

LIVING BULWARK

The online magazine of The Sword of the Spirit

sources of strength and renewal for Christian life and mission in today's world

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Love Unto Death *"They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."* (Rev. 12:11)

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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.

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The Love that Conquers All

Great love is manifested in the cost of the gift and the sacrifice of the giver. True lovers hold nothing back but give the best they have - including all they possess and their very lives.

God our Creator and heavenly Father has loved each one of us with an immeasurable and everlasting love. That is why he sent his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to set us free from a debt we could not repay and to break the curse of death and slavery to sin.

John the Evangelists describes the cost and aim of God's love for the world:

"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Scripture tells us that God sent his Son into the world - not to condemn but to redeem - not to destroy but to heal and restore. The Lord Jesus willing took our place and the punishment we deserved. That is why Jesus suffered and died on the Cross to atone for our sins and the sin of the world.

We can find no greater proof of God's love for fallen sinful humanity than the cross of Jesus Christ. "To ransom a slave God gave away his Son" (from an early Christian hymn for the Easter vigil liturgy). The Lord Jesus has won great victory for us through his death and resurrection. His victory frees us to love as he loves and to lay down our lives as a sacrificial offering of love and service for one another (John 15:12-13).

In this issue

This issue focuses on the gift of God's love for us and what it cost him to restore us to fulness of life, peace, and joy in his kingdom.

Don't miss Tadgh Lynch's story, [A Spring Day](#) that changed everthing, and Peter Mayoros' story of [The adventure in Detroit that changed my life](#). Bob Tedesco's article, [Miles Ahead](#), challenges how we view the world today and what God is up to. And there are some insightful articles from wise and experienced teachers on the [progression of family erosion and what we can do](#) and wisdom for dealing with [stress](#), [shame](#), and the [self-love trap](#). Check the [Table of Contents](#) for a full list of authors and articles.

As we ponder the great victory which the Lord Jesus has accomplished on the Cross, let us ask the Lord to renew in us the supernatural gift of his transforming love which conquers every fear, every weight of sin, and every obstacle that stands between us and him and his will for our lives. The Lord Jesus has won great freedom for us to walk in love and to follow him with joyful trust and obedience. Let us offer our lives anew to him as a willing sacrifice of praise and gratitude for the abundant life he gives us now and forever.

Sincerely in Christ,
Don Schwager
editor

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Love All Surpassing in Death and Life

reflections by Dave Quintana

Carrying Death, Manifesting Life

It is said that for the Christian it is always Good Friday and Easter Sunday at the same time. We are always living this dual reality of Christ's suffering and death on one hand, and his victory over sin and death in his resurrection on the other. In this life, they go together. They can't be separated. In fact, even in heaven he still stands (victoriously) as though slain, but we won't go into that today! The point is that even as an "Easter people," we experience loss, failure, weakness, limitation – in a word, the cross. But transcending that, and overcoming that, we experience Jesus alive and with us, sharing with us his resurrection life. Let us yield more fully to him, that we might become more fully like him.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

– 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 (RSV translation)

A Good Day to Die

I am not a morbid guy – really, I’m not. But I agree with chief Geronimo as he encouraged his warriors as they prepared for a day’s battle, “Today is a good day to die”. It is. It has to be. If it isn’t a good day to die, then how could it possibly be a good day to live? How could it possibly be a good day to live life to the full if it isn’t also a good day to give it all, to leave nothing back? There is nothing worth living for if there is nothing worth dying for. Let us be those who gladly spend themselves for what and for whom they hold dear.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

– *Philippians 1:21-24 (RSV translation)*

The Depths of his Love

Corrie Ten Boom was quite a lady. You might be familiar with her story through the book or film, “The Hiding Place.” She was a single Dutch woman, the daughter of a Christian watchmaker. She and her sister were both committed Christians who found themselves resisting the evil of Nazism and providing a “hiding place” for Jews who were fleeing for their lives. Eventually, she was taken to a prison camp where she suffered terribly before eventually being released, thus being able to tell her story. Faced with the atrocities of concentration camps, the horrors of this seemingly God-forsaken place, she resolutely proclaimed, “*There is no pit so deep, that God’s love isn’t deeper still.*” How much have we truly fathomed the depths of his love?

I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I beseech you, save my life!"

– Psalm 116:1-4 (RSV translation)

The Little Lady Who Lived a Big Life

You’ve gotta love Mother Teresa. Small, frail, bent over, wrinkly – but with a fire in her eyes and a fire in her heart – never afraid to say the hard word, to do the hard thing, to choose a hard path. She “did small things with great love.” She “loved Christ in his many disguises.” While others asked “Why?”, she asked “Why not?” I find her words a constant challenge:

- “God doesn't require us to succeed; he only requires that you try.”
- “Good works are links that form a chain of love.”
- “I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the

world.”

- “If you can't feed a hundred people – then feed just one.”
- “I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts – there can be no more hurt, only more love.”
- “I know God will not give me anything I can't handle – I just wish that He didn't trust me so much.”

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of the brethren, a tender heart and a humble mind.

– 1 Peter 3:8 (RSV translation)

Revolution of Love

Fr. Stan Fortuna is a CFR (Franciscan Friar of the Renewal) and is a good friend. He comes over from the Bronx to do our YI (Youth Initiatives) camps for us. He is quite a musician and he is at his best when he does a spontaneous rap with all his funky reverberaters and sound machines! Anyway, he will regularly sing about what he calls the “revolution of love.” He says that love is to revolutionize our lives and our world – that our lives need to be and must be, completely, absolutely, supremely re-ordered by love. That’s the life I want to live. That is the life I challenge you to live – a life that is completely, absolutely, supremely re-ordered by love. That’s the stuff revolutions are made of!

And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

– 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 13:1-7 (RSV translation)

If He has your Heart

I can’t explain to you exactly why it happened this way, but what I do know is that when God grabbed a hold of my life oh so many years ago that he did so in such a fashion so as to never let go. And just as much to the point, he did so in such a way that I would do my best to never let go of him as well. And so the journey began. A journey with many ups and downs to be sure, and with the occasional “missing the boat” or straying from the path – but my life has always been clearly in his hands. He has taken me places I never dreamed of going. He has called me to a life I never imagined possible. And he has also called me to a death that I never thought bearable. He has asked of me things I would have never thought myself capable of giving, and he has woven it all together for good – according to his plans and purposes. And so I think I am beginning to learn the lesson of giving myself fully, whole-heartedly to him – and of not holding back in fear or self-concern. As

someone once said, “if he has your heart, what does it matter if he asks for ... (you fill in your own blank!)?”

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might".

– Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (RSV translation)



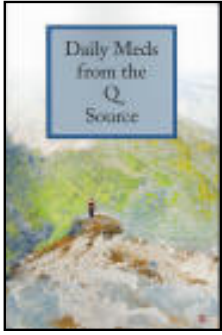
What Love is First?

A dear Fijian Methodist brother led me to a Methodist spiritual writer named William Sangster. He says that “there is only one love in this life to which all other loves are subordinate and in which all other loves must find their place.” I know, or at least am beginning to know, this to be true. I suppose I have always been somewhat simple-minded in my approach to life. Certainly life in today’s world is plenty complex – but why complicate things that don’t need to be complicated? For each and every one of us, does not one love stand out above all others? Does not one love receive first place? One love drive us more than all others? Sure, it could be love of a person or love of a thing, love of a career or love of a concept. For me however, and from my perspective for every true Christian – the love of God must be first. And just as importantly, and as a consequence of the love of God being first – love of all other things must be subordinate to the love of God. So I suppose the question I ask myself each morning, and the question I ask myself each evening is – “is the love of God first in my life? How do I, today, subordinate all other loves to the love of God?”

"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false; I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

– Revelation 2:2-4 (RSV translation)

Dave Quintana is an elder of the [Servants of the Word](#), a missionary brotherhood of men living single for the Lord. He is also Vice-President for the [Sword of the Spirit](#) in Europe and the Middle East. He currently lives in Beffast, Northern Ireland.



Daily Meds from the Q Source

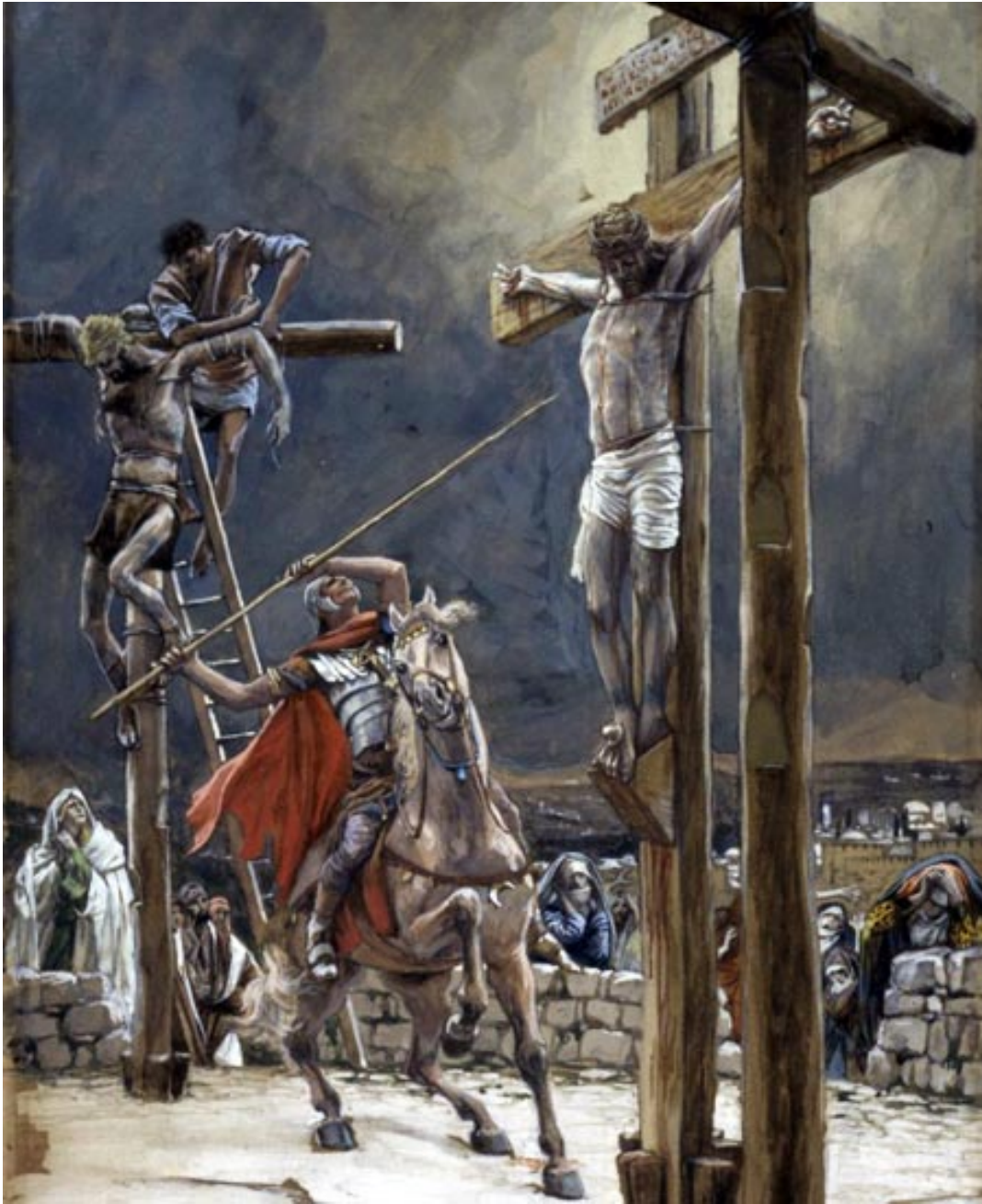
by Dave Quintana, published by [Tabor House](#), 2012, 250 pages, \$11.00

Dave Quintana's daily meditations and Bible readings to stir our minds and kindle our hearts in 2013. He explores themes important to all who search to be wise men and women in the Lord, and provides a wealth of personal experience from living and ministering in Central America, Asia, Europe, and the United States. Expect to be challenged. Expect to be inspired. Expect to meet the living and loving God. [Order](#) from Tabor House.

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A Love Unto Death

Jesus' Journey to the Cross

By Jeanne Kun

On Golgotha Jesus' Heart was pierced by a lance as a sign of his total self-giving, of that sacrificial and saving love with which he "loved us to the end" (John 13:1), laying the foundation of the friendship between God and man.

— Pope John Paul II

Introduction

The crucifixion was Jesus' enthronement as King. The inscription that hung above him on the cross was written in Hebrew, the language of religion; in Latin, the language of the empire; and in Greek, the language of culture – thus serving as a universal proclamation testifying to the truth of who Jesus is. As St. Ambrose explained in his Exposition of the Gospel of Luke,

The superscription is written and placed above, not below the cross, because the government is upon his shoulders [Isaiah 9:6]. What is this government if not his eternal power and Godhead! ... The superscription is fittingly above the cross, because although the Lord Jesus was on the cross, he shines above the cross with the majesty of a king.

Jesus' death begins to make sense only when we recognize the great love that the Father has for us – so great a longing in the Father's heart for us to be restored to full friendship with him that he would ask his Son to go to such great lengths on our behalf. The words of the Exsultet, the proclamation sung at the Easter Vigil [in the Roman Catholic liturgy], marvel at God's motive: "Father, how wonderful your care for us! How boundless your merciful love! To ransom a slave you gave away your Son."

We have come full circle now from the time when Adam and Eve, by partaking of the fruit of the forbidden tree, brought sin and death into the world. Jesus Christ, the new Adam, restored our relationship with the Father through the tree of the cross. Paradoxically, it is the death of the Son of God on this tree that secured new life for us:

How precious the gift of the cross, how splendid to contemplate! In the cross there is no mingling of good and evil, as in the tree of paradise: it is wholly beautiful to behold and good to taste. The fruit of this tree is not death but life, not darkness but light. This tree does not cast us out of paradise, but opens the way for our return.... This was the tree upon which the Lord, like a brave warrior wounded in hands, feet and side, healed the wounds of sin that the evil serpent had inflicted on our nature.... What an astonishing transformation! That death should become life, that decay should become immortality, that shame should become glory! (St. Theodore the Studite, *Oratio in adorationem crucis*)

John 19:13-22, 25-37

13 [Pilate] brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. 14Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" 15They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." 16Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus, 17and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. 18There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. 19Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." 20Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. 21Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" 22Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

25 . . . [S]tanding near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." 27Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. 28 After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." 29A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. 30When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

31 Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. 32Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. 33But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. 35(He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) 36These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." 37And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

(See Matthew 27:32-54; Mark 15:20b-39; Luke 23:26-49)

"Behold Your King"

Jesus' journey led from the house of Caiaphas to Pontius Pilate's official quarters in Jerusalem, most likely

located in the Antonia Fortress (see John 18:28). It would be Jesus' last stopping place before Golgotha.

As the Roman governor of Judea, Pilate possessed the *jus gladii* (the "right of the sword"), the authority to order an execution. Although the Jewish religious leaders despised Pilate, they had to submit their case to him if they wanted Jesus to be sentenced to death; the Sanhedrin was under Roman jurisdiction and had no authority to impose capital punishment (see John 18:29-31).

Pilate repeatedly declared Jesus innocent of any crime. In fact, he tried several times to avoid condemning him; he even had Jesus scourged in an attempt to appease the Jewish leaders and win the crowds' sympathy (see Luke 23:13-16; John 18:28-19:12). Nonetheless, the chief priests and elders were unyielding, and Pilate buckled under their pressure. Although Pilate knew Jesus had done nothing to deserve the death sentence, he lacked the courage and integrity to release him. When the Jews reminded Pilate that anyone who made himself a king was Caesar's rival, he acquiesced to the chief priests' demands in order to preserve crowd control and protect his political career from the emperor's displeasure (see John 19:12-16). Knowing that he was handing over an innocent man to quell an impending riot, Pilate tried to salve his conscience by symbolically washing his hands of responsibility for Jesus' death (see Matthew 27:24).

Mary remained steadfastly by Jesus as he hung on the cross, demonstrating her solidarity with him and his mission. How terrible it must have been for her to see her son's agony; yet she would not leave him without the comfort of her maternal presence. And even in his suffering, Jesus thought of his mother, entrusting her to the beloved disciple's care. But first he directed Mary to extend her motherly care to John, thus creating a new spiritual family at Golgotha (see John 19:26-27). Mary's maternal role now has a universal dimension; her motherhood extends spiritually to all humanity.

Standing nearby, John was able to hear and record for us Jesus' last words from the cross: "It is finished" (John 19:30). In colloquial English, we might say, "I have done it!" This was a declaration of victory. "Jesus must have died in ecstasy of joy, knowing that at last he had completed the work that he was born to accomplish" (Wendy Beckett, *Sister Wendy's Nativity*). Then he "gave up his spirit" (19:30), that is, handed himself over to the Father.

According to Jewish custom, the slaughter of the Passover lambs in the Temple—male lambs without blemish (see Exodus 12:5)—began at noon on the day of Preparation. And it was at that very hour that Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified, even though he had found no fault in him (see John 19:14). While the blood of the paschal lambs was being poured out to commemorate the Israelites' deliverance from their bondage in Egypt, the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God (see John 1:29), was being poured out on Golgotha to free us from the power of sin and Satan. And just as the bones of the Passover lambs were not broken (see Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12), neither were Jesus' legs broken, as was commonly done to hasten the death of a crucifixion victim (see John 19:32-33, 36; Psalm 34:20).

Finally, in his eyewitness account John testifies that water and blood flowed from Jesus' side when a lance was thrust into his body (see John 19:34). Now we have access to an inexhaustible source of eternal life: we are cleansed and purified from our sins by the waters of baptism, and in the Eucharist we drink from the fountain that flows from the heart of our crucified Savior. The Church, born from Jesus' pierced side, is continually invigorated and renewed by these sacraments. And, as Pope Benedict XVI notes, it is by contemplating Christ's wounded heart that we become "sensitive to God's salvific will. It enables us to entrust ourselves to his saving and merciful love, and at the same time strengthens us in the desire to take part in his work of salvation, becoming his instruments."

“It is finished”—this was Jesus’ declaration of victory.

Understand!

1. Why, in your opinion, was Pilate so adamant about the wording of the inscription placed on Jesus’ cross (see John 19:19-22)? What does this suggest about Pilate’s view of Jesus? About Pilate’s feelings toward the chief priests? What does this incident add to your impressions of Pilate?
2. Choose several adjectives to characterize Jesus’ relationship with his mother. Describe some of the human and natural dimensions of their relationship with each other. What qualities does Mary bring to her role as mother of the church?
3. What similarities do you see between the Israelites’ Passover deliverance from Egypt and Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross at Golgotha? What differences?
4. What is the significance of Jesus’ words, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Read Ephesians 2:13-16 and Hebrews 9:11-15. What did Jesus accomplish by shedding his blood for us on the cross?
5. Why is it so important that the evangelist John was an eyewitness to the events of Jesus’ life, ministry, and passion and so clearly stated this fact in his gospel (see John 19:35)? Read John 15:27 and 21:24 to for more insight into the validity and significance of John’s testimony.

In the Spotlight

Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews

Jesus was recognized and honored as the newborn king of the Jews by the gentile wise men who paid him homage at his birth (see Matthew 2:1-11), but the leaders of his own nation did not accept the truth of his kingship. When the chief priests and Sanhedrin brought Jesus before Pilate, they accused him of sedition and falsely claiming to be a king: “We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king” (Luke 23:2). Ironically, it was the gentile Pilate who defied the Jewish elders and accorded the title “King of the Jews” to Jesus at his death (see John 19:19-22).

It was customary to write the charge on which the accused was sentenced on a placard that was then carried in front of him as he made his way to the place of execution, where it was either affixed to his cross or hung around his neck. The inscription that Pilate ordered to describe Jesus’ “crime”—“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (John 19:19)—was written in Hebrew, the language of the Jews and their religion; in Latin, the language of the governing empire and its law; and in Greek, the language of culture. Thus, it universally proclaimed the truth of Jesus’ divine kingship as he was “enthroned” on Golgotha. “The superscription is written and placed above, not below the cross,” noted St. Ambrose, “because the government is upon his shoulders [Isaiah 9:6]. What is this government if not his eternal power and Godhead? . . . The superscription is fittingly above the cross, because although the Lord Jesus was on the cross, he shines above the cross with the majesty of a king.”

Grow!

1. Like Pilate, have you ever yielded to fear, social or political pressure, or self-interest and made a wrong decision against your better judgment? Are you sometimes more concerned about personal advantage and what others think of you than with upholding God's teachings and values? What might you do to strengthen your resolve to choose rightly in the future?
 2. Recall a time when you comforted and/or remained faithfully by someone dear to you when that person was in a time of deep distress or trial. What did this effort cost you? What enabled you to be steadfast? What have you learned from Mary's presence during Jesus' crucifixion that can help you support others in their difficulties or suffering?
 3. What particular work or mission has God entrusted to you? How do you feel about carrying out this task? How has this changed your life? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you fulfill God's mission so that you will one day be able to say, as Jesus did, "It is finished."
 4. Which moment from John's account of the events on Calvary moves you most profoundly? Why? What impact has Jesus' crucifixion had on you? How is the victory of the cross manifested in your life?
 5. In what way(s) do you acknowledge Jesus' kingship over you? What could you do to grow in loving Jesus more deeply? To respond more actively to his authority in your life?
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In the Spotlight

Mary at the Foot of the Cross

Only a consistency that lasts throughout the whole of life can be called faithfulness. Mary's fiat in the Annunciation finds its fullness in the silent fiat that she repeats at the foot of the cross.

—Pope John Paul II

Nor was Mary less than was befitting the mother of Christ. When the apostles fled, she stood before the cross and with reverent gaze beheld her Son's wounds, for she waited not for her child's death, but the world's salvation.

—Ambrose of Milan

Just as the Father gave us the great gift of his Son to be our Redeemer, so also the Son gives us the great gift of his Blessed Mother to be our Advocate. When he said to John at the foot of the Cross: "Behold your Mother!" he said it to him representing all Christians.

—John of the Cross

Reflect!

1. Reflect on this statement by St. Josemaría Escrivá:

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, brought Mary into his home, into his life. Spiritual writers have seen these words of the Gospel as an invitation to all Christians to bring Mary into their lives. Mary certainly wants us to invoke her, to approach her confidently, to appeal to her as our mother, asking her to "show that you are our mother."

2. How do you express your relationship to Mary as your "spiritual mother"? In what ways can you more

- consciously bring Mary into your home and make a place for her in your life as the apostle John did?
3. Reflect on the following passages to enhance your understanding of the significance and power of Christ's death on the cross:

Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
—Isaiah 53:4-6

When you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh,
God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our
trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands.
He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.
—Colossians 2:13-14

Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus
the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was
set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his
seat at the right hand of the throne of God.
—Hebrews 12:2

Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should
follow in his steps.
“He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not
threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself
bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live
for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.
—1 Peter 2:21-24

In the Spotlight

Pontius Pilate

“Pontius” was a hereditary family name of Roman origin. The given name “Pilate” was probably derived

from the Latin *pilatus*—a “pikeman” or person armed with a *pilum* or javelin. Pontius Pilate’s wife was Claudia Procula, granddaughter of the emperor Augustus Caesar.

Pontius Pilate was appointed the Roman governor of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria in A.D. 26. He held the official title of prefect (military commander), but also performed the duties of a procurator (civil administrator). Apparently Pilate was an able administrator since he remained in office ten years, while the region had had four governors in the previous twenty years. But he was also a harsh and insensitive ruler who made himself unpopular with the Jewish people by bringing images of the Roman emperor into the Temple precincts in Jerusalem and by using money from the Temple treasury to pay for the construction of an aqueduct.

Pilate’s headquarters were in Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast in the palace built by Herod the Great. Most of the soldiers under his command were stationed there, but others manned the Antonia Fortress, adjacent to the Temple in Jerusalem. During Passover Pilate and his Caesarea troops went to Jerusalem to keep order among the pilgrims and crowds gathered for the feast. Pilate retained Caiaphas as the Jewish high priest during his whole term as governor, which suggests that the two men maintained a working relationship, most likely playing off one another’s political interests and ambitions.

In A.D. 36 Pilate was removed as governor after his troops killed some Samaritans. Nothing certain is known of his later history. According to one tradition, he was executed by the emperor Nero. Another tradition holds that Pilate was exiled by the emperor Caligula to Gaul, where he committed suicide.

Act!

Teresa of Avila experienced a fuller conversion and deepening of her prayer life after seeing an image that portrayed the wounded Christ. St. John of the Cross was frequently moved by depictions of scenes from Christ’s life, and he taught that religious paintings should be prized because they point the heart toward the living image or mystery that they represent. As art historian Sr. Wendy Beckett points out, “Gazing upon sacred art is an exercise in prayer! The artists, by their very nature, and perhaps without even knowing it, teach us to pray!” (In the Midst of Chaos, Peace).

Kneel or sit quietly before a crucifix, painting or icon depicting Jesus’ passion. Allow the image to lead you into prayer. Tell Jesus of your love for him and express your gratitude for his death on the cross.

In the Spotlight

“I Have Done All You Gave Me to Do”

“It is consummated.” These are our Lord’s last words to his Father cited in St. John [19:30]. “I have done all you gave me to do.” My God, may these words also be ours at our last hour—though they will not then have the same meaning and the same perfection. We are only worthless human beings; but granted our wretchedness, may they at least be ours as far as they can be. What must I do if they are to be, O God? I must ask you what it is you have given me to do, and I must ask you—from whom alone strength comes—to do it. I beseech you, my Lord and my God, to let me see clearly what your will for me is. Then give me the strength to do it, fulfilling it loyally till the end, in thanksgiving and love.



This article is adapted from *God's Promises Fulfilled: A Scriptural Journey with Jesus the Messiah*, by Jeanne Kun, © 2006 The Word Among Us, and *Jesus' Journey to the Cross: A Love Unto Death*, by Jeanne Kun, © 2009 The Word Among Us. Used with permission.

Jeanne Kun is a noted author and a senior woman leader in the [Word of Life Community](#), Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

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God Has Reigned from a Tree

Meditations on the Cross of Jesus Christ



*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that
we might die to sin and live for righteousness;
by his wounds you have been healed.*

- 1 Peter 2:24

The Throne of Love

by Rupert, Abbot of Deutz (c.1075-1129)

We venerate the cross as a safeguard of faith, as the strengthening of hope and the throne of love. It is the sign of mercy, the proof of forgiveness, the vehicle of grace and the banner of peace. We venerate the cross, because it has broken down our pride, shattered our envy, redeemed our sin and atoned for our punishment.

The cross of Christ is the door to heaven, the key to paradise, the downfall of the devil, the uplifting of mankind, the consolation of our imprisonment, the prize for our freedom. The cross was the hope of the patriarchs, the promise of the prophets, the triumph of kings and the ministry of priests. Tyrants are convicted by the cross and the mighty ones defeated, it lifts up the miserable and honors the poor. The cross is the end of darkness, the spreading of light, the flight of death, the ship of life and the kingdom of salvation.

Whatever we accomplish for God, whatever we succeed and hope for, is the fruit of our veneration of the cross. By the cross Christ draws everything to him. It is the kingdom of the Father, the scepter of the Son and the seal of the Holy Spirit, a witness to the total Trinity.

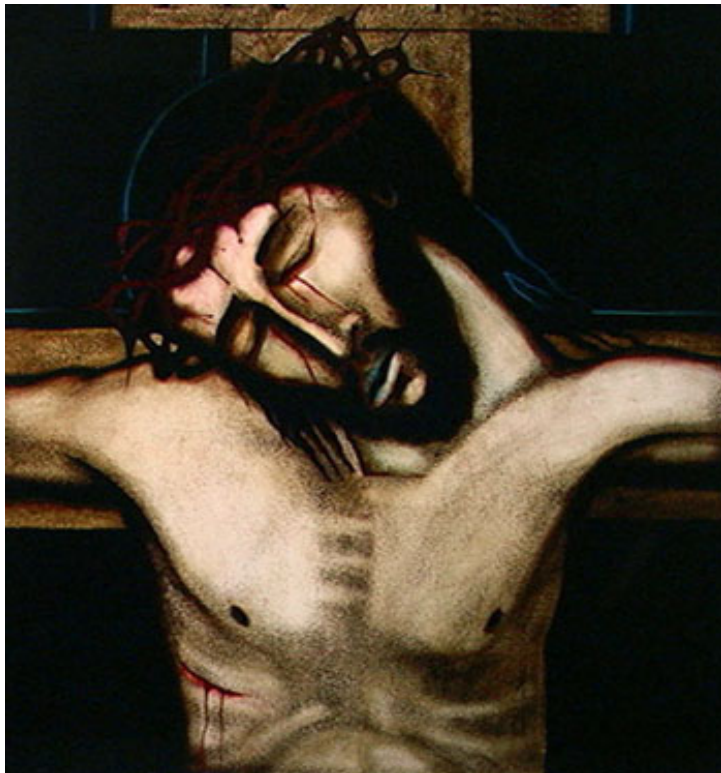
The answer of a Christian reflection on Genesis is that sin has to be taken away, removed from human life. Not only do human beings have to cease doing the things that cause evil and further ruin, the things that deserve penalization, but also the sinful state of the human race that causes those actions has to be changed. The disease that leads to death has to be healed. Sinfulness has to be eradicated; true health, true life, has to be given. Human beings need a Redeemer, someone who can rescue them from the misfortune into which they have fallen and restore them to true life



The Cross - the Tree of Life by Hippolytus (c.170-236)

The tree is my everlasting salvation. It is my food, a shared banquet. Its roots and the spread of its branches are my own roots and extension... Its shade I take for my resting place; in my flight from oppressive heat it is the source of refreshing dew for me... Food for my hunger and wellspring for my thirst, it is also covering for my nakedness, with the spirit of life as its leaves... Fearful of God, I find in it a place of safety; when unsteady a source of stability. In the face of a struggle, I look to it as a prize; in victory my trophy.

It is Jacob's ladder, the passage of angels, at whose summit the Lord is affixed. This tree, the plant of immortality, rears from earth to reach as high as heaven, fixing the Lord between heaven and earth. It is the foundation and stabilizer of the universe, undergirding the world that we inhabit. It is the binding force of the world... It is riveted into a unity by the invisible bonds of the Spirit, so that its connection with God can never be severed. Brushing heaven with its uppermost branches, it remains fixed in the earth, and between the two points, its huge hands completely enfold the stirring of the air. A single whole, it penetrates all things and all places.



What We Behold on the Cross

by Augustine of Hippo (c.354-430)

As they were *looking on*, so we too gaze on his wounds as he hangs. We see his blood as he dies. We see the price offered by the redeemer, touch the scars of his resurrection. He bows his head, as if to kiss you. His heart is made bare open, as it were, in love to you. His arms are extended that he may embrace you. His whole body is displayed for your redemption. Ponder how great these things are. Let all this be rightly weighed in your mind: as he was once fixed to the cross in every part of his body for you, so he may now be fixed in every part of your soul. [GMI 248]

God Has Reigned from a Tree

a hymn for Passiontide by Venantius Fortunatus (c.530-610)

The standards of the King appear,
the mystery of the cross shines out in glory,
the cross on which life suffered death
and by that death gave back life to us.

His side, wounded by the spear's cruel point,
poured out water and blood
to wash away the stains of our sins.

The words of David's true prophetic song were fulfilled,
in which he announced to the nations:
"God has reigned from a tree."

Tree of dazzling beauty,
adorned with the purple of the King's blood,
and chosen from a stock
worthy to bear limbs so sacred.

How favoured the tree
on whose branches hung the ransom of the world;
it was made a balance on which his body was weighed,
and bore away the prey that hell had claimed.

Hail, cross, our only hope!
In this season of passiontide
give an increase of grace to the good
and wipe out the sins of the guilty.

Let every spirit praise you,
fount of salvation, Holy Trinity.
On those to whom you have generously given the
victory of the cross,
bestow the reward also. Amen.

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A Spring Day

by Tadhg Lynch

It is a spring day in late March or early April in Jerusalem. The year is 30 or 33 AD. The feast of Passover is just about to begin. Our journey begins on the outskirts of Jerusalem. We follow a small farmer as he leaves his house. His steps will take him through the city in an ever upward direction – to the temple built on top of the plateau which is the highest point in Jerusalem.

He has heard stories about how the temple mount was called Mount Zion – where the Torah was given to his people many long years ago. Other friends have told him that it is instead Mount Moriah – where his ancestor Abraham went to sacrifice his son Isaac. He doesn't know. By the time he has finished the two mile journey from his house to the temple mount, he will have reached 2,300 feet about the level of the sea.

As he climbs through the narrow streets, his mind is on the coming sacrifice. He walks, recalling the law which Moses gave his people to remember the Passover of their deliverance from Egypt. He also thinks of the sacrifice God commanded Abraham to make, and the miraculous provision of a lamb for Abraham in the place of his son Isaac. His thoughts now turn to his own son.

The Cost of Redemption

Our farmer's family have already left home. They will travel more slowly through the city than he will. His delay was the result of last minute preparations for tying up the legs of the unblemished lamb he had bought for their sacrificial offering. Now he hastily carries the lamb through the winding streets on his way up to the temple for the ritual sacrifice.

As he walks past the market place where he bought the lamb six days ago, his mind now returns to the last scene he had observed there - in the corner reserved for the buying and selling of slaves. His rural synagogue had recently purchased a slave - a relative of a pious member of his town, unwittingly caught up in debt caused by bad decisions at harvest time.

Our Jewish Farmer knew all about slavery. Much of the Roman Republic were slaves. There were just so many reasons for making slaves of people. Slavery repaid debts, punished crimes, repatriated prisoners of war and dealt with child abandonment. And, from father to son, it was passed down the generations of those it entrapped.

Greeks, Berbers, Germans, Britons, Slavs, Thracians, Gauls, Jews, Arabs and many others were enslaved by the Romans. If a slave ran away, he was liable to be crucified. His father had told him of the 2,000 crucifixions and mass enslavement of the town of Sepphoris when he was young - caused by some ill-judged civil disobedience. Yes slavery certainly existed in our farmer's Galilee and Judea. Small landowners often owned a few slaves - men and women working in the fields outside the houses of fellow Israelites - foreigners - for a Jew could not enslave one of his own. Some householders owned a few slaves for domestic labour, gardening, marketing, and service as financial agents. They would not have been all that worse off than the average tenant farmer - but without his rights and certainly without his place in the community. King Herod's household had thousands of slaves, labouring day in day out to build his massive monuments and temples.

As he strides through the square, our farmer begins to approach the outer court of the temple. His city has swelled to about 5 times its normal size for the celebration of the annual feast of Passover. Three times a year, in accordance with the levitical and deuteronomiac command, the city performed a great collective intake of breath - sucking in devout pilgrims, agricultural labourers from the hinterland and important guests. They came from Jericho, Tyre, Caesarea Philippi and the Decapolis, Sepphoris and those other newish Greek towns where people still followed the law and returned every year to Jerusalem to celebrate the great feast - as well as every other kind of Jew from as far away as Damascus and Alexandria.

People are everywhere. The market is a riot of color and noise, every guesthouse is full, everyone's relatives have shown up to claim the last bit of floor space. At the head of the market, the farmer passes the place where the elders of the town would normally sit, passing judgement upon the smaller matters of the law that affected the ups and downs of the life of the people. Every commandment of the Torah, all 613 of them were weighed, counted and measured here. Just up the steps and in the alcove of one of the temple porticoes, the Sanhedrin would meet to decide the weightier cases.

These leaders of the Jewish people; careerist politicians, family aristocrats, lawyers, rabbis and the community movement of the Pharisees would meet here. Here there was order and peace, here the life of his nation beat from the heart of the temple through to its outer courts of justice and down the great arteries of the legal, social and community life of the Jews. Here was where restitution, repayment and rehabilitation commenced. Here was where the great genius of the Jewish people was realised, as custom, practice, history and theology combined to seamlessly weave the distinctive garb of identity that en-cloaked the nation. But here was not where, 13 hours before, a man was tried. There was no room for his trial or sentence here in the law court, instead he was condemned to death in a trial held only by torchlight. Here was where justice, practice and history were left, forgotten, as the priests and jurors fled to the houses of their leaders in a last ditch effort to

save the life of the nation.

On this Good Friday a man was sacrificed. For the life of the nation, the life of a man was offered. A just penalty was not given. A just penalty punishes the wrongdoer. The sacrificed man was undeserving of the penalty he suffered. Perhaps his death would give life to the nation, but it was against the law. The old covenant law did not allow individuals to take on a personal punishment like death as a way of making a compensation for someone else. The life of the nation would perhaps suffer under the boot of the Romans, but surely the life of the man would make no difference in the long-run.

Our farmer does not know this. He did not know the man of Nazareth who so recently had climbed those steps to preach about his own impending death. He may have sensed the vague, repeated stirrings of revolt. He may have had some friends – who were tired of the Hasmonean policy of complicity with the Romans – who wanted to rise up and free Jerusalem, or doom the nation. He does not realise, that as human and divine meet here within the temple they are meeting outside his town, on a tree, in the late afternoon sun.

Our farmer has by now joined thousands of other Jewish men in the court of the temple before the holy place... He is probably a bit weary of the hustle and bustle, but this is what this time of year is all about – the chance to gather together and be caught up once again into the mystery and immense power of the communal sacrifice that sets the Jews apart from the nations all around them. That makes them who they are. That makes him who he is – a Son of Abraham. He passes through the columns – they are massive. It would take three men with arms outstretched to span the base of one. They mark the edge of the temple court – it is heaving with men and women – not from the Jewish race – anxious to see what is going on inside. He walks past signs in Greek and Latin warning gentiles to go no further. They read: "No foreigner is to enter within the balustrade and terrace around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his death which follows."

He pushes through the court of the Gentiles and passes the low step marking the court of the women and enters. The temple is remarkable – there are no statues, no plants, no votive offerings such as are seen in the “temples” which are springing up all around Judea – influenced by the recent craze for all things Greek. The noise dims considerably. He crosses the court of the women and begins to climb the 15 steps to the court of the Israelites – his nation. He enters. Thousands of other Jewish men are in the court of the temple, before the holy place itself, the earthly throne room of God – the silent, empty, mysterious room where God dwells. Alone. He brings and ritually slaughters his lamb. There is a special way to do it – and one of the priests does it for him. While psalms of praise and thanksgiving are sung by the choir of Levites, the priest takes the blood of the lamb in a basin and pours it out at the altar as a way of offering the lamb to the almighty Lord of the universe. The body of this lamb will become the center of the family meal at the feast which celebrates the Exodus, the redemption of the people of Israel from the bondage of Egypt.

At the very moment the Judean farmer is offering his lamb, the Messiah dies on the cross and the veil of the temple is torn in two. The inner veil, the veil concealing God from man in the holy of holies is now parted. The pathway to God is open. Previously, God’s face had been concealed, now God has removed the veil and revealed himself in the crucified Jesus as the one who loves to the point of death. His death fulfils the ceremony of the Passover lamb and begins the true redemption of the human race. The pathway to God is open. We too now stand there. We too see the Passover lamb stricken, and slain. We too see the many men, bound together in community from far and near across the middle east 2000 years ago, chanting and singing the psalms of praise, as Passover sacrifices are offered continually on the alter. But we are not of them. We are not their people. We can have no share in the redemption and forgiveness of the lamb in the temple offered over and over and over again. This is not the covenant in which we share. For now there is no temple. For now, even the very foundation of the temple is buried beneath layers of rock, ash, debris and the ruin of two

millennia of war and life and death. There are no more sacrifices.

The blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer do not actually deal with sin – they never really did. They were sketches which would help men to understand what was to come and accept it when it arrived. The era of the old temple and its sacrifices is over. The reality has now come, the crucified Jesus who reconciles us all with the Father. Christ was the substance, the reality. Christ's death on the cross was the true sacrifice for sins, the offering for human sin that alone was truly acceptable to God.

Our farmer leaves the temple and gathers his children outside in the melee to leave on the short journey back to his home. It is dark and stormy, and a freak earthquake has shaken the city. There is panic outside the temple and he holds tight to his children. He will return again – in a year's time – to repeat his sacrifice. Perhaps he will have to bring a bigger lamb, because his family will grow next year. He will live to see the hunting down of the radical elements of a dangerous new sect, proclaiming an idolatrous and blasphemous good news about forgiveness of sins through a man. He will live to see the destruction of the temple and the beginning of the dispersion of his people. His world will turn very dark, as he thinks the meeting place for God and his people has been destroyed.

He does not know that it has been destroyed already, even as he has prayed this day. He does not know that one has met and carried a cross through his town. He does not know that the life of God and man has met and carried the weight of sin he brings every year to the temple and nailed it through his hands to the wood of a tree on a hill outside his town. He does not know that the life of God and man has left the body of the one called Jesus of Nazareth to begin the triumph over sin, death and Satan prophesied in the first book of his Torah.

He does not know that the *enmity* put *between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring* is decided. He does not know that the head is crushed, bruised a mortal *blow* in the hanging of a human man and God upon a tree and that the bruised heel is struck the last time. He does not know, that the life of God and man has met and will never be the same again.

Tadhg Lynch is a member of the [Servants of the Word](#), a missionary brotherhood of men living single for the Lord, and a Mission Director for Kairos, an international outreach to young people. Tadhg is originally from Nazareth Community, Dublin, Ireland.

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Called by Grace to Follow Jesus

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)

In times of church renewal Holy Scripture naturally becomes richer in content for us. Behind the daily catchwords and battle cries needed in the Church Struggle, a more intense, questioning search arises for the one who is our sole concern, for Jesus himself. What did Jesus want to say to us? What does he want from us today? How does he help us to be faithful Christians today? It is not ultimately important to us what this or that church leader wants. Rather, we want to know what Jesus wants. When we go to hear a sermon, his own word is what we want to hear. This matters to us not only for our own sakes, but also for all those who have become estranged from the church and its message...

We desire to speak of the call to follow Jesus. In doing so, are we burdening people with a new, heavier yoke? ... In following Jesus, people are released from the hard yoke of their own laws to be under the gentle yoke of Jesus Christ. Does this disparage the seriousness of Jesus' commandments? No. Instead, only where Jesus' entire commandment and the call to unlimited discipleship remain intact are persons fully free to enter into Jesus' community.

Those who follow Jesus' commandment entirely, who let Jesus' yoke rest on them without resistance, will find the burdens they must bear to be light. In the gentle pressure of this yoke they will receive the strength to walk the right path without becoming weary. Jesus' commandment is harsh, inhumanly harsh for someone who resists it. Jesus' commandment is gentle and not difficult for someone who willingly accepts it. "His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). Jesus' commandment has nothing to do with forced spiritual cures. Jesus demands nothing from us without giving us the strength to comply. Jesus' commandment

never wishes to destroy life, but rather to preserve, strengthen, and heal life...

Jesus died on the cross alone, abandoned by his disciples. It was not two of his faithful followers who hung beside him, but two murderers. But they all stood beneath the cross: enemies and the faithful, doubters and the fearful, the scornful and the converted, and all of them and their sin were included in this hour in Jesus' prayer for forgiveness. God's merciful love lives in the midst of its foes [Psalm 110]. It is the same Jesus Christ who by grace calls us to follow him and whose grace saves the thief on the cross in his last hour [Luke 23:32ff].

Where will the call to discipleship lead those who follow it? What decisions and painful separations will it entail? We must take this question to him who alone knows the answer. Only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow him, knows where the path will lead. But we know that it will be a path full of mercy beyond measure. Discipleship is joy.

Today it seems so difficult to walk with certainty the narrow path... and yet to remain wide open to Christ's love for all people, and in God's patience, mercy, and loving-kindness (Titus 3:4) for the weak and godless. Still, both must remain together, or else we will follow merely human paths. May God grant us joy in all seriousness of discipleship, affirmation of the sinners in all rejection of sin, and the overpowering and winning word of the gospel in all defense against our enemies.

See related articles:

- [Baptized into Jesus Christ](#)
- [Costly Grace versus Cheap Grace](#)
- [Stations on the Road to Freedom](#)
- [Community Through and In Jesus](#)

Excerpt from the Introduction to *Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, originally published in German by Christian Kaiser Verlag in 1937. Original, abridged English-language edition of *Nachfolge (Discipleship)* published in 1949 as *The Cost of Discipleship* by SCM Press Ltd., London, and the Macmillan Company, New York. Revised, unabridged edition of *The Cost of Discipleship* published in 1959 by SCM Press Ltd., London, and the Macmillan Company, New York. New English-language translation of *Nachfolge (Discipleship)* with new supplementary material first published in 2001 by Fortress Press, Minneapolis, as part of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 4*. English translation by Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a German Lutheran pastor and a founding member of the Confessing Church. He was the first of the German theologians to speak out clearly against the persecution of the Jews and the evils of the Nazi ideology. In spring of 1935 Dietrich Bonhoeffer was called by the Confessing Church in Germany to take charge of an "illegal," underground seminary at Finkenwalde, Germany (now Poland). He served as pastor, administrator, and teacher there until the seminary was closed down by Hitler's Gestapo in September, 1937.

In the seminary at Finkenwalde Bonhoeffer taught the importance of shared life together as disciples of Christ. He was convinced that the renewal of the church would depend upon recovering the biblical understanding of the communal practices of Christian obedience and shared life. This is where true formation of discipleship could best flourish and mature.

Bonhoeffer's teaching led to the formation of a community house for the seminarians to help them enter into and learn the practical disciplines of the Christian faith in community. In 1937



Bonhoeffer completed two books, *Life Together* and *The Cost of Discipleship*. They were first published in German in 1939. Both books encompass Bonhoeffer's theological understanding of what it means to live as a Christian community in the Body of Christ.

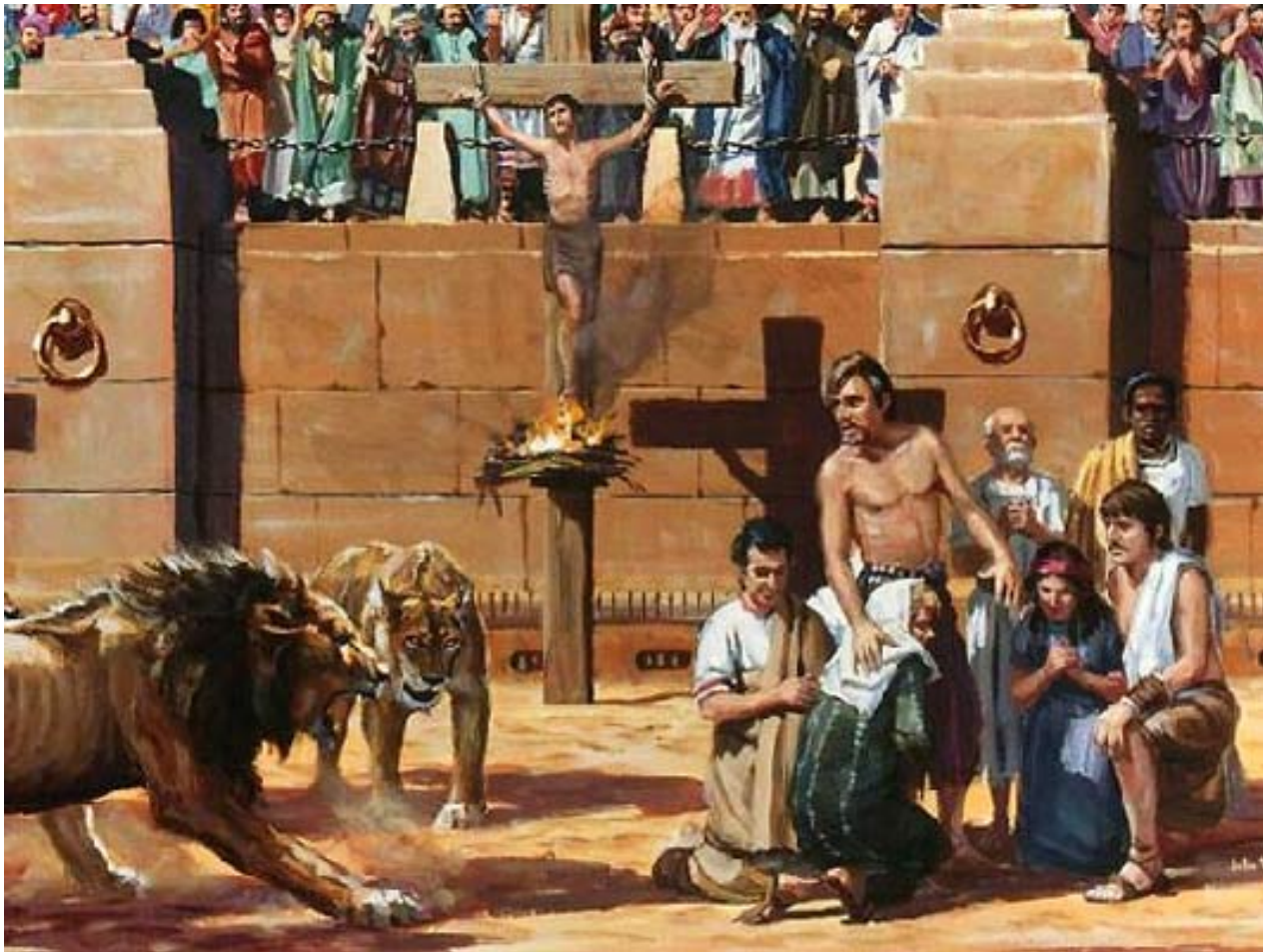
He was arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo in April 1943. On April 8, 1945 he was hanged as a traitor in the Flossenburg concentration camp. As he left his cell on his way to execution he said to his companion, "This is the end – but for me, the beginning of life."

photo of Bonhoeffer in the courtyard of Tegel prison, summer 1944; source: Christian Kaiser Verlag

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Martyrdom Throughout the Length of Days

by Clement of Alexandria (c.150-215 AD)

Martyrdom means bearing witness to God. Every soul that seeks in pureness of heart to know God and obeys the commandments of God is a martyr, bearing witness by life or by words.

In fact even if it is not a matter of shedding blood, the soul is pouring out its faith because it is by faith that the soul will be separated from the body before a person dies.

That is why, in the Gospel, the Lord praises the person 'who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the Gospel.' That person is blessed because he too is going to meet martyrdom simply by living in a way that is different from the crowd, because he is following the rule of the Gospel for love of his Lord.

The truly righteous are set apart from the world because they produce the fruits of grace in their actions. They do this because they have been able to become a friend of God and to obtain a place at the right hand of the Father, as the Apostles have done.

- *Miscellaneous Studies*, 4, 4, IS (Stahlin II, p.255)

[Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD) was an early Christian writer, Bible scholar, and theologian who taught at the Catechetical School of Alexandria.]



A New Ecumenism of Blood

“Today there is an ecumenism of blood. In some countries they kill Christians for wearing a cross or having a Bible and before they kill them they do not ask them whether they are Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic or Orthodox¹...They are witnesses to Jesus Christ, and they are persecuted and killed because they are Christians. Those who persecute them make no distinction between the religious communities to which they belong. They are Christians and for that they are persecuted. This, brothers and sisters, is the ecumenism of blood.”²

- Pope Francis

“The ecumenism of suffering and of the martyrdom of blood are a powerful summons to walk the long path of reconciliation between the Churches, by courageously and decisively abandoning ourselves to the working of the Holy Spirit.”

- Pope Francis' address to the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch³

“The blood of martyrs is in the church a force for renewal and of unity.”

- Pope John Paul II

“The only way to overcome our enemy is by loving him” (quote from *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer). When the German Lutheran pastor [Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#) was led from his cell to be executed by the Nazis, he told his prison companion: “This is the end – but for me, the beginning of life” (April, 1945).

“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose...God, I pray Thee, light these sticks of my life and may I burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one, like you, Lord Jesus.”

– [Jim Elliot](#), Baptist missionary in Ecuador who was martyred with four companions in 1956

“I ask of you this day the grace to become a servant and to give my life here as a ransom for peace as a ransom for life. Jesus draw me into your joy of crucified love.”

- Journal entry by Father Christophe Lebreton who was martyred in 1996 along with his six companion monks from the Trappist monastery in Algiers

Tertullian, a second-century Christian writer, expressed a profound and enduring reality when he said, “The

blood of Christians is seed.” As he looked beyond the suffering of the early Christian martyrs, he could see that their brutal deaths were not in vain. They would be like the mustard seed spoken of by Jesus (Matthew 13:31). From their sacrifice, the kingdom of God would blossom, strengthening the church and the faith of countless Christian believers.

Related article > [The Blood of Christians Is Seed](#), by Jeanne Kun

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Cross-Bearers of the King

The Mystery of Jesus' Sacrifice

by Richard Wurmbrand

Suppose you were living 2,000 years ago in Palestine, that you were sinful, heavy with guilt, and Jesus told you, “Your sin is grave and deserves punishment. ‘The wages of sin are death.’ But tomorrow I will be flogged and crowned with a crown of thorns for you—I invite you to assist them when they drive nails into My hands and feet and fix Me to a cross. I will cry in anguish, and I will share the sorrow of My mother whose heart will be pierced by compassion for Me as if by a sword. You should be there to hear My cries. And when I have died, you shall know that your sins are forgiven forever, that I was your substitute, your scapegoat. This is how a man gets saved. Will you accept My suffering for your offense, or do you prefer to bear the punishment yourself?” What would you have answered?

I believe that this dilemma should be placed before a soul seeking salvation. Fifteen hundred years before the historical birth of Christ the Bible says, “Today I have begotten You” (Psalm 2:7). It also says to the penitent 2,000 years after Golgotha, “Today I die for you.” Jesus’ life and death are outside of time and space.

Would you accept? More than once in Communist prisons I have seen a pastor receive a beating to the blood in place of another prisoner. A name would be called and the pastor would simply say, “It is I.” In Auschwitz,

Maximilian Kolbe, a priest, offered to take the place of a Pole sentenced to death by the Nazis. The Pole was the father of many children. The commandant of the camp accepted the substitution and the Pole was spared. Kolbe died by asphyxiation. Had you been that Pole, what would you have decided?

I lived many years in an isolated subterranean prison cell, in timelessness, something akin to the weightlessness experienced by astronauts. Just as they know no difference between heavy and light, I knew no distinction between past, present, and future.

In my prison cell Jesus' presence was immediate. His life did not belong to the past, nor was it a series of successive events. He put before me the problem I have just put to you. He told me, "You are a sinner and are condemned to eternal punishment for your transgressions, but I am ready to save you. Because of your sin, I will endure rejection, flogging, being spat upon, being crowned with a crown of thorns, the pains of crucifixion, and the agony of seeing my mother brokenhearted at the foot of the cross. My blood will cleanse you from all sin."

I had to decide whether or not to accept the sacrifice of the innocent Son of God for my sins. I believed that to accept would be a greater wickedness than all I might ever have done in my life and I flatly refused this proposal. Jesus was glad about my "No."

Then came the real question, the thing He had had in mind from the beginning. "What if I incorporate your being into Mine, if you become part of My body, if you deny yourself as an independent self, and I will live in you henceforth and you will be 'crucified with me' (Galatians 2:20), 'buried with me' (Romans 6:4), and share the fellowship of My suffering (Philippians 3:10)? People in churches will sing, 'safe in arms of Jesus,' while you will be safe as an arm of Jesus, nailed like His to a cross, but also imparting goodness like His. Do you wish to become My co-worker for the salvation of mankind, alleviating sufferings, filling up 'what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.'

I have accepted this proposal. Christians are meant to have the same vocation as their King, that of cross-bearers. It is this consciousness of a high calling and of partnership with Jesus which brings gladness in tribulation, which makes Christians enter prisons for their faith with the joy of a bridegroom entering the bridal room.

When George Vins, the general secretary of the Baptist Union of the USSR, was sentenced for his faith, believers in the courtroom covered him with flowers. His little daughter, hoisted on a stool, recited in front of the Communist judges, "Father, with Christ you are free in prison, and freedom without Him is prison." The believers waiting outside the building received him with a Christian hymn.

The relative of a Christian prisoner in Red China said to someone who sympathized with her, "You should not feel sorry for us, for if he were not in that slave labor camp, how could the others here come to know the gospel of the Lord Jesus?"

In the same spirit we should receive the crosses of poverty, racial discrimination, personal betrayals, unfaithfulness of marriage partners, rebellion of children, and all other sorrows of life.

A man who smugly accepts Christ's dying for him and shouts Hallelujah about the innocent Son of God receiving punishment he himself deserves should be more severely punished than before. The gospel, the good news, is the privilege of becoming a member of the Body of Christ, of suffering, of dying in pain with Him, and also of being resurrected with Him in glory.

Because sacrifice is implicit in a conversion, the call of an evangelist has the name "altar call." Every being

placed upon the altar in Jerusalem—lambs, rams, and pigeons—died. Someone dies for you. This time it is not an animal, but the Son of God. He has decreed it and nothing you can do will change His mind. You can only ask for the privilege of henceforth being able to sacrifice yourself as well, for the glory of God and for the good of your fellowmen. In return you receive the right to die to sin and to the world and its laws.

The reality of a conversion is in becoming one with Him. It is shameful and abominable to accept His substitutionary death otherwise.

This article and the brief bio below is excerpted from *100 Prison Meditations: Cries of Truth from Behind the Iron Curtain*, by Richard Wurmbrand, (c) 1982, 1984, 2000 The Voice of the Martyrs, Living Sacrifice Books, Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Previously published by Bridge-Logos Publishing, Inc.

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand (1909-2001) was an evangelical minister who endured fourteen years in Communist imprisonment and torture in his homeland of Romania. He was one of Romania's most widely known Jewish Believer leaders, authors, and educators. In 1945, when the Communists seized Romania and attempted to control the churches for their purposes, Richard Wurmbrand immediately began an effective "underground" ministry to his enslaved people and the invading Russian soldiers. He was eventually arrested in 1948. Richard spent three years in solitary confinement, seeing no one but his Communist torturers. He was then transferred to a group cell, where the torture continued for five more years.

His wife, Sabina, also Jewish, was a slave laborer for three years. Due to Pastor Richard Wurmbrand's international stature as a Messianic Jewish leader, diplomats of foreign embassies asked the Communist government about his safety. They were told he had fled Romania. Secret police, posing as released fellow prisoners, told his wife of attending his burial in the prison cemetery. Pastor Wurmbrand was released in a general amnesty in 1964. Realizing the great danger of a third imprisonment, Christians in Norway negotiated with the Communist authorities for his release from Romania. The "going price" for a prisoner was \$1,900. Their price for Wurmbrand was \$10,000. In May 1966, Pastor Richard Wurmbrand testified in Washington before the Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee and stripped to the waist and showed 18 deep torture wounds covering his body. His story was carried across the world newspapers in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. Read a portion of this report. [Communist Exploitation of Religion Pastor Richard's Testimony from 1966.](#)

Pastor Wurmbrand has been called "the Voice of the Underground Church" and the "Iron Curtain Paul." His books are best sellers in over fifty languages.

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Miles Ahead

What is going on in the world and what is God up to?

by Bob Tedesco

Introduction

Special seasons, such as Lent and Advent, mark times of reflection in the Christian world. On a more widespread level, the celebration of the New Year causes people of many persuasions to also reflect. On a daily basis the mostly bad news reported by the media sets many of us to wonder what is happening in the world. Terrorism, family violence, rebellion, and confusion about standards and absolutes elicits many a “Woe is me!” from Christian and non-Christian alike.

Sometimes the seasons or the news reports cause us to question what the Lord is doing, what is His response to the situation that we find ourselves in? Maybe He has already responded and it’s not so clear to us. In one such session, I took hope in knowing that the Lord is always a step ahead...even steps ahead. As I considered it more, I realized that the Lord is miles ahead of the enemy...even millennia ahead.

There is a certain coherence to the remarkable moves of the Lord; we need to make sense out of them, remember them and speak of them to our children. What I hope to do here is to mention three major moves of God over a period of one hundred and sixteen years and then say a little about our response to them. This will be a review or remembering for many of us, but for the young or newer community members, it may be more enlightening.

The Evangelical Revolution

I use the word revolution instead of movement to emphasize that this divine initiative was colossal and worldwide in its impact. This was the call to be “born again,” to have a personal relationship with Jesus. It affected people personally, deeply and effectively.

Protestants got a big jump on this and whole congregations identified as evangelical Lutherans or evangelical Presbyterians, etc. If you attended a well functioning evangelical church, the gospel would be preached, the Word of God would be exalted and there would be frequent opportunities to respond to an altar call. The Billy Graham crusades were para-church expressions of this great move of God. A crusade would result in decisions for Christ, some churches would grow, new churches would spring up, and still others might divide to become “evangelical.”

Catholics later would benefit from this initiative, but not in the same way. Catholics of the 1950’s and 1960’s had no language for it. In an article, one Catholic bishop even denied the possibility of having a personal relationship with Jesus. There was a lot of suspicion with many raising the concern that “It’s Protestant.” Today it’s not unusual to hear a priest talking about his personal relationship with Christ. The evangelical reality and language has slowly been rising due to personal decisions. Catholic movements such as the Charismatic Renewal and Cursillo led people to Christ: some for conversion, but for some life-long Catholics, their faith came alive as Jesus became personal and real. Some local Catholic bishops now welcome Franklin Graham to their city.

Markers

Some of the markers of this revolution are the altar calls, the sinner’s prayer, the four spiritual laws, and the conversion experience. I emphasize “experience” because many or most experience their heart being touched and their lives taking a new direction. Other markers are evangelical mission groups, campus ministries (e.g. Campus Crusade), tent revivals, etc.

Scriptures

I’ve selected a few scriptures that emphasize “relational” and “experience”

John 14:23 “Jesus answered him, ‘If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.’”

John 15:14-15 “You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”

Galatians 4:7 “So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.”

We have relationship with those in our home; we experience them, we have discourse with them.

We have relationship with our friends; we experience them, we have discourse with them.

We have a relationship with our Father; we experience him, we have discourse with him.

Charismatic Renewal: Baptism in the Spirit Releasing Spiritual Gifts

Near the beginning of the twentieth century some Christians sought to be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive spiritual gifts as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and several other places. This beginning led to the Pentecostal outpouring that has spread all over the world and has also led to the founding of many churches and even denominations such as the Assembly of God.

Once again Catholics were slower to get involved; but in 1967, two professors from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, led a small number of students to seek the “baptism in the Spirit” on a retreat weekend. The professors

had been influenced by the Pentecostal movement among the Episcopalians, and this time Catholics had some history and language for spiritual gifting, a history of saints receiving gifts and power from the Holy Spirit. There was a spiritual explosion that involved millions of Catholics worldwide. The baptism in the Spirit went from Pittsburgh to Michigan and Notre Dame, to Rome and from there, all over the world.

We all had our idea of what Christianity is or should be. A Pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit presents more of the Lord's idea for what Christianity is and what our lives should be.

Markers

Many have actually come to conversion due to their involvement with the Charismatic Renewal and prayer meetings. The commonly-used Life in the Spirit Seminar addresses the relationship with Christ early and then progresses to the baptism in the Spirit and the relevance of spiritual gifts. Usually (but not always) people have an experience when they are prayed with especially if there is a release of the spiritual gifts. It's not unusual for it to be a delayed or ongoing experience of receiving spiritual gifts and touches by the Holy Spirit. Something deeply spiritual has happened; some new world seems to have opened up: Scripture has come alive with energy and authority; there is greater freedom to enter into spontaneous prayer and praise; people from other denominations now seem more like brothers and sisters to me. Lay leadership was a key marker of the early renewal that I am most familiar with.

I think one of the key markers of the Charismatic Renewal was its ecumenical nature. Many prayer meetings were area-wide and included members from different denominations and even different races. These broad-based prayer meetings were often very powerful and very close to the heart of God. The follow-on experience of dividing those groups into parish and congregational prayer meetings have not been as successful: not as evangelistic; the gifts are not as prevalent; not as attractive to men.

Perhaps most importantly, they lost the ecumenical dimension...

Scriptures

Acts 2:4 "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Acts 10:45-46 "And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God."

Community: close committed relationships

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, some of the groups that had been formed out of the Charismatic Renewal formed into Christian communities. Similar pop-ups happened all over the world. People realized that the baptism in the Spirit and spiritual gifts were for charismatic body life and not just "stand-alone" spiritual experiences. Some of those who did not want to leave their denominational churches, formed communities. Networks of ecumenical, denominational and some non-denominational communities sprung out of Ann Arbor, Michigan; Notre Dame, Indiana; Orlando, Florida and others. Our Sword of the Spirit network has around one hundred communities in locations around the world in varying stages of development.

Covenants

Some folks knew they had hit the "mother-lode" of God's plan and laid down their lives together to see it through. They composed covenants that expressed the way of life that they intended to pursue together. They developed various plans and approaches that progress the covenant from temporary to lifelong or "public commitment." Not all communities have covenants, but, over time, it is common to realize the need to document your vision and your intended way of life.

Discipleship

Most communities realized the need for some sort of initiations teachings and for ongoing discipleship and pastoral care. Courses were developed for single life, married life, and community life. Discipleship included: teaching (information); training (application); Christian discipline (prayer, Scripture study, fasting, etc.) service; and pastoral care (ongoing help, support, instruction, etc.)

Some Markers

Almost all communities are marked by the desire for close personal relationships, and that was most often expressed by a small group structure or men's and women's groups. Many communities had some expressions of neighborhoods where some of the members bought (or built) houses to be closer together...to raise children together...to be more supported in single life.

Communities often sponsored or facilitated conferences, retreats, summer camps, campus outreaches, and youth groups. A special sense of the need to work with men often developed.

Scriptures

Mt. 12: 48-50 But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Luke 6:32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For, even sinners love those who love them."

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers.

Intentional: decisive, decision

Communities

Our communities are sometimes called intentional community. A group of non-related people decide to form a group with a shared life...an intentional, non-biological family...a decision to be relational beyond the natural family.

Intentional

The word "intentional" is now sliding to other activities. As I mentioned earlier, one of the expressions of community life is the building of intentional Christian neighborhoods or "clusters". Intentional discipleship is what we hope for when taking folks through the Entering Formation Seminar. We hope they will make a decision to live a life of discipleship, a decision to receive ongoing training in a pastoral relationship.

Christianity is intentional, active, (not passive), alive...not on "auto-pilot". It is a personal decision for a significant spiritual step, a conversion that leads to a decision...and then a life of deciding for Christ.

Our Response to His Response

His response to the times is to give us all of this again as in the early church: the gospel, the Pentecost, the community. It's all needed to do well! It's a revival of the original plan, and it's not received passively or with an "osmosis" approach to the needed decisions.

We intentionally and decisively embrace it all. We invest in this Christian body that he has given us; we love the life that he has given us; we speak positively about it to our children and in our Christmas letters and social cards.

Intentional Parenting

We teach and lead our children into intentional Christianity – the complete response. We (counter-intuitively) teach

them that they can't make it on their own. That experiment is being tried all around us and with little success. We intentionally join them to the right people. We have a window of opportunity with our children and parents and communities need to make the most of it.

It is not passive parenting, but parenting with a plan...a divine plan.

Intentional Mission: “Go and make...”

We are repeatedly reminded by speakers to live a good life and to be a good example...the “city on a hill” example from Scripture. The times we live in demand an intentional approach to mission; an active, life-filled sharing of the whole good news. (Ro 10:14b “...And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?”)

The times in the world are not good...evil abounds. But the Lord has responded to that: life in the kingdom is great! Every “Woe is me,” or “We’re doomed!” should be seen as an invitation to share the gospel. We were not given a spirit of fear at Pentecost, but a spirit of boldness and courage and power!

“Go and make disciples...”

See also > [The Three Greatest Needs of the Christian Church](#), by Bob Tedesco



Bob Tedesco is past President of the North American Region of the Sword of the Spirit. He is a founder of the [People of God](#) community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, and has been one of its key leaders for the past 40 years.

> [See other articles by Bob Tedesco](#)

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Doubting Thomas by Caravaggio, 1571-1610

The Lord of Life and Death

***the apostles' fear and skepticism gave way to faith and joy
when they recognized their Lord risen in glory***

by Carlos Mantica

Christ triumphed over death

Christians celebrate Easter because they believe that Jesus came back from the tomb and returned to life. But many have difficulty seeing past the tragedy of Good Friday when Christ died on the cross. They miss the significance of what Christ accomplished for us when he went through death and returned to life.

What was it like for Christ to return from the tomb? And how did his disciples react when they saw him again? Did he look the same as before, like someone who goes away on a journey, and then returns? Christ did not just come back in that sense. He went through death for our sake. And he returned not just as he was before, but now as the risen Lord who triumphed over death. That is why Christ's resurrection is the greatest news that has ever been announced to mankind.

The significance of Easter is more than the celebration of Christ rising from the tomb. If the only thing that Christ did was simply return from the dead, then what is so remarkable about that? Other people have risen from the dead as well. We know from the Gospel of John, in chapter 11, that Lazarus rose from the dead, and the lifeless son of the widow of Nain was raised by Jesus as well (Luke 7:11-17). Peter also raised up Tabitha (Acts 9:36). Paul raised up a young boy in Troas named Eutychus, who fell asleep while sitting in an open window because Paul's preaching was

so long, and then fell some three stories to the ground (Acts 20:7-12). And even before all these happened, we know of two earlier resurrection stories in the Old Testament—the son of the woman at Shunem was restored to life by the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-37). And the widow of Zarephath was raised by the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24)).

In 1975 I personally heard the testimony of a Mexican Indian girl in Texas whom the Lord raised up from the dead, and the testimony of the physicians and nurses who had cared for her.

All of these people who were raised ended up dying again. And after a while, no one remembers them or celebrates their “resurrection”. But in Christ’s resurrection something far greater and more significant has taken place. The apostles had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus, and they saw the lifeless son of the widow of Nain walking once again. But when they announced the resurrection of Christ, they spoke about something unusual, something that had never happened before, something not even conceived in a dream.

When the apostles first heard the story told by the women who saw Jesus on Easter Sunday morning, they could not believe it was possible. Like most Jews, except for the Sadducees who did not believe that the dead would rise again, the apostles did believe in the immortality of the soul. But the women’s story of seeing Jesus seemed more believable as the appearance of a ghost. Earlier, when Jesus had walked on the water and reached the apostles’ boat in the middle of the night, their first reaction was, “It’s a ghost!” (Matthew 14:26)

Put your hands in my wounds!

This same reaction happens after the resurrection of Christ, when Jesus has to persuade the disciples several times that they are not talking to a ghost or to an hallucination. “Come on, Thomas, put your hand in my wounds, touch me and see that I am no ghost!” (John 20:24-29)

That Christ could be a ghost was easy for them to believe, and they did believe it. What they could not believe was what they were actually seeing. Ghosts and apparitions do not eat roasted fish for breakfast on the beach, as Christ does by the Lake of Galilee after his resurrection (John 21). Nor do ghosts go about saying the kinds of things that the Lord Jesus said, such as:

Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained (John 20:22-23).

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age (Matthew 28:18-20).



Supper at Emmaus, by Caravaggio, 1610

The Lord of Life and Death

Christ is risen with his own whole body, but this body is not like the body of Lazarus, or the body of Tabitha, or the body of the son of the widow of Nain. It is not even like Christ's body before being glorified. Something special has happened. When Mary Magdalen finds Jesus in the garden, she mistakes him for the gardener, even though a woman can tell the face of her beloved at a thousand yards' distance (John 20:15). The same thing happens with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who only recognize Jesus when he breaks bread with them (Luke 24:30-31).

Christ is the same, and yet he is different. If he were not the same but someone else, then he would not be Christ and we would be referring to a different person. But if he were just the same as before, we would be talking about Jesus of Nazareth but not about the Lord of Life and Death, whom God glorified and to whom he gave a name above every name, the Lord of everything and everyone that exists, and before whom every knee bows down in heaven and on earth and below the earth (Philippians 2:9-11).

It is the Lord!

Jesus is the same, and therefore the apostles are able to recognize him: "It is the Lord!" Peter says, when Peter sees him on the beach and swims towards him (John 21:7). His gestures are the same, and he lifts his eyes to heaven when he breaks bread the same way he did at the Last Supper. His character is the same. He continues to be discrete and respectful of one's conscience. He is tender to all, and at the same time firm and strict. He continues to be a friend to all, but he preserves his circle of intimate friends.

He is the same, and yet he is also different. He can enter a room while the doors are closed, and he can appear and disappear at any place or time. He can take different appearances, so sometimes he looks like a gardener, sometimes a traveler going to Emmaus, or a young man strolling on the lake shore, but at the same time you can touch him and put your fingers in his wounds, and he can eat and drink with his friends. He appears as someone who has gone through time and space. He knows all about the past and the future.

We will be glorified too!

And this will happen to all of us. We will be the same, yet we will be different. We will have a glorified body, similar to Jesus' glorified body. Not mere spirits, disembodied little souls, but flesh and bone like him. But not like Lazarus, who merely came back to life, to the same life as before; rather, as people who have received a new eternal

life.



The Raising of Lazarus, by Giovanni Francesco Guercino, 1619

The resurrection of Lazarus was a simple return to this life, which therefore left him subject to death. Jesus did not return from death, did not evade it, but instead triumphed over it, and his new life was found on the other side of death. And now he cannot die again. Christ inaugurates this new life and this nature. He is the first-born of the risen ones. He is the one who opened the way for all of us who also will live forever, with a body like his. Neither Christ, nor we after being raised by him, will ever die again, but will live forever. Paul explains that all will rise again with the body they now have, in the same way Christ did, but that this body will have been transformed into a glorious body.

But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself (Philippians 3:20-21).

But some one will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain....What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power....For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15).

[Carlos Mantica is a past president of The Sword of the Spirit and the founding leader of [La Cuidad de Dios](#), a member community of The Sword of the Spirit in Managua. He is a national advisor of the Cursillo Movement in Nicaragua. He is a prolific writer and noted author and member of the Nicaraguan Academy of Language. This article is adapted from his book, *From Egghead to Birdhood: Hatch or Rot as a Christian*, 2001. Used with permission.]

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Redeemed for Eternity

by Raniero Cantalamessa

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

– Romans 8:37

Trusting in the Father's Love for Us

A child who is certain of his father's love will grow up strong, secure, happy, and free for life. God's word wants to do this for us; it wants to restore this security to us. Man's solitude in this world cannot be overcome except by faith in God the Father's love. A well-known philosopher wrote that "God's paternal love is the only steadfast thing in life, the real point of Archimedes" (Kierkegaard, *Journals*, III, A73).

Observe a child out walking with his father, holding his father's hand or being swung around by him, and you will have the best picture possible of a happy, free child, full of pride. I read somewhere about a trick that an acrobat once did on the top floor of a skyscraper. He leaned out as far as he could possibly go, supporting himself on the bare tips of his toes and holding his small child in his arms. When he and the child came back down, someone asked the child if he'd been afraid. The child, surprised at the question, answered, "No, I wasn't; my father was holding me!" God's word wants us to be like that child. After reminding us that God did not spare his own Son for us, St. Paul cries out joyfully and victoriously:

If God is for us, who is against us?... Who shall bring any charge against [us]?... Who is to condemn?... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:31-37)

And Jesus tells us, therefore, to free ourselves of all fear, of all cowardice, of all discouragement. Your Father knows you, and your Father loves you, Jesus says. You were not given a spirit of slaves to fall back into fear, but a spirit of children to cry out, “*Abba*, Father!” (cf. Romans 8:15-16).

Before such an incomprehensible love, it comes spontaneously to us to turn to Jesus and ask him, “Jesus, you are our elder brother; tell us what we can do to be worthy of so much love and suffering on the Father’s part.” And from the height of his cross, Jesus answers us not with words but with facts. “There is,” he says, “something you can do, something I also did, for it pleases the Father: have confidence in him, trust him against everything, against everyone, against yourselves. When you are in darkness and distress, when difficulties threaten to suffocate you and you are on the point of giving up, pull yourselves together and cry aloud, ‘Father, I no longer understand you but I trust you!’ And you will find peace again.”

Redeemed for Eternity

Some polls on religious beliefs have revealed a strange fact: there are, even among believers, some who believe in God but not in a life after death for human beings. Yet how could one think such a thing? The Letter to the Hebrews says that Christ died to win “an eternal redemption” for us (9:12)—redemption not for time only, but eternal. Some object, “But no one has ever come back from the beyond to assure us that it exists in fact and is not merely an illusion.” That is not true. There is someone who comes back from beyond death every day to give us that certainty and to renew his promises, if we but know how to listen to him. We are on our way to meet the One who comes to meet us every day in the Eucharist to give us a foretaste (*praegustatum*!) of the eternal banquet of the kingdom.

We need to cry out this, our hope, to help ourselves and others to overcome the horror of death and the mood of gloomy pessimism common in our society. So many reasons are put forward for the desperate state of the world. Scientists research in ever greater detail the possible scenario for the dissolution of the cosmos. The earth and other planets will grow cold, the sun and the stars will cool down, and everything will grow cold. Light will fade; there will be more and more black holes. The universe will be full of gigantic black holes drifting further and further apart until eventually the expansion ceases, the contraction begins, and all matter and all energy collapse into a compact mass of infinite density. It will all end in a grand implosion, the “Big Crunch,” and all will return to the emptiness and silence that preceded the Big Bang fifty billion years ago.

No one knows whether things will really go that way or some other way, but faith gives us the assurance that, whatever may happen, it will not be the total and final end. God did not reconcile the world to himself only to abandon it to nothingness; he did not promise to remain with us to the end of the world only to go—alone—back to his heaven when that end comes. “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” God says in the Bible (Jeremiah 31:3), and God’s promises of “everlasting love” are not like ours.



The Cosmic Significance of the Cross

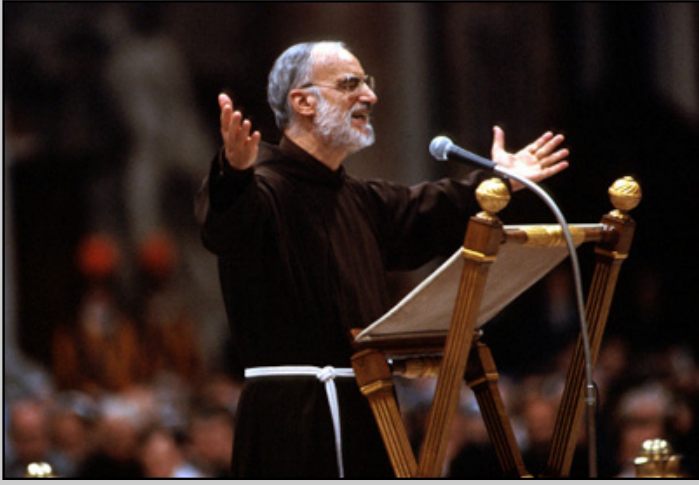
In Paul's eyes, the cross assumes a cosmic significance. Christ has torn down the wall of separation with it; he has reconciled men with God and with each other, destroying hatred (cf. Ephesians 2:14-16). Based on this truth, primitive tradition developed the theme of the cross as a cosmic tree that joins heaven and earth with the vertical branch and unites the different peoples of the world with the horizontal branch. It is both a cosmic and a very personal event at the same time: "[He] loved me and gave himself for me!" (Galatians 2:20); every man, as the apostle writes, is "one for whom Christ died" (Romans 14:15).

From all of this arises the sense of the cross, no longer as a punishment, admonishment, or reason for affliction, but, rather, a glory and the boast of a Christian—that is, a joyful security accompanied by heartfelt gratitude, to which man rises in faith:

“But as for me, it is out of the question that I should boast at all, except of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14, NJB).

Paul has planted the cross at the center of the Church like the mainmast at the center of the ship. He has made it the foundation and the center of gravity of everything. He has established the permanent framework of the Christian message. The gospels, written after him, follow his framework, making the story of Christ's passion and death the fulcrum toward which everything is oriented.

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Raniero Cantalamessa and the Call for a New Evangelization

Part 2 — The Mystery and Power of the Word of God

By Sue Cummins

Note: The following article is adapted from the thesis, *Raniero Cantalamessa and the New Evangelization: Proclaiming the Kerygma in the Power of the Holy Spirit*, which was submitted to the School of Theology of Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit, Michigan USA, December 2014. Sue Cummins works full time for the Archdiocese of Detroit's Department of Evangelization and Catechesis as Regional Catechetical Coordinator.

Introduction

This chapter examines the power and efficacy of the word of God and the nature and content of the kerygma. To proclaim the kerygma is to proclaim the love of God made manifest in Christ Jesus. The content of the kerygma is the gospel message, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!" The kerygma is confrontational, authoritative, and transformative; it leads to a personal encounter with Christ that invites and evokes a response. Central to the proclamation of the kerygma is the proclamation that God is a God of love

and that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The Mystery and the Power of the Word

God reveals himself in many different ways; this is reflected in the various uses and understandings of the terminology used to describe God's word. In his 2010 post-synodal apostolic exhortation *On the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, Verbum Domini*, Benedict XVI wrote that the Church Fathers recognized that "human language operates analogically in speaking of the word of God" (VD 7). The Logos is the "eternal Word, the only Son, begotten of the Father before all ages and consubstantial with him" (VD 7). Jesus is the Word made flesh, God's supreme revelation of his love to his people. Used in this sense the word of God refers to the person of Jesus. The word of God may refer to other aspects of divine revelation. God reveals himself through creation and salvation history; he anoints his prophets with his word. God has spoken through the apostles and in the words of Sacred Scripture. He continues to speak today in the heart of every believer.

The Bible proclaims from beginning to end that the word of God is creative, powerful, and transformative. The word of God endures forever (Isa 40:8) and it cannot be revoked (Isa 45:23; Ps 89:35; Rom 11:29). God's word is active and infallible (Josh 21:45; Isa. 55:11). God spoke and the world came into existence (Gen 1). God worked through his prophets as they proclaimed his word and performed signs and wonders.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor writes: "The mission of the prophet was to destroy and to ruin, to build up and to plant (Jer 1:9-10). His power to carry it out lay simply in the charism given him to utter the prophetic word whose intrinsic dynamism brought into existence the reality it signified (Jer 25:13; 26:12; 51:60)." The Gospel of John declares that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14). Jesus, the eternal Word, became flesh without relinquishing his divinity. Jesus, the Word, spoke and the lame walked (Mk 2:2-12), demons fled at his command (Mk 1:21-26), and tempests were calmed by his word (Lk 8:19-25).

The Word of God is living and effective

On Pentecost, Peter preached the words that God gave him and thousands were converted to Christ (Acts 2:14-42). Cantalamessa writes: "God made the word his favorite means of consoling, of illuminating, of giving life to the world and of revealing his love. Indeed, what is the Bible if not God's good word for us?"

Cantalamessa explores the power of God's word in his book *The Mystery of God's Word*. He points out that an adjective often used in the Bible to describe the word of God is *energes*. This word means "efficacious"; it describes someone or something that works and produces results. The First Letter to the Thessalonians refers to "the word of God which is at work [*energeitai*] in those who believe" (2:13). The word of God is "living and effective [*energes*]" (Heb 4:12). Cantalamessa recalls the words of the prophet: "In Isaiah, God declares that the word issuing from his mouth will never return to him 'without effect,' without having achieved the end for which he sent it out (Isa 55:11)."

God spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden; he spoke to Abraham; he spoke to Mary and Joseph through angels and dreams; he spoke the word that surpasses all other words in the incarnation; he spoke to the early Church through the apostles.

God is still speaking today. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a God of relationship, a God who reveals himself to his people. According to Murphy-O'Connor, "Yahweh's word is always the function of a conscious, moral personality, and nothing permits its being understood either as a force of nature or as a divine

emanation.”

This very real and personal God reveals himself through nature and through revelation. God speaks through the Sacred Scriptures; God speaks through Jesus the Logos, the Word made flesh; God puts words in the mouths of those he calls to proclaim the good news. God uses human beings to speak his word and his word has power when it is proclaimed with faith and humility. God speaks in different ways to and through his people.

Cantalamessa writes about a small movement in the heart, a small light in the mind, a word from the Bible that begins to stir within a person. God’s word may come in a very subtle manner or its coming may be more dramatic; it may be communicated quietly or shouted out with enthusiasm. That word touches hearts because it is God’s word.

God uses imperfect human beings as conduits of his word

Pope Francis wrote about the manner in which God uses the words of human beings to reveal his power and his love to others in *Evangelii Gaudium*. He conveys words of encouragement to preachers and evangelizers:

Let us renew our confidence in preaching, based on the conviction that it is God who seeks to reach out to others through the preacher, and that he displays his power through human words. Saint Paul speaks forcefully about the need to preach, since the Lord desires to reach other people by means of our word (Rom 10:14-17). (EG, 136)

God, who is perfect, uses imperfect human beings as conduits of his word. Both Pope Francis and Cantalamessa caution that the words of human beings are effective in bringing about conversion only insofar as they are truly God’s words. In contrast to the efficacious word of God, the words of humans are often ineffectual. Cantalamessa points out the importance of speaking with God’s words and not allowing an excess of human words to cloud God’s message.

One of the many challenging sayings of Jesus relates to human words: “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak” (Matt 12:36). Cantalamessa advances the argument that Jesus was not referring to every idle word that any person ever spoke, but rather he was referring to those who were called to preach God’s word and instead spoke empty words that produced no results.

A common English translation of the Greek word *argos* that is used in this passage of Matthew is “careless.” According to Cantalamessa a more precise meaning of *argos* is “ineffective”—“a word that ‘founds’ nothing, produces nothing, hence which is empty, sterile.” He points out that the Vulgate translation *verbum otiosum* (*otiose* word) was closer in meaning to the Greek. Cantalamessa contends that “The useless word, which human beings will have to account for on Judgment Day, is not, therefore, any old useless word; it is the useless, empty word uttered by people who ought instead to be uttering the ‘energetic’ words of God and at the time when they ought to be uttering them.”

Temptation to water down God's word

Cantalamessa is particularly concerned with the surplus of human words that tends to obscure the simplicity and urgency of the proclamation of the kerygma. He includes himself among the “false prophets” who fall into the temptation to water down God’s word:

The false prophets are those who do not present the Word of God in its purity but dilute it and weaken it in the thousands of human words issuing from their own hearts. The false prophet, alas! is me every time (and it happens often) I do not rely on the “weakness,” “foolishness,” poverty, and nakedness of the Word but try to dress it up and attach more importance to the dress than to the Word, spending more time on the dressing than in standing in prayer before the Word itself, in worshipping it and in getting it to start living in me. At Cana in Galilee, Jesus turned the water into wine, that is to say the dead letter into the life-giving Spirit (for such was the spiritual interpretation that the Fathers put on his action); the false prophets are those who do the very opposite, who turn the pure wine of the Word of God into water which cannot inebriate anyone, that is, into dead letter and idle chatter. Deep down, they are ashamed of the gospel (Rom 1:16) and the words of Jesus as being too hard for the world, or too poor and naked for the learned, and so they try to spice them up with what Jeremiah called “visions of their own fancy.”

Paul writes in the first letter to the Corinthians: “The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). Paul was not ashamed to proclaim the kerygma; he preached “Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles” (1 Cor 1: 23).

Those who proclaim Need to trust in the power of the gospel message

Those who proclaim the gospel need to trust in the power of the gospel message; they need to guard against adding too many of their own embellishments to the word that God wishes to communicate. Describing the growth of the early church, Luke writes: “So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily” (Acts 19:20). According to Murphy-O'Connor, “the meaning intended in 19:20 is that the word is a power capable of producing a real effect on those who hear it, and that this efficacy is the explanation of the extensive growth.”

Cantalamessa makes reference to the proclamation of God’s word being like a seed that holds within it future life: “The word of Jesus acts of its own, with an intrinsic force—as St. Paul says, by virtue of just being heard (Rom 10:17).

One of the primary activities of Jesus’ ministry was that of preaching. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus begins to preach after his baptism and the imprisonment of John the Baptist. The Gospel of Mark states: “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel’” (1:14). The Gospel of Matthew is more succinct: “From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand’” (Matt 4:17).

Cantalamessa writes about this time in the life of Jesus: “It is the start of a special time, a new *kairos*, of salvation, lasting for some two and a half years (from the autumn of A.D. 27 to the spring of A.D. 30), until the time of Jesus’ death. It is the time of the preaching of the kingdom.” Jesus’ preaching reveals the mystery of who he is and helps to explain his incarnation and his passion. Cantalamessa writes that “without the words of Jesus, these events would be mute.” Jesus taught by the example of his life, but his words were an important expression of his ministry as well. He used words to preach, exhort, and to reach out in love to those in need of salvation. He proclaimed the good news of salvation wherever he went to crowds and to individuals.

It is not enough to give testimony with deeds; as Christians we are called to model ourselves on Jesus and to speak about the love and saving grace of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him.

The Old Testament prophets prefaced their prophetic utterances with the words, “Thus says the Lord.” Jesus spoke with a different authority: “Amen, I say to you. . .” (Mk 3:2). Cantalamessa states that “Revelation and revealer, in Jesus, are the same thing; he who speaks is also he of whom he speaks and this is so because ‘the Word was God’ (Jn 1:1).” He explains that after Pentecost there was a change: “A transition has occurred from ‘Jesus preaching’ to ‘Jesus preached’; this coincides with the transition from the age of Jesus to the age of the Church.” This paper is primarily concerned with the age of the Church past and present. In this day there is a need for proclamation of the same message preached by the first disciples: the good news, the gospel, the kerygma.

Called to Proclaim the Lordship of Jesus and the Love of God

In *Life in Christ: A Spiritual Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, Cantalamessa describes the Letter to the Romans as an excellent model for evangelization. He points out that the Apostle Paul begins the letter by speaking first of the love of God for his people. After he has established the truth of God’s infinite and unconditional love, Paul goes on to talk about the response that men and women should have to that love.

The Letter to the Romans is divided into two parts. The first part presents the kerygma—the work that God has done for his people. The second part contains an exhortation (parenthesis) that deals with the response—that which is to be done on the part of men and women in cooperation with the gift and grace of God.

Only after a person has heard and believed the good news is that person ready to learn how to live and walk in the way of Jesus Christ. Cantalamessa points out that the basics of the kerygma are not simply “theological ideas”; the Letter to the Romans was not written so that future generations could enter into theological debates over its contents. Paul wrote the epistle “to all God’s beloved in Rome” (Rom 1:7) in order to help them to grow in faith and encourage one another in the faith.

Throughout his academic career and his years as a preacher, Cantalamessa has placed a high priority on sharing the love of God with others through the proclamation of the kerygma. His writings and sermons provide excellent examples of creative ways to proclaim the kerygma. He writes and speaks frequently about the importance of keeping Jesus at the center of one’s life and one’s message:

This is the first model of evangelization and if we want to re-evangelize our secularized, modern world, this is how we must start: Jesus Christ in the center, Jesus Christ as Lord. This is, I repeat, the model of any evangelization. We must start by presenting to modern man the person of Jesus, or better still, by helping modern mankind to come into a personal relationship with Jesus. This is not a slogan taken from our Evangelical, Pentecostal brothers and sisters. This is a proof, a great reality.

The Bible is a story of love

The proclamation of the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ is at the heart of the proclamation of the kerygma. Cantalamessa insists that it is not enough to say that God is love just once; this message must be repeated often. Men and women need to spend time on a regular basis meditating on the love of God and allowing the truth of his love to permeate their beings.

The Bible is a story of love; it repeats again and again the message of God’s love for his people. Scripture reveals a divine order, “We love, because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). The proclamation of the “the simple and overwhelming” message of God’s love should be proclaimed before the teaching of his commandments.

Cantalamessa sees himself as a messenger who must communicate the most important news of the love of God, so that it will ring out “loud and clear” and resonate throughout the entire spiritual journey. The truth of God’s love is a “precomprehension” that should permeate all that a person reads or hears about God and his Church.

God’s love is real; it is transformative. A personal encounter with Christ and the active response to God’s invitation to walk with him in love helps a person to enter more fully into an experience of the grace of their baptism. Cantalamessa emphasizes this personal and very real love of God:

What is this love that was poured into our hearts at baptism? Is it just a feeling God has for us? Is it just a benevolent disposition towards us? That is, something purely *intentional*? It is much more than all this, it is something real. It is literally the love “of” God, that is, the love that is in God, the very flame that burns in the Trinity and which we partake of in the form of indwelling. “My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn 14:23).

Encounter with God is transformative because God is real, his love is real. The proclamation of the kerygma leads to encounter with God because it recounts the truth about God who loves the human race so much that he took on human flesh. He came to walk in our midst to show us his love. He died on a cross to restore us to that love. He wants us to live forever with him in the fullness of the love of the Blessed Trinity. He has poured out his Holy Spirit on us to help us to love him. These are not words without substance; these are words of truth about God who is real and active in the world today.

As individuals come to know the love of God, they begin to cooperate intentionally with the power and the grace of their baptism; they begin to tap into the spiritual power that they need to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

In his first encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, promulgated in June 2013, Pope Francis speaks about the effect of a personal encounter with the living God who transforms hearts with his love:

Faith is born of an encounter with the living God who calls us and reveals his love, a love which precedes us and upon which we can lean for security and for building our lives. Transformed by this love, we gain fresh vision, new eyes to see; we realize that it contains a great promise of fulfillment, and that a vision of the future opens up before us. Faith, received from God as a supernatural gift, becomes a light for our way, guiding our journey through time. (*LF*, 4)

Task of the new evangelization

The task of the new evangelization is to help men and women, the baptized and the unbaptized, churchgoers and non-churchgoers, to come to know the love of God and what God has done for them in Christ.

Those who preach and teach must proclaim the kerygma in a way that helps individuals to grasp and respond to the reality of the salvation that is being offered to them personally, so that they can grow in faith, and learn how to share their faith with others. Cantalamessa points out that while there is more truth to be preached and taught than that which is contained in the kerygma, an effective proclamation of the kerygma is an essential element of evangelization which should not be glossed over or forgotten. The events of the life of Christ should not be trivialized, distorted or obscured in an excess of superfluous words and activities.

Cantalamessa observes that Jesus spoke God’s words: “He simply offered ‘the words of God’, and with these few and unadorned words he changed the face of the earth.” Jesus’ message was simple and unembellished.

He preached the kerygma: the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe.

A concern that Cantalamessa writes and speaks about is that the rich tradition of the Church can at times add to the challenge of the preaching of the kerygma. There is a tendency to skip over the initial proclamation of Gospel message in the attempt to pass on the entire deposit of faith all at once. Often those who are evangelizing provide too much information, too soon. The person they are trying to bring to Christ is overwhelmed. Cantalamessa emphasizes the importance of proclaiming the events of Christ's life and the good news of his resurrection from the dead before launching into a detailed theological account of the teachings of the Church.

The proclamation of the kerygma of the New Testament consists of the proclamation of a series of events: Jesus the Son of God died a public, gruesome death; God the Father raised the crucified Jesus from the dead; Jesus died so that we might have forgiveness for our sins and find new life in him. The kerygma is to be proclaimed in simplicity and with conviction. At the heart of the message is the proclamation that Jesus is the Lord, the victorious Son of God.

In his book *Dal Kerygma al Dogma: Studi sulla cristologia dei Padri* Cantalamessa examines the content of the kerygma of the New Testament and early Church Fathers with its emphasis on the events of Jesus' death and resurrection and the proclamation of Jesus as Lord:

The attempts to go back to the oldest and most elementary form of the Christological belief of the New Testament now seem to converge without exception towards those formulas of acclamation in which faith in Christ is expressed through use of the titles of Lord and Son of God. These are titles that express in reality an event, the resurrection, by which Christ was constituted Lord and Son of God. "If you confess with your mouth: Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom 10.9).

Proclaiming the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

Cantalamessa notes that while the earliest creeds focused on the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the later Church Fathers shifted their focus from the recounting of the events of salvation history to defending the faith from heresies and defining important dogmas of the faith. He describes the distinction between the "Christ of the New Testament" and the "Christ of dogma," pointing out that the Fathers speak of one Christ but with a different focus. He recognizes the importance of the dogmatic articulations of Christ's humanity and of his divinity for furthering the understanding of the Christian faith, and for responding to heretical propositions; at the same time he emphasizes the importance of not losing sight of the significance of the events of salvation history and the saving actions of Jesus Christ that are contained in the kerygma.

In an analogy that he refers to frequently, Cantalamessa says that the rich heritage of the dogmas of the Church is comparable to the ornate vestments of a priest. The vestments are beautiful and they have their place, but they are not appropriate for a child. One should be careful not to overburden a person with all of the history and theological development of two thousand years before sharing the simple good news as it was proclaimed in the early days of the Church.

There is a right time and place for passing on the rich heritage of teaching and tradition of the Church; the difficulty lies in the tendency to skip over the first step of evangelization that involves bringing a person to a deep, heartfelt response to the truths of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The presentation of the kerygma, the basic gospel message of the New Testament, is essential for conversion.

Without a personal encounter with Jesus that leads to a conscious, intentional decision to live as his disciple, it is very difficult for an individual to appreciate, absorb, and put into practice all of the teaching that flows out of the theological development and the liturgical expression of the kerygmatic truths.

The "germinative character" of the kerygma

Cantalamessa writes that the kerygma “has a germinative character” and it is more analogous to a seed that bursts into new life than the ripe fruit that grows on a mature tree. The rich Tradition of the Church is the outgrowth of the proclamation of the kerygma. Along the same lines Cantalamessa uses an analogy that he borrows from Charles Péguy that compares the development of the message of the Church to the wake of a ship which starts out as a small point and then continues to grow as the ship moves through the sea. The kerygma is likened to the starting point of that great wake. Those who proclaim God’s word need to use discretion and discernment when presenting the gospel. It is important to know the audience or the individual being evangelized:

At this point, if we want to re-evangelize the post-Christian world, we must make a choice. Where should we begin—at any point along the wake, or from its beginning? The immense abundance of doctrine and institutions can become a handicap if we try to present this to the person who has lost all contact with the Church and no longer knows who Jesus is. . . . Instead, we must help these people establish a relationship with Jesus. We need to do with them what Peter did on the day of Pentecost with the three thousand people present: speak to them about this crucified Jesus whom God raised up. We should take them to the point at which they, too, cut to the heart, shall ask, “Brothers, what should we do?” Then, we shall respond with the words of Peter, “Repent, and be baptized” (Acts 2:37), if you are not yet baptized, or confess, if you already have been.

Kerygma precedes catechesis

A common approach to preaching and teaching recognizes a division between evangelization and catechesis. Evangelization is envisioned as the time for the proclamation of the kerygma. Catechesis (*didache*) is understood to be the teaching about doctrine and ethical norms that comes after conversion. This model assumes that evangelization and conversion actually take place before catechesis begins. It is difficult for a person who has not embraced the good news and encountered the love of Christ to appreciate the teaching of the Church on sacraments or to put into practice the moral norms of the Christian life. One of the challenges of the new evangelization is that many Catholics have received the sacraments but never been evangelized and many begin to receive catechesis without having first hear the proclamation of the kerygma.

In his apostolic exhortation *Catechesis in our Time*, *Catechesi Tradendae* promulgated in 1979, John Paul II points out that many children and adults who come to a parish for catechesis have not yet been evangelized and that others have hesitations and doubts about their faith (CT, 19). He says that, “Since catechesis is a moment or aspect of evangelization, its content cannot be anything else but the content of evangelization as a whole (CT, 26). A rigid interpretation of the division between kerygma and *didache* is inadequate for the present-day situation of the Church. It is not enough to proclaim the kerygma once; it should not be assumed that because a person is baptized they have no need for conversion. The proclamation of the kerygma should be an ongoing element in all catechetical endeavors. Pope Francis makes this point in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.” This first proclamation is called “first” not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a

qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment. (EG, 126)

Efforts should be made to help individuals receive and respond to the good news of salvation at every age and in every circumstance of life.

The Nature and the Content of the Kerygma

The New Testament Greek word *kerygma* is translated as “preaching” or “message”; *euangelion* is translated as “gospel” or “good news.” The words are often used interchangeably in the New Testament and early Church writings. The early Church adopted these terms to describe both the content of the good news of salvation through Christ Jesus and the act of the proclamation of that good news.

The word *kerygma* was associated with the custom of sending forth a messenger to make an official proclamation. The Greek word for a messenger or herald (*keryx*), the act of proclamation (*kerysso*), and the content of the proclamation (*kerygma*), all come from the same root. The verb *kerysso* has various translations: to herald, to preach, to announce. A herald (*keryx*) was one who announced the *kerygma* (important news). A herald was at times commissioned to stand in the public square and shout out the message. The herald spoke with authority that had been delegated by the king or another person with authority; he was expected to relay the message verbatim.

The word *euangelion* meant “good tidings” or “good news”; the verb *euangelizo* means to bring glad tidings or to announce good news. Barclay writes: “The *euangelion* is ‘good news of salvation’ (Eph 1:13). It is news of that power which wins us forgiveness for past sin, liberation from present sin, strength for the future to conquer sin. It is good news of victory.”

In the letter to the Romans (10:14) Paul writes: “How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? How are they to hear without a preacher?” The literal meaning of “without a preacher” is “without someone who proclaims the kerygma (*choris keryssontos*).”

Cantalamessa points out that the message that Jesus preached was “the kingdom of God has come upon you”; Jesus, the Word of God, the only begotten Son of God, walked in the midst of God’s people and proclaimed the coming of his kingdom. The content of the preaching of the Apostles was different. Jesus was the Word; the Apostles preached about the Word. They proclaimed the message about “the work of God in Jesus of Nazareth”; they proclaimed the good news that Jesus the Lord had risen from the dead. The content of the kerygma is the essential gospel message. Ralph Martin summarizes the content of the kerygma: “We are sinners, saved by grace, through faith in Christ; saved from hell, for heaven, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In his book *Theology of the Kerygma: A Study in Primitive Preaching*, Claude H. Thompson refers to a series of lectures by C. H. Dodd published in 1936 under the title *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*. According to Thompson, this publication is a source-book for “the theology of the kerygma” and Dodd is to be given credit for bringing attention to this important terminology of the New Testament. Thompson summarizes Dodd’s study on the kerygma:

Since Dodd’s thesis has such widespread influence, it should be stated. He finds in the kerygma six elements: (a) “The age of fulfilment has dawned.” (b) “This has taken place through the

ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.” (c) “By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God, as Messianic head of the new Israel.” (d) “The Holy Spirit in the church is the sign of Christ’s present power and glory.” (e) “The Messianic Age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ.” (f) “The kerygma always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of ‘salvation.’”

According to Thompson the kerygma “denotes the proclamation, the declaration, the heralding of the news of the redemptive deed of Christ as the core of apostolic preaching.” Thompson points out that what God has done in Christ gives authority to the proclamation of the kerygma. The one who proclaims the kerygma acts as a herald of God and speaks with his authority.

Christ the power and wisdom of God

In *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus*, Cantalamessa states that the original kerygmatic message of the early Church was different from the rest of what was handed down in oral tradition. It was “rousing, not formative,” “occasional, not systematic,” “assertive and authoritative” rather than “discursive” and “dialectical.” There is no need for scientific proofs, philosophic debates, or apologetic arguments to determine or defend the veracity of the kerygma. Cantalamessa cites the apostle Paul:

The *kerygma* is not something that can be re-arranged, since it is what re-arranges all; it cannot be established by human beings, for God himself establishes it and it is then what forms the basis of existence, since we “exist in Christ Jesus” who died and rose again for us (1 Cor 1:30). In other words, this is something different from human wisdom (*sophia*). On this topic, we need only listen to St. Paul as he develops his memorable argument with the Corinthians in defense of this characteristic of the *kerygma*: “It was the will of God through the foolishness of the *kerygma* to save those who have faith. For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:21-24).

The kerygma is a timeless message. There is power in the recounting of the work of God in Jesus Christ. The kerygma stands alone and should be given a place of primacy in the work of evangelization. Cantalamessa describes the kerygma as being “prophetic speech in the strongest sense of the term.”

The preaching of the kerygma leads to encounter. The simple proclamation of the message of salvation in Christ invites and at times provokes the response of the listener. In his book *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel*, Amos N. Wilder writes about the confrontational nature of the gospel message:

This plain new rhetoric of the Gospel was what it was only because it was prompted by a new direct speech or word of God himself to men. What makes such stories and such dialogue so formidable is that in each one God, as it were, forces us to give him a face-to-face answer. . . . The personal dramatic character of the Gospel itself necessarily involves confrontation, not instruction in the ordinary sense but the living encounter of heart and heart, voice and voice, and that this has inevitably registered itself in the ongoing story of the Christ and in the style of the New Testament. As we have observed, it is as though God says to men one by one: “Look me in the eye.”

The Gospels are full of stories about the effects of the encounters of individuals with Christ. The proclamation of the kerygma presents the historical events of Jesus’ life, but even now Jesus is present in the proclamation

of the kerygma. Behind the message is the person of Christ, the living God who constantly reaches out to those who are willing to respond to his message of love and forgiveness. Cantalamessa, speaking about the role of the risen Christ in the new evangelization, states:

Jesus is not only the object of the Church's proclamation, that which is announced. Woe to us if we reduce him to only this! That would mean to "objectify" him and deny the resurrection. In the Church's proclamation, it is the risen Christ who, with his Spirit, still speaks today. He is also the subject who announces.

As a person responds in faith to Christ, the events of Christ's life become present to that person because the risen Christ is present in the proclamation of the word.

The power of Scripture to touch and transform lives

Francis Martin has written extensively about the power of Sacred Scripture to touch and transform lives. He writes about the importance of encounter narratives:

The gospel encounter stories . . . are efficacious "testimony narratives" bearing witness not only to what Jesus did but also to what he is doing. They are a word of witness in the Church, made living and active by the anointing action of the Holy Spirit, so that for those who receive their literary action in faith, they become the source of an encounter with Jesus now, as being the one who heals, calls to discipleship, and enlightens. . . .

In a similar vein, Martin writes about the effect of the "vocation stories" or "call narratives" that are found in the Gospels. These narratives follow a pattern that is similar to the call of the Old Testament prophet Elisha by the prophet Elijah: the call is issued; sometimes the one called seeks to delay the response; the person called follows the call. Martin points out that these "call narratives" are intended to show that Jesus spoke and acted with the authority of the prophets, and he states that they also are intended to illustrate to future disciples what it means to be called by God:

In the theological transposition effected by the evangelists, the call to "follow" or "serve" Jesus was extended to all those generations who would come to faith in him. The Gospel writers were not attempting to convey edifying or imitable information about a dead master; they were describing for believers what it meant to live in communion with a living Lord. Every believer, each in his or her own way, is also called to preach, to live in a community with Jesus and with those who serve him, and to share his life, his commitment to the Father, his death and resurrection.

The call of Jesus is personal; he interrupts people who are involved in their daily work and normal activities. An affirmative response involves breaking their routine and jeopardizing normalcy, in order to leave everything to follow Jesus Christ. Commenting on Jesus' call to discipleship, Mary Healy writes:

"Following Jesus means a break with the past and a willingness to let go of all other attachments. Not everyone is called literally to abandon their profession or family, but all are called to put everything in second priority to him. Saying yes to that call is the first step in a lifelong adventure."

The Christian life is not intended to be one of following a list of rules or doing the minimal necessary to

squeak into heaven. In the encyclical *The Splendor of Truth, Veritatis Splendor*, John Paul II provided an exegesis of the importance of following Jesus (sequela Christi) as both the “way” and the “content” of perfection. He says that there is more involved than hearing a teaching or following a commandment; being a disciple involves “*holding fast to the very person of Jesus*, partaking of his life and his destiny, sharing in his free and loving obedience to the will of the Father. (VS, 19-21)

Jesus invites each believer to surrender completely to his love, to follow where he leads. He offers grace to become like him, to be transformed into his image, to share fully in his life. The purpose of the initial proclamation of the kerygma is to awaken faith and bring about conversion that is expressed by a change of heart, mind, and action, and that leads to a lifetime of discipleship that is shared in communion with other disciples. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* describes the intended results of a full response to the proclamation of the gospel message:

In fact the proclamation only reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it. An adherence to the truths which the Lord in His mercy has revealed; still more, an adherence to a program of life—a life henceforth transformed—which He proposes. In a word, adherence to the kingdom, that is to say, to the “new world,” to the new state of things, to the new manner of being, of living, of living in community, which the Gospel inaugurates. Such an adherence, which cannot remain abstract and unincarnated, reveals itself concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers. (EN, 23)

As well as choosing carefully the content of the proclamation, those who would proclaim God’s word effectively must pay attention to the method of their proclamation. The next chapter deals with the importance of calling on the Holy Spirit as the method of the proclamation. The chapter will explore Cantalamessa’s treatment of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through sacramental grace and charisms. In the first chapter we looked at the need for effective proclamation of the kerygma; in the second chapter we looked at the content of the message. The third chapter deals with the method of delivery—not in the sense of style or rhetoric—but in the more fundamental sense of the importance of the permeation of the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the message proclaimed.

[See > Part 1 - The Call for a New Evangelization](#)



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Orthodox, Protestants, Roman Catholics: What Basis for Cooperation?

by Steve Clark

Note: This article is based on a presentation given by Steve Clark at an Allies for Faith and Renewal Conference held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA in 1982. Some 130 Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic leaders who participated in the conference came with a concern about the confrontation between Christianity and modernity. They shared a common desire to preserve and to some degree recover the fundamental teaching about faith and morals and a way of life distinct from surrounding society – by its faithfulness to the teaching of Christ. The principles which Steve Clark presented for cooperative ecumenism in the 1980s are just as relevant and even more urgently needed today.

I would not be surprised if, during the course of this conference, each of us has wondered, “Why are we all here together? What can people of our diversity do together that would not be a waste of time?” Yet we do find many common concerns and much similarity in the ways we view things, even when we come from what in the past would have been regarded as widely differing theological positions. I personally do not believe, however, that similar concerns and views form an adequate basis for cooperation. Therefore I want to give two other reasons for cooperation.

Common need socially and politically

The first is simply common need. Christians who maintain historic Christian beliefs in the world today need help. It is unclear whether we need help just to survive. But we need help badly enough that we cannot spurn help as a luxury. And often the cause of Christ is suffering because we do not come together and help one another.

For example, the community to which I belong has found itself in regular outreach to Islamia [fictional place name, but real example]. We have received many visitors and a variety of requests for help. For several years now, Islamia's Mohammedan government has been persecuting Christians. The persecution is not violent, but it is constant and increasing, and is partly executed by legislation that restricts the ability of the Christians to function. Besides the normal anti-missionary legislation, Islamia has legislation which restrains native Christians from carrying out standard church functions, and more restrictions seem to be on the way. In addition, the government is pouring large sums of money into converting Christians to Mohammedanism. Not only does it hire Mohammedan proselytizers and finance the production of a great deal of propaganda, it also uses the schools, including Christian schools, to indoctrinate Christian children. Yet when I visited Islamia, I was amazed to find that in this situation, there is almost no cooperation between Catholics and Protestants. Surely in a situation like this, we could see the value of cooperation. We might also see the effect in Islamia of the decreasing cooperation among Christians around the world. Many people are remarking these days upon the success of the solidarity of American Jews with Israel's ability to maintain itself in the world today. The situation of the Christians in Islamia is a testimony to the opposite – the low solidarity of Christians with one another internationally.

Let me take a different example closer to home. I have been impressed by the recent efforts among Conservative Evangelicals to start Christian schools in the United States. I have also been struck by how many of them would appreciate getting some of the tax money that parents pay for education channeled to their own schools and not just to public schools. I have been struck even more with how many of their arguments are the same I heard Catholics using when I first became aware of the issues twenty years ago. Now, however, they are coming from the same sort of people who tended to be among the most vigorous opponents of parochial education in the 1950s. I cannot help wondering whether, if we had been able to get a strong coalition of Catholics and Evangelicals working together in the Fifties, all Christians might now have more money available for their schools and for the survival of their children's Christianity – and morality.

These are contemporary examples. History provides many more. Many historians, with good grounds, attribute the beginning of the de-Christianization of Western Europe to the wars between the Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. That certainly is a heavy price to pay for hostility. Perhaps the most striking example of Christians' failure to achieve cooperation is the Fourth Crusade. While it is too much to attribute the motivation for the Fourth Crusade completely to religious disunity, religious enmity did play a part. As a result, Western crusaders destroyed the power of the Christian Byzantine empire, the one force which had been a bulwark against Turkish invasion, and within a hundred years or so of that crusade, the crusaders' descendants began to see the Turks conquer Catholic as well as Orthodox countries and begin a rule of oppression and religious persecution that lasted for centuries. One is reminded of the teaching of 2 Chronicles 28.

The lessons are not all bitter ones, though. We see positive results of cooperation among Christians, too. The battle in this country against abortion has certainly gained a great deal of strength from the cooperation between Catholics and Evangelicals, a cooperation that might even be on the increase. Inspiring examples are often given to us from Christians suffering violent persecutions in many countries of the world today. I recently read a statement in *Christianity Today* by an Evangelical leader in Czechoslovakia, who said,

Suffering has shown us that we can survive without church structures. But we cannot survive without other Christians. Many of us learned that lesson in prison cells when we suffered together with Orthodox and Catholic believers. We discovered that [what mattered was] our central commitment to Jesus Christ.¹

Common theological challenges

Some have predicted that it will only be common external enemies that will drive Christians together into unity. That

may be the case, but there are other grounds of common need besides external enemies. We also have common challenges. For most of us, the chief challenge at the moment is the presence of what we have called theological liberals, modernists, or theological secularists within the churches to which we belong. An understanding of their appearance in the churches, and of the background of their thinking, indicates that in our different theological traditions we are encountering a common problem, although it takes somewhat different forms in various churches.

To describe the phenomenon, I prefer the term “theological secularism.” “Theological secularism” is the descendant of nineteenth-century Protestant liberalism. It began with a desire on the part of many Christians to accommodate themselves to the then dominant ideology, classical liberalism, the result of Enlightenment thinking. Liberalism was hostile to doctrine and dogma – truths held on authority, and held with the conviction of certainty and not simply as tentative hypotheses. It was likewise hostile to moral constraints imposed on human beings from outside authority, either the authority of tradition or the authority of revelation. Because of this, in fact, it tended to be unfriendly to community – although the classical liberals would never have said such a thing – unfriendly because community depends on corporate norms that come to an individual from outside himself and, if a community lasts very long, on tradition.

In nineteenth-century Protestant churches, most notably in Germany, many Christians attempted to combine liberalism with Christianity. They adopted many of the characteristic liberal positions, and they also adopted many of the liberal critiques of traditional Christianity. The result was a denial of the paramount authority of scripture and of church doctrinal formulations, and a reinterpretation of Christian doctrines, such as the atonement, to mean something acceptable to the society around them. A Christianity with a severely reduced content remained, which coexisted rather peacefully with the surrounding culture. The Protestant liberals by no means intended to attack Christianity – they thought, in fact, that they were helping it. Instead, they had an undermining effect on it, sapped its vitality, and paved the way for a loss of membership.

As Protestant liberalism has developed it has, in recent years, extended its influence into the Roman Catholic Church. It has also given rise to other streams that could not be described as liberalism in the old sense. Some are Marxist. Some are “Hindu indigenist.” It would hardly do, for instance, to describe certain modern Catholic liberation theologians as Protestant liberals, but they do have some very important characteristics in common with them, and their ancestry can be traced back to them. It is from the Protestant liberals that they learned how to approach Christianity as if it were a religion that did not base itself on a supernatural God intervening in human history and speaking to men, establishing beliefs and practices with his authority. And it was from the Protestant liberals that the Catholic liberation theologians learned how to reinterpret the meaning of central Christian doctrines so that these doctrines coincided in meaning with the key tenets of non-Christian ideologies, in this case, the Marxist ideology. They learned from the Protestant liberals, in other words, the reductionism that Peter Berger, in “Secular Theology and the Rejection of the Supernatural,” defined as a procedure in which

the contents of the religious tradition, with which the theologian continues to identify in some manner, are translated in full into language that (or so it is intended) will no longer be in cognitive dissonance with the secularized milieu.²

Those we can call theological secularists belong to this broader movement within the Christian churches today, which includes not only Protestant liberals but also Marxists and the adherents of other ideologies attractive to those who would still like to identify with Christianity.

Over the years, Catholics, Evangelicals, and also Orthodox have responded to theological secularism in similar ways. However, few realize just how similar two earlier responses were: the original Fundamentalist movement and the anti-modernist campaign under Pius X, and on how much they agreed. A good book of comparison still waits to

be written.

Today, theological secularism is a common problem for both Catholics and Evangelicals, the very groups that resisted it so strongly seventy-five years ago. It has been on the rise since the 1960s, when it began to affect Roman Catholics in a significant way. In the Seventies it began to invade the Evangelical world. My observation is that it is not without influence among Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox as well. This conference has addressed the erosion of theological secularism and other currents that sap the strength of Christianity, and we have seen how the lessons in one church are often applicable to another. We could learn from one another's experience and wisdom, and it would be promising for us to cooperate in this area.

Brothers and sisters in Christ

There are, then, many practical reasons for cooperation that come out of our common need to survive and serve as Christians in a difficult environment. But there is another reason which I personally find more compelling – the theological fact of our brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ. If we are brothers and sisters in Christ, we ought to be able to love one another. That does not just mean that we should work up sentiments of solidarity during the week of prayer for Christian unity. It means that we should be committed to one another in an ongoing, practical way.

I would like to turn to a teaching in scripture that does not get the attention that it deserves. The teaching is expressed most clearly in the First Letter of John, although it is to be found in many other places in scripture. First John is concerned with distinguishing between “those who have gone out from us,” a group that many would identify as a Gnostic or proto-Gnostic sect, and true Christians. John picks out a number of marks of true Christians: belief in what we would now call the doctrine of the Incarnation, a moral Christian life, and the experience of the Spirit. In addition, he picks out love of the brethren as an identifying mark essential to being a Christian.

By “the brethren” or “brothers and sisters” John means fellow Christians. In this he follows the usage of the rest of the New Testament, except where the term is used to mean “fellow elders,” and, of course, where it means natural brothers and sisters. The New Testament, scholarship tells us, never speaks of the brotherhood of the human race. That does not mean that the idea of some solidarity with the human race is foreign to Christian revelation. It simply means that we cannot read such a notion into places where the word “brethren” is used in the New Testament. “Brethren” or “brothers and sisters” means “fellow Christians,” and “love of the brethren,” as the phrase in 1 John is rendered in the Revised Standard Version, means “love of our fellow Christians.”

First John stresses the love of the brethren in several places. Chapter 3:13-18 summarizes the teaching well and states it in a way we cannot easily ignore:

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death....By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth.

This, and similar passages, have often been used in merely humanitarian ways, but while there may be humanitarian passages in scripture, this is not one of them. It is very evangelical. In attempting to state the marks by which to distinguish true Christians from false brethren, John is interested in criteria that directly relate to the fundamental reality at the core of Christianity – our relationship to Christ himself and to his work of redemption. He chooses love of fellow Christians, since to love fellow Christians *because* they are Christians is to recognize the importance of belonging to Christ. As the gospel saying puts it, the relationship we have with fellow disciples is more important than the relationship with our mother and natural brothers and sisters. Love of the brethren is an external, behavioral

indication of a genuinely Christian spiritual state.

First John says some strong things about the love of the brethren. It says that it is essential. It says, in fact, that if we do not love the brethren, we do not have eternal life in us. On that basis, 1 John sees it as obligatory. We are obligated to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and laying down our lives at least involves the sharing of goods with them when they are in need. We have, in short, concrete duties toward them, duties which touch our pocketbooks. Further study of the scriptural teachings on love of the brethren would indicate that we have considerably more obligations towards them, such as defending them when enemies attack them, and so on. In other words, scripture teaches that we do have special obligations to our fellow Christians, and fulfilling them is essential to being a Christian.

Such a statement leads naturally to the question, “Who, then, is my brother in Christ?” Tackling that question theologically would detain us in an issue of sufficient size to keep us from discussing anything else here. Rather than doing that, I simply want to observe that in the course of the last fifty to seventy-five years, there has been a massive change in attitude among the Christian people. The result of that change is that we here at this conference are likely a body of Christians who all recognize one another as Christians, even though we represent a considerable diversity of theological conviction and church loyalty.

Many of us might want to add some qualification to the term “brother,” such as “separated brother.” Most of us would not go on to recognize all the churches that others belong to as fully acceptable as churches or perhaps even as churches at all. I would not be surprised if some of us were still of the opinion that the Catholic Church is an apostate church, and the Roman Catholic Church has not yet officially come to the point of recognizing Protestant bodies as anything more than “ecclesial communities.” Nonetheless, that does not obscure the significance of the revolution I am describing. A hundred years ago, Roman Catholics would have normally viewed Protestants as people who needed conversion to Christianity and who would only be saved by way of exception when they had a desire for the truth but because of ignorance could not recognize it in the Catholic Church. And, many, if not most, Protestants would have returned the compliment. Many Protestants still view Catholics and Orthodox in such a way. But a large number of Catholics, Orthodox, and Evangelicals are at the point of recognizing one another as Christians, Christians who have made some serious theological errors and who belong to faulty churches, no doubt, but Christians nonetheless. They would not extend that recognition to all of the members of the other groups, and there is certainly no way of getting us all to agree on where to draw the line, but we do take the perspective that a large number of members of all the other churches turn out to be Christians. That, then, puts us in the place of needing to recognize a gospel demand for cooperation that goes beyond the Christians in our own church to whomever we can see to be true Christians, and that recognition will at least unite a substantial number of Evangelicals, Catholics, and Orthodox.

Second Chronicles 28:1-15 provides a scriptural illustration of the importance of this obligation. It narrates a war between Israel and Judah, fought under Ahaz of Judah and Pekah of Israel. Israel resoundingly defeats Judah and leads many of them into captivity to slavery. As they are bringing the captives back, the prophet Obed goes out to meet the returning troops with this message:

Behold, because the Lord, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but you have slain them in a rage which has reached up to heaven. And now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. Have you not sins of your own against the Lord your God? Now hear me, and send back the captives from your brethren whom you have taken, for the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you (2 Chron. 28:9-11).

We should note a few things here. First, Israel and Judah were in a state of schism and had no united government.

Nor was either in a fully acceptable spiritual position from the other's point of view – or from God's. Second, God did not rebuke them for fighting one another. He seemed to regard some fighting between them as acceptable and even seemed to view it as a punishment of Judah's sins. But he was very concerned that they had not followed the rules of how to treat brothers during their conflict. The Israelites slaughtered their defeated brothers and led the rest captive to enslave them. They also, as the next verses make clear, neglected to provide for their needs: food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. I might note here that many of us fail to perceive the significance of this passage because we have lost an awareness of the view that there are different rules of fighting that apply depending on the relationship, a view that was certainly accepted in the Old Testament. The chief point is simply that even in such an unlikely situation as that in 2 Chronicles 28, the Lord was very angry when his people did not treat their brethren as brethren.

What sort of brotherly love might be practical and appropriate in a group like ours? One area would be cooperation in missionary and evangelistic work. I have been impressed with much of the missionary study and writing that emerges from places like the Fuller School of World Mission and the U.S. Center for World Mission. I have noted how often their writings draw lessons from Catholic missionary workers. Yet I rarely see indications that Catholics are aware of them.

I can add a personal observation. The first covenant community I was a part of was called an ecumenical community, that is, a community composed of Christians from differing church backgrounds. We did not start out being ecumenical, though. And we did not originally decide to be an ecumenical community primarily because we wanted to be ecumenical. In fact, two of the first leaders of our community were rebuked by a Catholic bishop the year before our community began for not being adequately cooperative with the Catholic Church's new ecumenical interests. Some of the original Protestant leaders of our community have testified that they came to our group, before it was much of a community, because they thought it might provide a chance for them to save some Catholics. We started being ecumenical because of the new openness in the 1960s that drew together Christians of a wide variety of churches into grass-roots renewal movements and local groups. Many of those groups, however, faded, affiliated with a church body, or became churches themselves. We were one of the groups that remained ecumenical, and I believe a key reason was that we began a serious effort at evangelism.

As we evangelized together, we discovered that we were more effective than we would have been if we had evangelized along denominational lines. Modern Americans are not nearly as responsive to Catholic evangelism or Orthodox evangelism or Lutheran evangelism as they are to basic Christian evangelism. Many people do not discover this, because what they describe as evangelism is either a form of church renewal or a form of retrieving ex-church members. They either appeal to people in church environments or those who once were affiliated with a church environment. However, when we go to evangelize in a secular environment such as a student or business environment, and appeal to all the people in the environment, then we discover the limitations of denominational evangelism.

As our community became more successful in evangelism, we found ourselves a growing body of people who had come to a deeper Christian commitment, but who did not want to leave our churches. That has been a constant complication of our community life, one that in many ways we might have preferred to avoid, but one that has unexpectedly put us in positions where we found we could do the Lord's work where others were not able to. The chief benefit that it has provided for us locally, however, has been the ability to evangelize effectively.

Another area in which Christians could cooperate is spiritual renewal. We can be helpful to one another in learning how to be more effective in spiritual renewal. The Catholic charismatic renewal is a movement in the Roman Catholic Church that has clearly gained some of its effectiveness in spiritual renewal from lessons it learned from Evangelicals. Catholic charismatics were initially criticized for bringing Protestant revivalism into the Catholic

Church. (The attacks normally centered more on questions of culture and technique than on doctrinal matters.) However, when one traces the history of revivalism back to its roots in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one finds that the Protestant renewal movements had learned from earlier Catholic “revivalists,” especially the Franciscan and Dominican friars. Accounts of medieval Catholic revivalism such as “The Great Alleluia” of 1234 would no doubt curl the hair of some of the modern Catholic critics. At any rate, the history of renewal movements shows an ecumenical sharing that has been both successful and helpful.

Yet another area for making our brotherly love practical is the sharing of pastoral wisdom. We clearly confront the same challenges, because we live in the same society. Normally, the same things work or don’t work when employed by Protestants, Catholics, or Orthodox. Here I would give Pastoral Renewal magazine as a good example of how we find many of the same things helpful.

Cooperative ecumenism

I have pointed out two important bases for cooperation. Now I would like to discuss an obstacle that we need to deal with as well, that is, theological disagreement. There are many points of the faith we do not agree on, and we often believe those points to be important to the integrity of the faith. We recognize our disagreements as serious. We may be very polite about the language we use to describe one another’s views, but we do not like the kind of ecumenism that is sometimes called “lowest common denominator ecumenism” or “the ecumenism of compromise.”

I have been struck by what seems to me an undeniable fact: ecumenism in the past often has led to the watering down of Christian conviction and the entry of theological secularism. The reason appears to be rooted in the way in which points and principles of disagreement have been built into the foundations of our different systems of doctrine. If we try to eliminate the points and principles of disagreement, we usually end up undermining the whole system without realizing it. I believe that such an effect could be avoided; or, to put it a different way, that dialogue ecumenism could be done successfully and not undermine basic beliefs in the various churches and traditions. That, however, goes beyond the scope of this paper. Here I only wish to make clear that I am not talking about this type of ecumenism.

I would like to call to mind an important distinction here. Ecumenism has too often meant something which happens between the officials of church bodies and which is carried out by officially appointed theologians dialoguing with one another. There is, however, another kind of ecumenism, sometimes known as cooperative ecumenism, that proceeds on a different basis. It is a kind that has flourished increasingly in the last fifteen years in this country, sometimes in an irresponsible way, but often in a very positive way. This is the kind of ecumenism that I am concerned with.

Cooperative ecumenism has to proceed on the presupposition that we do not have full agreement or full unity and do not expect it for some time to come. It requires that we love one another as brothers and sisters even now, looking forward to the time when the Lord will make greater unity possible, and in the meantime we will cooperate where we can and whenever we can to strengthen the worldwide Christian cause and the Christian people. The rule should be: whatever builds up, that we will try to do. Sometimes that rule indicates not cooperating in certain ways, though we might be personally ready for them, because of the need to take into account others who do not see things our way or to avoid worsening relations between the churches. Nonetheless, the spirit behind such an approach is to seek to lay down our lives for all those whom we recognize as true brothers and sisters in Christ, and with them to advance the cause of Christ. That, I am proposing, is the proper basis of cooperation.

Dialogue ecumenism and cooperative ecumenism proceed on two different bases, practically speaking. Dialogue ecumenism proceeds on the basis that we need to discuss our differences and try to seek agreement. Cooperative ecumenism proceeds on the basis that we will cooperate where we can in matters of common concern, even though

we have disagreements. That does not mean we do not talk about them. Often one of the most helpful things we can do is to educate one another in our differences so that we do not presuppose something that we should not. It certainly does not mean that we regard the differences as unimportant. But the purpose of coming together is not to work out the differences but to love one another as brothers and sisters and work together in spite of the differences.

Cooperative ecumenism proceeds, when effective, on certain principles that can be stated as follows:

1. We need to accept the fact that there are issues that divide the churches, and we need to abide by the limits that our churches have set. We cannot solve fundamental interchurch problems and should probably not try to. Nor should we act as though they did not exist. We therefore have to accept that each of us will believe the doctrines of our church and be faithful to its essential practices and current discipline.
2. In our sharing together we will emphasize the central core of Christian teaching and practice that we share in common. We will do this partly because these truths in themselves call for such emphasis. But we will also emphasize the common central core of Christian truth because we can thereby foster our unity and serve the convergence of the entire Christian people.
3. In discussing our differences together, we should
 - aim at having the peace in our relationships which will enable us to discuss differences in a loving manner
 - avoid discussing those things we cannot yet discuss peacefully, gradually widening the circle of the things we can discuss as we experience the peace and trust to do so
 - not be embarrassed by our own beliefs, nor be apologetic about them
 - regard the things other Christians hold that we disagree with as mistakes a good Christian could make rather than as wrongdoing or a denial of Christianity
 - not discuss our beliefs in a polemical way, but state them in the way that would be most acceptable to others
 - ask whether the discussion is building up love and unity in the body of Christ or tearing it down.
4. We should learn about points of doctrinal and theological dispute:
 - so that we can avoid expressing ourselves in ways unacceptable to others because of doctrinal commitments in certain circumstances such as:
 1. leading in common prayer
 2. proposing a common course of action
 3. stating an opinion that we think the group as a whole should hold
 - so that we can educate one another in our differences when that would be helpful.
5. When we can, we will talk together, help one another, and serve one another, so that we prevent our theological and cultural differences from poisoning our brotherly love, and so that our personal unity can provide the basis for a more complete unity among the whole Christian people.

The cultural obstacle to our cooperation is a human one. To describe it, I want to rely on an analysis done by Christopher Dawson, the British historian. It comes from a book he wrote during World War II called *The Judgment of the Nations*, a book that I personally regard as prophetic. The book was written to state the program of a movement called the Sword of the Spirit that developed during the war. Dawson summarized the goal of the movement in the following words:

What we must look for is not the alliance of temporal power, as in the old Christendom, and an external conformity to Christian standards, but a re-ordering of all the elements of human life and civilization by the power of the Spirit: the birth of a true community which is neither an inorganic mass of individuals nor a mechanized organization of power, but a living spiritual order.³

One of the concerns of the Sword of the Spirit was to bring together Catholics and Protestants in Britain in a common response to the crisis of the hour, a crisis that the leaders could see was a crisis for Christian society. Ecumenical cooperation of that sort was not common then. In advocating what he called a “return to Christian unity,” Dawson gave a helpful analysis of some of the main roots of disunity.

He wrote that the fundamental problem of Christian disunity is the problem of schism. In practice this problem is so closely associated with that of heresy, i.e. differences of religious belief, that they are apt to be confused with one another. But it is nevertheless important to distinguish them carefully, and to consider the nature of schism in itself, for I believe that it is in the question of schism rather than that of heresy that the key to the problem of disunity of Christendom is to be found. For heresy as a rule is not the cause of schism but an excuse for it, or rather a rationalization of it. Behind every heresy lies some kind of social conflict, and it is only by the resolution of this conflict that unity can be restored.⁴

He based his view on a historical analysis of the history of divisions among Christians.

But, whatever view we may take of the causes of any particular schism and the social significance of particular religious movements, there can, I think, be no question but that in the history of Christendom from the Patristic period down to modern times, heresy and schism have derived their main impulse from sociological causes, so that a statesman who found a way to satisfy the national aspirations of the Czechs in the fifteenth century, or those of the Egyptians in the fifth, would have done more to reduce the centrifugal force of the Hussite or the Monophysite movements than a theologian who made the most brilliant and convincing defense of Communion in One Kind or of the doctrine of the two natures of Christ. Whereas it is very doubtful if the converse is true, for even if the Egyptians had accepted the doctrine of Chalcedon they would have found some other ground of division so long as the sociological motive for division remained unaltered.⁵

Further on, Dawson draws this conclusion:

It is, above all, necessary to free the religious issue of all the extraneous motives that take their rise in unconscious social conflicts, for if we can do this, we shall deprive the spirit of schism of its dynamic force. If we can understand the reason for our instinctive antipathy to other religious bodies, we shall find that the purely religious and theological obstacles to reunion become less formidable and more easy to remove. But so long as the unconscious element of social conflict remains unresolved, religion is at the mercy of the blind forces of hatred and suspicion that may assume really pathological forms.⁶

Dawson goes somewhat farther in the weight he attributes to the sociological factors than I would, but, nonetheless, he puts his finger on what, in my observation, is a core difficulty in matters of Christian unity – personal relations difficulties. When two groups of people, be they nations or smaller groups, come into conflict in such a way that they desire to separate from one another, they become open to theological disagreements. They desire to believe differently. This is the principle behind the schism of Jeroboam and the altar at Bethel. Hence, when we are dealing with the ecumenical problem, we are dealing with intercommunity and intercultural suspicion and hostility as well as theological issues. And insofar as there is a spiritual problem at the base of the human relations problem, it can well be described as schism. The cause of schism is putting something human above Christ as the point of unity and division in our personal relations, so that we join with and separate from others over something other than faithfulness to Christ.

I believe there is a solution to this aspect of the problem of Christian unity, and the solution is our common commitment to Christ. It lies in our together putting above everything else our commitment to Christ and to the

cause of Christ in the world. Practically speaking, it lies in that cooperation we are discussing. It lies in working together in practical ways to strengthen one another in Christianity and in working together in practical ways to defend Christianity and to bring the world to Christ. It lies, in short, in an approach opposite to the kind of ecumenism I think so many of us dislike. The other ecumenism tries to unite Christians in a common dedication to accommodation to the world and to secular goals. Unity comes from putting aside an explicit focus on Christ and with it all the theological differences that come from different teaching about Christ and his work. For us, however, ecumenism should be a matter of restoring Christ to the center as Lord and working together where and as we can until he expands our unity. The basis of cooperation, I propose, is our core Christian commitment, one that Orthodox, Protestants, and Catholics have in common.

We are in an era in which the world is putting a question to us. In many countries, faithfulness to Christianity involves loss of wealth, position, and life. Historians tell us that our age has more martyrs than any other. And for the most part Christians are given a choice: they can accommodate. They can compromise without even giving up everything involved in Christianity, and thereby avoid personal loss and death. They are told, for instance, that if they are simply willing to work for the common good, the collective, the nation, and put aside their otherworldly preoccupations and divisive concerns, they do not have to experience any penalties. As near as I can see, in such situations the theological secularists tend to find ways to accommodate. They do not die for Christ. On the other hand, true Orthodox, Evangelicals, and Catholics frequently find themselves undergoing the same persecution as one another at the hands of the same persecutors.

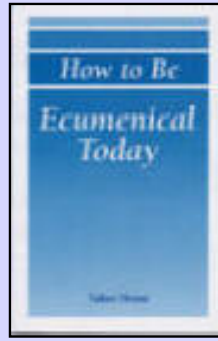
Facing death brings one to a peculiar clarity about what is important in life. I propose, then, as the basis for our cooperation, the willingness to die for our Lord Jesus Christ. Cannot those of us who pray for the grace to be able to die for him, if martyrdom comes our way, recognize one another as brothers and sisters in him? Can we not work together for him until such time as the world puts the final question to us too, and we are called on to witness to him with our lives?

NOTES

1. Anita and Peter Deyneka, Jr., "A Salvation of Suffering," Christianity Today, July 16, 1982, p. 20.
2. Peter Berger, "Secular Theology and the Rejection of the Supernatural: Reflections on Recent Trends," Theological Studies 38, 1977, pp. 39-56.
3. Christopher Dawson, *Op. cit.*, p. 160.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 179.



Steve Clark is past president of the [Sword of the Spirit](#) and founder of [The Servants of the Word](#).



[How to Be Ecumenical Today:](#)
*Cooperative and Convergent
Ecumenism*

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Dave Quintana from Servants of the Word (right) with Fr. Bob Oliver from Brotherhood of Hope (left)

An Anglican in Rome

Reflection on an Ecumenical Meeting for Consecrated Persons

by Andy Pettman

Q [Dave Quintana] turned to me, and said, “look! They are everywhere. They must be going to our conference.” But the closer we came to our destination, the more “them” there were, and the more we realised that, well in this city, you would find “them” on every street corner! The city was Rome, and the “thems” were nuns in traditional habits!

This was not my first trip to Rome, but it was my first to a meeting arranged by the Vatican. As an Anglican, Rome holds more fascination for me as the capital of a lost empire, and as a European cultural contrast to my own English upbringing, than it does as a pilgrimage site. That notwithstanding the invite to “An Ecumenical Meeting of Consecrated Persons” had intrigued me, so when Ken Noecker, the presiding elder of the Servants of the Word, invited me to go to represent us, I did not hesitate to re-arrange my plans.

On arrival at our venue, the Augustinianum, just outside St Peter’s Square, I was delighted at the welcome, and relieved, given the fairly short notice of the invitation, to find that, yes, they were expecting us. Shortly after our appearance the conference began with a welcome from a red capped Brazilian Cardinal João Braz de Aviz. He was effusive in his expressions of delight that we had come, and come from so many different places.



I looked around the room. What a mixture. There were of course Catholic nuns, and monks, and consecrated priests with all the usual garb – they made up a bit over half of the 110 of us. Then there were Orthodox - Serbians, Russians, Copts, Greeks, and a small tribe of Romanians – ten in fact –all from one monastery in Transylvania – in varying habits. But there were also Protestants – Lutherans, Free Church, Franciscan Anglicans, and Evangelicals. Moreover, there were two other ecumenical brotherhoods represented: Taizé, founded in eastern France; and Bose founded in northern Italy. Like the Servants of the Word both groups are constitutionally ecumenical, and have Catholic, as well as Protestant, and some Orthodox, members.

Cardinal João continued with words that set the heart theme of the conference. He commented: *“We want to express unity in diversity”*; and *“We were the church of God, the one and only in the past...but now we have acknowledged the greater number of the things we have in common,”* and *“Ecumenism today allows everyone to acquire a truer approach.”* I was already feeling very much at ease. Here was a man who represented the highest levels of the Catholic world, saying how much his church now recognized other churches and valued them.

The rest of the conference was structured so to flesh out his words, with presentations from different groups and traditions during the day, and each evening ending with a bus journey to take us to our location for evening prayer in different church traditions. The first night we travelled to the vast basilica (but Rome is filled with vast basilicas!) called the Church of Jesus – the mother church for the Jesuits. The second night we journeyed to the beautiful Russian orthodox church of St Catherine of Alexandria, where we were packed into a tiny interior fugged with incense, and followed as the Orthodox monks canted the traditional evening prayers of the church. And the third night we found our way to All Saints Anglican Church for evensong - I felt quickly at home!



But the conference was far more than a series of presentations, discussions and services. It was supposed to be a time of genuine getting to know one another, or communion, one tradition to another, even across language barriers. This being Italy the food was excellent, and so around lunch, or over a late morning snack, we would chat, sharing and laughing about many of the practical things we have in common: living together in community with all its ups and downs; experiencing being misunderstood in our call to live a celibate committed life; sharing our faith in a Europe that has lost its taste for believing in God; bringing new men and women into our different groups, and what helps them to find a home with us. The conversations were rich.

On the third day we had a private (at least private to the 110 of us) audience with Pope Francis. Finding a path through the security queues, and then up stair ways secured by Swiss Guards, we made our way through the Apostolic Palace to the Clementine Hall, where Pope Francis would greet us. When he arrived he looked tired – he had just returned from Manila – but he was warm and gracious. From what I understand this conference was his inspiration, something ecumenical in the Year of Consecrated Life, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, in its breadth possibly the first ever of it type.

Getting everything right all the time for a group as diverse as ours was never going to be easy. On Friday, lunch was...well... normal – meat, a fine Friday dish in Rome. Later that day the Monsignor José Rodríguez Carballo who was leading us through the program made an official apology to the Orthodox in the group (who normally fast on a Friday) apologizing that there been no alternative to meat at the meal. What impressed me though was the real desire of the organisers, to try and get it right, to not offend, and the recognition that it is sometimes in small things like this that divisions are created between us. But this time, we were not going to be divided.



Andy Pettman is senior coordinator of [Antioch Community](#) in London, UK. He is a member of the Church of England which is part of the Anglican communion, and a household leader of the [Servants of the Word](#), an ecumenical brotherhood of men living single for the Lord.

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Reflection on “Progression of Erosion in Family, and What Can We Do...”

by Roger Foley

People change don't they, and I am certainly changing in line with Job 19 [26a] and other Scripture passages. My change is gradual and feels somewhat comfortable. But other changes around me, and impacting me, are taking place with the speed and impact of a societal tsunami. They are coming in fast, in waves one after the other, as far as the horizons I see, and many of them are damaging and undermining Christian family beliefs, and by consequence the church.

In recent years I have seen an agenda of darkness which has eroded Christian parenting. We are now familiar with the mainstreaming of systems which lessen parental notification regarding things as serious as teenage abortions, and laws that lessen parental ability in the ways of disciplining their children. We now have terms such as 'carer/parent' replacing 'mother and father' or 'mum and dad'. And in marriage we now have 'partners' instead of husbands and wives [well - not in my home]. We are well softened to accept same sex relationship to equal traditional marriage, and we are now seeing adoption into same sex marriages. That could be a little confusing down the track with two dads or two mums. And this will likely confuse a growing child to understand and embrace Christianity. We now see the mainstreaming of these new realities portrayed every evening in a variety of television programs. And millions of young children will grow up having known no other reality than that portrayed in media.

In April 2006, in Bogota, Columbia, Catholic Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko gave an address at a Latin

American Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities. In his talk he included quoting other significant church leaders. He said 'The expanding process of secularization and an authentic "dictatorship of relativism" (Benedict XVI) have produced a tremendous absence of values in many of our contemporaries, which is accompanied by a joyful nihilism that ends in an alarming erosion of faith, a type of "silent apostasy" (John Paul II) and a "strange forgetfulness of God" (Benedict XVI).

And six years later the world renowned speaker and Evangelical Evangelist Billy Graham warned 'Our society strives to avoid any possibility of offending anyone- except God'.

But other warnings go back further, given by men of God such as the insightful Evangelical Pastor [AW] Aidan Tozer. He warned of a 'dangerous path of Christian compromise with the world' and he is quoted as saying 'Religion today is not transforming people, but rather it is being transformed by people', and 'It is not raising the moral level of society but rather is descending to join society's own level', and 'Society is smilingly accepting its surrender...'



What can we do? For me I see wisdom in Ephesians 6 [10-18]. In particular verse 12. Read it and then reflect on how many times the Apostle Paul exhorts us to 'stand'- not to ignore, not to run, not to shrink in fear, not to say that's some other person's problem. Start at home, stand at home, and embrace the many rich gifts, blessings and support that you have in being a member of the Christian Community. Stand. We are the body of Christ today, we are a Christian people, and we are a part of the answer in God.



Roger Foley is the senior coordinator of the [Lamb of God Community](#). He and his wife Veronica live in Christchurch, New Zealand.

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Reflection on the “Importance of Taking Time to Build Special Memories”

by Roger Foley

Veronica has often encouraged me to invest time in the ‘building of memories’ both with our grandchildren and with the children who were born and grew up in our community, the Lamb of God. And I have made it a regular practice.

Over the years I have been blessed on many occasions when I have talked with the community children. Many of the older ones now in their teenage years, remind me of times I have spent with them from many years ago - now forgotten by me - that were special for them. Things such as my skipping the main community gathering talk to visit with the children in their community ministry program and to take an interest in what they drawing or doing at the time.

Veronica and I have also offered to take the children out for a special treat (with their parents permission beforehand), such as an Oasis Night Rally - which then always somehow ends on the journey back home with a stop at McDonalds for a final treat! The children remember these kinds of things, and they really count.



A few weeks ago was another memory building opportunity with my twenty-one year old granddaughter Clarice. A few years ago, I started taking Clarice [followed then by the other grandchildren - Nathaniel, and Sebastian] trekking with some pretty good climbing in the Hanmer ranges, followed by some other trips in the Southern Alps. My grandchildren have grown up appreciating the awesome grandeur of God's creation. And now that Clarice has a Degree in Geology with distinction in Volcanology, to whom does she turn to ask help in climbing the Ngaruahoe Volcano, an active volcano of 2,300 meters? Yes - me. And yes with a fifty year age gap.

On a recent trip we had a wonderful time together as we took three days up on the Volcanic Plateau. We trekked, climbed, ate and talked, talked and talked together. There was no generational gap or awkwardness. Clarice just kept on reminding me of the memories of her early childhood. Maybe she was unaware that this three days together was building another whole set of memories. It cost me a significant amount of money for flights and accommodation, and three days of time from my busy schedule. But my reward vastly exceeds the cost.



The climb up Ngaruahoe is brutal and exhausting. Eleven years ago I did it base to base in nine hours and I lost one toe nail coming down! This time it took ten hours and it looks like two nails will go. Maybe more. But that cost is well worth the raw exposure to the wonders of creation, the marveling at the hand of God, the memories that will establish well into the future.

If you are a dad, or like me a granddad, go and build some 'special memories.' If you are serving in community leadership why not go take time to 'connect' with the children in your local community group and take an interest in them as individuals. It doesn't all need to be the responsibility of the children's ministry team. We are a community, a family of families, building a way of life as a people.



Roger Foley is the senior coordinator of the [Lamb of God Community](#). He and his wife Veronica live in Christchurch, New Zealand.



Every Child Is a Thought of God

by Eberhard Arnold

When we receive a little child from God, a soul is entrusted to humankind from eternity. No matter how often this happens, each time it is a powerful event, something unbelievably great.

We love little children because Jesus loved them. And from him we know that the kingdom of God belongs to them – in fact, that the kingdom is nearer to them than to the millions of adults.

Seen in this light, educa-tion is no arbitrary molding of a child, as the unbeliev-ing world imagines. We cannot shape or form our children however we like, according to

our own preferences. If we are to serve them rightly, we will form them only according to the way God has already thought of them.

Every child is a thought of God. We can only perform the service of education when we understand the thought of God for each child – a thought that God has had in eternity, and still has, and will always have just for this child. This thought of God is the holy “So be it” for this child.

God knows what each child is intended to become. It is the task of the parents, the church, and the educators to help this child become just what he or she should be, in accordance with the original thought of God. Through a religious sensitivity, we must attain a vision of this thought of God, which is still apparently hidden, and must learn to understand it more clearly from moment to moment, from day to day, from year to year. Then the forming of the child will not be something we undertake ourselves; rather, our role will consist solely in assisting in the formation intended by God. That is the secret of this task.

It is the same in our relationship with every individual adult. We must see each human being just as he or she is intended in the heart of God, in the holy purpose of his “So be it.” Above all, we must wish for each person that he or she is integrated into the ultimate thoughts of God, so that God’s final will may be revealed among humankind: that is, the church and the kingdom of the complete unity of Jesus Christ.

We thus bear a crucial responsibility to live in reverence for the Holy Spirit. This is true for all aspects of the church’s life, but it applies in an especially holy sense to the bringing up of children. Reverence for the Holy Spirit means reverence for the father, who is to represent Christ as the God-given head; reverence for the mother, who is to

represent Christ in the like-ness of Mary and the church; and reverence for the child and for the wonderful mystery of being a child and becoming a child.

These words are taken from remarks by Eberhard Arnold at the dedication of a newborn, September 30, 1934. Translated by Nicoline Maas. Copyright 2014 by [The Plough Publishing House](#). Used with permission.

[Eberhard Arnold](#) (1883–1935) founded the Bruderhof communities in 1920, in his native Germany. With Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as a blueprint, he and a handful of friends formed a Christian community grounded in prayer, fellowship, nonviolence, and reverence for life. He was a prolific writer, theologian and educator.

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The Adventure in Detroit that Changed my Life

“I have a broken spirit and a shallow love, Lord use me”

by Peter Mayoros



[Detroit Summer Outreach](#) changed my life forever. In Detroit, a city sometimes in great darkness, I was able to see light shining. Light shines the brightest in the greatest darkness, and I came to see that that is why the light of God is so evident in Detroit and that light changed me.

This light shone through in the work that we did in the city. I worked with the Street Team program this summer. This is a summer work leadership program set up by YouthWorks Detroit, which

employs around 25 high-school age youth that live in the city. YouthWorks sponsors workshops to instruct applicants on proper business etiquette, such as how to look and dress for work, how to manage finances, and how to prepare for an interview. Then all the applicants are interviewed and 25 are hired for the program. These 25 youth are then split into separate crews and I was privileged to help lead one of these crews this summer.

I can honestly say that the 6 weeks I worked with this crew were some of the most rewarding of my entire life. I learned how to love others around me and to love these youth. Some of them came from broken home situations where they would live in up to 3 homes throughout a week and some of them came from more stable environments. That is really irrelevant though, because what I saw in these youth, who became my good friends, was what I saw in myself, a very basic need for love. I looked at this opportunity as a chance to be just that, someone who would love them well. That is a good intention but in that attitude is still a little pretentiousness that says I have a lot to give and need nothing. That is where I was blown away because as much love as I attempted to show these youth, I received back a hundredfold.

Every morning as we walked into the building to start the day I was greeted with a chorus of “Peter!” followed by a barrage of hugs. That is what inspired me to go throughout the day, that is what got me out of bed; I did not want to miss that. The work we did sometimes seemed pointless, but the relationships that were formed with these youth, who became my friends, was the gift I received. This summer was all about relationships, with the StreetTeamers, with my fellow interns, and with God.

The summer began for me with a couple of weeks of training and I was almost a little disappointed. I met a lot of great people and we got to know each other pretty well, and we learned about how to serve and I got a little taste of the service that needed to be done in Detroit. It was nice to get to know all the interns and to grow with them, but I hadn’t come to Detroit for that, I had come to work with the youth. As a whole, the group of interns and staff bonded really well during that time and that would keep us together when we were tired and exhausted during the work-days. I realized that I did learn a lot during training and that helped me in the work that followed.



One of the most important lessons that I learned was that this is not in any way about me. I am quite a loud and outgoing person with a lot of energy, and I often like to be the center of attention. However, during these first couple of weeks I was not the center of attention and I identified something there, this desire for attention. I knew that it was there, but I found in myself that I evaluated my days by how much attention I received and I decided to change that and instead evaluate my days by how much I had loved others.

The schedule was a pretty exhausting one. We would wake up every morning at 6 am and have breakfast. Then we'd go to morning prayers and then have an hour for meditation, personal prayer, and preparing for the day, before we would head out to work until around 5 pm when we would get back and help set up dinner which was at 6 pm. At night we had small groups, prayer meetings, chores, other activities and occasionally we had free time. This schedule led to some very tiring and exhausting days, and it was then that we needed the most help, from each other and from Jesus.

Morning prayers were vitally important for me this summer. The time in the morning that I would give to God was always the time that gave back to me. When I was able to push through my mental fatigue and exhaustion and engage in prayer I found the ability to focus more on Jesus and then I was able to focus more on others instead of my own fatigue. My small group leader suggested that I have a prayer that I would pray before every morning of work. I thought that was a good idea and I wrote up a long prayer to say every morning. Then the first morning of work I was in morning prayer and a simple prayer came to me: "I have a broken spirit and a shallow love, use me". That was the prayer that I decided to say every morning and it helped focus me on what was important and forced me to turn myself to God deliberately everyday.

Another way that I was forced to turn to God was through my small group. I was put into a small group where I was the only American and the rest were from different countries. This group was one of the best small groups I have had the pleasure of being a part of. They were the most open and honest group of individuals. From day one, when we shared our testimonies, everyone in the group was real with where they were at in their lives and what they were going through. This continued for the whole summer. When everyone is honest with each other and doesn't try to hide the fact that they are struggling or going through a difficult time, that brings about an environment where the truth can have an impact. That meant that when we asked questions or gave encouragement or advice the whole group knew that these words came from a place of genuine interest and love for them and that build up a brotherhood between all of us because we knew that we had each others' backs.



These relationships were some of the most important that I formed this summer and it was an honor to be able to gain friends of the quality of these men. This was a theme in Detroit this summer, I was

blessed by the relationships that I gained. This was true of the guys in the house that we shared, it was true of the women interns that I got to know during the summer, and it was especially true of the youth that worked in the Street Team with us.

These youth in this program were some of the most special individuals that I have had the pleasure of meeting. I built friendships working with them and talking with them about practically everything.

There are two stories in particular that illustrate for me how lucky I was. The first came early on in the summer when we took a group of the Street Teamers to Pittsburgh to participate in a week long service camp working on underprivileged homes in the area. There I got to spend even more time with these young people and got to know the youth in a way that bonded us together. I worked with one girl in particular, Grace, for the whole week and was really inspired by her attitude. At the end of the week we were honoring everyone in our work group and when she got to honoring me she told me “You are the older brother that I never had and one of the best people I know”. I will never forget that moment when I gained a great friend and a little sister. I heard God in that, I heard him telling me, look at what happens when you give everything, when you offer your life as a sacrifice. I can work through you and surpass your wildest expectations.

The other example that really struck me happened with a young man named Ellington. I really enjoyed him, he was a guy with a great heart, and I had spent a lot of time with him in our work. On the last day of work he had happened to find a wristband with “1 Peter 3:15” written on it and he gave it to me because my name is Peter, and throughout the day he kept telling me: “We are brothers”. It is a really small event, but it had a huge impact on me. God didn’t need me to be in Detroit for the summer, but he wanted me to be there to experience his love, to learn how to give it to others and to receive his love through others.

See related stories from [YouthWorks-Detroit](#) >

- [Acting in Faith](#), by Evan Kresta
- [Called to Mission Together in Detroit](#), by Chad and Doris Shellabarger
- [Trusting God in New Ways](#), by Mary Sarah Erickson
- [God's Light Prevails Even in All-time Lows](#), by Shane Dunne

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Power for Mission

Members from Kairos in Europe and the Middle East gathered for a powerful weekend retreat in Belgium February 2015

"God is alive and wants to work through His people today"

by Greg Potter



A highly anticipated event this academic year was the Kairos Weekend. Students from across Europe and the Middle East gathered in Belgium in February for a time of prayer and fellowship. "Power for Mission" was the theme of the weekend; being warriors for Christ and being prepared to stand up and answer his call in a time which is so opposed to any kind of faith.

Jean Barbara, President of the Sword of the Spirit, led the sessions and told some amazing stories - including miracles such as people



being raised from the dead and limbs growing.

The talks stressed that God is alive and wants to work through his people today. We saw for ourselves as God worked in power when we prayed for the gifts of prophecy and healing. During the day on Saturday we split into separate sessions for men and for women so we could pray with one another for an outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit.

The crescendo for the weekend was the prayer meeting on the Saturday evening. Healings took place and prophecies were given in several hours of prayer and worship. Being on the worship team it was so inspiring to look out at a room full of people engrossed in worship, and despite growing up in a Christian environment, I have rarely felt the Holy Spirit so tangibly and powerfully.

On the Sunday we had a session in which we split into our university outreach groups. We discussed areas in which we could improve and other groups prayed that God would really use Koinonia. I personally took a great deal of encouragement from the weekend and look forward to putting it into practice back in our Koinonia student outreach at the University of London.

Greg Potter currently attends the London Oratory. He has been a member of Koinonia for over a year.

Spiritual Warriors

by Joelle Mok



‘Power for Mission!’ read the sign at the front of the stage. I sat in the audience on the first day of the Kairos Weekend in Leuven, Belgium, watching as the three emcees repeat this phrase, which was this year’s theme. This didn’t mean much to me at that point. Going to the weekend, I wasn’t mentally prepared, and I certainly didn’t feel powerful in any spiritual mission.

But as the weekend progressed, I started to understand what these simple three words meant. I was pushed out of my comfort zone, doing things I never thought I’d do, or have the chance to do. Prophesying, speaking in tongues, praying over not only my peers, but spiritual ‘warriors’ who were much older than me – these were things that brought my relationship with God to a whole different level. I understood how God speaks in small, simple ways, and how His words not only impact me, but those

around me as well. I saw the true meaning of community, and how real God’s presence could be, just like in Matthew 18:20: ‘For when two or more are gathered in (God’s) name, there (God is) among them’ .

As I was exposed to the different gifts of the Holy Spirit, searching within myself and asking God to give me strength, I realized what was making me feel spiritually powerless. It was my fear, my hesitations, my reluctance to simply ask God to grant me the strength and courage that I needed. I gradually learnt to overcome those fears and hesitations, and felt empowered to carry out God's mission for me, with an overwhelming sense of inner peace and joy. For me, this whole weekend and experience was indeed challenging, but at the same time, fun, enriching and spiritually rejuvenating.

Joelle Mok studies Speech Therapy at UCL and has been a key member of Koinonia for the last few years.

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A new Kairos Alumni generation taking initiative

The Legacy Conference

by Michael Shaughnessy

Vocabulary

Edult: those transitioning from adolescence to adulthood,
A.k.a. twenty-somethings or emerging adults.

There is a new door to mission opening among our [Kairos](#) alumni. Although we have had outreaches to edults before, there have not been many. In the past few years we have seen them begin in Grand Rapids, Kansas City, Ann Arbor, St. Paul, Maryland, Lansing, Boston, and Houston, as well as internationally, in Vancouver, Monterrey, and Mexicali. Some have grown quickly. Some are only finding their feet. New ones are beginning this spring.

On January 16-18, 2015, Kairos and the Sword of the Spirit hosted the Legacy Conference for nearly 130 edults from ten different countries. The average age was 26. The conference focused on how God has acted and continues to act on us individually and as a people. Dan Keating spoke on scouting out the land, using Joshua and Caleb as examples of the boldness needed to enter into the new territory the Lord is opening to us.

Mike Shaughnessy reviewed how the Lord has guided us through prophecy: the call to be a people, a bulwark

of communities bound by covenant in the days of trial that are upon us, to be the Sword of the Spirit, to endure testing and receive grace, and lately, to go through the open door for mission, especially one he is opening among young people.

Ryan O'Hara's theme on Saturday night was choosing greatness not comfort, especially by accepting God's will when it disagrees with yours.

Sunday was devoted to hearing how the new outreaches began.

The Leadership Summit

Following the Legacy Conference 30 people remained in Ann Arbor for a leadership summit where we discussed what we believed the Lord was doing among edults and how best to respond.

SUDDEN, MESSY, AND FRAGILE

So far, this work has been sudden, messy, and fragile. The Lord often acts suddenly; he raises up people who act with faith and new things begin to happen. Like many new initiatives, an edult outreach can be messy at first.

Who is responsible for its direction? That's not always clear. Generally it has been those who started it. What is its purpose? Some edult work began just as a social group for those in a community. In other cases it was based on a desire for mission. In yet others it was alumni wanting to have "life after UCO."

People came: people who had been on the fringe but were now responding to the Lord, people of no faith, and people returning to the faith they had when young but needing a low-key restart. This has made it difficult to define a target audience. Twenty-three-year-olds? Yes, but some are nearer thirty. Singles? Yes, but young marrieds also come. Alumni? Yes, but they have new friends they are bringing.

How it connects to our other work or the local community also varies from place to place. In most places that also is unclear. This work is also fragile. Will it last? Not without some care to ensure it continues as its leaders move on in life.

SOME KEY FACTORS IN PLAY NOW

There are many factors that contribute to this happening now; foremost is grace. The Lord told us he was going to multiply our work with young people. This is that. Oddly, some other factors are a negative forces at work on edults.

DELAYED ADULTHOOD

Compared to thirty years ago, today it takes an edult three to five years longer to reach the six sociological markers of adulthood. (These are: finishing formal education, financial independence from one's parents, starting one's career, getting married, buying a house and having children.) The transition to adulthood takes double or even triple the amount of time. It is no longer a transition but a stage of life for most people.

INSTABILITY

It is a very unstable time of life. Everything is in flux: with whom you live and where, where you work, debt, courtship, friends getting married, buying a car or a place to live... The winds of change are constantly blowing.

LOSS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Many lose their friends when they graduate from university. They scatter back home, or to a new city pursuing a job, or nowhere in particular, while others stay put because they need more time to finish their education. This is a time of life characterized by the desire for lasting relationships but plagued by mobility. One's social life can dry up overnight.

Delayed adulthood, instability, and loss of relationships create a vacuum and adults want it filled. Put on an event and people will come. Put on a good one and they will come back for more.

TIME TO GROW UP!

Many adults know it is time to get on with life. The juvenile lifestyle is less and less attractive. Partying is losing its luster. Peter Pan is ready to grow up and wants some like-minded peers, ones moving forward with a purpose.

Finally, some factors are positive forces at work among our alumni.

LOSS OF SOCIAL FEAR

Most teens and university students wrestle with social fear. They do not want to be rejected or lose their friends. That fear declines in adulthood, as they realize they can survive BFF breakdowns. Declining fear makes it easier for Christian adults to be bold, to invite people to events, especially those who might be socially undernourished.

ALREADY EQUIPPED

Our alumni have been getting trained as disciples for several years. They know what needs to be done and are ready to do it. They have grown in confidence as they take jobs where they need to lead. This is a generation eager for mission and taking the initiative.



Michael Shaughnessy is the [Kairos](#) director for the Sword of the Spirit both in North America and Internationally. He is the editor of the Kairos Youth Culture Newsletter (http://www.kairos-na.org/YouthCulture_News). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people.

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CHALLENGES IN LIVING TOGETHER AS COMMUNITY



Stressed? Rest in the Lord

by Tom Caballes

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

- Matthew 11:28–30

Stress is a modern day malady. It affects our physical, mental and spiritual health. Are you able to sleep well at night, or do you toss and turn about something? Do you feel enslaved by daily duties and responsibilities? Is life like a list of endless urgent matters that you need to keep up with? Too much cell phone, Facebook and the internet occupy our precious time and energy – they do not help with our stress level.

God wants us to rest. He rested when He created the world. He introduced the Sabbath, which is a time for personal and family rest, and is a pattern for us to follow. Jesus came so that we may have life in its fullness, in abundance [John 10:10]. He created us not to be like robots or machines. Stress sucks the joy out of life. You can choose to live a stressful life, but you can also choose also not to. So, if you choose to live in the rat race, you will still end up – as a rat. It is your choice.

So How Do You Avoid Stress in Life and Be Able to Rest in the Lord?

1. Decide to be purposeful in life – do not just do what is the most urgent, but what is important. Establish personal and family goals. Plan your life based on your goals and priorities. Learn to say no.
2. Take regular ‘pauses’ in life. See how you can avoid or alleviate stress in your daily life. Use your annual leave wisely. Regularly plan for a personal retreat and/or family vacation. Take care of your body by exercising regularly. A revitalised and healthy body refreshes and sharpens the mind too.
3. Take time off from cell phones, the internet and other technology stuff. Some Christians regularly ‘fast’ from technology. Why? It shows that they are not slaves of all these modern gadgets, but they serve the living God. Decide to invest your time with relationships rather than with gadgets.
4. Develop some good healthy hobbies and diversions you enjoy – such as gardening, reading good books, hiking, painting or something similar. These things can help you regain some balance in life.
5. Celebrate the Lord’s Day with family and friends. Gather together to thank God for His blessings of the week, and recall your forthcoming eternal destiny. Enjoy time together with some board games or other fun activities together. Enjoy the company of friends and family.
6. Learn to trust in the Lord and say no to anxiety. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:6-7] Know that God is in control – not you. He knows the past, the present and the future, and believe that everything will work out good for those who love Him [Romans 8:28].
7. Lastly, if there is something that keeps stressing you out, you need to deal with that source of stress. The best thing to do is to talk with a pastoral care person to discuss and for you to decide what to do.

Other Scripture passages:

1. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow... [Matthew 6:33-34A]
2. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. [1 Peter 5:6-7]
3. Other references: Psalms 9:10; Psalm 37:3-5; Psalm 118:8-9; Proverbs 3:5; and Isaiah 26:4

For personal reflection or group sharing

1. From a grade of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest, how stressed are you right now? How and why?
2. What decisions and actions do you need to do to avoid and/or lessen stress in your life?
3. What can you do to enjoy life more?



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CHALLENGES IN LIVING TOGETHER AS COMMUNITY



Riches and Investments that Really Matter

by Tom Caballes

“And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.”

- Luke 16:9

Do you consider yourself good with handling money or investments? If yes, that is great. We are called to be good stewards of our time, talent and resources. But the truth is, no matter how rich we become in this life, we will leave them behind. Do you know who the best businessmen truly are? **They are the ones who mainly invests on eternal riches.** Why? Their riches and treasures will never rot, get stolen or fade away. It is theirs forever – eternal! - to keep. That is why the Bible is encouraging us to use ‘unrighteous wealth’ here on earth sensibly, so that it will earn for us eternal dividends. So, if you have Christ in your life, you are rich beyond compare! In due time, you will earn your rewards. Are you looking forward to enjoying your eternal riches?

So How Do You Invest in Things that Really Matter for the Kingdom?

1. Use your money, time, talent and resources well. You don’t have to be involved with everything, but you are called to do well where God has called you into. Love your spouse well, bring up your children in God’s ways, and do well as an employee, and wherever else God has called you to – and live out your call in the community well. You are called to invest your resources in loving and serving God and His people.
2. Decide on things with eternal perspective. Do not be like the foolish rich man in Luke 12, who did not

know what to do with his overflowing crops. At the end, he wasted his life acquiring wealth he cannot keep. When you make big life changing decisions, you should be mindful of how that decision will affect you eternally. When you make huge financial decisions, you should remember that you will leave everything behind.

3. You need to learn to be content. Do not let your heart be focused on earthly wealth. You need to be careful with your eyes, mind and heart from the allures of the latest gadgets and gizmos. Rather than amassing worldly wealth, you should store eternal riches, which brings us to the next point - about being generous.
4. Practice generosity – you are called to be generous to those around you, including the poor and the needy. Galatians 6 calls us especially to grab opportunities to be generous, especially to the ‘household of faith.’
5. You are called to support your church and community – because you get spiritual support from them. In order for your church and community to work well, you are called to ‘invest’ your resources with them well.
6. If you find a real hidden treasure, wouldn’t you share it with your friends and families? You might be tempted not to share your earthly wealth with others because it runs out – but not with God’s Kingdom. I believe that the more we share our heavenly wealth by witnessing to and evangelising others, the richer we will become eternally. Sharing Jesus to others is a great strategy to earn greater eternal returns.
7. There are two clear ways you can be in danger of ‘losing them all’ – first is by living in sin; second is by not forgiving those who offended you in the past. You need to continuously repent and live under God’s mercy and grace. Get rid of all anger and bitterness in your life and live in freedom to love and serve your eternally rich and generous God, who keeps your eternal rewards safe with Him which you will enjoy in due time.

Other Scripture passages:

1. And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." [Luke 12:15]
2. ... for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. [Galatians 6:7-10]
3. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? If you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? [Luke 16:11-12]
4. Other references: Luke 12:16-21; 1 Timothy 6:6-12; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; and Hebrews 13:5.

For personal reflection or group sharing

Are you a good eternal investor? In what ways can you improve? Are you in any danger of ‘losing them all?’



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Shame is Nothing to be Ashamed of

by Sam Williamson

Popular, secular therapy proclaims the evils of shame. It's wrong. Sure, shame is misused and abused, but deep-shame—deep shame alone—offers our only hope of grace-based healing. As J. I. Packer once suggested, “Seek the *grace* to be ashamed.” (This is a response to the anti-shame rant in the world around us.)

Scripture tells two stories of boatload catches of fish, the first at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Luke 5:4-8) and the second at the end (John 21:2-7). In both stories:

- Professional fishermen fish all night.
- Their night of fishing is fruitless; not a single fish is caught.
- The following morning, an amateur offers unsolicited and unusual directions.
- The fishermen obey and catch so many fish that their boats begin to sink.

Despite their similarities, there is one, huge difference. After the first miracle, Peter exclaims to Jesus, “*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.*” After the second, Peter casts himself into the sea and breaks an Olympic-record-freestyle to get close to Jesus.

What changed in Peter that drove him to Jesus? He had finally experienced deep shame.

The modern world hates shame

Shame is a feeling that attacks the core of our spirit. Guilt is the thought “I *DID* something bad.” Shame is the belief “I *AM* something bad.” Guilt attacks our actions; shame attacks our being:

- Shame is the intensely painful feeling . . . of believing we are [deeply] flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance. (Brene Brown)
- Shame . . . is that sense of unease with yourself at the heart of your being (David Atkinson).

Shallow-shame nurtures an intense concentration on ourselves. We feel our flawed nature and we frantically try to fix it. Tim Keller asks,

What is the opposite of Righteousness? Evil? No, the opposite of righteousness is shame, and we do everything in our power to try to cover it.

We frantically cover ourselves with desperate attempts at perfection. We “*hustle for our worthiness by constantly performing, perfecting, pleasing, and proving*” (Brene Brown).

Shallow-shame breeds self-focus; but self-obsession is the root-cause of every problem in the world. Oppression, betrayal, and greed are all birthed by self-centeredness.

So what are we to do with shame?

Modern therapists suggest we dump shame and embrace worthiness. Secular Brene Brown writes, “*The greatest challenge for most of us is believing that we are worthy now, right this minute. As is.*” (Without the cross, it’s the opposite of grace.) *

Brown’s therapy teaches non-biblical, gospel substitution, self-hypnosis. It’s *The Little Engine That Could*, huffing and puffing, “*I think I’m worthy, I think I’m worthy.*” Scripture disagrees with Brown. Jeremiah says his generation’s problem was *lack* of shame:

Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? *No, they were neither ashamed nor even knew how to blush.* Therefore they shall fall (Jeremiah 6:15).

Mark Twain agreed with Scripture (amazingly) when he said,

Man is the only animal that blushes. And the only animal that needs to.

God’s answer to shame is deep-shame

The first time Jesus creates the miracle of the great catch of fish, Peter rightly senses his own unworthiness and asks, “*Depart from me because I am a sinful man.*” He is saying, “*Leave me alone until I claim my own self-worth.*” (Brown would be proud.)

Right before the final miraculous catch, Peter finally experiences deep-shame. He had just denied

Jesus three times. He is not the brave man he self-proclaimed. He's a coward. And that deep-shame finally drove him to God's grace.

This is all that's required for deep communion with God: to come *empty*, to admit we are *unworthy*. Everything else is smoke and mirror therapy.

A life without regret

Shallow-shame leads to self-claimed worth. Just before his denials, Peter exclaimed, "*Those other disciples may deny you but I never will.*" Then his self-proclaimed worthiness failed. When the cock crows three times, he finally experiences deep shame.

Paul explains the differing results between deep-shame repentance and shallow-shame self-proclamation:

Godly-grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly-grief produces death (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Godly-grief (at deep-shame) leads to deep repentance and a life without regret.

Without regret?

Shame isn't the problem, it's what we do with the shame. We can be angry and sin not; we can also be ashamed and despair not. In fact, we can finally find life.

Every human wants an *enduring* love and worth. Therefore we need something stronger than self-hypnosis. We need grace. Grace says God loves us just because he loves us. His love doesn't depend on what we do or what we claim.

That's why Paul can write, "***Nothing*** can separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus" (not through our self-worth proclamation). Deep-shame can drive us to grace. Let's seek the grace to be ashamed and yield to grace; no striving, no hypnosis. He loves us because he loves us. That can never be removed.

We come to God in little empty boats till we overflow with more than we can imagine.

*[Our solution is not: "believing we are worthy at this moment." Our solution is to receive worth from the Son on the cross.]

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Sam Williamson grew up in Detroit, Michigan, USA. He is the son of a Presbyterian pastor and grandson of missionaries to China. He moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1975. He worked in London England from 1979 to 1982, helping to establish [Antioch](#), a member community of the Sword of the Spirit. After about twenty-five years as an executive at a software company in Ann Arbor he sensed God call him to something new. He left the software company in 2008 and now speaks at men's retreats, churches, and campus outreaches. He is married to Carla Williamson and they have four grown children and a grandson. He has a blog site, www.beliefsoftheheart.com, and can be reached at Sam@BeliefsoftheHeart.com.



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The Self-love Trap

by Sam Williamson

I had a high school friend who was insecure, socially awkward, and overweight. He envied the skills (and good looks) of classmates; he vilified himself for his frequent social blunders; and he castigated himself for his shortcomings.

My friend, however, was in the top five percent of the honors class of a magnet, honors high school; he just never reached the top *one* percent. And he was the second chair trumpet of a nationally recognized orchestra; he just never made first chair.

Despite his many successes, he saw others do better and it discouraged him. My heart went out to him. We became friends, and in the lunchroom I listened as he told story after story of how students, teachers, and his parents misunderstood him.

His discouragement deepened into depression, and he finally sought a counselor. The counselor said his problem was self-hatred, and that he needed to grow his self-love.

I thought he loved himself too much.

And I still think so

I don't mean to be harsh—this was a friend for whom I cared deeply—but the counselor's advice

increased his troubles; he didn't grow more joyful, he grew sorrowful. His problem wasn't self-hatred, and the solution wasn't heightened self-love.

Real hatred fosters ill-will for the hated one; it delights in the humiliation, pain, and failures of the hated object. My friend harbored *zero* ill-will for himself, he *disliked* his pain and humiliation, and he was *furious* at his failures. He wanted the high marks, good looks, and social acceptance of others. He was angry at himself for their absence.

He was angry because he loved himself so much.

Elie Wiesel (a Nobel Laureate and holocaust survivor) said, "*The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference.*" So, the opposite of high self-love would be high self-indifference. If my friend lacked self-love, he would be indifferent to his sufferings.

Yet my friend was anything but indifferent about himself. In fact, "himself" was all he thought of, and "he" was the topic of every conversation. His counselor's advice simply exacerbated his self-absorption. To paraphrase C. S. Lewis, my friend had a "ruthless, sleepless, unsmiling concentration on the self."

Unsmiling indeed.

What's the other option?

Too many Christian teachers today have adopted that secular counselor's message of heightened self-love. They see the commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and claim that it contains the *hidden* commandment: "Love yourselves more."

I understand why the world cheers on greater self-love (what other option do they have?); but I can't understand why Christians, like lemmings, leap into this trap as well.

Love is more than a feeling; love is action. (That's why lovers promise devotion: "I will love you to the end of days"—they mean, "I'll care for you no matter what, even on the days I don't feel it.") But my friend's actions were *already* devoted toward himself. He didn't need more self-love with its selfish-action; he needed something better.

He needed an attitude of *self-acceptance*. He refused to accept his own gifts, looks, body-style, personality, and intelligence (which was quite high—just not the highest).

Isak Dinesen wrote, "Godly pride is faith in the idea God had when He made you." My friend lacked *Godly* pride. He was *disappointed* in how God made him. He envied the gifts of others; he coveted their personalities, looks, and intelligence.

He was mad at himself for lacking such gifts; he was angry with others for having them; and he was furious with God for his design. All because of his devotion to self. *

So what are we to do?

Most of us have friends who suffer the agony of self-dissatisfaction. Many of us personally suffer such self-disgust. The throbbing anguish is almost unbearable. Instead of increased self-love, I urge us to consider that we really need self-acceptance.

Scripture says God chose us and made us his most *prized treasure* (Duet. 7:6) and that we are his *joy* (Heb. 12:2); God declares us to be his *poem*, his *masterpiece* (Eph. 2:10).

Imagine the genius Leonardo da Vinci (not DiCaprio) giving you his *Mona Lisa*. What would he say if you whipped out a paintbrush and said, "Let me just fix that smile"? He'd shout, "*Stop! It's my masterpiece. Anything you add to it will subtract from it.*"**

We are God's masterpiece. Anything we add will subtract. Even if we're not perfect.

Self-absorption is usually a sign of envy

Augustine said, "Envy is sorrow at another man's good." Envy sucks joy from our lives. Sir John Gielgud (a famous English actor) exposed the torment of envy as he admitted,

"When Sir Laurence Olivier played Hamlet ... and the critics raved ... I wept."

The cruel, double agony of envy is this: we are mournful at our failures and we are grief-stricken at the success of others. Envy's sorrows rob our souls of joy.

Only in the acceptance of "the idea God had when he made us," will we have joy. No longer sensing the bitter envy of self-love; just contentment as his masterpiece. No longer hiding a masterpiece behind sheets of shame; no longer burying our talents.

What we most need

Thomas A Kempis wrote, "Self-love is more harmful to you than anything else in the world. The proportion you give love to a thing is the proportion that thing will rule you. If your love is pure, simple, and well ordered, you will be a slave to nothing."

In the end, we need something beyond self-love or self-acceptance: we desperately need to know the love of our maker (which existed before time).

We need to be filled with the love of the Master artist who loves us as we are.

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Jesus' Descent into Hell, fresco by Fra Angelico (1395-1455)

The Harrowing of Hell

**What happened between Christ's death on the cross
and his resurrection from the tomb?**

by Don Schwager

The descent into Hades

What happened between Christ's death on the cross and his glorious resurrection from the tomb on Easter Sunday morning? The Scriptures tell us that the Lord Jesus holds the "keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:18). (Hades is also referred to in the Scriptures as the underworld and hell.) Paul the Apostle tells us that Jesus "descended into the lower parts of the earth" (Ephesians 4:9) - the lower parts were understood to be the "abode of the dead" and "Hades." Peter the Apostle tells us that Jesus "preached to the dead" (1 Peter 4:6) and "to the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:18).

In a famous ancient church sermon which was preached on Holy Saturday ([see text](#)) - the day before Jesus' resurrection, the scene of Jesus descent to Hades (or Hell) is vividly described. Jesus unlocks the door to Hades to announce his victory over death, Satan, and all the powers of Hell. He then releases Adam and Eve and all the just who were waiting for their redemption by the Messiah. A number of Christian paintings and icons, especially from the Eastern churches, vividly depict this scene.



Descent to Hell, painted by Duccio in 1308-11

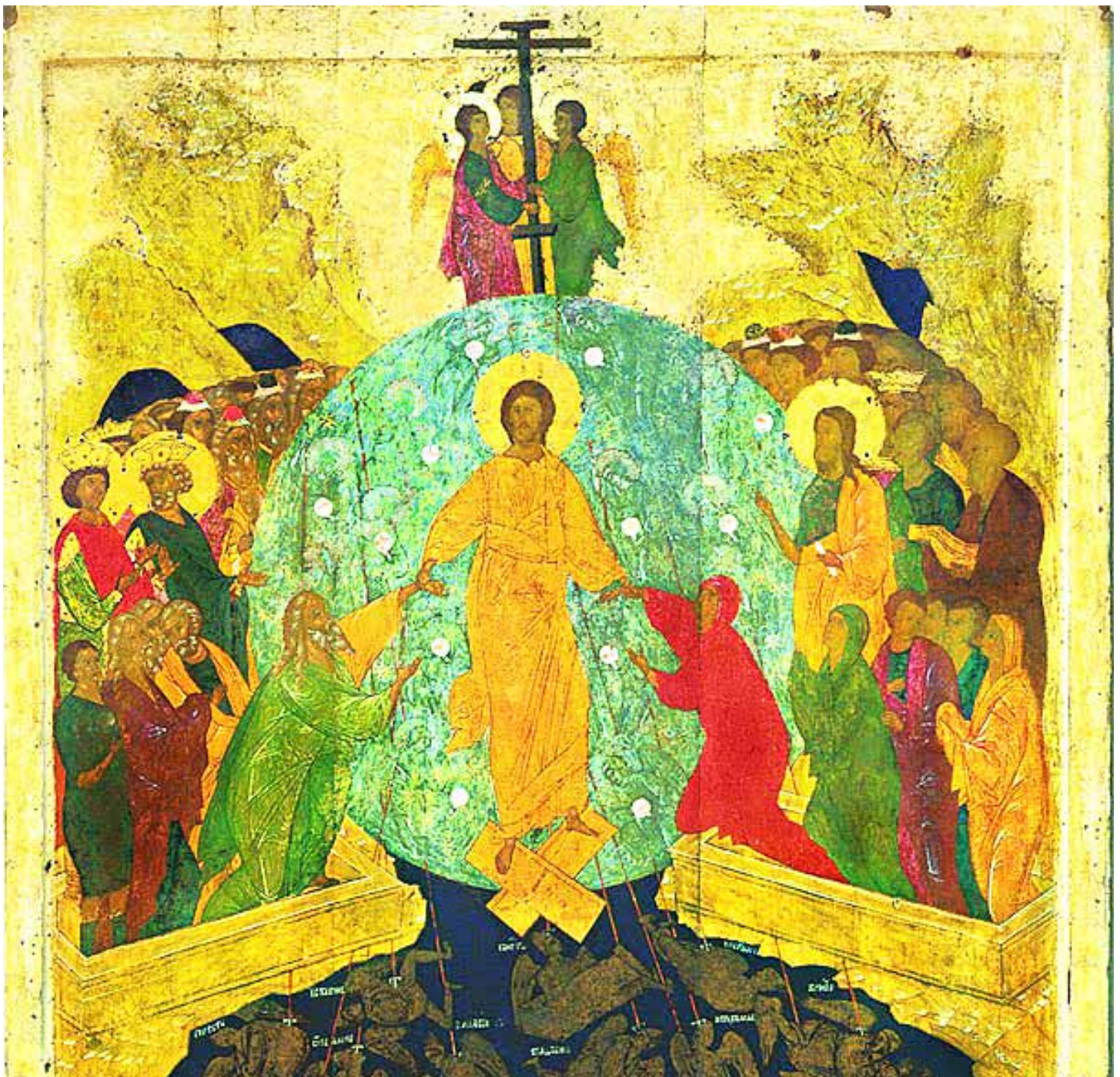
The "harrowing of hell" refers to what Christ did when he descended to Hades or hell between his death and his resurrection. Specifically, the early church believed that after his death Christ descended into hell in order to rescue the souls of the just, starting with Adam and Eve, who had died under the Fall. When Jesus descends he breaks down the doors of hell, unbinds the prisoners held in chains, and then leads the just to their heavenly paradise.

Orthodox Easter icons do not portray the empty tomb which is the typical Easter scene within Western

Christian art. Rather, the Easter icons of the Orthodox Church depict the event known as the harrowing of hell.

In the Easter icons of the Orthodox Church two common motifs are often portrayed: First, Christ standing over the broken gates of hell, angels binding Satan in the pit of hell, and Satan crushed under the gates of hell. Second, Christ pulling two figures up out of hell, Adam and Eve who have been imprisoned there after their deaths, along with all humanity, due to sin. Eve is generally depicted in a red robe.

Beyond iconography, the harrowing of hell is also the dominant symbol of Orthodox Easter liturgies. Again, in Western churches the empty tomb is what you will see depicted on Easter Sunday. But Orthodox services recreate the harrowing of hell. Specifically, the priest exits the church with a cross. The sanctuary is immersed in darkness and the doors are closed. The priest then knocks on the door and proclaims, "Open the doors to the Lord of the powers, the king of glory." Inside the church the people make a great noise of rattling chains which conveys the resistance of hell to the coming of Christ. Eventually, the doors are opened up, the cross enters, and the church is lit and filled with incense.





Orthodox icons depicting Christ releasing Adam and Eve from the prison of Hades (Hell)



Some key Scripture passages

1 Peter 3

18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; 19 in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience,

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

1 Peter 4

6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, that though judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God.

Acts 2.27, 31 (Peter's Pentecost sermon)

because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay.

Ephesians 4

8 Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." 9 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Revelation 1

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

The Apostles Creed

One of the earliest written versions of the Apostle's Creed is the Interrogatory Creed of Hippolytus (ca. 215 AD). Here is the section which refers to Christ's descent to the dead.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead (some translations use "he descended into hell" or "hades"). On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

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Kevin Carden

God's Grandeur

by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89)

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil

Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.



That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection

a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89)

CLOUD-PUFFBALL, torn tufts, tossed pillows ' flaunt forth, then chevy on an air-
built thoroughfare: heaven-roysterers, in gay-gangs ' they throng; they glitter in marches.
Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash, ' wherever an elm arches,
Shivelights and shadowtackle in long ' lashes lace, lance, and pair.
Delightfully the bright wind boisterous ' ropes, wrestles, beats earth bare
Of yestertempest's creases; in pool and rut peel parches
Squandering ooze to squeezed ' dough, crust, dust; stanches, starches
Squadroned masks and manmarks ' treadmire toil there
Footfretted in it. Million-fuelèd, ' nature's bonfire burns on.
But quench her bonniest, dearest ' to her, her clearest-selvèd spark
Man, how fast his firedint, ' his mark on mind, is gone!
Both are in an unfathomable, all is in an enormous dark
Drowned. O pity and indig ' nation! Manshape, that shone
Sheer off, disseveral, a star, ' death blots black out; nor mark
Is any of him at all so stark
But vastness blurs and time ' beats level. Enough! the Resurrection,
A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, ' joyless days, dejection.
Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. ' Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; ' world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, ' since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, ' patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

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Cluster of Light, painting by Jamie Treadwell (75cm x 100 cm)

Cluster of Light

artwork and text by Jamie Treadwell

My friends in Lebanon and Syria
Witness to a strengthening light

In a time when many are forced to flee
Others choose to stay
Gathering in communities of light
to serve, to witness, to love

Lebanese pines cluster in a magical landscape
Their lifted limbs create a dancing canopy
a shelter and haven

Together they create a brightness
Standing firm in deep rooted faith
Drawing strength from generations of faithfulness
their unfathomable joy plants seeds for tomorrow

*The image 'Cluster of Light' is available as an original oil painting
and limited edition print*

Visit www.jamietreadwell.com for inquiries, gallery and blog

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