to the former blessedness made smooth,
 the gates of paradise opened,
 our nature seated at the right hand of God,
 and we made children and heirs of God.

By the cross all these things have been set aright...

Go to > [Next Page](#)



John of Damascus

John of Damascus, also known as John Damascene, was born in 676. He was brought up in Damascus Syria in a Christian family living under Muslim rule. His father was a government official under both the Byzantine emperor and the Muslim rulers of Damascus. John received a classical education. His fields of interest and contribution included law, theology, philosophy, and music. He was fluent in Arabic as well as Greek. John worked in the Muslim court until the hostility of the caliph toward Christianity caused him to resign his position, about the year 700.



Mar Saba Monastery, Judaeen dessert
 photo by Shay Shickgold

He moved to the vicinity of Jerusalem and

It is a seal that the destroyer may not strike us,
 a raising up of those who lie fallen,
 a support for those who stand,
 a staff for the infirm,
 a crook for the shepherded,
 a guide for the wandering,
 a perfecting of the advanced,
 salvation for soul and body,
 a deflector of all evils,
 a cause of all goods,
 a destruction of sin,
 a plant of resurrection,
 and a tree of eternal life.

[excerpted from *Orthodox Faith*, 4]

Go to > [Next Page](#)

> [What Happened on the Cross?](#) by John of Damascus

> [A Few Drops of Blood Renew the Whole World](#), by Gregory Nazianzen

> [The Lamb That Was Slain Has Delivered Us from Death and Given Us Life](#), by

Melito of Sardis

> [The Death of Death](#), by Augustine of Hippo

became a monk at Mar Saba Monastery located in the Judaeen desert hills near Bethlehem, 18 miles southeast of Jerusalem. He taught in the monastery, preached many sermons in Jerusalem, and wrote both theological treatises and hymns.

Since he lived in the midst of political and theological turmoil, John wrote a great deal to clarify true doctrine and to do his part in spreading the gospel. He is recognized as one of the principal composer of hymns in Eastern Orthodoxy. His most important theological work, *The Fount of Wisdom*, is a summary of Eastern theology. He was a key defender of the use of icons during the iconoclast controversies.

John is considered the last of the Greek church fathers and the first of the East to formulate a comprehensive synthesis of Christian Dogma. John died in 749. He worked to the very end and was beloved by his fellow monks and revered by the people. He was buried at the Monastery of Mar Saba.

(c) copyright 2009 [Living Bulwark](#)

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
 email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

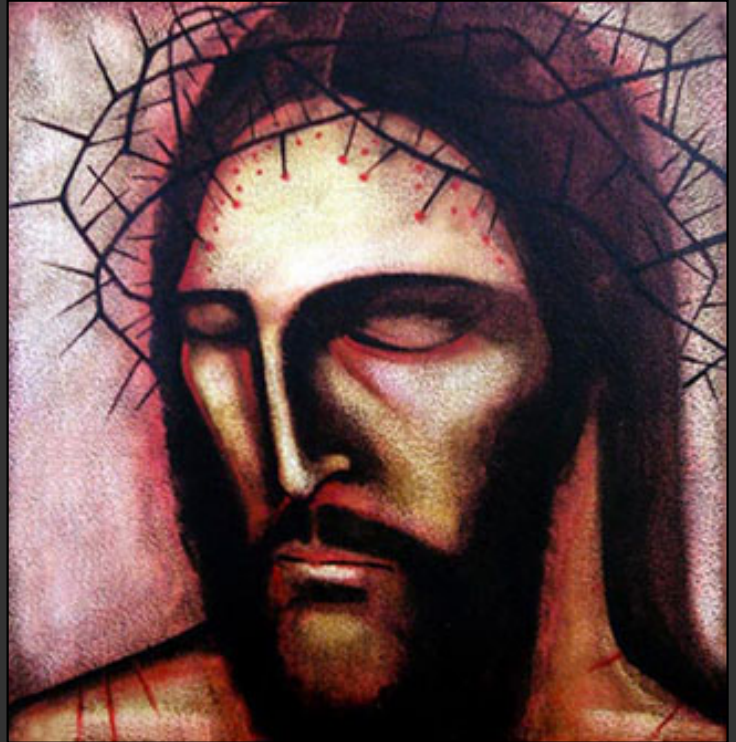
[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)

Quotes from the Early Church Fathers on Christ's Death

A Few Drops of Blood Renew the Whole World by Gregory Nazianzen

Many indeed are the wondrous happenings of that time: God hanging from a cross, the sun made dark and again flaming out; for it was fitting that creation should mourn with its creator. The temple veil rent, blood and water flowing from his side: the one as from a man, the other as from what was above man; the earth shaken, the rocks shattered because of the rock; the dead risen to bear witness to the final and universal resurrection of the dead.

The happenings at the sepulcher and after the sepulcher, who can fittingly recount them? Yet no one of them can be compared to the miracle of my salvation. A few drops of blood renew the whole world, and do for all men what the rennet does for the milk: joining us and binding us together.



"Ecce Homo" by Michael O'Brien



Gregory of Nazianzen, also known as Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory the Theologian, was a 4th century bishop (330-389) who came from a family of distinguished church leaders and teachers. While studying in Athens, he became a close friend of Basil the Great, who was also studying there at the time. They returned to their native Cappadocia (now Eastern Turkey) to serve the Lord. Basil became a monk and Gregory, who preferred a life of solitude, was forcibly persuaded by his father to be ordained a presbyter so he could assist in the care of the local Christians in Cappadocia. Gregory described his father's decision as an "act of tyranny" because Gregory wanted to live a solitary life as an ascetic monk. With Basil's wise counsel, Gregory, nonetheless, embraced the life of priestly service.

During the Arian controversy when many teachers contested the full divinity of Christ, both Gregory and Basil took up the pen to write in defense of the true doctrine of Christ's divinity. Gregory was made a bishop. In 381 he presided over the First Ecumenical Council of Constantinople which completed the creed that is commonly called today the Nicene Creed. Gregory taught with such clarity and depth that he became known simply as "the theologian." During his time as bishop of Constantinople Gregory encountered fierce opposition from the Arians, but Gregory's sermons on the Trinity and the Incarnation won him increasing respect and renown, and even Jerome came in from his desert to hear him. After a period of troubling work, Gregory resigned and retired to the solitude of the desert, spending his last years contentedly in study, writing, and ascetical practices.

Go to next page > [The Lamb That Was Slain](#), by Melito of Sardis

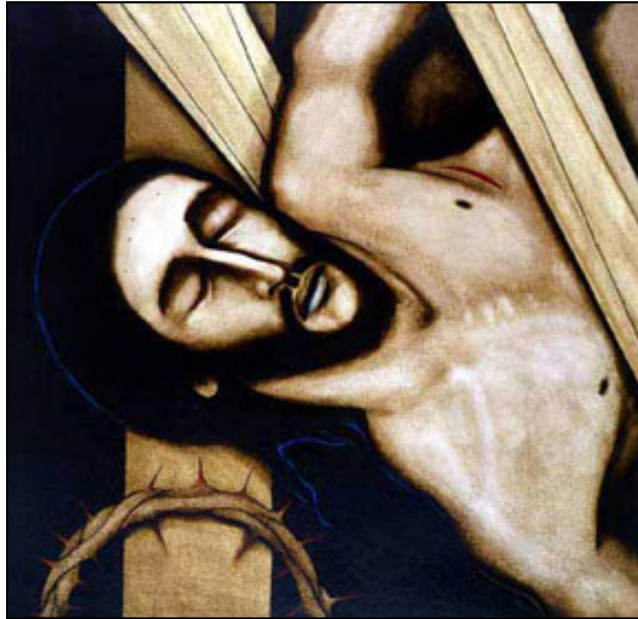
- > [What Happened on the Cross?](#) by John of Damascus
- > [A Few Drops of Blood Renew the Whole World](#), by Gregory Nazianzen
- > [The Lamb That Was Slain Has Delivered Us from Death and Given Us Life](#), by Melito of Sardis
 - > [The Death of Death](#), by Augustine of Hippo

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

copyright © 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#) | email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com
publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)

Quotes From Early Church Fathers on Christ's Death



Jesus Down from the Cross - painting by [Michael O'Brien](#)

The Lamb That Was Slain Has Delivered Us
from Death and Given Us Life

from an Easter homily by Melito of Sardis

There was much proclaimed by the prophets about the mystery of the Passover: that mystery is Christ, and to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

For the sake of suffering humanity he came down from heaven to earth, clothed himself in that humanity in the Virgin's womb, and was born a man. Having then a body capable of suffering, he took the pain of fallen man upon himself; he triumphed over the diseases of soul and body that were its cause, and by his Spirit, which was incapable of dying, he dealt man's destroyer, death, a fatal blow.

He was led forth like a lamb; he was slaughtered like a sheep. He ransomed us from our servitude to the world, as he had ransomed Israel from the hand of Egypt; he freed us from our slavery to the devil, as he had freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh. He sealed our souls with his own Spirit, and the members of our body with his own blood.

He is the One who covered death with shame and cast the devil into mourning, as Moses cast Pharaoh into mourning. He is the One that smote sin and robbed iniquity of offspring, as Moses robbed the Egyptians of their offspring. He is the One who brought us out of slavery into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of tyranny into an eternal kingdom; who made us a new priesthood, a people chosen to be his own for ever. He is the Passover that is our salvation.

It is he who endured every kind of suffering in all those who foreshadowed him. In Abel he was slain, in Isaac bound, in Jacob exiled, in Joseph sold, in Moses exposed to die. He was sacrificed in the Passover lamb, persecuted in David, dishonored in the prophets.

It is he who was made man of the Virgin, he who was hung on the tree; it is he who was buried in the earth, raised from the dead, and taken up to the heights of heaven. He is the mute lamb, the slain lamb born of Mary, the fair ewe. He was seized from the flock, dragged off to be slaughtered, sacrificed in the evening, and buried at night. On the tree no bone of his was broken; in the earth his body knew no decay. He is the One who rose from the dead, and who raised man from the depths of the tomb.



Melito of Sardis was bishop of Sardis (now in present day Turkey) in the second century AD and known for his pastoral approach. A letter of Polycrates of Ephesus to Victor, bishop of Rome, around 194 AD (Eusebius, *Church History* V.24) states that "Melito the eunuch whose whole walk was in the Holy Spirit" was buried at Sardis [in 180 AD]. Tertullian (c. 160-225 AD) wrote that Melito was esteemed as a prophet by many of the faithful Christians.

Melito was a prolific Christian writer, although only one sermon, entitled "On the Passover," and a few fragments of his works are preserved today. Eusebius listed most of his works and gave a few extracts in his *Church History* (IV.13, IV.26). One work which was written around 172 AD is "An Apology for the Christian Faith," an appeal to the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius to examine the accusations against the Christians and to end the persecution. Melito presented elaborate parallels between the Old Testament, the form or mold as he called it, and the New Testament which he saw as the truth that broke the mold, in a series of *Eklogai*, six books of extracts from the Law and the Prophets which pointed to Christ and the Christian faith. Eusebius also cited Melito's famous canon (official list of the books) of the Old Testament, one of the earliest known canons preserved from the early church period.

Go to next page > [The Death of Death](#), by Augustine of Hippo

> [What Happened on the Cross?](#) by John of Damascus

> [A Few Drops of Blood Renew the Whole World](#), by Gregory Nazianzen

> [The Lamb That Was Slain Has Delivered Us from Death and Given Us Life](#), by Melito of Sardis

> [The Death of Death](#), by Augustine of Hippo

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

copyright © 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#) | email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

Go to > [Next Page](#) | [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#) | [6](#) |

[This article is excerpted from the book *Redeemer: Understanding the Meaning of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, copyright © 1992 by Stephen B. Clark, published by Servant Books.]

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

(c) copyright 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#)

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

Quotes From Early Church Fathers on Christ's Death

The Death of Death

by Augustine of Hippo

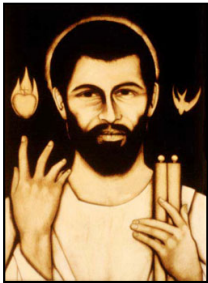
He died, but he vanquished death; in himself he put an end to what we feared; he took it upon himself and he vanquished it, as a mighty hunter he captured and slew the lion.

Where is death? Seek it in Christ, for it exists no longer; but it did exist and now it is dead. O life, O death of death! Be of good heart; it will die in us, also. What has taken place in our head will take place in his members; death will die in us also. But when? At the end of the world, at the resurrection of the dead in which we believe and concerning which we do not doubt.

[Sermon 233.3-4]



"Jesus Laid in the Tomb" by Michael O'Brien



Aurelius Augustine was born in 345 in the town of Tagaste, in Roman North Africa, in what is today Algeria. His mother was Monica, a very devout Christian who had a significant influence on her son's life. His father, named Patricius, was a pagan of significant status in society. Patricius became a Christian shortly before his death.

Augustine was educated at Carthage where he enjoyed academic success. He also enjoyed the party life, and at the age of 17 fell in love with a woman whom he never named. They lived together unmarried for 13 years and had a son whom Augustine named Adeodatus, meaning "gift from God." His son died in his youth.

At the age of 19, after reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, Augustine fell in love with philosophy. He later wrote, "It gave me different values and priorities. Suddenly every vain hope became empty to me, and I longed for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardour in my heart." While he pursued Platonic philosophy and the theology of the Manichaens, a Christian heretical sect, he became restless for truth and virtue. Shortly before his 30th birthday, Augustine encountered Ambrose, the saintly bishop of Milan. Augustine was moved by Ambrose's example and his inspired teaching and preaching of the gospel. At the age of 32 Augustine found peace with God and was baptized by Ambrose during the Easter liturgy in 387. Augustine returned to North Africa and formed a monastic community with a group of friends. He was ordained a priest in 391 and became a noted preacher. In 396 he reluctantly became a bishop and remained the bishop of Hippo until his death in 430. He left his monastic community, but continued to lead a monastic life with the parish priests of Hippo in his episcopal residence. Augustine died on August 28, 430, during the siege of Hippo by the Vandals.

Augustine was a prolific writer and original thinker. His numerous writings, including theological treatises, sermons, scripture commentaries, and philosophical dialogues, number into the hundreds. His autobiography, the *Confessions*, was considered the first Western autobiography. It was highly read among his contemporaries and has continued as a classic throughout the ages.

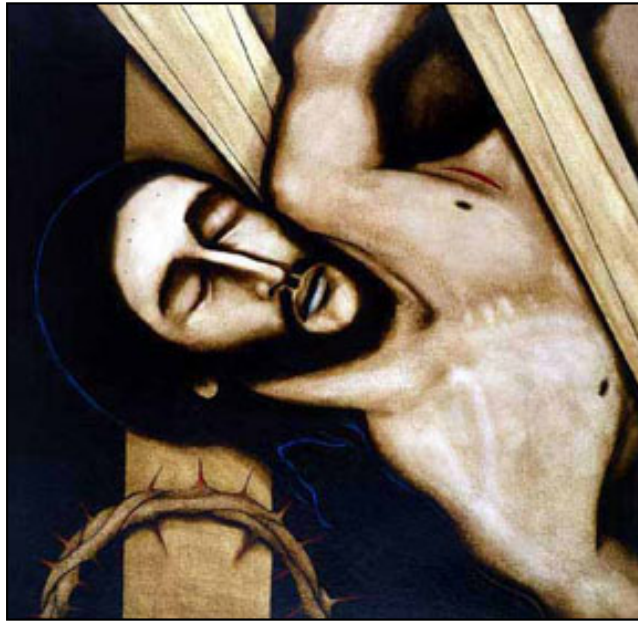
Augustine is one of the most important figures in the development of Western Christianity. He is esteemed as a great Latin church father and a Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church. Many Protestants consider him to be one of the theological fathers of Reformation teaching. Among Orthodox he is called St. Augustine the Blessed.

- > [What Happened on the Cross?](#) by John of Damascus
- > [A Few Drops of Blood Renew the Whole World](#), by Gregory Nazianzen
- > [The Lamb That Was Slain Has Delivered Us from Death and Given Us Life](#), by Melito of Sardis
- > [The Death of Death](#), by Augustine of Hippo

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

copyright © 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#) | email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com
publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)



Jesus Down From the Cross, by [Michael O'Brien](#)

The Redeemer Who Died

In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them - 2 Corinthians 5:19

by Steve Clark

The main section of the Book of Revelation begins with a vision. John sees an open door in heaven and is summoned by a heavenly voice to come and see “what must take place after this” (Revelation 4:1). No sooner had the voice spoken than he found himself in heaven. God was seated on his throne, presiding over his court. God, in other words, appeared to John as the ruler of the universe, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. He was in the process of determining what would happen to human history.

In God’s right hand John sees a scroll, which contains the divine decrees for the future. Once the scroll would be opened, God’s purpose would be achieved, evil would be destroyed, and the great and blessed consummation would arrive. John’s vision, however, comes at a dramatic and somewhat distressing moment. The time is at hand for the concluding act to begin, but something is missing. The angel calls out the great summons: “Who is worthy to open the scroll and open its seals? Let him stand forth and be the blessed instrument of the consummation.” But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth comes forward as worthy to open the scroll.

John begins to weep. He fears that human history will not achieve the purpose for which God created it, that the present evils will continue. Then one of the rulers in heaven speaks to John. “Weep not,” he says. Someone has just conquered, the one who was prophesied as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:9–10) and as the Root or Branch of David (Isaiah 11:1,10) – the messianic King of Israel. Because he has conquered, he can open the scroll. As it turns out, John is present when the one who is worthy arrives in heaven – he who died on the cross, was raised from the dead, and was ready to receive “dominion and glory and kingdom” (Daniel 7:14) from the eternal Lord of

the universe, the Lord God Almighty.

The one who stands forth is an extraordinary personage, a lion who is a lamb. This is symbolic language that shows the paradox of a man of great and regal power, a king and high priest, standing before the throne of God – yet appearing at the same time as a sacrificial victim. Moreover, although he is a human figure, John can see in him divine power and divine omniscience as expressed in the symbols of the seven horns and seven eyes.

Only one was found worthy, our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the one who could open the scroll. He is the one who can bring human history to its decreed consummation, who can establish the kingdom of God, and who can bring to earth the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God, filled with God's glory and blessing (Revelation 21–22).

Go to > [Next Page](#) | [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#) | [6](#) |



Steve Clark is President of the [Sword of the Spirit](#). This article is excerpted from the book *Redeemer: Understanding the Meaning of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, copyright © 1992 by Stephen B. Clark, published by Servant Books. It can be purchased at Tabor House Books

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

(c) copyright 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#)

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)

The Redeemer Who Died, continued, by Steve Clark

Why was Christ worthy?

Christ was worthy because of what he did, shedding his blood and paying the price of redemption. But he was also worthy because of who he was. He was not just an ordinary man. Christ was worthy because he was special.

I was once employed in a shipping room. Various attempts had been made to improve efficiency – to no avail. One day the president of the company unexpectedly appeared. From then on the shipping room was different.

Another time I was in New York City seeing a friend off on an ocean liner to Europe. My friend's uncle had driven us. The area around the dock was crowded, with no parking spaces anywhere nearby, except within a cordoned-off area. My friend's uncle happened to be a priest, and an Irish policeman noticed our efforts to find a place, caught sight of my friend's uncle (and his collar), lifted the chain, and waved us to an empty space while nodding respectfully to the priest.

I recently read an article describing a well-known television talk show. The article explained how the person being interviewed was asserting the evils of abortion. Normally, no one would have been allowed onto that particular program to make such remarks. The guest on the show, however, was Mother Teresa. Her charitable work in Calcutta gave her an access and moral authority that opened up even that show to her.

“It all depends on who you are.” The saying is true in many ways, some good, some bad, but the principle involved is an important one for our redemption. Not just anyone could be the Redeemer. It would have done no good for the Jewish High Priest or the Roman Emperor to notice that the human race needed redemption and to ask for volunteers. No one else in the land of Israel or in the Roman Empire – indeed no one else in all of human history – could have done what Jesus did. Only the one who held a special position could be the Redeemer.

John's vision in Revelation 5 shows us who the Redeemer was and had to be. He was the prophesied king, the one who was from the royal dynasty of Israel but who was to rule all the nations of the earth as their rightful Lord. He was also the priest who was himself a sacrifice, able to make the offering that could purchase human beings for God. He was human, but had divine power and omniscience and could be worshiped as the Son of God (Revelation 5:13). Only such a person could be the Redeemer.

Go to > [Next Page](#) | [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#) | [6](#) |

[This article is excerpted from the book *Redeemer: Understanding the Meaning of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, copyright © 1992 by Stephen B. Clark, published by Servant Books.]

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

(c) copyright 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#)

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)

The Redeemer Who Died, continued, by Steve Clark

The New Adam: A Representative

The question before us is: Who must someone be in order to die for the sins of others and have that death make any difference? Christ's position as the new Adam gives us a first answer. He held a special position in the human race and that position allowed his death to have an effect that no one else's could have. He acted as the representative of the human race – in a unique way.

A representative is someone who can act on behalf of others. Sometimes, a representative only represents an individual. A widow might give her son or daughter “the power of attorney” to act on her behalf and take care of her interests. A businessman might have an agent in another country to dispose of his assets in that country.

Agents also represent groups of people. In English-speaking countries, it is common to say that people who are affected by some governmental action should be represented in the deliberations that decide on that action. “No taxation without representation,” to use the historic phrase. They therefore are represented by someone in Parliament or Congress. Such representatives have some freedom of action, but they should genuinely represent the interests of those on whose behalf they are sent.

Representatives also function to symbolically represent groups of people. In the twentieth century, it became common to find the body of an unknown soldier who had died in war and to bury him with great honor in the “tomb of the unknown soldier.” He was chosen to be the symbolic representative of all such soldiers, chosen precisely because the only thing known about him was that he was a soldier who had given his life in war.

There is, however, a significantly different kind of representation: corporate or authoritative representation. The head of some corporate body, and only he, can represent it when it acts. If two warring nations decide to make peace, the presidents or their designated delegates sign the treaty. Average citizens off the streets, even citizens in high standing, would not be authorized to sign. They would not hold a position allowing them to represent the nation as a corporate entity.

Likewise, if one nation wanted to warn another nation that war was imminent unless something changed, the message would not be delivered to just any citizen of the other nation. Once again, the president would seek to communicate that message to the head of the other nation, or at least an appropriate official, in the expectation that the head of state would lead that nation in its response. Only an authorized leader can represent the nation as a corporate entity.

In a similar way, if a nation loses a war and has to pay reparations, the head of the nation – either personally or through a delegate – is responsible to see that it happens. He might not be the one who began the war. He might not even have taken part in the war in any active way. He might even have become the head after the defeat because he was opposed to the war from beginning to end. But if he is the head of the nation, he is responsible for the body he is the head of. He is therefore responsible for the fulfillment of the treaty obligations by that nation. Someone, in other words, can be morally or legally responsible as a representative for something he is not morally or legally responsible for as an individual. Christ was such a representative – of the human race, or at least the redeemed human race. But Christ's representative role was unique and unrepeatable in human history. Perhaps the easiest way to understand it is to understand what it means to say he is the new Adam.

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)

The Redeemer Who Died, continued, by Steve Clark

Christ and Adam

The phrase “new Adam” comes from Paul, at least in the sense that he is the earliest one we know of who used it and that his writings are the source of later writings that use the phrase. The idea almost certainly does not stem from Paul. But the clearest and most explicit presentation of the idea in scripture is found in Paul.

Paul makes several references to Christ’s relationship to Adam. The most extended presentation is found in Romans 5, where Adam is described as “a type of the one who was to come” (v. 14), a type of Christ. Paul says of the two of them in Romans 5:17–19:

If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace...reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ...Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience, many will be made righteous.

The same connection is made in First Corinthians 15:21–22:

As by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

In the same chapter, Christ is called “the last Adam” (v. 45), in contrast to the first Adam.

To see Adam as a type or foreshadowing of Christ indicates an important correspondence between the two in God’s plan for human history. In certain respects, the position that Adam held and Christ now holds are the same. Adam prefigured or foreshadowed Christ as the head of the human race, the source of its life.

By calling Christ “the last” Adam, Paul probably means that Christ is the Adam for the ending period of human history, when he brings into existence a new human race as the fulfillment of God’s plan. A more common title among Christians is “new Adam,” indicating that Christ brings that newness of spiritual life that is the mark of the new covenant (Rom 7:6). Either way, Christ is a new beginning, the personal source of a new humanity that fulfills the purpose for which God originally created the human race.

Adam is a type of Christ, but in a somewhat different way than someone like David is. Christ fulfills David’s role of king of Israel by ruling in a “fuller”, that is, a spiritually more effective, way. Although Christ fulfills the same role as Adam, in certain respects he reversed what Adam did. Both Adam and Christ were appointed to establish the human race. Adam was appointed to begin it, Christ to renew it. Adam, however, brought condemnation; Christ brought acquittal or justification. Adam brought death through his fall. Christ brought true and unending life through his rising.

Nonetheless Christ did not totally reverse what Adam did. He became a son of Adam and took on the humanity Adam began. He reversed the fall of Adam not by annihilating human nature or transforming it into something completely different, but by restoring human nature and bringing it to a new level of life.

[Go to > Next Page](#) | [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#) | [6](#) |

[This article is excerpted from the book *Redeemer: Understanding the Meaning of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, copyright © 1992 by Stephen B. Clark, published by Servant Books.]

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)

The Redeemer Who Died, continued, by Steve Clark

A Corporate Effect

The position of the first Adam reveals some important truths about that of the new Adam. The texts comparing the two indicate that the chief reason to see Christ as the new Adam lies in the way Christ passes on the results of his actions and his own life to his spiritual descendants. Just as by eating the forbidden fruit, Adam performed an action that changed the human race, so by giving himself on the cross, Christ performed an action that also changed the race. Just as Adam's action affected the way all his descendants lived because as their father he passed on his life to them, so Christ's action affected all his spiritual descendants, because he too passed on his life.

Behind the effect of Adam's and Christ's actions is what could be called the family principle, which explains why the action of ancestors can have moral effects on their descendants. The modern mentality makes it more difficult for us to recognize the family principle than it seems to have been for earlier people, including the recipients of Paul's letters. Our individualistic orientation often leads us to overlook corporate effects, especially corporate moral effects.

In Adam we see the family principle magnified. As the first father, he simply was the human race at one point. What happened to Adam happened to the whole race. Subsequently, the same was true of Adam and Eve together. As we have seen, none of the various views of "original sin" among orthodox Christians completely eliminates the corporate aspect of the result of the first sin. Since the fall, the human race as a whole has been in a state of "separation" from God (Isaiah 59:2). Corporately, it has failed to comply with the commandments of its sovereign. As a result, it has suffered the bad consequences of its condition, including the loss of that full life that God intended for it. According to the beginning of Genesis, this condition is the result of the family principle and of the actions of the first two parents of the whole human race.

The family principle is similarly magnified in Christ and allows him to merit (deserve, earn, pay for) redemption for us. As the head of the new human race, Christ functions like Adam. He shares his relationship to God, his Father, with his spiritual descendants. He also passes on his life to that new human race and determines much of what the life of its members is like.

Christ is, however, the new Adam. "New" indicates that there are some important respects in which Christ's effect on Christians is unlike Adam's effect on the human race as a whole. It is not only unlike Adam's in the fact that the effects of his actions reverse that of Adam's. It is also unlike Adam's in the fact that the operation of the family principle or principle of corporate solidarity is itself strengthened in Christ, not lessened.

This increase in the effect due to the family principle is indicated by the section of First Corinthians 15 that talks about Christ as the new Adam. Paul is explaining how a corruptible human nature can be raised from the dead after decaying in the tomb:

Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:45-50).

In this passage, Paul tells us that the new Adam is a heavenly man, not just an earthly man. He is, in other words, a human being, but a special one. He also tells us that this heavenly human being is not just a living being like other human beings, but a life-giving spirit. In both ways Paul is possibly referring to what we would describe as Christ's incarnate nature. More probably he is talking about the transfigured, glorified humanity that resulted from the resurrection. Either way, the human Jesus of Nazareth has a heavenly aspect, a "spiritualized" humanity. That humanity is the source of a new human life, one that changes us so that we look more like God and can live eternally.

The heavenly human being, who is Christ, imparts the new life to us directly. We receive spiritual life from the "life-giving spirit". We are given the heavenly image from the "man of heaven". We are not, in other words, connected to Christ the way we are connected to Adam. We are only connected to Adam through generations of intermediaries. We are connected to Christ directly. We become Christians through a personal union with him. We can even be said to be one spirit with Christ and corporately one flesh with him (1 Corinthians 6:16-17). We are his body, members of him (1 Corinthians 12:27).

To describe Christ as the new Adam indicates the importance of what Christ is doing. He is not just improving the human race. He is not just creating a grouping of human beings that will do better than others. He is creating the grouping that can fulfill the purpose for which God created the human race in the first place, because they know his will and have been delivered from the bondage of sin. They are the new human race not in the sense that there are no other human beings, but in the sense that they are part of the human race as it is becoming what God made it to be.

Go to > [Next Page](#) | [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#) | [6](#) |

[This article is excerpted from the book *Redeemer: Understanding the Meaning of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, copyright © 1992 by Stephen B. Clark, published by Servant Books.]

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

(c) copyright 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#)

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)

The Redeemer Who Died, continued, by Steve Clark

The Representative of the Race

Christ's position as the new head of the human race provides an important perspective in understanding why his death could count for us. He acted on our behalf in his death, as well as in his resurrection and ascension. He was representing the human race which would come into existence as a result of what he was doing, the race which would be his body, and which was already being drawn together through the calling and formation of his disciples. In considering his death and resurrection, we sometimes miss the fact that Christ acted as a corporate representative and not just as a righteous or godly individual.

Christ can represent the human race because of who he is. As the new Adam, he is the head of the human race. He is the one whom God appointed to be the ruler of the human race, and even now he functions as the King or Lord of those who accept him for who he is. Consequently, Christ has the authority to relate to God the Father on behalf of the human race. In turn, he also represents God to the human race insofar as God relates to the human race through the head of that race. Finally, he leads the corporate response to God of those who accept him.

Christ died "for us," therefore, not only in the sense that his death was for our benefit, but also in the sense that he died "on our behalf" as our representative. As Paul put it, "One has died for all, therefore all have died," (2 Corinthians 5:14) because that one could act on behalf of all as the head of those who were united to him. The effects of his death can therefore become our own once we become members of his body and "live for him" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Return to > | [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#) | [6](#) |

[This article is excerpted from the book *Redeemer: Understanding the Meaning of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, copyright © 1992 by Stephen B. Clark, published by Servant Books.]

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

(c) copyright 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#)

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)



["Road to Emmaus"](#) by John Dunne, Dublin, Ireland

The Good News of Easter

by Fr. Herb Schneider

What are the consequences of Easter?

Have you ever asked yourself what the world would be like if there were no Easter, if Jesus had not been raised from the dead? For sure the disciples would not only have returned from Jerusalem to Galilee deeply disappointed and sad, but they would have gone back to their ordinary way of life and little by little forgotten Jesus. He would have been but a fading memory and his teachings a beautiful dream buried with him in the tomb. The advice of the poet Horace would have been correct: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." And so would have been Catullus, another Roman poet, who encouraged his lover to live for love and kisses, because when life ends and night falls it lasts forever without any dawn.

St. Paul wrote: "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is void of content and your faith is empty too. You are still in your sins and those who have fallen asleep in Christ are the deadest of the dead. If our hopes in Christ are limited to this life only, we are the most pitiable of men" (1 Corinthians 15:14-17,19).

But thanks be to God! He has raised Jesus from the dead. Everything has changed. Our sins have been pardoned. We have been reconciled with God and in Christ have become his sons and daughters. In this Spirit he has called us together as his people. The Pentecost chapter of the Acts of the Apostles describes the consequences of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus under the following headings:

1. The gift of the Spirit and the reversal of all the curse of the Tower of Babel
2. The transformation of frightened people into bold proclaimers of the marvels of God
3. The creation of a Eucharistic community of disciples on mission.

The gift of the Spirit

“All were filled with the Spirit” (Acts 2:4). The keywords are “all” and “filled.” All in the upper room without exception received as much of God’s Spirit as they were able to receive. No one received only a little bit or a partial gift. There was an immediate transformation: frightened men and women who had assembled behind closed windows and locked doors threw open doors and windows and had an exuberant prayer meeting in the street. Their fears were gone, and their praise and exultation was such that the onlookers thought them drunk with wine (Acts 2:13,15).

They boldly proclaimed “the marvelous deeds God had accomplished” (Acts 2:11) and all those who had come together, “Jews of every nation under heaven” heard in their own native language what God had accomplished through Jesus (Acts 2:8-11). The book of Genesis comes to a climax in the story of human sinfulness by telling us that people in their pride attempted to build a tower into heaven in order to usurp God’s place. God dealt with their pride by confusing their language. The story depicts the ultimate result of sin: not only estrangement from God, but also estrangement from one another. Sin destroys communication and makes community impossible. But now, because of Easter, because of Jesus’ victory over sin, the gift of his Spirit undoes the curse of the Tower of Babel. Communication and communion are restored. In and through Jesus, community is once again possible in the Holy Spirit. Bringing together God’s people is the goal of the gift of the Spirit.

A community of God's redeemed people

Luke describes for us in Acts 2:42-47 the redeemed people of God. Community is the fruit of Jesus’ death, resurrection and exultation to God’s right hand as Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:34,36). The community of God’s redeemed people is first of all a Eucharistic community, a community that is able to give God praise and worship (Acts 2:46-47). They celebrated the Lord’s Supper with joyful hearts (Acts 2:42-46). They cared for one another in such a way that no one lacked necessities (Acts 2:44-45). They grew in their life of discipleship living out the instructions of the apostles (Acts 2:42). They welcomed new members (Acts 2:47).

Good news for us

The resurrection of Jesus was a one-time event. It happened on the first day of the week some nineteen hundred seventy-seven years ago. The effects of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, however, have never ceased. Easter in this sense happens whenever people accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior and are filled with his Spirit and called to community. Easter happens when disciples of Jesus in community, empowered by the Holy Spirit, worship and praise the Father for the marvels he has done in and through Jesus. Yes, Easter happens when they boldly and fearlessly proclaim “that God has made both Lord and Messiah the Jesus” who was crucified (Acts 2:36), when disciples share their resources with one another not only to sustain the mission of evangelization, but also to care for one another’s needs, and when their bold proclamation bears fruit in the growth of God’s people.

This is exactly what is happening in our midst. In so many different ways we see the exalted Lord and Messiah, Jesus, pour out his Spirit to raise up communities of disciples on mission in the church, to live out in their particular circumstances the Easter and Pentecost chapters of the book of Acts. To God’s marvelous deeds there is only one response, which has a twofold process: to praise and thank God with exuberant alleluias and to make ourselves available for his mission.

[Fr. Herb Schneider, MA, STL, STD, is professor of New Testament and dean of Loyola School of Theology in the Philippines, author of five books on the New Testament and transformational leadership, and a member of the International Executive Council of [The Sword of the Spirit](#)].

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

copyright © 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#) | email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)



Midday Shoppers, Galway, Ireland, photo illustration by Don Schwager

The Challenge of Mission in Ireland Today

a report by Louis Power

A Sword of the Spirit ecumenical conference in Dromantine, Northern Ireland on January 2009, hosted jointly by the [Community of Nazareth](#), Dublin, and [Charis Community](#), Belfast, was addressed by Most Reverend Dr. Donal McKeown, Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of Down & Connor, and the Right Reverend Ken Good, Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry & Raphoe. Also represented at the conference were the Focolare Movement, Corrymeela Community, The Christian Renewal Centre, John the Baptist Koinonia – renewal movements active in Ireland.

Both bishops affirmed how vital Christian community is for the future of mission in Ireland. Participants came away from the conference with a greater sense of support and encouragement for the place of renewal communities in the wider church.



Quotes from Bishop McKeown

The exaltation of the individual has affected how many see spirituality. For some it can become a self-indulgent and shallow browsing in a religious supermarket, where we pick the sort of spiritual treat that we fancy. As you know from your own understanding of your call [a community of disciples on mission], what is now sometimes called a "spirituality of communion" can play a vital role. We all have to develop a personal relationship with the Father, the Son and the Spirit, even though the emphases will vary for individuals and communities. However, that relationship with the Trinity is lived out in the context of committed human relationships. It is there that the call to love, forgive, grow in self acceptance, be forgiven all develop. And a spirituality of communion is not just the context for human and spiritual growth but part of the *content* of it.

Your community is not just a useful support for your individual and spiritual growth. Being in community is part of the proclamation of the Gospel message. In a social context where relationships are not really expected to last too long and where the temptation is always strong to move on immediately rather than try to sort failings out, where love is seen only as an emotion and rarely as a decision, Jesus invites his disciples to walk together. "By the love that you have for one another will all know that you are my



Dromantine Retreat and Conference Center, Northern Ireland

In his address, **Bishop McKeown** stated that the world in which people of his generation grew up was one in which language about the transcendent was an assumed part of daily discourse, unlike today's secularist society, as captured by the title of a recent book, *God is Missing and not Missed*. The current condition leads to a ruptured relationship between faith and culture, the bishop explained. Secular society today works on the basis that, except where scientific truths are involved, there is no such thing as absolute truth; or that assumed truth is really only what a particular group decides is truth for them. One clear trend however, Bishop McKeown stated, is the move away from a sense of community to an emphasis on the individual.

A secularist society today tends to promote "the right and ability to choose" as its paramount value. But Bishop McKeown stressed that where a culture of choosing dominates, "the choosing itself can become the good thing rather than an evaluation of what is being chosen."

He went on to point out that this is not an easy time for mission in an Ireland that has lost confidence in the narrative it had about the past, so Ireland is thus struggling to find its way forward. He concluded that a society that sets at risk the values of the present and hope for the future is all the more in need of Good News. "

Bishop McKeown encouraged the members of the Sword of the Spirit to see the call to community as "not just the context for human and spiritual growth but part of the content of it. Your community is not just a useful support for your individual and spiritual growth. Being in community is part of the proclamation of the Gospel message."

Bishop McKeown continued, "In a social context where relationships are not really expected to last too long and where the temptation is always strong to move on immediately rather than try to sort failings out, where love is seen only as an emotion and rarely as a decision, Jesus invites his disciples to

disciples" (John 17:23).

And a spirituality of communion is not just one that calls you to share your lives as much as you can. It is also an invitation to make your community as open and as welcoming as possible. That is not easy when just staying united is a challenge. But a community that is not welcoming, that does not have space for others to come and rest, that does not find time to share its life, that gives the impression of excluding rather than including – that community will find it very hard to be seen as a credible witness to the Jesus of the Gospel. And there are many who have never felt they belonged, or who are afraid to belong. Help them to see concrete examples that community is better than competition. Even the *possibility* of community is an important pointer to the healing grace of Jesus. If we say that we witness to the foolishness of the Cross and the possibility of reconciliation, the people of today say, "Don't tell us, show us."

continued on > [next page](#) | [1](#) | [2](#) |

walk together. 'By the love that you have for one another will all know that you are my disciples' (John 17:23)."

“As a community and as churches we are here only so that we can bring our brothers and sisters with us to the throne of Christ,” he proclaimed.

continued on > [next page](#) | [1](#) | [2](#) |

[Louis Power is a member of the [Community of Nazareth](#), in Dublin, Ireland.]



(c) copyright 2009 [Living Bulwark](#)

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)

The Challenge of Mission in Ireland Today, continued

Bishop Good, in his address, agreed that there are now many more strident and forceful voices in Ireland and elsewhere which are critiquing a Christian viewpoint and arguing for a humanistic or even atheistic understanding of life. Religious practice as traditionally understood in Ireland has declined and continues to do so, and there is an increasing moral relativism that regards as unacceptable that Christian ethics and moral standards should have pride of place in the Ireland of today, north or south.

But despite these challenges, Bishop Good affirmed his deep conviction “that this is a good time to be alive, that it is a great time to be a follower of Christ and that it is the right time to have Good News to share.” As much as at any previous period in our history, people are in need of the grace, the love, the forgiveness, the new start and the eternal hope which faith in Christ freely offers us.



conference participants

God created mankind for relationship, Bishop Good stated, and God’s acts of creation and of redemption are the expressions of the depth of his love. Mission is the overflow of our transforming encounter with God; it is not so much our work for him but his work in us. Mission is the full breadth of what God is doing in building his Kingdom among us – and evangelism is a key aspect of that, whereby people are invited to allow the power of the Holy Spirit to draw them into a Kingdom way of life, to forsake their old patterns of living and their old values, to be adopted into a new life modelled on Jesus Christ’s example of self-giving love.

Bishop Good recommended a book about evangelism that had challenged him recently. Entitled *Just Walk Across the Room* by Bill Hybels, the book de-mystifies the whole business of talking to other people about faith and shows that evangelism can be an exciting adventure which doesn’t necessarily require great theological expertise or special social skills. People do really



Quotes from Bishop Ken Good

When thinking about mission, we constantly need to be brought back to that bigger picture in which God is the focus. He created humankind for relationship, and his acts of creation and of redemption are an expression of the depth of his love. They are his mission. *Missio Dei* is the Latin phrase which places the emphasis on what God is doing, rather than us mistakenly and presumptuously assuming that mission is entirely our responsibility and that it is all up to us. As Jurgen Moltmann expresses this reality, "It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church."

Any theology of mission must be based on God himself. It is only when our lives are centred on God, when we know that we are loved by him and have been forgiven by him, when we are set free from our fears and petty preoccupations and find ourselves swept up in his divine mission of transformation and renewal, then we can engage more holistically and realistically in mission, in his mission.

When we are enabled to see the world more as God sees it, when we sense something of his compassion and love, when we are moved as he is by the signs of injustice, oppression, lostness, alienation, fear and pain in the world, then can we engage more realistically in his mission.

One of the things which impresses me about a large group of people like this is the healthy range of ages, the variety of life experiences, from north and south, and the assortment of church backgrounds and affiliations. All seeking to serve Christ more effectively, you each have something positive and useful to offer to the rest of us today.

appreciate someone noticing them, taking an interest and wanting to find out more about them – hence, the advice given in the title “Just Walk Across the Room.”

In his concluding remarks Bishop Good urged his listeners to enlarge their sense of what mission is – God’s activity in which he chooses to involve us. If we hold exclusively to the approach of our own spirituality, whatever it may be, we may well be limiting our ability to be more useful to God in his mission.

“We can learn a great deal from and be inspired by the evangelistic and mission style and approach of others,” Bishop Good pointed out, “as long as we are willing to adapt and apply the lessons we learn in what I hope will be for you a life that is far from *misadventure* and much more of a *mission-adventure* with God.”

During a time of questions and answers following his talk, Bishop Good commended the communities for their willingness to commit time to both live community life and be actively involved in the renewal of their local churches as well.

[return to page > | 1 | 2 |](#)

[Louis Power is a member of the [Community of Nazareth](#), in Dublin, Ireland.]

[return to page > | 1 | 2 |](#)

(c) copyright 2009 [Living Bulwark](#)

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#) > [Español](#)



To Faithful Warriors Commeth Rest

**It is now time for the next generation to answer the call
of advancing the bulwark built by the first pioneers**

by **Miguel Vargas Arroyo**

The song *For All the Saints* is an anthem which inspires me in a very special way. Although I had always related it to the servants of God throughout the centuries, lately this song makes me think of the founders of the Sword of the Spirit. I must say as a twenty-one year old that I deeply admire the men and women of the “first generation” in community, who have served since the late 1960s. That is why I want to write a little about their life, their sacrifice, and their answer to God’s call. I have taken the title of this article from a line in the song I mentioned.

Whoever encounters my community today – the [Tree of Life community](#) – finds a well-formed structure. Our gatherings are on Saturdays in the afternoon in a hall built by the community. We have eight main leaders (we call them coordinators) and five more are in training; there are several senior women’s leaders, three districts and some three hundred adult members. We have some established policies about the way we want to live as a community. There are many outreaches. We have community courses on Thursday night, a community conference once every year, day trips, youth camps, celebrations of the Christian seasons, and many other things. My community is well formed, and whoever encounters it today could think that it has always been like this.

It’s the same when you enter a big building. You find huge windows through which the sunlight enters into the wide hallways that lead from one room to another. There might be a fountain in a lobby, you could see elevators in different places, emergency exits, innovating architecture and all kinds of details. The modest size of the building could deceive us, and make us believe it was easy to build. But the truth is that behind that great structure there are hours and hours of the work of hundreds of people. Architects, engineers, masons, plumbers, electricians, designers. That building was built with the sweat of many people, their weariness and sometimes even their exhaustion. Some risked their life to place the highest windows, some gave hours of their sleep to design the plans, some oversaw each step of the building, others supplied just a minor detail. But in the end, the building would not have been finished without the effort of so many people.

It was also like this in the Sword of the Spirit. Each element that characterizes the way of life of our “community of communities” has behind it the effort of our founders. Hours in airplanes, long phone conversations, email messages, tiring debates.

Those who came before us, the Sword of the Spirit saints of the past, responded to a call from God and gave themselves to the building of the bulwark that God had in mind. Through the veins of the Sword of the Spirit flows the blood of these men and women who layed the foundation for the community. They are the stones that carry upon themselves the whole weight of the bulwark. They are the pioneers, those who conquered the land, those who crossed the Red Sea dry shod. For more than 30 years our founders have walked like Abraham, leaving their land behind and pursuing God's promise.

My generation came to a community that was already built; some of us were born in it, others were attracted to it by God's leading. It would be easy for us to behold the building and think it was simple to build. But it is not like that. We who were born in community easily forget the effort of our parents. We have grown up under the protection of the bulwark, and now the Lord calls us to take our place and continue to strengthen it.

*The golden evening brightens in the west;
Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest...1*

The times are changing, the first generation has fought the good fight and it is time for us in the next generation to move to the front of battle.

It is time for us to take our places as leaders and servants in the mission of our communities. It is time for us to make our own the call of being a bulwark for protection of those who are weak or unprepared. It is time to give our lives, our professions, our jobs, our time and our strength to serve the Lord. It is time to leave our fears behind and trust the Lord, for he will be with us. It is our turn to leave the world behind and walk towards God, to put our hands in the plow and stop looking back. It is time to be different from the young people around us. It is time to reflect Christ's light and pass it on to others who still live in darkness.

As our founders, we must not trust in our own strength or abilities, we must abandon ourselves to the Lord. We need a firm conviction that this is God's will for us, and then make firm decisions. We have received much, we should give much to the cause of God's kingdom. We must leave our comfort behind and go to battle as gappers, as mission leaders, as members of a consecrated people - with holy marriages, or with holy single lives for the Lord.

When Moses died, Joshua had to replace an impressive leader. All his admiration for Moses might have made him feel unfit to the task, but the people's march had to continue. Today, as our founding leaders, the faithful warriors who are coming into their rest as Moses did, it is time for us, the relief forces, to take our places. One truth shall comfort us:

"The Father has chosen the little and the weak, to advance his Kingdom, and to defeat the enemy." 2

1 *For All the Saints*, by William W. How.

2 *Adelante*, by John Keating. Verse translated by Miguel Vargas for the article.

[Miguel Vargas is an underway member of the [Tree of Life Community](#) in San Jose, Costa Rica. He has been actively involved in youth ministry and is currently an affiliate of the [Servants of the Word](#). He majored in classical philology and graduated from the University of Costa Rica in December 2008.]

[Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

copyright © 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#) | email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

[Avril 2009 - Vol. 29](#) > [English](#)



Los Guerreros Van A Descansar

por Miguel Vargas Arroyo

Nuestro canto “*Por los gloriosos santos del ayer*” es un himno que me inspira de manera muy especial. Aunque siempre lo había asociado a los siervos de Dios a través de los siglos, últimamente este canto me hace pensar en los fundadores de la Espada del Espíritu. Debo decir que admiro profundamente a los hombres y mujeres de la ‘primera generación’ en comunidad, por eso quiero reflexionar en su vida, en su sacrificio y en su respuesta al llamado de Dios. He tomado del canto citado el título de este artículo.

Quien entrara hoy a mi comunidad, la comunidad [Árbol de Vida](#), encontraría una estructura bien armada. Nuestras asambleas son los sábados por la tarde en un local construido por la comunidad. Tenemos ocho coordinadores y cinco más que están en formación; hay varias responsables mayores, tres sectores y unos trescientos adultos. Hay varios programas de misión, una serie de políticas que rigen nuestro modo de vida, tenemos cursos los jueves en la noche, un encuentro comunitario al año, paseos, campamentos de jóvenes, celebraciones de los tiempos del año... Mi comunidad está bastante armada, quien entrara hoy en ella podría creer que siempre ha sido así.

Ocurre lo mismo cuando entramos a un gran edificio. Encontramos enormes ventanales por donde el sol inunda con su luz los amplios pasillos que llevan de un salón a otro. Tal vez haya una fuente en un vestíbulo común; podríamos ver ascensores en varios lugares, salidas de emergencia, diseños arquitectónicos innovadores y toda clase de detalles que nos podrían abrumar. La grandeza del edificio podría engañarnos, y hacernos creer que fue fácil construirlo. Pero lo cierto es que detrás de esa grandeza hay horas y horas de trabajo de cientos de personas. Arquitectos, ingenieros, albañiles, constructores, electricistas, plomeros, diseñadores.. Ese edificio se construyó con el sudor de tanta gente, su cansancio, su agotamiento. Algunos pusieron su vida en peligro para instalar los ventanales más altos, otros gastaron horas de sueño diseñando planos, algunos supervisaron cada paso de la construcción, otros sólo aportaron un pequeño detalle. Pero al final, el edificio no se hubiera concluido sin el esfuerzo de tanta gente.

Así ocurrió también en la Espada del Espíritu. Cada elemento que caracteriza el modo de vida de nuestra comunidad de comunidades tiene detrás el esfuerzo de nuestros fundadores. Horas en avión, largas conversaciones telefónicas, cadenas de correos, cansadas deliberaciones... todo esto se encuentra detrás del gran edificio de nuestra comunidad.

Los que pasaron antes que nosotros, los santos del ayer, respondieron a un llamado de Dios y se entregaron de corazón a la edificación del baluarte que Dios soñó. Por las venas de la Espada del Espíritu corre la sangre de estos hombres y mujeres que fundaron la comunidad. Ellos son las piedras que soportan todo el peso del baluarte. Ellos son los pioneros, los que conquistaron la tierra, los que cruzaron a pie el Mar Rojo. Durante más de treinta años

nuestros fundadores han caminado como Abrahán, dejando su tierra y buscando la promesa de Dios.

Mi generación llegó a una comunidad que ya estaba levantada; algunos nacimos en ella, otros fueron llevados por los distintos caminos de Dios. Sería fácil contemplar el edificio y creer que fue sencillo construirlo. Pero no es así. Los nacidos en comunidad olvidamos fácilmente el esfuerzo de nuestros padres, hemos crecido protegidos por el baluarte, pero el Señor nos llama a tomar nuestro lugar.

*En el ocaso el sol se oculta ya,
Y los guerreros van a descansar...1*

Están cambiando los tiempos, la primera generación ha luchado la buena batalla y es tiempo para que la segunda generación ocupe el frente de batalla.

Es tiempo de que tomemos nuestro lugar como líderes en la misión de nuestras comunidades. Es tiempo de hacer nuestro el llamado de ser un baluarte que proteja a los más débiles. Es tiempo de entregar nuestras vidas, nuestras profesiones, nuestros trabajos, nuestro tiempo y nuestra fuerza para servir al Señor. Es tiempo de dejar atrás nuestros miedos y confiar en el Señor pues él estará con nosotros. Es nuestro tiempo para renunciar al mundo y caminar hacia Dios, para poner las manos en el arado y dejar de ver hacia atrás. Es tiempo de ser diferentes al resto de los jóvenes del mundo. Es tiempo de reflejar la luz de Cristo y llevarla a otros que todavía están en tinieblas.

Como nuestros fundadores, no debemos confiar en nuestra fuerza, o nuestras habilidades; debemos abandonarnos en el Señor. Necesitamos una firme convicción de que esta es la voluntad de Dios para nosotros, y tomar decisiones fuertes. Hemos recibido mucho, deberíamos dar mucho a la causa del Reino. Debemos renunciar a nuestra comodidad e ir a la batalla como brechistas, como líderes de misión, como gente consagrada; con matrimonios santos, o como solteros y solteras para el Señor.

Cuando Moisés murió, Josué tuvo que reemplazar a un líder inigualable. Toda su admiración por Moisés no podía hacerlo sentirse incapaz para la tarea, la marcha del pueblo de Israel debía continuar. Hoy, nuestros Moisés, los guerreros van a descansar, y es tiempo de hacer el relevo. Una verdad nos consolará:

“El padre ha escogido a los pequeños sin poder, para avanzar su Reino y al enemigo poder vencer.” 2

1 *Por los gloriosos santos del ayer*, letra de William W. How, traducción de Carlos A. Vargas

2 *Adelante*, Letra y Música de John Keating

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

copyright © 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#) | email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)



photo by David Steingruber

The Hope That Does Not Disappoint

by Dave Touhill

Faced by today's unceasing new challenges in raising children, parents can hardly be blamed for responding with fear or collapsing in despair. Unfortunately, fear and despair are the wrong responses. Faith and hope are needed instead. [Kairos](#), the international student outreach of the Sword of the Spirit, recently interviewed Dave Touhill, senior coordinator of the [People of Hope Community](#) in New Jersey, USA, on the subject of hope.

How does hope differ from optimism?

Hope is based on a sure thing, on the pledge of someone we can rely on, who always has our best interests in mind. It's based on Jesus Christ. Optimism is just a pleasant disposition. It may not even reflect reality. I can be optimistic about the Michigan football team beating the Ohio State team.

Why is hope important as a parent?

All parents, even the worst ones, want the best for their children. Unfortunately, in spite of our best efforts, our children can make bad choices. If a child decides not to follow the Lord or to live an immoral life, it can be devastating to a parent. The situation can seem hopeless.

Yet, it's at exactly these moments that we need hope. Real hope! Hope that the Lord has not forgotten our kids or our prayers. Hope reminds us that the Lord's love for our children far exceeds our own, that he has not abandoned them, that he will do everything to win them back and that he will never dismiss our prayers for them. This hope doesn't fail.

What most undermines a parent's hope?

Unrealistic expectations can douse our hope. Things like, "My kids are going to be perfect and never fail!" Even some seemingly realistic dreams like, "They will do better than I did," can disappoint. False, high expectations can easily lead us to discouragement, to not praying, to becoming critical and thus to losing hope. It's a downward spiral.

Low expectations are also a problem. Setting the standards too low is often a sign that hope has already been abandoned. Our standards should be where the Lord wants them, and that means challenging our kids to achieve their full potential in Christ.

And we must never underestimate the power of the spiritual battle our children face. It certainly isn't easier now than 30 years ago. Still, we mustn't fear. Fear is crippling. The battle can be won. Just don't underestimate it.

How can parents guard their hope?

All Christians – sinners and saints – have some good and bad chapters in their lives. Look at Peter, Paul, Francis of Assisi or John Newton. If we caught them at the wrong time in their life, we would have written them off as cowards, murderers, cheats or liars. But the Lord rescued them. Also, remember your own life. Look how merciful Christ has been to you, how he never abandoned you. Shouldn't we hope for as much for our kids?

Let's not pronounce any final grades on our kids when they're 16 or 18 or 25. Thank God I didn't get my final grade at that age.

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

copyright © 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#) | email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

[April 2009 - Vol. 29](#)



Birth/Death - painting by [Michael O'Brien](#)

Losing Justin

on Miscarriage as God's Bitter Word

by Dan Propson

God made man in such a way that, if he simply did what was pleasant to him, he would in short order have a bunch of smaller clones of himself toddling around at his feet. And as this is what a man (or a woman) was made for, the man without children ought to ask himself: What good is everything I manage to build, if I can offer it to no one?

To be sure, the parent's calling is to give of himself, to the point of death, to meet the needs of his children. But the father (or mother) may find joy in this sacrifice, while the man or woman who is free of children all too often finds that his freedom is a burden, a loss, and a source of pain.

Particular Losses

A couple of years ago, my wife and I experienced what modern doctors call a "miscarriage." The term used is too gentle. Let me say what actually happened. We had a one-month-old baby in utero, and for some reason the little one died on us. We were just married, and so excited about having this child, but our smiles were lost in a storm of bleeding and weeping and questioning.

The reaction of several acquaintances to our loss was this: We were not taking this "complication" (as some put it) very well. And that word – complication – tells me something about the way we think of babies. The worldview goes something like this: Either a couple wants a baby, or they don't. If they want a baby, miscarriage hurts them,

but if they have another pregnancy, and are able to carry that baby to term, they will be perfectly happy.

What many people do not fathom is that, to the father and mother, each particular child is a unique gift, and they desire to know *this one individual* who has left them. When a “miscarriage” occurs, the Christian family does not weep because the child is dead forever, for in fact the child lives. No, the family weeps for its personal loss – not the generic selfish loss of *a child*, but the particular selfish loss of *this child*.

My wife and I would have been, in a worldly sense, better off without that baby. Our finances would have been more stable; our marriage would have had more time to establish itself; my wife would have been able to work full-time in her first year as a nurse. There was no external benefit to having that child, and the pregnancy was at least as worrying as it was exciting.

And yet, losing that child was hard, one of the hardest things we have ever experienced. People were encouraging, but many did not seem to comprehend that this was not a matter of struggling with a lack of children in a generic way, but with the loss of this one irrevocably irreplaceable child.

We heard whispers from the Lord about our baby. Perhaps it is presumptuous to say that. I just know that we were listening for God, and certain things came to us. We felt that this was a son, and we felt that the Lord was speaking to us about justice. In response to these senses, we named him Justin: Justin Benedict (the good word of justice).

And yet, God’s “benediction” upon us did not seem either good or just at the time. It kept us from knowing our son, from watching him grow. It was a bitter word, a word that inspired anger and frustration. Blessings like these have the power to destroy, to diminish, to disillusion.

Mourning and Questioning

But though our short experience of our son’s life and death was nothing less than awful, we would not exchange it for a happier blessing. This child is a unique creation, who has the opportunity to experience God’s eternal benediction: He is a blessing to us. God spoke, and he was. How can we begrudge him his eternity?

When a man’s life does not come to fruition on earth, is it any less life? We hold mournful vigils for the losses of strangers while we “grin and bear” our own loss of a child born too soon. Perhaps if Christians responded to miscarriage with more hurt and anger, our response might signal to the secular world that we really do mean what we say about abortion. Holy sorrow is a virtue; that is, a way of responding to the reality of our lives in holiness. Lest we forget, it is our duty to mourn.

The victims of miscarriage (by which term I indicate the parents, not the child) are bound to struggle with the concept of justice, as we did, and the Lord’s answers are not quick in coming. Is it for my sin that God has taken back his gift? Are we being punished, even as our son walks before the throne of God?

In a sense, the answer is yes. It is for my sin that my son dies, as it was for Adam’s sin that Abel died, for David’s sin that Absalom died. We *are* being punished for our failings—that is the scriptural meaning of death.

But punishment is not the meaning of miscarriage. Or, at least, punishment cannot whitewash all the perceived injustices of miscarriage – as it does not tend to satisfy as a simple explanation for cancer or for natural disaster, either. For here is the crux of the Old Testament, epitomized in the book of Job: For shame, I am not worthy of God’s blessing, but how much less worthy are some people that are being blessed! Why do the wicked prosper? How long must we wait for justice?

These are questions that most people avoid. They avoid the questions by pretending that a miscarriage is “no big deal,” as if an eternal human life were not involved. They avoid the questions by distracting themselves, shifting

their focus onto the next child, the next job, the next goal. They avoid the questions by opening themselves to sin, replacing a heart of flesh with a heart of stone – in short, becoming the wicked men that they despise.

There are many ways to avoid the questions. But each way trades death for death. I can live by encountering death, or I can die by avoiding it; there is no middle ground. He who suffers much and does not question God is not the wise man, but the fool.

The experience of a miscarriage ought to bring us into conflict with God, for it is a place where his interests and our own seem to collide. There is something deep going on here, a relationship more binding than the chains of death, to which the Lord is calling us. That is, as long as we keep listening.

Dominionless Death

Ecclesiastes tells us: “When times are good, be happy. But when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other” (7:14). Fallen human instinct considers death the fundamental evil, but human instinct is not the final word on the matter. The Old Testament teaches us that death is evil, but not fathomless; God’s hand reaches further than the grave.

Man’s life can have meaning – God-given, permanent meaning – despite death. This meaningfulness of the just man’s life, in the Hebrew tradition, has no need for an afterlife. And yet, with the coming of the Messiah, death is conquered a second time, opening the way to heaven. Now, death not only fails to destroy a man’s meaning, it also fails to destroy a man’s life.

Death moves from the category of “terminal” to “transitional.” The fact that Christ did not destroy, but instead redeemed, our experience of death ought to give us pause. The human journey (even the journey of a saint) passes through death. Scripture tells us that “the day of death is better than the day of birth” (Ecclesiastes 7:1) It seems wise, then, to take every opportunity to consider death, both as a temporary evil and as a potential conduit of God’s grace.

There is richness in a life that comprehends death, if only incompletely. We can encounter life entirely on our own terms. We cannot encounter death on our own terms.

Had my wife and I been able to meet our son, we might easily have claimed him as our own and left his Creator out of the picture. But when our encounter with Justin was delayed (in our faithless moments, we feared, delayed forever), we were forced into a new encounter: an encounter with God.

There is a strong connection between suffering and worship. For all we hear of Job being a complainer, we ought to consider the very first words he speaks. Informed of a wealth of calamity, Scripture says, Job “fell to the ground and worshiped,” saying:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
And naked shall I return there.
The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away;
Blessed be the name of the Lord” (1:21).

The meaning of miscarriage is a mystery, much like the meaning of death itself. The Christian response to miscarriage is not guilt, but neither is it acceptance, as such. It is mourning. And, yes, questioning God.

God the Other

“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and gnashing of teeth, Rachel mourning for her children and refusing to be comforted, for her children are no more.” If we have not questioned God, perhaps even raged against him, about

how he seems to bless the sinner and curse the saint, then perhaps we have never encountered the powerful otherness of our Creator: a place where a man might find mystery and perplexity, but even so, an answer to his question.

For the Father, we must remember, does not leave Job with empty hands. He shows up, and he proclaims his otherness: that he is eminent, that he is unapproachable. But in time, the Lord answers not only with eminence, but also with transcendence. For who else is Jesus but the “advocate” that Job has begged for, the “Redeemer” in whom Job places his trust?

Job questions. Jacob wrestles with God. Rachel mourns.

Jesus answers.

The answer, in a word, is hope. Christians must remind themselves of this hope constantly. If the devil cannot make us lukewarm in our allegiance to Christ, he tries to make us hopeless. Love is the “greatest of these,” but hope is indispensable. A man can know all truth, and he can love with his whole being, but if he has no hope, all his virtue will be sabotaged by suffering. Suffering can lead either to hope (as in Romans 5) or to despair.

If you have lost a child, perhaps you can see it more clearly in this image. He or she lives now in realms of glory, in harmony with Christ. I want you to imagine your child reading you the words of Jesus now, perhaps just whispering them in your ear:

Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but *I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you* (John 16:20–22).

God will be just to the victims of miscarriage. We just have to wait on him.

This article originally appeared in [Touchstone Magazine](#), January/February 2007. Used with permission.

Daniel Propson is an English teacher at Lincoln High School in Ypsilanti, Michigan, USA. He and his wife and are members of the [Word of Life Community](#). They live with their three young children in midtown Detroit as part of a residential community outreach that provides mentoring, training, and support for inner city youth to grow in Christian discipleship and maturity.

| [Current Issue](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Invite a Friend](#) | [Archives](#) | [The Sword of the Spirit](#) |

copyright © 2009 [The Sword of the Spirit](#) | email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

April 2009 - Vol. 29



UCO students enjoying a time of games with children in Agua Prieta, Mexico

Learning to be a Servant

reflections on a spring break mission trip to Naco and Agua Prieta, Mexico

by Ashley Martin

A dozen students from [University Christian Outreach](#) at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan USA spent their spring break between February 21 and March 1, 2009 on a mission trip to Agua Prieta, Mexico. Ashley Martin shares her experience.

After waiting for what felt like forever, we were finally on our way to Mexico. Having never been out of the country, (besides Canada, which is right on the border with Michigan) I couldn't contain my excitement, so much so that had I started practicing my Spanish weeks before the trip at any chance I would get, speaking with Hispanics in University Christian Outreach, translating things in my own mind, or even speaking with people who didn't speak Spanish at all. I was ecstatic and felt myself prepared for the trip... or so I thought.

I distinctly remember crossing the border, getting through as if it was just another green light in America. They didn't ask for our passports, they didn't search our car, and the most surprising thing was that I don't even remember seeing anyone like a border guard there! As much as I was thankful for that, I was definitely shocked, expecting a lot more of a hassle than just driving

"God blessed us and worked through us in many ways on that trip. We were able to build two rooms of a house for a poor family, paint two classrooms at a school, and hand out clothes and basic supplies to families. We were also able to help out at two orphanages and played with the orphans for hours nearly every day. We learned and saw things that really put things in perspective and made us appreciate the life that God has given us. It was an experience that I will never forget and I am blessed to have had the opportunity to go."

– Charlie, EMU, Sophomore



Kelsie Norton, mission team member with some of the orphans she worked with in Mexico

"Working in Mexico was a time of faith and affirmation. Faith because it required going beyond what I was comfortable with in some ways: not knowing Spanish or how to build anything, let alone a house! And affirmation because God blessed the work there, despite, or perhaps because, of our individual weaknesses. The love of God was made clear through submission to his will. And by being willing to be weak, our energy under his direction was useable, and paradoxically more powerful. I was privileged to be part of a

straight across the border. But this definitely wasn't the only surprising thing. I couldn't believe the difference in the change of scenery within only ten yards! On the American side of the border there was a Wal-Mart and a McDonalds, and we were driving along a four-lane road. It was completely the opposite in Mexico. There were tiny buildings and houses (probably about the size of my dorm room), trash, dogs roaming the streets (some with only 3 legs), and most of the time dirt roads barely big enough for two cars. The biggest thing that shocked me, though, wasn't so much the scenery, but the children. There were so many little ones walking along the street by themselves, with what seemed like no parents in sight, and even sometimes as it was getting dark. From what I had known growing up in the USA, that was *way* too dangerous, but in Mexico, the children seemed to have so much more responsibility and independence from a very young age.



UCO students on top of the house they built in Naco, Mexico

As the trip went on, I was continually shocked by the poverty in the area that we were in (Agua Prieta), but more shocked by how welcoming and hospitable the people were. At one point, I was given the opportunity to deliver hand-knit sweaters to children in the neighborhood we were working in. We just walked around, knocked on doors, and told them (in Spanish) that we had free sweaters to give to their children. They responded by saying, "Sure!" or even, "Come in!" and let us talk to their kids and hang out in their house as if we were close friends. The same thing happened in the neighborhood elementary school where the principal just let us walk into the classrooms and hand out sweaters.

This experience of joy and love was just one of the many that was life-changing and unforgettable. I will never forget the children who I had never met before, but who came running up to me and jumped on me to give me a huge bear hug. I will never forget being sick for two days, but having almost *all* of the girls I had

group of people who allowed themselves to be used for a purpose so much bigger than their resources that the only explanation for any success at all was that God met us there and was present in our work."

– Amy, U of M Junior



Ashley Martin is a University of Michigan Freshman

been spending time with ask me if they could make me food, get me water, or get me medicine. I will never forget the abandoned house that I walked into with no windows, dirt and trash everywhere on the floor, and walls falling apart, but with a colorful and ornate picture of Jesus on the wall. I will never forget how much physical pain and soreness we felt helping rebuild a house, mixing cement, digging out the floor, and making mortar, and then seeing the four year old boy from the family we were staying with helping carry bricks which seemed like half his size from the back of a truck to a pile about 10 feet away. I will never forget the family who hosted us for a Mexican dinner one night, the dance party that we helped host, and a guy from our group dancing with the grandmother who cooked the food for us.

Among all of the things I learned and all of the ways I grew on the week-long trip, there is one thing that I think is the most important: learning how to become a servant. Being in college now, with 1,000 things to remember and 2,000 places to be at once, it is very easy to become too focused on myself, but going on this trip and experiencing the fulfillment and joy that comes from completely giving my life to others, I am forever grateful. I now know that it is possible to change the world. It starts with simply serving one family.

(c) copyright 2009 [Living Bulwark](#)

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com