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Martyrs for Christ

They loved not their lives even unto death (Revelation 12:11).

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Lessons from the Martyrs

by James Munk

During my last year of high school, I reached the pinnacle of my athletic career: the period of my life when I was the best I was ever going to be at any sport. And in truth, I wasn't half bad. However, my sport was cross country – distance running – and even a pinnacle can feel pretty minor when not many people care about it. You see, in the pantheon of high school athletics, my sport was somewhat eclipsed by football – the American version. That sport is dominated by broad-shouldered Titans, muscle-bound and coordinated. I wasn't then – nor am I now – built that way. I was skinny, a little lanky, and just coordinated enough to run the straight lines afforded by the cross country course. Nonetheless, I would often think about what it would be like to play football: to take the field under the Friday night lights and–held in awe by the entire student body – make a major play or a bone-crunching tackle.

But in truth, I can't now (nor could I then) imagine what I would actually do. If I were given the ball, I would likely freeze. Not paralyzed by fear, but stupefied by ignorance. It wasn't my sport – not my skill set. I would not have known what to do.

Red martyrdom

Recently, the Lord has been speaking to the Sword of the

A Call to More, A Call to Give All by Dave Quintana

a reflection on the word of the Lord to leaders and members of the Sword of the Spirit

For some years now the Lord has been at work in our young people throughout the Sword of the Spirit. A season of grace is upon us, and a wave of response is building. The Lord has spoken to the entire Sword of the Spirit about going through an open door in mission, and significantly the Lord spoke to leaders attending the International Coordinators Meeting in Santo Domingo (May 2008) regarding the call they are to issue to our young people:

Say to the youth of the Sword of the Spirit and to the multitude who will join them "Believe my word, believe the word that I have spoken to the generation that has gone before you, believe in the word that I gave to your parents, for that call that I gave to them is the call that I give to you. Yet the call that I gave to them is only a part of the call that I will give to you. The call I will give to you will go beyond what I have said and what I have done so far."

Say to the youth of the Sword of the Spirit and to the multitude who will join them "I want more from you than I asked from your parents. I want more from you than I required of the generation that has gone before you. I have asked them for everything, and I ask you for more. I ask you for all that you have, all that you will have, all that you hope to have. For that, I will give you a crown of glory. For that, I will give you martyrdom. For that, I will give you a place in the battle. I lay a choice before you, before the youth of the Sword of the Spirit and the multitude who will join you, and I ask you to say 'YES. Say, 'Yes.'

Spirit (and specifically to its young people) about martyrdom. “Red” martyrdom: allowing one’s blood to be spilled for the gospel.

When I think about this, my personal response is somewhat conflicted. On the one hand I find such an invitation stirs a solemn excitement: the opportunity to lay down one’s life for the Lord, to give what is most precious for what is beyond price. But I find this zeal muted by another sentiment – not primarily fear; rather, incomprehension.

Christians in the past have faced torture, burnings, beatings, crucifixions, and imprisonment – suffering difficult to imagine – but I’ve grown up in a nation that values religious freedom where my beliefs are legally protected. And in my mind, martyrdom doesn’t seem like an actual possibility. As such, when I hear about Christians persecuted for their faith – in history or today in other parts of the world – I’m hard pressed to imagine a plausible scenario with me in it. It’s football, and I’m a runner.

So what then? I don’t believe lack of familiarity (or imagination) exempts one from the Lord’s call. If the Lord is calling for martyrs, he will have them. What then should I expect? Axes, lions, concentration camps and the rack? Martyrdom in a vehicle fundamentally alien to any of my experiences? Perhaps –and if so, the Lord will give grace to meet that challenge. But it is my suspicion that my generation’s contribution – our martyrdom – will be by an agent chillingly familiar. I don’t know exactly what it will be, but I feel that it will be something we’ll know, a thing we will see coming.

I believe this for two reasons. First, a conviction that it is the Lord’s plan that we find ourselves in this era of human history, not any other. He made us for something; he made our communities for something; and for a certain time. We are to build Christian community in the modernized world, a civilization unlike any that has existed before; and we are to meet its unique challenges. While our society may not have lions to which we may be fed, it is certainly not without its killers. Ours is new arena: a different sport – perhaps the one for which we have been conditioned. By living today, we may be the best ones currently suited to die.

The quintessential act of courage

The second reason is that martyrdom is the quintessential

I believe that the Lord is speaking seriously, and that a serious response is required. The Lord is calling our Kairos generation to be a generation of Joshuas, a generation of Elishas.

Those involved in Kairos are laboring to respond to the Lord’s word and seeking to understand what it means that the call will “go beyond” what the Lord has said and done thus far, and what it means that the Lord is “asking more” and will “give martyrdom.” May the Lord open our ears and strengthen our hearts, for such a time as this, Kairos.



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act of courage. Choosing for the Lord when it costs your life is to give a spiritual response when doing so means silencing the flesh; a flesh that knows it will perish if quieted. It is, as John Wayne said, “being scared to death, and saddling up anyway.” But this begs the question: of what is the courageous afraid – why is his flesh in rebellion? Is it the result of something beyond his comprehension? I don’t think so. Rather, it because he comprehends the predicament that he fears, and it is precisely because he knows the possible outcomes that he has need of courage. The courageous man does not hedge his bets – win or lose, he is “all in”; the ignorant man who does not know he is risking all is not to be considered brave. Courage is not simply a bold response in the face of the undefined. It is steadfastness when definite hardship promises an uncertain outcome.

If martyrdom in my generation is to be courageous, it must be of the type we can comprehend: not an element of the Christian past that is vague in our understanding, but a very real, very possible outcome for our actions. It will be an instance where courage proves its necessity, because we’ll know we are in danger. We’ll know we need it.

For these reasons, I think we’ll find martyrdom to be more familiar than we might like. In fact, forms of it may already be apparent. And here again courage is paramount: the things we know to be dangerous, we also know to avoid. We can assume that a Roman Christian walking by the Colosseum knew well what sport was done inside. Perhaps this knowledge led some believers to choose a different path.

Dare I turn this accusation on myself? Jesus told us that the world would hate us; we can be sure that it reserves special dangers for Christians – Christians in any time and any society.

Do I try to avoid these dangers? Have I looked for martyrdom in a form I won’t recognize so that I might distract myself from the one I do know? Thinking back to cross country, courage was essential to run the race – but not because I didn’t know what the race would be like – rather, because I knew exactly, and knew how I must respond.

[A sport we know how to play](#)

I believe that the Lord is inviting some of us to receive the

crown of martyrdom. It is a concept difficult to grasp – hard to play out in the mind. But I take some comfort in the probability that we'll know it when we see it. While it will not be any less difficult, ignorance will not keep us from responding – it will be a sport we know how to play.

May the Lord grant us the courage to respond to his invitation, and let us not run from the dangers we already see. Instead, let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

Happy running.

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Perpetua's Victory Over Death

The heroic witness of the early Christian martyrs

Perpetua was a young lady who had it made. She was born into a noble Roman family in Carthage, a Roman city in North Africa in 181 AD. She was beautiful, well-educated, happily married around the age of twenty, and now the mother of an infant son. And then to the surprise of her family she decided to become a Christian. This appeared sheer nonsense to her father who saw it as breaking not only with Roman tradition but with family loyalty as well. Besides, what good had Christianity brought to Roman society? It seemed to mainly attract working class people and the slaves who had little or nothing to lose. Many emperors had tried to suppress it in the past, and the current emperor Septimus had decided to outlaw it once again, and threatened death to anyone who professed it.

The threat of death did not deter Perpetua from taking instructions in the Christian faith. She discovered that the Gospels were true and offered the way to eternal life and happiness. Jesus of

From the account of the holy martyrs of Carthage (203 AD)

Called and chosen for the glory of the Lord

The day of the martyrs' victory dawned. They marched from their cells into the amphitheater, as if into heaven, with cheerful looks and graceful bearing. If they trembled it was for joy and not fear.

Perpetua was the first to be thrown down, and she fell prostrate. She got up and, seeing that Felicity was prostrate, went over and reached out her hand to her and lifted her up. Both stood together. The hostility of the crowd was appeased, and they were ordered to the gate called Sanavivaria.

There Perpetua was welcomed by a catechumen named Rusticus. Rousing herself as if from sleep (so deep had she been in spiritual ecstasy), she began to look around. To everyone's amazement she said: "When are we going to be led to the beast?" When she heard that it had already happened she did not at first believe it until she saw the marks of violence on her body and her clothing.

Then she beckoned to her brother and the catechumen, and addressed them in these words: "Stand firm in faith, love one another and do not be tempted to do anything wrong because of our sufferings."

Saturus, too, in another gate, encouraged the soldier Pudens, saying: "Here I am, and just as I thought and foretold I have not yet felt any wild beast. Now believe with your whole heart: I will go there and be killed by the leopard in one bite." And right at the end of the games, when he was thrown to the leopard he was in fact covered with so much blood from one bite

Nazareth became a real living person to her, someone greater than the emperor, someone who was king of heaven and the whole earth as well. Despite the objections of her family, Perpetua pursued the Christian faith with great enthusiasm and conviction. Her brother Secundus soon followed in becoming a Christian as well.

Perpetua's father had pleaded with tears to persuade her to give up her Christian faith. Her answer was simple and clear. Pointing to a water jug, she asked her father, "See that pot lying there? Can you call it by any other name than what it is?"

"Of course not," he answered. Perpetua responded, "Neither can I call myself by any other name than what I am – a Christian." Her father became so upset that he physically attacked her.

Sometime after the birth of her firstborn son, she was arrested, along with four other Christians who were new in the faith. Her brother Secundus had been arrested earlier and thrown into prison as well. Before being taken to prison she was baptized. The Holy Spirit gave her a prophetic gift and told her to pray for nothing but endurance in the face of her trials.

Perpetua was thrown into a crowded prison with no light anywhere. In her diary she described her ordeal:

Such darkness I have never known! What a day of horror! Terrible heat, owing to the crowds! Rough treatment by the soldiers! To crown all, I was tormented with anxiety for my baby.

Perpetua admitted she was afraid and was most at pain from being separated from her nursing infant. Another young woman in prison with her, who was a slave by the name of Felicity, was eight months pregnant.

Two deacons who visited the prisoners paid the jailers to move Perpetua and Felicity to a better prison cell where they could receive visits from family members and be better cared for. Perpetua's mother brought Perpetua's baby to her so she could nurse the child. When Perpetua received permission for the baby to stay with her, she said "suddenly my prison became a palace for me."

Once again Perpetua's father pleaded with kisses and tears for Perpetua to give up her faith. She told him, "We rely not on our own power but on the power of God." When she was taken before the judge he also tried to persuade her to give up her faith. After

that the people cried out to him: "Washed and saved, washed and saved!" And so, giving evidence of a second baptism, he was clearly saved who had been washed in this manner.

Then Satorus said to the soldier Pudens: "Farewell, and remember your faith as well as me; do not let these things frighten you; let them rather strengthen you." At the same time he asked for the little ring from Pudens' finger. After soaking it in his wound he returned it to Pudens as a keepsake, leaving him a pledge and a remembrance of his blood. Half dead, he was thrown along with the others into the usual place of slaughter.



The people, however, had demanded that the martyrs be led to the middle of the amphitheater. They wanted to see the sword thrust into the bodies of the victims, so that their eyes might share in the slaughter. Without being asked they went where the people wanted them to go; but first they kissed one another, to complete their witness with the customary kiss of peace.

The others stood motionless and received the deathblow in silence, especially Satorus, who had gone up first and was first to die; he was helping Perpetua. But Perpetua, that she might experience the pain more deeply, rejoiced over her broken body and guided the shaking hand of the inexperienced gladiator to her throat. Such a woman – one before whom the unclean spirit trembled – could not perhaps have been killed, had she herself not willed it.

she refused, the judge sentenced her, along with the other four new Christians and Satorus their Christian teacher, to be thrown to the wild beasts in the arena.

Two days before the execution, the slave Felicity gave birth to a healthy girl who was adopted and raised by one of the Christian women of Carthage.

While in prison Perpetua shared a vision she had received. She saw a ladder leading to heaven. At the bottom of the ladder was a serpent, attacking the Christians trying to climb the ladder to heaven. Perpetua understood that she would have to fight Satan rather than just the beasts of the arena. The Lord assured her that she would not be defeated in overcoming Satan. This gave her great confidence and courage.



On the day of the games, the three men and two women were led into the amphitheatre. At the demand of the crowd they were first scourged. Then a boar, a bear, and a leopard, were set on the men, and a wild cow on the women. Wounded by the wild animals, they gave each other the kiss of peace and were then put to the sword.



Bravest and happiest martyrs! You were called and chosen for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Historical note: This excerpt is taken from *The Martyrdom of Perpetua*. It is based on the first-person accounts of Perpetua and Satorus, which took place under the persecution of Septimius Severus in 202-3 AD. The popularity of the account spread rapidly in the third and fourth centuries. By the fourth century, a basilica at Carthage was dedicated to the memory of Perpetua.]

Perpetua's last words to her brother were: "Stand fast in the faith and love one another and do not be tempted to do anything wrong because of our sufferings."

An early eyewitness account describes the death of Perpetua:

"But Perpetua, that she might experience pain more deeply, rejoiced over her broken body and guided the shaking hand of the inexperienced gladiator to her throat. Such a woman – one before whom the unclean spirit trembled – could not perhaps have been killed, had she herself not willed it."

Perpetua and Saturus wrote personal accounts of their ordeal while in prison. They include the testimony of Felicity as well. An English translation of the account, called [The Passions of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas](#), along with an eye witness testimony of their martyrdom can be found [online](#).

[The story of Perpetua is based on her personal testimony along with other early eye witness accounts, adapted by Don Schwager.]

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A Soldier's Higher Allegiance

The heroic witness and martyrdom of Ivan "Vanya" Moiseyev

Ivan Moiseyev (1952-1972), known to friends and family as Vanya, was a brave soldier in the Soviet Army, but he was braver still in his witness to Jesus Christ. He was tortured for his faith and died as a Christian martyr in 1972 at the age of 20.

What fueled his faith and courage in witnessing for Christ? His parents had raised him and his six brothers and one sister in a Christian home. They were from Moldavia, which was part of the Soviet Union at that time, and they belonged to an underground Christian church, because religion was outlawed by the Communist government.

When Vanya completed school in 1968 at the age of 16, he decided to personally commit his life to Jesus Christ and to read the Bible daily. He joined the Evangelical Christian Baptist (ECB) Church in Slabodeyska and was baptized in 1970. After his baptism he had an intense desire to tell others about the good news of Jesus Christ and the gift of new life and forgiveness of sins which he won on the cross. He preached the Gospel with great enthusiasm and joy, both in his local church and to many young people of the town where he worked as a delivery driver.

In November 1970 he was drafted into the Soviet Army to perform two years of required military training and service. When Vanya began to speak openly of God in the army, his military supervisors began a systematic campaign of intimidation and torture to silence him.

In one of his letters to his parents Vanya wrote:

Even though I am a soldier, I work for the Lord, though there are difficulties and testings. Jesus Christ

gave the order to proclaim his word in this city, in any meeting, in a military unit, to officers and soldiers. I have been in a division headquarters and in a special section. Though it was not easy, the Lord worked so that it turned out well there. I had an opportunity to proclaim his word to the most senior personnel. But I was reviled and thrown out of the meeting.

On one occasion the sergeant in his barracks challenged him to prove that God exists. The test was that God would miraculously arrange a military home leave for a certain sergeant. Leaves were hard to get. After asking God if he should accept the challenge, Vanya agreed. All night, he sat up with the sergeant explaining the things that he would need to know when he became a Christian. The next day, an authority from another town called and ordered the leave. The sergeant became a Christian and so did other men.

Shortly after this incident, Vanya wrote again to his parents about his determination to speak about Christ to his commanders and fellow soldiers alike.

They [his officers] have forbidden me to preach Jesus, and I am going through tortures and testings, but I told them that I will not stop bearing the news of Jesus. And the Lord shamed them before the entire unit, when they were torturing me. A soldier stood up who had miraculously gone on leave and had told everyone, and he asked, "Whose power was this?" The authorities did not wish to let me go, but they were put to shame.

On his last leave home, Vanya made a recording of the ordeals and cruelties used against him in the army. At times he was starved when his officers forbade him to eat for many days. He was awakened and interrogated night after night, and often struck.

Once, after a discussion about God, Vanya was made to stand in the street throughout the whole night wearing his summer uniform. The temperature at that time was thirteen degrees below zero (-25 celcius). He obeyed the order and stood in the street the whole night, remaining faithful to God. Miraculously, his eyesight was still functioning and he could see his officers and he could move his body despite the terrible cold. All throughout the ordeal, Vanya prayed for his persecutors. For the next twelve nights, Ivan continued to stand in the street outside his barracks. Miraculously, he did not freeze, nor did he beg for mercy. Ivan continued to speak about his faith to his comrades and officers.

Other miracles also confirmed his testimony. Once he was run over by a truck. He was told his life could only be saved by the amputation of an arm and part of a collapsed lung. Delirious with fever he earnestly prayed aloud. The next morning, he was completely healed.



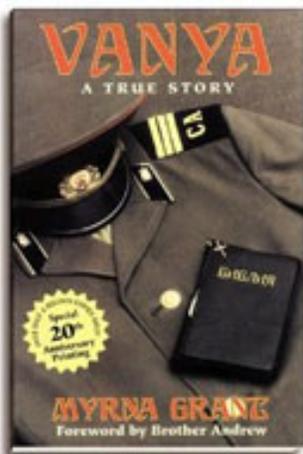
Soldiers around him were converted, impressed by his ardent faith. His commanders continued to interrogate him, trying to get him to deny Jesus. They put him in refrigerated cells. They clothed him in a special rubber suit, into which they pumped air until his chest was so compressed he scarcely could breath.

In his interrogation, Vanya testified, “I have one higher allegiance, and that is to Jesus Christ. He has given me certain orders, and these I cannot disobey.”

At the age of 20, Ivan knew that the communists would kill him. On July 11, 1972, he wrote his parents, “You will not see me anymore.” He then described a vision of angels and heaven which God had sent to strengthen him for the last trial. A few days later, a coffin arrived at his parents' home, welded shut. Vanya's mother insisted it be opened. One of his brothers, who belonged to the Communist party, resisted, but the rest of the family prevailed. Vanya was barely recognizable. Witnesses, Christian and non-Christian alike, signed a statement which declared that his chest had been burned. His face and body were covered with lumps, bruises, and heel marks. His heart was punctured in six places.

In his last letter, dated July 15, 1972, Vanya wrote:

I desire that all of you, dear friends, young and old, remember this one verse. Revelation 2:10 “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Receive this, the last letter on this earth, from the least of the brethren.



This article is based on the letters of Vanya and the biography *Vanya*, by Myrna Grant, (c) 1974 Creation House, and adapted by Don Schwager.

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The Trappist Martyrs of Algiers

by Jeanne Kun

Algeria, formerly a colony of France, became an independent republic in 1962. Since then, indigenous Muslim groups have continually vied for power within the country. Violence increased markedly in 1992 after unpopular government authorities canceled an election that Islamic fundamentalists seemed likely to win. Extreme militant groups began to use terrorist tactics in their efforts to gain political and spiritual control of the nation. On May 21, 1996, in an act that stunned and grieved both the Christian and Muslim world, seven monks of the Cistercian (Trappist) Monastery of Our Lady of Atlas, near Tibhirine, Algeria, were brutally executed [beheaded], presumably by the radical Armed Islamic Group (*Groupe Islamique Armé* or GIA) who held them captive for nearly two months.

The Trappists – Dom Christian de Chergé (59), Prior of Our Lady of Atlas; Father Christophe Lebreton (45), Master of Novices; Brother Luc Dochier (82); Brother Michel Fleury (52); Father Bruno Lemarchand (66); Father Célestin Ringear (62); and Brother Paul Favre-Miville (57) – had been abducted from their monastery nearly two months earlier, during the night of March 26. (Two monks sleeping in another building escaped capture, as did the visitors in the guesthouse.) Nothing was heard of the kidnapped monks until April 27, when a London Arabic newspaper, *Al Hayat*, published extracts from a communiqué issued April 18 by the GIA.

In the communiqué, the GIA's emir said he considered the protection that his predecessor had accorded the Trappists illicit since they had not "ceased to invite Muslims to be evangelized, to display their slogans and symbols, and to commemorate their feasts with solemnity." The statement continued: "Monks who live among the

United in Love

excerpts from the writings of the Trappists in Algiers

After the monastery had been "visited" by members of the Armed Islamic Group (*Groupe Islamique Armé* or GIA) on Christmas Eve 1993, Dom Christian sought to express the monks' position in a letter to the chief of the GIA, Sayah Attiya:

Brother, allow me to address you like this, as man to man, believer to believer. . . . In the present conflict in which our country [Algeria] is experiencing, it seems to us impossible to take sides. The fact that we are foreigners forbids it. Our state as monks binds us to God's choice for us, which is prayer and the simple life, manual work, hospitality, and sharing with everyone, especially with the poor. . . . These reasons for our life are a free choice for each one of us. They bind us until death. I do not think that it is God's will that this death should come to us through you. . . . If one day the Algerians judge that we are unwelcome, we will respect their desire to see us leave. With very great regret I know that we will continue to love them all, as a whole, and that includes you. When and how will this message reach you? It does not matter! I needed to write it to you today.

Forgive me for having written in my mother tongue. You understand me. And may the only One of all life lead us! Amin.

In October 1994, two Augustinian nuns were murdered by Islamic fundamentalists. On November 13, 1994, Dom Christian wrote to the Abbot

working classes can be legitimately killed. . . . They live with people and draw them away from the divine path, urging them to be evangelized. It is also licit to apply to them what applies to lifelong unbelievers when they are prisoners of war: murder, slavery, or exchange for Muslim prisoners.”

All the monks of Our Lady of Atlas Monastery had long been aware of the dangers surrounding them. Between December 1993 and the spring of 1996, militant Muslims had slit the throats of twelve Croatian Catholics working at a nearby Algerian hydraulic plant and killed eleven priests and nuns of various religious congregations. The Trappists had even received veiled threats and intimidating “visits” to their monastery. Nevertheless, their commitment to peace among all people, their desire to aid their Algerian neighbors, and their hope of maintaining their vow of stability linking them together in their monastic community were so firm that they voted to remain at Our Lady of Atlas despite the danger.



The prior of the monastery, Dom Christian, had been involved for many years in interreligious dialogue and was the inspiring spirit of the Islamic-Christian dialogue group known as *Ribat es Salam* (Bond of Peace). He and his fellow monks willingly risked their own safety to maintain a Christian witness among the Algerians. They had dedicated their monastic lives to furthering healthy relations between Muslims and Christians, and hoped that their continued presence – living a life of prayer, simplicity, manual labor, and openness to everyone, especially the poor – would be a visible sign of God’s love in Algeria. The writings of the monks during these months reveal this profound understanding of their vocation as well as their clear awareness that, in faithfully living it out, they might in love give up their lives as martyrs.

All seven of the Trappist monks were French citizens. Not wanting to encourage further terrorism, the French government refused GIA demands to release previously captured terrorists in exchange for the

General of the Cistercians:

The communities of men seem to be standing by their option to remain. This is clear so far for the Jesuits, the Little Brothers of Jesus, all the White Fathers. It is also clear for us. At Tibhirine as elsewhere this option has its risks. That is obvious. Each one has told me that he wants to take them, in a journey of faith into the future and in sharing the present with neighbors who have always been very close friends of ours. The grace of this gift is given to us from day to day, very simply. At the end of September we had another nocturnal “visit.” This time the “brothers of the mountain” wanted to use our telephone. We ... emphasized the contradiction between our way of life and any kind of complicity with what could harm the life of another. They gave us assurances, but the threat was there, supported by arms.

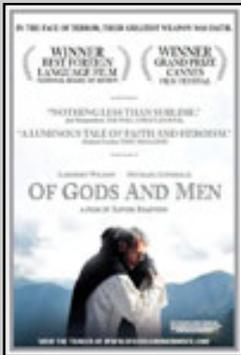
Aware of the danger to their lives, Father Christophe Lebreton, Master of Novices, made a conscious effort to discern and interpret God’s will and frequently noted his thoughts in his journal.

Journal entry, January 15, 1994:

Where is fidelity? Who is the one who obeys? The one who says and declares categorically and sure of himself: I will never leave this place.

Or the other who has said: I would like to go, and who is still here. . . persevering in your teaching (the Gospel here today) in the monastery until death (which came close and is still threatening) sharing in your sufferings O Christ our Passover by patience

hostages. Pope John Paul II publicly asked the abductors to free their prisoners. Instead, on May 23, Radio Medi I in Tangiers read extracts from a GIA communiqué announcing that all seven of the monks had been beheaded two days earlier. They were slain because of the witness of their Christian faith, martyred in an act of religious intolerance and hatred.



Of Gods and Men
A movie and DVD based on the story of the monks of Algiers released in 2010.

A [movie review](#) by *Christianity Today Magazine* describes it as a "quiet, profound meditation on martyrdom, based on a true story of Trappist monks."

That evening, millions watched on television as Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger of Paris extinguished the seven candles which, in the presence of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish leaders, he had lit seven weeks earlier as a prayer and a hope for the release of the monks.

The leader of the Islamic Salvation Front publicly condemned "this criminal act, which runs absolutely contrary to the principles of Islam." In addition, the High Council of French Muslims stated: "We strongly condemn this savage and barbaric act. It is forbidden in the holy Koran to touch 'all servants of God,' and that means priests and rabbis as well."

In his Pentecost address on May 26 that year, the pope told the world: "Despite our deep sorrow, we thank God for the witness of love given by these religious. Their fidelity and constancy give honor to the church and surely will be seeds of reconciliation and peace for the Algerian people, with whom they were in solidarity."

Also on Pentecost Sunday, Cardinal Lustiger relit the seven candles before the high altar of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris in a powerfully symbolic gesture, declaring that the monks had not died in vain, but rather "for life, for love, and for reconciliation."

The funeral Mass was held in the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa in Algiers on June 2, and the remains of the monks were buried in their monastery's cemetery near Tibhirine. The Muslim villagers, who loved the monks and had often benefited from their prayer, hospitality, and care, had dug the seven graves.

in order to merit
to be in your kingdom
"consortes"
new Eucharists
other Christs.

In the monastery until death, yes, if
and as you wish, but not apart from a
living fidelity to your teaching: what
the Spirit is saying at this time in the
Church.

Journal entry, July 25, 1995:

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.

From a Lenten homily preached by Dom
Christian on March 8, 1996, a few weeks
before he and his brother monks were
abducted:

In fact it is very clear that we should
not wish this death, not only because
we are afraid, but because we should
not wish for a glory that would be
gotten at the price of a murder, which
would make the one to whom I owe it
a murderer. God cannot allow for that:
You shall not kill, this commandment
applies to my brother and I must do all
I can to love him enough to turn him
away from what he would want to
commit. I love them enough, all the
Algerians, not to want one of them to
be the Cain of his brother.

[This article is excerpted from the book, [Even Unto Death: Wisdom from Modern Martyrs](#), edited by Jeanne Kun, The Word Among Us Press, © 2002. All rights reserved. Used with permission. The book can be ordered from [WAU Press](#).

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

[Selections from text by Dom Christian de Cherge, O.C.S.O., and Father Christophe Lebreton, O.C.S.O., (c) Association des Ecrits des Sept de l'Atlas, Aiguebelle, 26230 Montjoyer, France.

Selections from text by Dom Bernardo Olivera, O.C.S.O., (c) Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance, Curia Generals, Rome, Italy.]

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A Family Fast

by Bill Navarre

In December of 2010, the Holy Spirit began suggesting to me that I call for a family fast. After the second or third time, I paid attention. I outlined the suggestion and developed a format for the family fast.

I have been a single parent for 25 years and I have six grown children in their thirties and forties – three boys and three girls – and 12 grandchildren. The grandchildren range in age from five months to college freshman age. They live in the west of the U.S., in California, and in the east, near the New York Finger Lakes, and 15 of them live where I do in the Midwest, in Jackson, Michigan. Thanks to the Internet and phone I have been able to stay in personal communication with them.

There were a number of pressing issues within my family. It seemed that jobs were the number one concern. In 2010, five out of the six children had had job losses, a severe economic downturn in business, or were otherwise in a major financial crisis.

There also were health concerns in the immediate and extended family – prostate cancer, struggles with alcohol, mental illness – as well as pressing decisions to be made about college and career for some of the grandchildren. There were also interpersonal relationship issues.

One of my sons and his wife were looking for a church where they could feel at home with their little daughter, others desired to deepen their faith in Jesus.

Retired and Still on Mission
interview by Sheila Pursglove

The following is excerpted from a forthcoming feature news interview written by Sheila Pursglove for the Jackson County Legal News. [http://www.legalnews.com/jackson/]. Used with permission.

Retired attorney Bill Navarre can look back over a legal career that spans almost five decades. But law wasn't his original career choice. He first set his sights on being a missionary then dreamed of a career in politics, before becoming a lawyer in Brooklyn, south of Jackson [Michigan].

Navarre, who enjoys impressionist art, classical music, golf, and hunting waterfowl and deer, gives his time to the Jackson Interfaith Shelter where he serves as lay pastor. The non-profit shelter, with 32 beds for men and 44 for women and children, provides emergency shelter for the homeless and needy, prepared meals and assistance with physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

“The shelter is well respected in the Jackson community and is supported by many good people who recognize the wonderful impact it makes,” he says. “It makes good sense to give to the shelter as opposed to an individual because you can be assured where your money is going.”

Navarre, who has been involved with the shelter for 11 years, teaches a Bible study on Wednesday evenings and coordinates Sunday services with four or five local Christian churches, each taking one Sunday a month; he preaches every other month or when a scheduled minister cannot be there. Individuals are under no obligation to take part in

I spoke to each son and daughter, son-in-law and daughter-in-law, and told them that I felt that we as a family should have a week of prayer and fasting to seek the Lord's mercy and provision for each other. I proposed starting the fast January 16 and ending it on January 23. All agreed to join in and participate, which I experienced as a tremendous blessing from the Lord.

The suggested format consisted of the following:

- I made a schedule of the intentions for each day and emailed it to each household so we would all be fasting and praying for the same thing on the same day.
- Each person would perform some form of fasting which would work for him or her during the week of fasting and prayer.
- Each family – husband and wife and children – would each day pray together for the specific fast intention of that day.

We started the fast week at 2 pm on Sunday, January 16. Most of the family members in Jackson met that day at the home of one of my daughters, and we went over the schedule and committed ourselves to the family fast. During the week, I communicated with each household to get an update on how it was going and to encourage them.

On Sunday afternoon, January 23 the Jackson families all came to my home where I had prepared a full standing rib roast for a potluck dinner at which we celebrated the end of the fast together. The celebration together was a great time.

In faith I believe the week of fasting was a great success and the effects are still being manifested. At the end of the first week after the fast, one family reported an increase in clients in their business, with twelve new ones. Within three weeks or so, another family received two job opportunities on the same day, one of which has resulted in a new job with the medical benefits alone worth \$22,000. The job started April 1, 2011.

There has also been a sharing of some family members' faith in Jesus. The extended-family member struggling with alcohol has not been drunk since the fast and has almost completely stopped his fifty-year addiction to cigarettes.

In another family, a seven-year-old son underwent successful surgery and had a quick and dramatic recovery. At the end of the celebration dinner, I was blessed because some of the children

services, he says.

"Most of us realize we live in a broken world where we find pain and suffering, if not next door then just down the street," he says. "At the shelter there is refuge for those who are just out of prison or jail, whose home burned to the ground with all they owned, or who were thrown out by a spouse or a parent, or whose home was taken by the bank. Also, there are some whose addiction has impoverished them and who are often sick. Oftentimes there is great dejection and discouragement. I try to bring hope and encouragement by presenting the gospel of Jesus to each one."

People find themselves in hard circumstances because of bad decisions, he says. "The sad fact is often we not only bring ourselves down, we pull others with us. A few years ago I heard of a statistic that the average age of the homeless in Michigan is 13 years old."

He belongs to the Morning Star Christian Community formed in the 1970s in Jackson, and is comprised of Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans, Nazarenes, Anglicans, Pentecostals and others. "We've lived our trans-denominational lives together now for some 36 years," Navarre says. "We agreed we would respect one another's traditional backgrounds, not trying to convert each other, daily read our scriptures, have a daily prayer time with the Lord, pay a tithe and support our individual churches. It's been a source of great strength to have these committed relationships for so many years."

and grand children said that they had also prayed for me, though I had not put myself on the prayer intention schedule.

I am confident that the Lord built upon the many years of my being encouraged by my Christian community, Morning Star, to fast and pray. Additionally, the Lord Jesus stated that his disciples would fast and pray.

Derek Prince wrote a great book called, *Shaping History through Prayer and Fasting*; and Mahesh Chavda wrote a wonderful book called, *The Hidden Power of Prayer and Fasting*. These books are very practical as well as inspirational and are a great resource for anyone who would desire to have a thorough biblical understanding for undertaking a family fast. The Lord Jesus, as always, is our example: he fasted forty days and nights and assumes his disciples will fast (see Matthew 6:16).

Lastly, there is a wonderful promise made by the Lord in the Second Book of Chronicles for those who feel led by the Lord to participate in a family fast: “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Bill Navarre is a retired attorney and a member of Morning Star Christian Community in Jackson, Michigan, USA.

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Laying down our lives for the brethren: an interdenominational responsibility?

Exploring a neglected motive for cooperation among Christians of different traditions

by Steve Clark

Christians of different traditions face many common foes around the world. In many nations we must deal with governments that persecute believers for not accommodating themselves to the official ideology or religion. Here in the United States we can find many common problems to work on together in the political arena. Shared challenges such as these are spurs to interdenominational cooperation.

Along with these common concerns, other developments have been moving Christians of different traditions toward greater cooperation. One is a growing recognition of the action of the Holy Spirit among Christians who are not of one's own church. Another is the increasing recognition of members of other Christian communions as "brethren" – brothers and sisters in Christ.

But while Christians of a variety of traditions have begun to speak freely of one another as brothers and sisters, the terminology does not have much impact on actual relationships. It is worth looking more carefully at what it means to be "brethren" in the biblical sense, because the term turns out to be much more than a mere platitude.

An often neglected biblical source for understanding the relationship of Christians as "brethren" is 1 John. As is well known, the first letter of 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 identifies several marks of true Christians: belief in what we would now call the doctrine of the incarnation, a moral Christian life, the

experience of the Spirit. A further mark essential to being a Christian, he writes, is love of the brethren (1 John 3:14-23; 4:11-2, 19-21; 5:1).

By “the brethren” or “brothers and sisters” John means fellow Christians. In this, his usage is like that of the rest of New Testament, where, except when the term is used to mean natural brothers and sisters or fellow elders, it refers to those bound to one another in covenant – either the old covenant or the new.

The New Testament, scholars tell us, never speaks of the brotherhood of the human race. It does express an idea of the solidarity of the human race, for instance, in the solidarity of all human beings in Adam. But in the New Testament the term “brethren” means “fellow Christians”; and love of the brethren,” as the phrase in 1 John is often rendered, means “love of our fellow Christians.”

First John 3:14-18 summarizes its teaching on love of the brethren in this way:

“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 ear 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.”

In attempting to locate the marks by which to distinguish true Christians from false ones, John is interested in criteria that relate directly to the core of Christianity – our relationship to Christ himself and to his work of redemption. John 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 sayings put it, the relationship we have with Christ is more important than our relationship with our mother and natural brothers and sisters, and it establishes a new set of primary relationships among those who follow him (Matthew 10:37; 12:48-50; Mark 10:29-30). Love of the brethren is thus an external, behavioral indication of a genuinely Christian spiritual state.

The first letter of John teaches that laying down our lives for our brothers and sisters in Christ involves at least the sharing of goods when they are in need. We have, in short, concrete duties toward them, duties which touch our pocketbooks. Further study of the scriptural teaching on love of the brethren would indicate that we have additional obligations towards them, such as defending them when enemies attack them. Fulfilling these obligations is essential to being a Christian.

Revolution of recognition

Such a statement leads naturally to the question, “Who, then, is my brother or sister in Christ?”

At present, no single answer can be offered that would satisfy every Christian tradition and church. However, it is important to observe that in the present century there has been a massive change in the way Christian people think about this question. Today Christians of very diverse theological convictions and church loyalties are willing to recognize one another as Christians.

Many of us might want to add some qualification to the terms “brother and sister,” such as “separated brother and sister.” Most of us would not recognize all the churches that other Christians belong to as fully acceptable as churches – or perhaps even as churches at all. Some, for example, while recognizing Catholic brothers and sisters in Christ, are of the opinion that the Roman Catholic Church is an apostate church; and the Roman Catholic Church has not officially come to the point of recognizing Protestant bodies as anything more than “ecclesial communities.”

Nevertheless, a revolution of tremendous significance has occurred. A large number of Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox now recognize one another as Christians – Christians who have embraced some serious theological errors and belong to faulty churches, no doubt, but Christians nonetheless. We would not necessarily extend that recognition to all the members of each other's churches, nor would we agree on where to draw the line; but we do have the perspective that a large number of members of all the other churches are, in fact, Christians.

We are, then, in the position of having to acknowledge the gospel duty to help and support not only the members of our own church but also whomever we can currently recognize to be true Christians. For many of us, that is surely a substantial number of Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox.

Second Chronicles 28 provides a scriptural illustration of the obligations covenant brothers and sisters have toward one another even when there is division between them. This makes it especially relevant for us to ponder today.

The passage records a war between Ahaz of Judah and Pekah of Israel. Israel resoundingly defeats Judah and leads the captured southerners into slavery. As the northerners are bringing the captives back, the prophet Obed goes out to meet them 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 Chronicles 28:9-11).

Israel and Judah were in a state of schism and had no united government. Neither was in a fully acceptable spiritual position from the other's point of view – or from God's. Divided as they were, God did not rebuke them for fighting one another. He seemed to regard a certain amount of fighting between them as acceptable, and even as a punishment for Judah's sins.

But God was angry that the Israelites slaughtered their defeated brothers and led them back captive to enslave them. As the next verses in the account make clear, they had also neglected to provide for their needs – food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Even in a situation in which brothers and sisters were in open conflict, the Lord was angered by his people not treating brethren as brethren.

Kinds of mutual help

What sorts of brotherly love might be practical and appropriate among Christians today? One area would be cooperation in missionary and evangelistic work. I have been impressed with much of the missionary study and writing emerging from evangelical institutions such as the Fuller School of World Mission and the U.S. Center for World Mission. It is notable how often their writings draw lessons from Catholic missionary workers – but how rarely Catholics are even aware of these Protestant institutions. In my own community, the Sword of the Spirit, which is composed of Christians with different church loyalties, we have discovered that we can be more effective in evangelism if we work together.

Christians can also help one another learn how to be more effective in spiritual renewal. For instance, the Catholic charismatic renewal is a movement in the Roman Catholic Church that has clearly gained some of its effectiveness from lessons it learned from Pentecostals and other evangelicals. Indeed, participants in the Catholic charismatic renewal 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 to its roots in the 17th and 18th centuries, one finds that the Protestant renewal movements learned for earlier Catholic revivalists, especially the Franciscan friars.

Another area for making our brotherly love practical is the sharing of pastoral wisdom. We confront the same challenges, for example, regarding family life and child rearing, because we live in the same secular society. Normally, the same basic approaches work or do not work when employed by Protestants, Catholics, or Orthodox.

Cooperative ecumenism

Ecumenism has too often meant something which happens only between the officials of church bodies and which is carried out only 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.

Cooperative ecumenism proceeds on the pre-supposition that Christians of various traditions do not have full agreement or unity, and we do not expect it for some time to come. In the meantime, however, we acknowledge the requirement that we should love one another as brothers and sisters, looking forward to the time when the Lord will make greater unity possible. Our rule is that we will try to do whatever builds up. Sometimes the rule indicates not cooperating in certain ways, though we might personally be inclined to do so, because of the need to take into account others in our churches who do not see things our way and to avoid worsening relations between the churches. Nonetheless, the spirit behind cooperative ecumenism urges us 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.

Dialogue ecumenism and cooperative ecumenism proceed on different bases. Dialogue ecumenism proceeds with the conviction that we need to discuss our differences and try to seek agreement. Cooperative ecumenism proceeds with the resolution that in the meantime we will cooperate where we can in matters of common concern, even though we have disagreements.

Cooperative ecumenism does not mean we do not talk about our differences. 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 about each other that we should not. It certainly does not mean that we regard the differences as unimportant. But the purpose of coming together in cooperative ecumenism is not to work out the differences but to love one another as brothers and sisters and work together as best we can.

How to go about it

Effective cooperative ecumenism proceeds on certain principles:

1. We need to accept the fact that there are issues that divide the churches and to abide by the limits that our churches have set. Most of us 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 his or her respective 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 which we share in common. We will do this partly because these truths in themselves call for such emphasis, and also because we can thereby serve the convergence of the entire Christian people.
3. In discussing our differences, 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 where we are in circumstances such as leading in common prayer, proposing a common course of action, or stating an opinion that we think the group as a whole should hold
- we can educate one another in our differences when that is 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.

Christ above all

We must also seek to prevent our cultural differences from poisoning our brotherly love.

The cultural obstacle to our cooperation is a human one. A helpful treatment of this problem was provided by Christopher Dawson, the British historian, in a prophetic book he wrote during World War II called *The Judgment of the Nations*. The book was written to state the program of an earlier movement that developed during the war called the Sword of the Spirit.

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, which the leaders saw as a crisis for Christian society. Ecumenical cooperation of that sort was not common then. Advocating what he called a “return to Christian unity,” Dawson gave a helpful analysis of some of the main roots of disunity:

The fundamental problem of Christian disunity is the problem of schism. In practice this problem is so closely associated with that of heresy, that is, 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 the 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.

Dawson based his view on an 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 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.

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.

Dawson attributes somewhat more weight to the sociological factors than I would, but, nonetheless, he puts his finger on a key factor in Christian disunity. When two groups of people, be they nations or smaller groups, come into conflict and desire to separate from one another, they become open to theological disagreements. They desire to believe differently.

Hence, when we are dealing with ecumenical problems, 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.

The solution to this source of Christian disunity is our common commitment to Christ. The solution lies in putting above everything else our commitment to Christ and his cause in the world. It lies, practically speaking, in ecumenical cooperation – in working together to strengthen one another's faith, defend Christianity, and bring the world to Christ.

The solution to schism lies, in short, in the opposite approach to the kind of ecumenism which many of us have learned to dislike. That ecumenism tries to unite Christians in an accommodation to the world and secular goals; it puts aside an explicit focus on Christ in order to shelve the theological differences that come from different teachings about Christ and his work. True ecumenism, however, is a matter of restoring Christ to the center, as Lord, both in our theological dialogues and discussion of reunion, and in our working together where and as we can.

Witnesses together

The world is putting a question to Christians regarding the seriousness of our faith in Christ. In many countries today faithfulness to Christ 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 of compromising – avoiding personal loss or death without giving up everything involved in Christianity. They are told, for instance, that if they are simply willing to work for the good of the collective, the nation, and put aside their other worldly preoccupations and divisive concerns, they do not have to experience any penalties. In these circumstances, Orthodox, Protestants, and Catholics frequently find themselves undergoing persecution at the hands of the same persecutors.

Facing death brings one a peculiar clarity about what is of supreme importance in life. Cannot all of us who pray for

the grace to be able to die for our Lord Jesus Christ, if that were to come our way, recognize one another as brothers and sisters in him? Can we not work together for him until such time as the world may put the final question to us too, and we are called to witness to him with our lives?

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[Steve Clark](#) is a founder and former president of the [Sword of the Spirit](#).

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Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace

Reflections on Suffering

By Lynne May

I have been reflecting lately on my experience of suffering hardships and trials and how God can use these to strengthen me in faith, hope, and love. Jesus stated that a grain of wheat must first die and be buried, covered completely, before it can bear fruit and become what it was made to be (John 12:26). I think that is an image of what God does in each of us as we die to ourselves, even in our times of suffering, and rise to new life in Christ. Jesus showed me that, because of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, suffering is now a gateway to hope. And hidden within the ground of suffering lies the treasure: the priceless gift of eternal life with God in heaven.

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (*Book of Daniel*, Chapter 3), who were thrown into the fiery furnace has been as inspiring example for me of how suffering can allow faith to grow and also be a witness to help nonbelievers find God. Three men, in a pagan land, are commanded to bow before a golden image, to commit idolatry. They say no, and are thus thrown into a fiery furnace – a furnace with real fire, a fire whose heat killed the men who threw the three in. The three who chose to be martyrs rather than idolaters, were engulfed in the flames and felt the heat, and yet they *lived*. They are thrown into the furnace bound, yet in the furnace – and not before – they are “unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt,” Scripture says. I think, if we pass this too quickly we may miss the reality that they felt the fire, that they were touched by it, in their bodies, but ultimately were not harmed. This preservation is the cause of Nebuchadnezzar’s change of heart: “I see [he physically saw] four men walking in the middle of the fire and they are not hurt.”

Walking in the furnace of this world

The witness we can offer, perhaps the most provocative one, is that, if we find ourselves in the midst of trial, is to keep walking – keep walking in the furnace of this world and to live as “unbound” men and women. And we are called to live as “three,” as a community and not as individuals, confident that we do not walk in the furnace alone but with Jesus Christ, who is much more, “more” in every sense of the word, than the “angelic being” who was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

During some recent trials of mine I have felt a little like I was being bound and tossed into a fiery furnace, but I now realize more clearly that Christ has set me free. I can choose to walk in faith – to get up and live my life each day with Christ beside me, even in the midst of the heat of temptation. This is one concrete way I can witness to others around me. Satan wants me to be bound in fear and discouragement, and one of the best ways I can thwart his strategy, is to continue to pray, serve, and share the gospel joyfully, even in the midst of sorrow, pain, and suffering.

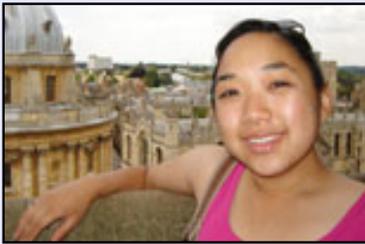
Because of what Jesus has accomplished through his incarnation, death, and resurrection, we are free to choose for eternal life with God.

Your response to suffering

I think it's helpful to ask ourselves, How do I respond to personal suffering? Do I pull away from the Lord and from others? Or do I embrace the Lord in my suffering and, as the psalmist says, "pour my heart out before him" and proclaim that the Lord is my refuge? (Psalm 62: 8).

In our daily life, the Lord will at times give us a foretaste of the glory that awaits us. As Paul says, we are being transformed "into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18). For me the most powerful and richest taste of this heavenly reality has come in the midst of suffering because it reminds me that I am made for something more – for glory with God.

As I experience God bringing me through trials, I experience, in minute ways, the redemption of my body, from which God's own life of grace flows, just as the Psalmist promises will happen: "As they go through the Valley of Baca / they make it a place of springs" (Psalm 84:6).



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Martyrdom and the Sons of Zebedee

Two Gospel Texts in the Tradition

by Patrick Henry Reardon

The Gospels of Matthew (20:20–23) and Mark (10:35–40) record the occasion on which the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, request of the Lord the privilege of sitting to his immediate right and left when he enters into his kingdom. In both Gospel accounts the Lord responds to the brothers' request with a further query about their ability to “drink the cup whereof I am to drink,” and Mark's version contains yet another question about their being “baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.”¹

Having elsewhere surveyed and assessed the modern exegesis of the Marcan version of this story,² I now propose to give expanded attention to the interpretation of both of these Gospel passages in the Tradition of the Church.³ Convinced, moreover, that the transition from the New Testament to the church fathers is something of a seamless robe, I hope to convey some sense of that continuity, demonstrating a single and sustained, albeit complex, understanding of these dominical logia all through the patristic literature.

Mark's Historical Context

I begin this study with Mark. My reason for doing so is not necessarily a presumption of Marcan priority, still less a persuasion about the full two-source synoptic theory popular in modern critical exegesis. I begin with Mark, rather, for the simple reason that we possess more and clearer information on the historical circumstances of his composition, information that throws considerable contextual light on the passage chosen for our study.

Early patristic testimony to the circumstances of Mark's writing is remarkably uniform. Our first witness, Papias of

Hierapolis, about A.D. 140, quotes an anonymous elder who called Mark the “interpreter of Peter” (hermeneutes Petrou),⁴ a description repeated within a generation by the Roman Anti-Marcionite Prologue, dated between 160 and 180, which further testifies that “after the death of Peter himself, [Mark] recorded this present Gospel in the regions of Italy.”⁵ Likewise around 180, that identical expression, *interpres Petri*, as well as the ascription of Mark’s Gospel to Rome, are found in Irenaeus of Lyons.⁶ Both the Prologue and Irenaeus, furthermore, agree in dating Mark’s composition after Peter’s death. Within the next generation, Clement of Alexandria, though contradicting their testimony on that last point, does state that this Gospel contains the preaching of Peter at Rome.⁷

By the year 200, then, we are dealing with an impressive, fairly uniform and widespread consensus, evidenced in material from Hierapolis, Rome, Lyons (and, thus, doubtless Asia Minor), and Egypt, and against which there is not the slightest shred of dissent or contradiction during the entire period. This consensus asserts that Mark’s Gospel was written at Rome, either just before or just after Peter’s death, and reflects the preaching of that apostle.

Now this information is most instructive, because we happen to know quite a bit about the place, time, and circumstances of Peter’s death. Eusebius cites testimonies from the second and early third centuries to bolster his thesis that the chief of the apostles was crucified in Rome during Nero’s persecution (mid-60s): Tertullian, Caius of Rome, Dionysius of Corinth.⁸ Tertullian himself speaks even more boldly of that crucifixion at Rome, “where Peter equals the Lord’s passion”; he treats the information as though it were common knowledge.⁹

Indeed, the early Christians seem to have been so familiar with the circumstances of Peter’s martyrdom that Clement of Rome (writing from that city) and Ignatius of Antioch (writing to that city) had not felt the need to elaborate on the place and circumstances.¹⁰ The story of the apostle’s crucifixion was so widely reported among the churches that the Gospel of John, probably written at Ephesus, could simply refer to the stretching out of Peter’s hands as “signifying by what death he was to glorify God” (John 21:18f).¹¹ John did not have to explain the point; everyone knew exactly how Peter had died. That this Johannine passage (“thou shalt stretch forth thy hands. . . . signifying by what death he was to glorify God”) did in fact refer to Peter’s crucifixion in Rome was perfectly obvious to Tertullian. Citing that Johannine verse, he wrote: “Then was Peter ‘bound by another,’ when he was fastened to the cross.”¹² Moreover, the symbolic extension of the hands as signifying crucifixion is attested to in early Christian and even pagan writings.¹³

According to the combined and uncontradicted testimony of antiquity, then, Mark’s Gospel was written in Rome near the time of Peter’s martyrdom under Nero. Inasmuch as the crisis that led to that persecution was the fire at Rome in July of 64,¹⁴ Mark’s Gospel was written shortly after, or very close to, that date. Moreover, since the historical setting of Mark’s Gospel was the persecution of Nero, and since that setting provides an interpretive key to the understanding of Mark, it will be useful to comment more in detail about Nero’s persecution.

Blaming (subdidit according to Tacitus, implying innocence) the Christians for the fire, Nero took advantage of their relatively low social standing and bad reputation among the populace (“a class despised for their abominations,” says the same source) to divert the guilt from himself. Tacitus describes their unjust punishment in detail:

Every kind of mockery was added to their deaths. Covered in beast skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs and thus perished. Or they were crucified [recall Peter], or burned in the flames to serve as torches during the night after daylight was gone. Nero offered his gardens for the show.¹⁵

In this vivid and moving account a pagan historian is describing the very church for whom Mark wrote his Gospel. It was a congregation suffering severely for their faith, and, as we shall see, Mark’s message would emphasize, above all, the mystery of the cross and the necessity of Christians suffering with their Lord. This is the historical context to be borne in mind as we now turn to examine the structure and literary themes of Mark’s story.

Mark's Literary Context

That text of Eusebius, noted earlier, refers to an important ancient source descriptive of Mark's literary effort. Eusebius quotes Irenaeus who, writing about 180, was citing another work called Interpretation of the Sayings of the Lord. This work, now lost, was written by Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis, about the year 140, some 40 years before Irenaeus's testimony, and it recorded information that Papias himself had "carefully learned from the elders," he tells us, of a yet earlier period.

How early? According to Irenaeus who, born and raised in Asia Minor, was in a position to know, Papias himself was personally familiar with the Apostle John (as was Polycarp, of whom Irenaeus also speaks in this context). Even though Eusebius himself doubts that Papias's memory goes back quite so far, he does admit that Papias was familiar with those who had been friends of the apostles. Thus, what Papias had to say, Eusebius asserts, came "from a living and abiding voice" (para zoses phones kai menouses) going back to the apostles themselves.¹⁶

What, then, on the basis of such ancient and trustworthy testimony, did Papias's source have to say about the composition of the Gospel of Mark? The passage is worth quoting at length:

Mark, having become an interpreter of Peter, recorded accurately whatever he could remember, though not in order, of the things said and done by the Lord. For he had neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but later, as I said, he followed Peter, who crafted (epoieto) the teachings according to needs, but not as though making a correct sequence of the Lord's sayings. Thus Mark did not err in writing the single components as he remembered them.¹⁷

Attention should be drawn, I believe, to several features of this precious and remarkable text written within the living memory of men who had known the apostles personally. First, the link of Mark to the preaching of Peter.

Second, the admission that Peter himself had been accustomed (such being the force of the imperfect *epoieto*) to adapt the story of Jesus to the needs of his hearers. Papias is very clear on this point: discrete pastoral disposition of the inherited traditions about what Jesus did and said was already at work prior to the composition of the Gospels. That is to say, what was handed down and received was not only preserved but also pastorally interpreted and applied.

Third, the further assertion that Mark's Gospel itself reflects this earlier "preached" Gospel already familiar to his hearers, the believers at Rome. That is to say, Mark had in mind to tell the Church only what the Church already knew and believed, on the basis of the apostolic preaching, specifically Peter's.

It is not surprising, therefore, given the historical context of actual martyrdom in Rome, that Mark lays a special stress on the necessity of the cross. This emphasis is obvious in so many places, almost from the beginning: "But the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away (2:20). . . . And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him how they might destroy him (3:6). . . . And Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him (3:19). . . . Afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the sake of the word (4:17). . . . Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (8:34). . . . Whoever will lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it (8:35). . . . For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many (10:45). . . . And they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard (12:8) . . .", and so on. Although the account of the Lord's passion is covered in only two (though the two longest) chapters, it is fair to say that the mystery of the cross permeates the entire perspective of the Evangelist Mark.

This assessment has special relevance to the story under consideration in this study, particularly with respect to the questions that the Lord puts to James and John about baptism and the cup. An analysis of Mark's immediate literary context for this story, chapters 8–10, shows how this is so. These three chapters of Mark are structured around three prophecies that the Lord gives of his coming suffering, death, and resurrection (8:32; 9:31; 10:33f). Then, in turn, each of these dominical prophecies is followed by some totally inappropriate response of the disciples, who are habitually portrayed by Mark as resistant to Lord's message of the cross (8:32; 9:32–34; 10:35–38). Then, again in each instance, the Lord goes on to say something further about the implications of the message of the cross, particularly as it affects the actual lives and attitudes of his disciples (8:34f; 9:35; 10:39–45). By unifying image, chapters 8–10 are especially dominated by the theme of the "way" (hodos)¹⁸ of the cross, which for Mark means true discipleship, humility, service, and even martyrdom.



In Mark's structure, then, the story of James and John (10:35–45) is the third and climactic example of an inappropriate response to the Lord's prophecies of his impending passion. The two brothers are here portrayed, like Peter in Mark 8:32f, as resistant to the message of the cross. Still worldly and without understanding, they covet the chief places to the Lord's right and left when he comes into his kingdom. There is a particular irony in the fact that they make this ambitious request in the very next verse after the Lord's third prophecy of his passion, indicating they had not grasped a single word of it.¹⁹ In sum, then, Mark's account of the incident makes it the culminating point of a growing emphasis on the inability of the disciples to come to grips with mystery of the cross.

The Sacraments & Martyrdom

Both images, baptism and the cup, are found elsewhere in the New Testament as symbolic of the Lord's passion. Relative to baptism one thinks immediately of Luke 12:50—"But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am straightened until it be accomplished." Interpreters since the second century have appealed to this Lukan passage to interpret the story of James and John.²⁰ Relative to the cup, of course, the synoptic descriptions of the Lord's agony in the garden and his arrest show it to refer to his sufferings, and earlier exegetes normally cited those texts when interpreting the account of Zebedee's sons.²¹ The Lord called "his crucifixion a cup and his death a baptism."²²

In the context of the New Testament churches it is obvious that the symbolisms of baptism and the cup likewise

referred to two of the sacraments, and it was understood, moreover, that these two sacraments place their communicants into a special relationship with the Lord's passion. With respect to the sacrament of baptism, one thinks of Romans 6:3f ("Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death. . .") and Colossians 2:12 ("buried with him in baptism. . ."). The sacramental relationship to the Lord's passion is no less clear with respect to the Eucharist: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Thus Hippolytus identified the cup of Mark 10 with the chalice of the Eucharist.²³

Mark's account of the Lord's questions about baptism and the cup, then, were especially poignant for the Christians at Rome, who were thereby instructed about an important dimension of their own participation in the sacraments. Even to be a Christian at Rome was a risky business, for Christians were regarded as enemies of the state, and actual martyrdom was a true possibility for anyone in the Church. Thus to each catechumen presenting himself for sacramental immersion into the life of the Church, this question was implicitly addressed by Jesus himself: "Can you be baptized with the baptism with which I am to be baptized?"²⁴ And to each believer who came forward, Sunday by Sunday, to share in the mystic cup of the Lord's blood, this question was implicitly addressed by Jesus himself: "Can you drink that cup of which I am to drink?"

The cup's reference to martyrdom as a participation in the passion of the Lord is virtually ubiquitous in early Christian literature. One may begin with the second-century prayer of Polycarp as he stood in his sacrificial pyre: "I bless You that You have brought me to this day and to this hour, that I might receive a portion, among the number of the martyrs, in the cup of Your Christ unto the resurrection of eternal life."²⁵ Chrysostom paraphrases the Lord's question about the cup thus: "That is, you will be martyrs (martyresete), you will be killed for my sake."²⁶ This was the "cup of martyrdom,"²⁷ the "cup of the martyrs,"²⁸ the "to-be-imitated chalice of the Passion."²⁹ Similar statements abound.³⁰

In particular, the history of Christian exegesis saw in Psalm 115 (Hebrew 116, second half) a rich confluence of all these themes: "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." In this single text, as read by the Tradition of the Church, we find the Lord's passion, the mystery of the Eucharist, and Christian martyrdom—all in the unifying symbol of the chalice. It is no wonder that the Fathers were particularly fond of citing the Lord's cup-question to James and John in explaining this passage from the Psalms. The apparently earliest to take this interpretive path was Origen in the third century,³¹ whose lead was quickly followed by Athanasius,³² and then by others, both East³³ and West.³⁴

Matthew's Account

We may now turn to Matthew's version of the story (20:20–23), which differs from Mark's in two material respects.

First, Matthew's account does not contain Mark's reference to baptism. Since, as we have seen, this latter reference is very important to Mark's conjunction of soteriological and sacramental symbolism, its absence in Matthew does render the latter proportionately less rich. It is not surprising, then, that this detail from Mark occasionally found its way into the Matthean manuscripts and into the patristic interpretation of Matthew by way of filling out the story, the two accounts becoming conflated in the sermons and commentaries of the church fathers.

Second, Matthew's narrative presents Zebedee's wife, the mother of the two brothers, approaching the Lord to make the request on their behalf. The historicity of this detail, unreasonably doubted by some more recent scholars, provided no difficulties for patristic exegesis.³⁵

Nothing would be easier, of course, than to regard the wife of Zebedee as simply the unscrupulous promoter of her

sons' selfish aspirations. Scenes of ambitious mothers endeavoring to promote the political fortunes of their sons are absolutely commonplace in ancient history, with examples from Assyria (Sammuramat, mother of Adad-Nerari III), Macedonia (Olympias, mother of Alexander), Rome (Agrippina the Younger, mother of Nero), and so forth. The Bible's memorable instance is the mother of Solomon, Bathsheba, in 1 Kings 1:11f. For all that, patristic and medieval comments on the incident tend to "go easy" on Zebedee's wife, excusing her request as a weakness born of excessive maternal affection,³⁶ pardonable anxiety,³⁷ "womanly error,"³⁸ "simplicity and inexperience,"³⁹ or "female enthusiasm."⁴⁰ Indeed, does not Mark's very omission of the detail indicate that the fault lay rather with the sons than with their mother? Surely the whole idea was theirs, not their mother's, it was argued.⁴¹ Her two sons had prevailed upon her,⁴² thinking thereby more easily to prevail upon the Lord.⁴³

Whatever the merits of these suggestions, I believe they do less than full justice to a certain subtlety in Matthew's account, for he is surely implicating the mother in her sons' failure to understand the message of the cross. This woman, elsewhere known as Salome,⁴⁴ Matthew calls simply "the mother of Zebedee's sons." The detail is certainly significant, inasmuch as this designation, "mother of Zebedee's sons," appears only twice in the entire New Testament, both times in Matthew: here in 20:20 and later, in 27:56, at the foot of the cross. In the first of these instances Zebedee's wife is portrayed as an enterprising and somewhat ambitious worldlying who fails to grasp the message of the cross, while in the later scene we find her standing vigil as her Lord dies, now a model of the converted and enlightened Christian who follows Jesus to the very end. This marvelous correspondence between the two scenes—a before and after—is proper to Matthew and points to a delicate nuance of his thought.

The Mystery of the Cross

In both Mark and Matthew, then, the dominical questions put to the sons of Zebedee are in truth addressed to all Christians, pointing to a special dimension of their very participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Following the traditional exegesis of this story, we may say that properly to share in baptism and the Holy Eucharist means a deep commitment to the mystery of the Lord's cross, even to the point of martyrdom. But not only to martyrdom in its ultimate, defining sense. There is more than one way to be martyred, after all, nor will every Christian be called to shed his blood for Christ in that final and dramatic way. Still, the same question is put equally to all believers, whether or not they are to die as martyrs. James, the elder son of Zebedee, was actually put to death with a sword, according to Acts 12:2, which may be read as a partial fulfillment of the prophecy in Matthew 20:23 and Mark 10:39.⁴⁵ But it was also well known that his brother John, though he suffered many things for the name of Christ, was not actually put to death by the enemies of the gospel. Did he any less drink of the cup of Christ's sufferings? Was not he too a martyr?

The Tradition emphatically says yes. "What is expressed by 'cup' except the torment of the Passion?" asked Ambrose Autpert, and then went on to comment: "We all know that James was beheaded by Herod, while John died peacefully. But both of them drank of the cup, for the one was crowned with an open martyrdom and the other was martyred in secret."⁴⁶ Origen believed John's exile on the island of Patmos to be a kind of martyrdom,⁴⁷ while Rupert of Deutz thought that John amply fulfilled the Lord's cup-prophecy by standing beside the Mother of Jesus at the foot of the cross and watching the Savior die, the only one of the Twelve so to do.⁴⁸ Other commentators made similar observations to the same effect.⁴⁹

Whether or not we are to die as martyrs in the strictest sense, then, the questions put to the sons of Zebedee stand at the center of our participation in baptism and the Eucharist. The sacraments of the Church, these dominical questions show, are the proper setting for stating and renewing our commitment to the mystery of the cross. As in the case of Nero's Rome, the Lord's questions to Zebedee's sons indicate how some Christians may be called upon to die; but more especially they proclaim how all Christians are summoned to live.

Notes:

1. Such is the testimony of the manuscripts generally. Some copies and early versions (Syriac and Boharic) of Matthew, as well as patristic citations, have been inflated with the more ample wording from Mark, an inflation long rendered popular among us by the King James Bible. All of the other manuscript variants in the two texts are fairly minor, requiring no further reference to critical textual matters in this study. For exegetical purposes, the two passages are solid.
2. Cf. P. H. Reardon, "The Cross, Sacraments and Martyrdom: An Investigation of Mark 10:35–45," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 36/1&2 (1992), esp. pp. 111–114.
3. Unwilling to burden this article with too many technical points, I will be sticking almost entirely with primary sources. Where I am dependent on secondary literature, the relevant sources are cited in the article mentioned in the previous note.
4. Cited in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* 3.39.15 (Bibliothèque Hellénique Paterson [hereafter BEP] 19.281).
5. Text in D. de Bruyne, "Les plus anciens prologues latins des Évangiles," *Revue Bénédictine* 40 (1928), pp. 193–214. This and all other translations are my own.
6. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses* 3.1.2 (PG 7A.845).
7. Quoted in Eusebius, *Church History* 2:15.1–2 (BEP 19.236f); 6.14.6–7 (360).
8. Eusebius, *Church History* 2.25.4–8 (BEP 19.247f). From another writer of about 200, Clement of Alexandria, we learn that Peter's wife was also martyred and that Peter was a witness to it; cf. *Stromata* 7.11 (BEP 8.274).
9. Tertullian, *De Praescriptione* 36.3 (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina [hereafter CCL] 1.216): "ubi Petrus passioni dominicae adaequatur. . . ."
10. Clement of Rome, *Ad Corinthios* 5.4 (BEP 1.15); Ignatius of Antioch, *Romans* 4 (BEP 2.275).
11. "Glorifying God" was, in context, nearly a technical term for martyrdom; cf. 1 Peter 4:16; *Martyrium Polycarpi* 14.3 (BEP 3.25); 19.2 (26).
12. Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 15.3 (CCL 2.1097).
13. Cf. Pseudo-Barnabas 12.1–4 (BEP 2.237); Justin Martyr, *Apologia Prima* 35 (BEP 3.179); *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 98 (BEP 3.300) and 114 (313); Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.33.12 (PG 7A.1081A); Cyprian of Carthage, *Testimonia* 2.20 (PL 4.715A). Cf. also Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.26.22.
14. Cf. Tacitus, *Annals* 15.38; Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 6.38.
15. Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44.
16. Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39.1–4 (BEP 19.279f).
17. *Ibid.* 3.39.15 (281).
18. Mark 8:27; 9:33f; 10:17,32,46,52. Each of these passages may be contrasted, in this respect, to their parallels in Matthew and Luke. While Matt. 20:30 and Luke 18:36 do have the word *hodos* found in Mark 10:46, it is missing in every other instance of synoptic parallels to those verses in Mark. This fact indicates clearly that we are dealing with a special Marcan accent on the "way" of the cross.
19. This irony was noted by John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Matthaeum* 65.2 (PG 58.618); Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 17.7.9 (CCL 143A.856); the anonymous *Speculum Virginum* 7 (Corpus Christianorum, *Continuatio Medievalis* [hereafter CCM] 5.242); and Rupert of Deutz, *In Joannis Evangelium* 3.2 (CCM 9.132f).
20. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.21.2 (BEP 5.138); Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 35 (PG 32.129A); Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Joannem* 25.2 (PG 59.151); Haymo of Halberstadt, *Homiliae de Tempore* 38 (PL 11.239A–B); Rupert of Deutz, *De Divinis Officiis* 6.15 (CCM 7.197); *In Joannis Evangelium* 13.19 (CCM 9.751).
21. Clement of Alexandria, *Paidagogos* 1.6 (BEP 7.101); Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 16.2 (CCL 48.500); *Tractatus in Joannem* 28.5 (CCL 36.279); *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 126.4 (CCL 40.1859f); Fulgentius of Ruspe, *Epistola XIV ad Ferrandum* 41 (CCL 91.435f); Paschasius Radbertus, *Epistola ad Fredugardum* (CCM 16.158); Ambrose Autpert, *In Apocalypsin* 5 (CCM 27.415).
22. Chrysostom, *De Petitione Filiorum Zebedaei* 5 (PG 48.775).
23. Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* 5.8 (Patristische Texte und Studien 25.157).
24. Indeed, the dominical logion in Mark 10 was also taken to imply that when catechumens were martyred, the martyrdom supplied for baptism itself; cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 3.10 (BEP 39.63).
25. *Martyrium Polycarpi* 14 (BEP 3.25).

26. Chrysostom, In Primam ad Corinthios 32 (PG 61.271); cf. also his Homiliae in Matthaeum 65 (PG 72.619–620).
27. “martyrii poculum”—Cyprian, Epistolae 57.2.2 (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 3B.652).
28. “poculum martyrorum”—Tertullian, Scorpiace 12 (PL 2.148A).
29. “imitandus calix passionis”—Gregory the Great, Moralia in Job 17.7.9 (CCL 143A.856).
30. E.g., Augustine, Sermones de Scripturis 142.6 (PL 58.781); Enarrationes in Psalmos 37.16 (CCL 38.394); Rupert of Deutz, De Divinis Officiis 6.15 (CCM 7.198).
31. Origen, Exhortatio ad Martyrium 28–30 (BEP 9.51f); Selecta in Psalmos 115 (PG 12.1577B–C); In Matthaeum 16:5–6 (BEP 14.28–31). Cf. also his Homiliae in Jeremiam 12.2 (BEP 11.75–77).
32. Athanasius, Epistolae Heorasticae 5.3 (PG 26.1381).
33. Basil, In Psalmos 115 (PG 30.109); Didymus the Blind, Expositio in Psalmos 115 (PG 39.1556); Theodoret of Cyr, In Psalmos 115 (PG 80.1804A–B).
34. Jerome, Tractatus in Librum Psalmorum 115.13–15 (CCL 78.243f); Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos 115.5 (CCL 40.1655); Cassiodorus, Expositio in Psalmos 115.13 (CCL 98.1043); Haymo of Halberstadt, Homiliae de Tempore 38 (PL 118.239A); Gerard of Csanad, Deliberatio Supra Hymnum Trium Puerorum 5 (CCM 49.70); Thomas of Chobham, Sermones 10 (CCM 82A.105).
35. This item argues that Mark’s version of the story represents a simplification of an event that Matthew narrates in more precise detail, a point perfectly obvious to every church father who commented on the matter (e.g., Chrysostom, De Petitione Filiorum Zebedaei 4 [PG 48.773]). In contrast, E. P. Blair, J. C. Fenton and others have argued that Matthew invented the story about their mother so that James and John would not look quite so bad. The latter is a gratuitous and truly pathetic theory.
36. Gregory Nazianzen, Orationes 37.14 (PG 36.300B).
37. Ambrose, De Fide 5.56 (PL 16.688A).
38. “errore muliebri”—Paul the Deacon, Homiliae 84 (PL 95.1249D).
39. “apo haplotetos kai idioteias”—Origen, In Matthaeum 16.4 (BEP 14.21).
40. “fervore muliebri incitata”—Haymo of Halberstadt, Homiliae de Tempore 38 (PL 118.238D).
41. Paschasius Radbertus, In Matthaeum 9.20 (CCL 56B.992–993).
42. Eric of Auxerre, Homiliae 2.2 (CCL 116B.18).
43. John Chrysostom, Homiliae in Matthaeum 65.2 (PG 58.618).
44. Compare Matt. 27:56 with Mark 15:40; cf. also Mark 16:1.
45. Thus, Origen, In Matthaeum 16.6 (PG 13.1385A), and Chrysostom, In Acta Apostolorum 26.2 (PG 60.199).
46. Ambrose Autpert, In Apocalypsin 4 (CCM 27.284).
47. Origen, In Matthaeum 16.6 (PG 13.1385); also Fragmenta Syriaca in Matthaeum 403 (BEP 14.347).
48. Rupert of Deutz, In Joannis Evangelium 14 (CCM 9.788).
49. Cf. Rather of Verona, De Translatione Sancti Metronis 12 (CCM 46.26); Peter Damien, Sermones 64.2 (CCM 57.377).

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Scene from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*: "Eowyn and the Lord of the Nazgul"

Courage – "the readiness to fall in battle"

by Don Schwager

Good and bad heroes

What spurs men and women to risk their lives, as well as the lives of those under their command, in the face of great danger, peril, and death? Is it heroic courage against all odds, excessive confidence in their own strength, or foolhardy recklessness?

It takes courage – some would say “guts” – to overcome obstacles that can inflict great pain and harm. Courage, however, can be exercised foolishly or wisely, for a good cause or for evil, for selfish gain or for the benefit of others. Heroes are not born but are made – through the lessons they learn and the habits they acquire in facing the challenges and difficulties of daily life. Big heroes have a lot of courage because they have learned how to conquer their fears and overcome their aversion to pain and difficulties through meeting the little adversities and difficulties of daily life. When the really big struggles and life-threatening difficulties arise, they are ready to face them. It is in such times that one's true character and inner strength is revealed.

A professional soldier undergoes intensive training in the art of combat and survival. But none of this can prepare him for the test of character – that inner moral fiber that disposes him to act bravely instead of cowardly, wisely instead of foolishly, with tempered strength, integrity, and honor, rather than with contempt and abuse. How he treats his mates and his prisoners reveals the strength or weakness of his moral character. In the moment of crossfire or ambush, he will either panic and flee, or he will stand and fight to the death for his men. His response will bring into sharp relief the kind of character that was built into him. He is either in this for himself (to preserve his own skin) or he is in it for his mates (to defend, protect, and help them in need). The choice is often stark and clear – who comes first – myself or my fellows? Am I willing to put my own life on the front lines in order to protect my fellow men?



The courage of Christian martyrs

We can see this same lesson in the example of men, women, and children who were attacked for their Christian faith and threatened with torture and death. What made some seasoned Christians buckle under the pressure by renouncing their faith and falling into despair, while other younger or physically weaker Christians responded with an affirmation of their trust in God and were willing to renounce their life for Christ's sake? Until the test comes, we often don't know for sure how we or others will respond. But one thing is sure. God promises to give supernatural strength to those who will put their trust in him and not in themselves.

In the year 203 AD [Perpetua](#), a young well-educated 22-year-old mother with a nursing infant, made the decision to become a Christian, although she knew that this could result in death for her, since the emperor had outlawed the Christian religion. Perpetua was arrested with four other recently converted Christians. Despite the pleadings and tears of her father to renounce her faith and gain freedom, she went calmly to her death in the arena with serene faith and joy. Her companion in martyrdom was another Christian woman named Felicity who two days earlier had given birth to a child.

Faith doesn't grow by itself. Just as the physical human body needs a skeletal structure joined with ligaments and muscles, faith also needs to be buttressed with the moral virtues of courage, justice, temperance, and prudence, along with hope and love. The Apostle Peter states, "Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue" (2 Peter 1:5). When our faith is tested, courage helps us to hold firmly to the promises of God, even in the face of doubts and fears, and to confidently look to God to give us the strength to do his will.

Courage for daily living

Courage not only helps our faith to grow strong, it also helps us meet a variety of challenges and struggles we are likely to face in our daily life. If I feel lazy or sleepy in the morning, will I sleep in or force myself to get up in time to avoid being late for school or work? When it comes time to study and prepare for my exams, will I put the media and other interests aside, and take the effort needed to prepare well? Or will I choose to cut corners by cheating or bluffing my way through the exams? When I am asked to take on difficult assignments or an unpleasant task, do I try to make excuses? Will I go the extra mile when a co-worker or fellow student needs help catching up? Difficult tasks often require sustained effort to keep at them, especially when we encounter setbacks or other difficulties. Stubborn problems require diligent searching for solutions, resisting the urge to give up. Repairing damaged relationships, mending offensive remarks, and forgiving repeat offenders, often require the courage to forbear, forgive, and let go of resentments. It is easy to blow off steam and react when offended, but harder to "turn the other cheek" with

meekness (Matthew 5:39). It often takes courage to choose the more difficult path that leads to growth and maturity rather than the painless road to comfort and ease.

Courage helps us to do more than we would naturally be inclined to do, to go the extra mile when needed, to push through to the finish line even when we feel tired or exhausted, to endure the suffering, deprivation, and hardship that come our way. Courage is an inner strength because it keeps our mind resolute and our heart steady when we feel fainthearted, weak, or weary. It keeps us from giving up and running away when we need to stay the course.

There are different types of courage – such as the physical courage to climb a treacherous mountain or to defuse a land mine, the intellectual courage to persist in searching for a cure to fight a terminal illness, the heroic courage to lay down one's life to save others, like the soldier who throws himself on top of a live grenade, or the person on a sinking ship who gives his life jacket to the person who doesn't have one, and the moral courage to stand for the truth and to resist evil in the face of opposition and threats to one's life.

Moral courage is a virtue precisely because it consistently (habitually) chooses to do what is morally good in the face of difficulty and to resist what is morally wrong despite the pressure to conform or succumb.

[Need for heroes](#)

The world today needs heroes who are courageous, loyal, and ready to witness their Christian convictions even to the point of shedding their blood for Christ. When Hitler rose to power and began to promote his Nazi ideology, many Christians at first mistook it for social and economic progress. Those who listened more carefully and followed the moral convictions of their conscience began to speak up and point out the errors of Nazism and its uncompromising anti-Christian ideology. Martin Borman, a prominent Nazi official, said: "Priests will be paid by us and, as a result, they will preach what we want. If we find a priest acting otherwise, short work is to be made of him. The task of the priest consists in keeping the Poles quiet, stupid, and dull-witted." Many clergy who refused accommodation were silenced, imprisoned, or sent to concentration camps. [Dieterich Bonhoeffer](#), [Alfred Delp](#), [Sophie Sholl](#), [Edith Stein](#), and many others are recognized today as true German Christian heroes and martyrs who risked their lives by openly defending the gospel against the false claims of Nazism.

[Distortions of heroism](#)

Our present age, unfortunately, promotes distorted models of courage and heroism. The flawed hero and the antihero are very popular in the media. Video games and comic books are devoted to serializing antihero characters and villains who have little or no morals and scruples. They cheat, steal, maim and kill in epic fashion. They are great con artists, daredevils, rebels, and reckless adventurers who stop at nothing. Traditional heroes by contrast are often seen these days as old-fashioned, intolerant moralizers who are trying to turn the clock back to the good old days when heroes were seen as guardians of society who strove to root out evil in the land and make neighborhoods and schools safe for kids.

Can modern society survive without true heroes and guardians of moral values? [Charles Colson](#), in his book [Against the Night](#), writes:

Societies are tragically vulnerable when the men and women who compose them lack character. A nation or a culture cannot endure for long unless it is undergirded by common values such as valor, public-spiritedness, respect for others and for the law; it cannot stand unless it is populated by people who will act on motives superior to their own immediate interest. Keeping the law, respecting human life and property, loving one's family, fighting to defend national goals, helping the unfortunate, paying taxes – all these depend on the individual virtues of courage, loyalty, charity, compassion,

civility, and duty.

There can be no sound character nor any decent society without them. And sound character can only be won through courage and perseverance in the pursuit of what is good. The ancient Greeks and Romans took great pride in upholding their noble ideals and in honoring their heroes who bravely died defending them. Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations both eventually lost these ideals and collapsed through moral decay and excess. Our modern society will continue to decline and eventually collapse in the same way unless its leaders and teachers courageously choose to pursue the truth and restore moral order and virtue to their proper foundational role.

Overcoming vice with virtue

What role should Christians play in restoring virtue and moral truth to society, community, and family life? First we need to cultivate courage in our own lives, to embrace the truth courageously, live it, defend it, and teach it to others, especially our children. God has revealed his truth to us so that we can live well and not become slaves to fear, doubt, ignorance, and sin. It takes courage to pursue the truth of God’s word, believe it, and submit our lives to it. The second step is to reject whatever is contrary to the truth and to expose its falseness. And the third step is to promote and imitate good role models – men and women who have lived virtuous lives, who were honest, faithful, just, and compassionate.

One of the best ways to understand and teach virtue more clearly is by contrasting it with its opposite extremes (vices and bad habits). [See chart below.] The two extreme opposites of courage are false courage and escapism – avoiding difficulty through sloth and the fear of getting hurt. We usually associate courage with fear as its chief opposite. Sloth, however, opposes courage more strongly than fear because it drives away any incentive for wanting to be courageous in the first place.

Recklessness (false courage)	Fortitude (true courage)	Escapism (sloth and fear)
Being reckless or oblivious to danger is not courage. Reckless people take unnecessary risks and have excessive confidence in the face of danger or peril.	The courageous person strikes a balance between foolhardy recklessness and irrational fear and avoidance of pain and suffering.	The escapist doesn't want to face the truth nor pursue what is morally right and good, especially if it will require personal sacrifice, struggle, pain, and suffering.
Excessive fear can keep us from acting, but there are circumstances when the bravest and most difficult thing to do is wait patiently and endure.	Christian fortitude is the ability and readiness to undergo suffering, make sacrifices, and risk danger for the sake of doing God's will and for protecting others from physical and moral danger and harm.	A coward lacks the moral courage to face the truth and to do what is right and good, either out of timidity (fear of pain and suffering) or out of sorrow (lack of desire or interest in pursuing what is good).
False confidence, especially in physical strength, and a sense of fearlessness, is based upon a false evaluation of reality.	True fortitude does not trust itself, but is subordinate to justice and prudence. "Fortitude without justice is a lever of evil" (Ambrose of Milan). Fortitude grows with the dogged effort to study, to finish a task, render a service, or overcome laziness or some other fault.	Sloth is excessive sorrow which weighs upon the mind and makes one listless (wanting to do nothing) in the face of good, especially in the pursuit of what is morally and spiritually good for us – such as loving God and neighbor, doing God's will, overcoming vice with virtue.



False courage

False courage is reckless daring, foolhardy risk-taking, audacious bragging, and false confidence. Reckless people often take unnecessary risks with excessive confidence in the face of danger or peril. They “dive in head first” without thinking. Some are “dare-devils” because they engage in reckless and indiscriminate courting of danger for the thrill of it. False confidence, especially in physical strength, and a sense of fearlessness based upon a false appraisal and evaluation of reality is another form of false courage. It makes us think we are stronger than we really are.



Sloth

Sloth is an enemy of courage. It literally means “not caring” or “apathy.” [Sloth](#) is a kind of sadness in the face of some good that requires effort and choice – through searching, seeking, and achieving. And sloth drives out joy for what is truly good – God and his kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17). Sloth weighs upon the mind and makes a person listless (wanting to do nothing) in the face of good, especially of what is morally and

spiritually good – such as loving God and neighbor, doing God’s will, overcoming vice with virtue.

Sloth makes us look for joy in the wrong places. Pascal describes sloth as diversions and distractions we fill our lives and minds with to avoid facing the truth about who we are and are called to be in relationship with God. Sloth can spring from laziness (not wanting to put the effort in pursuing and doing what is good) or timidity (fearful of how difficult or painful it might be to do what is good). Sloth leads to indifference – a “don’t care” attitude – and to restless escapism (excessive busyness, diversions, and distractions), and a refusal to work at our heavenly task (to seek first the kingdom of God).

[Peter Kreeft](#), a prolific Christian writer and professor of philosophy, describes sloth as the chief modern sin holding us back from pursuing God and his kingdom.

There is a deep spiritual sorrow at the heart of modern civilization because it is the first civilization in all of history that does not know who it is or why it is, that cannot answer the three great questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? and Where am I going?

This is the most terrifying thing of all to us, because our primary need is denied, our need for meaning. This tenor is so great that it must be pushed down far into the unconscious by sloth, or we would go insane. So we cover it up with a thousand busynesses. Thus, paradoxically, it is our very sloth that produces our frantic activism. ([Back to Virtue](#), Chapter 11, by Peter Kreeft)

Fear

Another obstacle to courage is fear, especially the fear of suffering that makes us shy away from living according to our convictions, standing up for the truth, and doing what is right in the face of difficulty. Fear makes us run away from problems and difficulties. It hinders us from taking decisive action. Unreasoning timidity and being too affected by the opinions of others can be debilitating because they keep us from holding to our convictions and standing for what is right.

Courage, on the other hand, empowers us to take on what is hard and to persevere through the difficulties. It fortifies a spirit of strength and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7). Courage both allows us to overcome fear and it restrains excessive boldness as well. Often fear can keep us from acting, but there are circumstances when the bravest and most difficult thing to do is wait patiently and endure. Courage steers a middle course between cowardliness on the one side and foolhardiness on the other.

Courage – fortitude

The English word *courage* comes from the French word *coeur* and the Latin word *cor* which means "heart," or "to have heart" which is another way of saying "to be brave." Another Latin word for courage is *fortitudo* which comes from the root word *fortis* which means "strength." Both *courage* and *fortitude* were used interchangeably until more recent times. The virtue of fortitude is more than “gutsy courage” or taking daring risks. Courage (fortitude) is the trait of persisting in or going after what is good or right in the face of difficulty (danger of harm or loss, of toil or suffering). Christian fortitude is a strength of mind and heart and the readiness to undergo suffering or risk danger for the sake of doing God’s will and overcoming evil with good.

Josef Pieper, a German Christian philosopher, has written extensively on the seven cardinal virtues (faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance). He describes fortitude as one of the key virtues every person needs for living a morally good life.

Fortitude presupposes vulnerability; without vulnerability there is no possibility of fortitude. An angel cannot be brave, because he is not vulnerable. To be brave actually means to be able to suffer injury. Because man is by nature vulnerable, he can be brave.

By injury we understand every assault upon our natural inviolability, every violation of our inner peace; everything that happens to us or is done with us against our will; that everything in any way negative, everything painful and harmful, everything frightening and oppressive.

The ultimate injury, the deepest injury, is death. And even those injuries which are not fatal are pre-figurations of death; this extreme violation, this final negation, is reflected and effective in every lesser injury.

Thus, all fortitude has reference to death. All fortitude stands in the presence of death. Fortitude is basically readiness to die, or more accurately, readiness to fall, to die, in battle. (*The Four Cardinal Virtues*, by Josef Pieper)

Along with overcoming fear, courage inspires one to do great things. Magnanimity is also related to courage. Magnanimity is the virtue of being great of mind and heart. It encompasses a willingness to face danger and trouble with tranquility and firmness; it raises a person above revenge and makes him delight in acts of benevolence. It makes him disdain injustice and meanness, and prompts him to sacrifice personal ease, interest, and safety for the accomplishment of useful and noble purposes. Such a person is self-possessed and is unaffected by the opinion of others. That person takes delight in helping others, and is generous with his resources, especially in the service of the gospel and the Lord's people.

Patience is also connected to courage. Patience enables us to bear affliction without anxiety or discouragement. Patience is courage borne out over time (James 1:2-4; Luke 21:19). Courage also requires that we be ready to die for the sake of what is right. We must be willing to die rather than sin. The martyrs, by laying down their lives for Christ and the spread of the gospel, make the supreme act of courage.

How do we grow in the virtue of fortitude?

Courage (fortitude) cannot be taught in a textbook or in a course. It can only be taught by role models – by men and women who live it and who show others, especially their children, how they have learned to break bad habits and vices and how they have learned to acquire good habits and virtues. Jesus taught by precept and by example (Luke 10:37, John 13:15). Both go hand in hand. Bad example reinforces bad behavior and good example reinforces good behavior. Proverbs says, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). There is no short path to growth in character and moral maturity.

Servais Pinckaers, a noted Christian moral teacher, wisely taught that courage calls for wise educators – parents, teachers, and pastoral workers – who can lead by example as much as by precept and training.

The development of courage (fortitude) is progressive. It is acquired far more through small victories of self-conquest, repeated day after day, than through dreams of great actions. It grows with the dogged effort to study, to finish a task, render a service, or overcome laziness or some other fault. There will also be battles to fight, trials to encounter, small and great sufferings to endure, reaching their pitch in the illness and death of loved ones.

There is no course in courage, like courses in music or the other arts. Its best school is the family,

where we learn from our parent's example, wise discipline, and the encouragement we receive to make personal efforts and persevere in them. Courage, like any virtue, calls for educators rather than professors.

Courage, which the Romans considered as the highest of virtues, is a characteristic of the morally mature person. It is indispensable for complete moral freedom. (*The Sources of Christian Ethics*, by Servais Pinckaers, O.P.)

The greatest of all teachers is the Lord Jesus himself who calls us to walk in his way of love, truth, joy, and courage. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit he gives us the help, wisdom, and strength we need to overcome whatever obstacles and challenges we may have to face. Nothing can shake our faith or separate us from God's love if we root our lives in Jesus Christ and trust in his word.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

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Sloth – the deadly vice of our present age

by Peter Kreeft

Of all the seven deadly sins, sloth is the most distinctively modern. Nothing so clearly distinguishes modern Western society from all previous societies as its sloth.

Sloth is not just laziness. There are two kinds of laziness, the first of which is only mildly, or venially sinful, the second not a sin at all. Not working, or not working hard, at good and necessary earthly tasks is a venial sin. Preferring the pleasures of resting to the sweat of needed labor is irresponsible and self-indulgent; but it is not the mortal sin of sloth. Sloth refuses to work at our heavenly task.

The second kind of laziness belongs to a phlegmatic or slow temperament, such as is associated with the lifestyle of hot climates. “It’s a lazy afternoon in summer” is a kind of delight, and sloth has no delight. Relaxing is not sloth. The person who never relaxes is not a saint but a fidget.

Ironically, it is often just such a fidget who is guilty of sloth. And here at last we are ready to clear up the paradoxical claim made at the beginning, that activist modernity is slothful, by asking the obvious but seldom-asked question: Why are we so busy? Why, in this great age of time-saving devices, does no one have any free time? Why, now that we have technology to do our labor, is life emptier of leisure than it ever was in pretechnological societies? What are we hiding from ourselves with all this pointless and unhappifying activism?

We are hiding ourselves; we are hiding the God-sized hole in our hearts, the hole in the foundation of our existence. We try to paper the hole over with a thousand things, but they are all thin, and we know we will fall through the hole if we get too close. So we don’t. We avoid God’s absence as much as God’s presence. We are slothful.

There is a deep spiritual sorrow at the heart of modern civilization because it is the first civilization in all of history that does not know who it is or why it is, that cannot answer the three great questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? and Where am I going?

This is the most terrifying thing of all to us, because our primary need is denied, our need for meaning. This tenor is so great that it must be pushed down far into the unconscious by sloth, or we would go insane. So we cover it up with a thousand busynesses. Thus, paradoxically, it is our very sloth that produces our frantic activism.

Our lust is also a cover-up for sloth. Thomas Aquinas explains in the *Summa* how “something arises from sorrow in two ways: first, that man shuns whatever causes sorrow, secondly, that he turns to other things that give him pleasure: thus those who find no joy in spiritual pleasures [that is sloth] turn to pleasures of the body [lust].” As Walker Percy puts it, since modern man fears he is a ghost, he has to assure himself of his reality by lust. Ghosts don’t get erections.

The familiar face of sloth in our world can be identified from Saint Thomas’ further description of it as “an oppressive sorrow which so weighs upon a man’s mind that he wants to do nothing.” Sound familiar? It’s a pretty exact, clinical description of what we call depression. It is a symptom or effect of boredom.

Now why are we bored? Why this distinctively modern phenomenon? The very word for it did not exist in premodern languages! Above all, how do we explain the irony that the very society which for the first time in history has conquered nature by technology and turned the world into a giant fun-and-games factory, a rich kid’s playroom, the very society which has the least reason to be bored, is the most bored? Why is an American child playing with ten thousand dollars worth of video equipment more bored than an Indian child playing with two sticks and a stone?

The answer is inescapable. There is only one thing that never gets boring: God. The God-shaped vacuum in us is infinite and cannot be filled with any finite objects or actions. Therefore if we are bored with God, we will be bored with everything. For as Saint Augustine says, he who has God has everything; he who has everything but God has nothing; and he who has God plus everything else does not have any more than he who has God alone.

Modern man has sloth, that is, sorrow about God, because God is dead to him. He is the cosmic orphan. Nothing can take the place of his dead Father; all idols fail, and bore. When God is dead, it is the time of the twilight of the gods as well.

[This article is excerpted from the book, *Back to Virtue*, Chapter 11, (c) 1992 Peter Kreeft, and published by Ignatius Press, San Francisco. Used with permission.]

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Drinking Fountains, Napkins, and Trash Cans

by Clare Darnell

As an American living in Europe for the past year, I am often asked the question “what do you miss most from home?” Besides the obvious answer of friends and family, my answer usually surprises people. I find myself often in search of common objects like a drinking fountain, a napkin, or a trash can (rubbish bin for those non-American English speakers). These objects, though present in Europe, are much more available in the United States, and it is in their scarcity that I miss them.

What pulled me away from my home and the familiarities that it provides? I decided to do a [Gap year](#) of voluntary Christian service. In our international network of Christian communities, the [Sword of the Spirit](#), young people (ages 18-25) have the opportunity to devote a time of their life to serve in various ways in one of our Christian communities. Often the service involves direct personal evangelism- telling other people about the Good News of Jesus Christ. This can be quite daunting especially since the typical image of a missionary in the secular world is of a person wearing an oversized cross holding a Bible in one hand and a machete in



the other, thrashing through the jungle of some distant land. But here I am, living in a modern western country far from my home and living as a missionary. I have found that at times it has been pretty hard being in Europe where faith is often harder to find than those objects I miss from home. But I have found hope in the many signs of real faith that I have discovered there. I have seen a variety of Christians expressing their love for the Gospel through their hospitality shown to me, in their generous sharing of resources for the spread of the Gospel – especially time and money, and in the significant amount of intercessory prayer they do as well. It is through these acts that I am encouraged to continue and preserve despite the difficult faith climate in Europe.



The desperate need for Europe to hear the truth and the beauty of the Gospel, and the shining glimmers of light that I have experienced through other people's faith, have led me to abandon those little luxuries of drinking fountains, napkins, and trash cans in order to continue being a missionary in Europe for another year. Perhaps my life would be a bit easier if I were back home doing things I am familiar with, but the joy I have experienced here in Europe to help build Christ's kingdom overrides any small discomforts I might experience. My prayer now is that I will have the strength to continue working for the spread of the Gospel like the missionaries who I have encountered here, and that other people will also rise up and respond to the need for God's love to be declared courageously in our homes, to a neighbor or even in another country.



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Father Knows Best

by Michael Shaughnessy

Sometimes the abandonment of authority happens subtly. Dad hardly noticed that he shared his authority with the script writers of CBS television by allowing his children to watch *Father Knows Best*.

Soon they were watching *All in the Family* with its message that Dad, like Archie Bunker, clearly did not know best. Dad heard something idiotic and might have voiced his disagreement with the script, but the kids heard, "Parents aren't with it. Why even listen to them?" Television brought another authority into the house, shaping the children's world view, and dad and mom allowed it.

Farewell Norman Rockwell

Today's family might be captured in this scene from a recent episode of *Modern Family*. Mom is serving dinner to the family at table where each person is on a device. She says, "O.K. That's it! Everybody, gadgets down, now! Families are supposed to talk." The daughter says, "Mom's insane," and they all return to their screens. Cue the canned laughter. The lesson is clear – parents should not control the use of gadgets.

A modern family of four may sit together in the living room, yet be in four different realities. Dad is watching sports on his computer, mom is checking her flickr photos on her iPad. Their daughter is sending her 197th text of the day on her phone and their son is playing Super Mario on his Xbox with a boy living in Hong Kong.

Authority Under Fire

Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Ephesians 6:1

Why does God command this? God doesn't command us to sleep or eat. He doesn't need to.

Commandments are intended to address our sinful state so we will not do what is wrong: lie, slander, steal, commit adultery or disobey.

God orders children to obey their parents because parents teach children to obey God and his truth. It is hard for children to obey their parents if parents don't expect it.

This week's news story about a Toronto couple raising a genderneutral child makes a point. "What we noticed is that parents make so many choices for their children. It's obnoxious." So say parents who are making a huge, and foolish choice for their child.

Parental abuse or abandonment of their authority is part of their sinful condition. That's obnoxious!

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4.

An iPad, smart-phone, television, mp3 player, Gameboy, or Kindle can hold the modern family captive in an odd sort of unity as each periodically interrupts the others with the latest, funniest, most awesome, or coolest picture, video, joke or news, before they all go back to what they were doing: sucking giga bytes of digital data into their cozy family cocoon.

Sharing Your Shaping

Children's lives are now regularly being shaped, not by the parents, but by whoever is at the other end of their children's gadgets. In the modern world you probably can't get rid of all the gadgets, but it is still the parents' responsibility to "authorize" their use, knowing that they are giving away authority every time they buy a new gadget.

Parents should know the power they are giving into the hands of others before they give it. It is hard to take back.

[Michael Shaughnessy is an elder in [The Servants of the Word](#) and the Director of [Kairos in North America](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people.]

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Trinity, scene from Lebanon, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 150 cm, by David Kurani

Spring in Lebanon

recent art work by David Kurani

David is a noted Lebanese landscape artist. He teaches classes in art and theater at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. David has exhibited widely in art galleries and private collections throughout Lebanon, Europe, and the USA. He recently completed a 6-month sabbatical dedicated to painting the Lebanese landscape. He and his wife Gisele and their three sons are active members of the People of God in Lebanon, a member community of the Sword of the Spirit.

Spring time in Lebanon

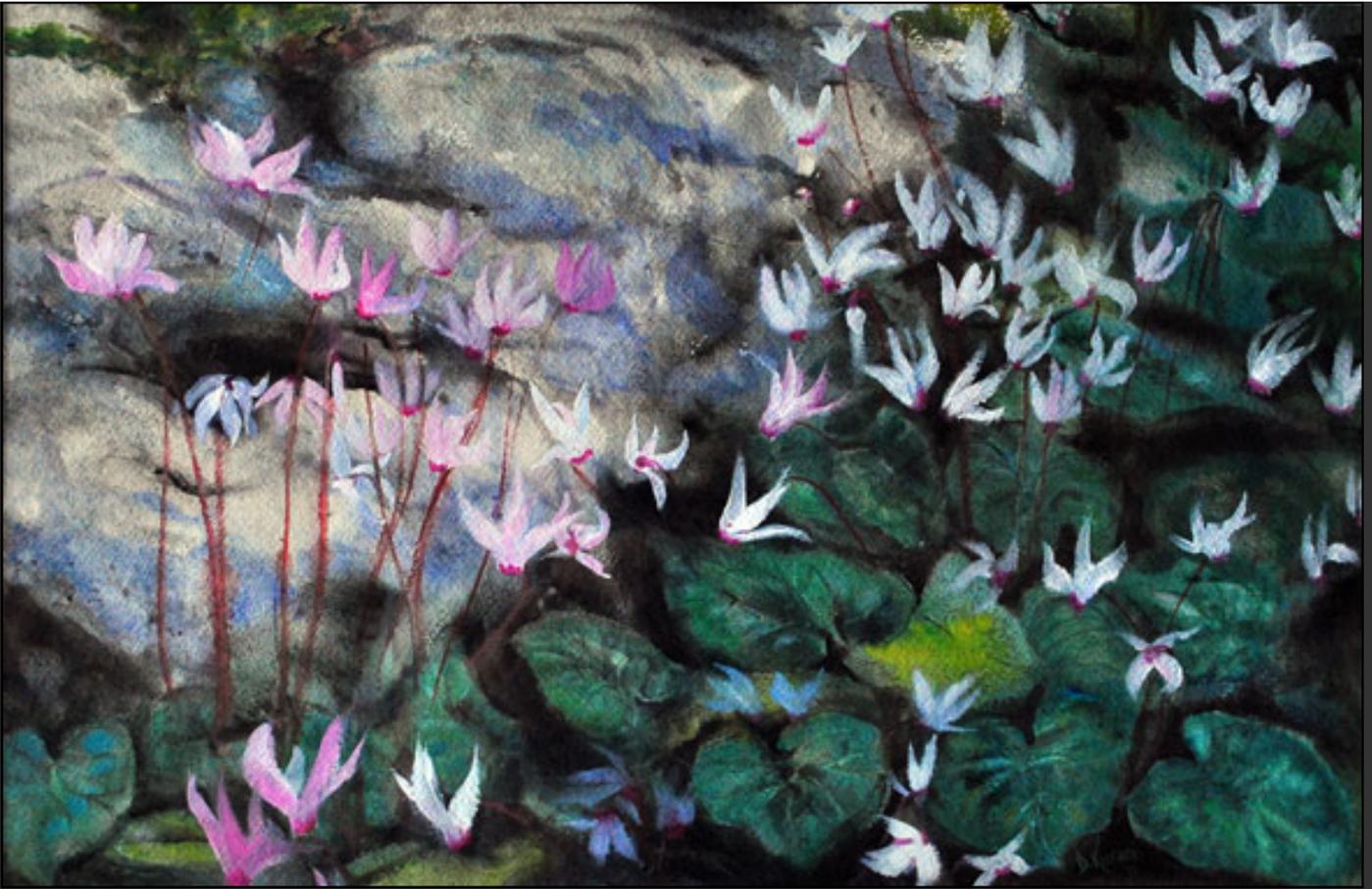
From the artist: I love painting nature - just going outside and looking at it is medicine for my soul. I feel palpably better after gazing at it. To try and capture some of its beauty and upbuilding effects can be both a challenge and a relaxation at the same time. And I feel happy contentment if I am able to capture some of it and bring it inside to those who cannot go outside so much, or to the

particularities of that interesting place/time/light.

Of course God is behind it all. The scenery is his handwriting, the weather his mood, the appreciation of them his inspiration and the creative process his impulse built on his precedent. I am reminded of a thought offered by Bernard of Clairvaux which goes, in effect: "The beauty around us is meant to remind us of, and point us towards, the perfection of beauty in its author and creator, our God." I thank God every time I finish a picture; I feel each one is a gift from him.



Foliage by the sea looking towards Beirut skyline, watercolor 47 x 64 cm, by David Kurani



Cyclamen, watercolor with body color 47 x 64 cm, by David Kurani

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You Are Mine

song and verse by Ellie Giles

The life I live is not my own,
For what I have I give to you.
For you, O Lord, I claim as my prize.

Holy, worthy, beautiful are you.
You are mine, and I am yours.
And though I cannot see you, I believe.
You are mine.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
Holy, worthy,
You are mine.

Click [here](#) to listen to an [mp3 audio clip](#) of the song

Last year during my second year of university, I experienced a particularly challenging and joyful time in my relationship with the Lord because of a consistent, clear call he gave me to live a life of martyrdom. Over the course of several months, this call from the Lord was given to me repeatedly through different words, Scripture passages, and other people. God was not asking me to travel to the most dangerous place in the world to preach the gospel to cannibals; rather, he was asking me to live a life of complete

surrender no matter the circumstances, no matter the cost. He was asking me to sacrifice everything I had – my time, my studies, my money, my relationships, my family, my strengths, my weaknesses – in order to seek him alone, and he was showing me that the call to martyrdom is not just for grown-ups. I was given this call even as a student.

While I felt very challenged by this radical call God had placed on my life, I also felt overwhelmed by two things: first, the peace I had in forsaking other things, even good things, so as to claim Christ as my one prize; and second, the joy I had in saying “yes!” to a life of complete surrender. This call is one I know I will be striving after during my whole life, and although I fall down daily, God continues to pick me up and brush me off, reminding me not so much of my weakness but of his strength.

In response to this call, I wrote the song [*You Are Mine*](#), and this past summer, I had the opportunity to record it with some friends for the [Detroit Summer Outreach Music CD *Overwhelmed*](#). Recording the song was a huge blessing to me, and I hope that it can inspire others, as it continues to inspire me, to live a life of single-hearted devotion to the Lord.

Ellie Giles is an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She is actively involved in [University Christian Outreach at U of M](#) and in the [Word of Life Community](#) in Ann Arbor.



Ellie attending a university art exhibit

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