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

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A Large Pearl Collection?

The power of the Holy Spirit is not only for us.

by Bruce Yocum

Making sacrifices to follow the Lord

A number of years ago I was visiting a young Nicaraguan man — a husband and the father of four children. The economic difficulties in Nicaragua had been increasing rapidly. The morning of my visit, the government had once again devalued the córdoba against the dollar. Worse, it doubled the price of gasoline.

This meant that the young man would be earning less money in a week than it cost him to pay for gasoline to drive to his job.

This young husband and father is a Christian. I asked him the obvious question, “How can you feed your family and raise your children in an economic situation like this?”

“I can’t,” he replied.

“What will you do?” I asked him. He smiled and said, “God will take care of me. And so will my brothers and sisters in the Lord.”

I often think, “I thank God I am not called to live a life as difficult as that of my Nicaraguan friend.” Aren’t you and I fortunate? We do not have to make those sacrifices to follow the Lord.

Or do we?

Jesus and the rich young man

“And behold, one came up to him, saying, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter eternal life, keep the commandments.’ He said to him, ‘Which?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The young man said to him, ‘All these I have observed; what do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possession” (Matthew 19:16-22).

Using our resources for the Lord

That rich young man was not forced to give away what he had. Difficult economic circumstances did not strip him of his possessions. Jesus simply asked him to give them away for the sake of the kingdom of God. Jesus asked him to take on a more difficult life for the sake of the kingdom of God. I know many places where you and I could voluntarily give away our possessions. I know many Christians around the world who are in serious need of food, clothing, and shelter.

I know many places where the gospel could be preached more effectively if there were more financial resources. Many people could provide us with opportunities to sell all that we have and give it for the Lord’s sake. Or perhaps the issue for us is our time — do we use it primarily for ourselves or for the Lord?

Many years ago a young minister, David Wilkerson, felt God calling him to take the time he spent watching television and simply give it to God in prayer. God began to move in his life. Later Wilkerson wrote a book about what God had done for him — *The Cross and the Switchblade*. Years after that, some young Catholics read that book, and in part because of that, were baptized in the Holy Spirit. These Catholics were instrumental in the beginnings of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a movement which has now brought new spiritual life to tens of millions.

Why did God do this? Why did he act in David Wilkerson’s life? Why did he send the charismatic renewal? For what reason have you and I experienced an outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit?

Is it so that we can experience a more comfortable Christian life?

Rewritten parables

George Martin, author of *Reading Scripture as the Word of God: Practical Approaches and Attitudes*, once told me one of his “rewritten parables”: “And the man went and found the pearl of great price. So he bought that pearl and took it home and put it in his pearl collection.”

George’s rewritten parable points out our great temptation to take the gifts of God and add them to our own personal collection of comfortable advantages and treasures.

Why has God poured out his Spirit? Not just to make our Christian life more pleasant, but to give us the power to live as disciples of Christ. Through his Holy Spirit God gave that young man in Nicaragua the power to live for God — joyfully and *radically*. Has not God sent the Holy Spirit to us for the same reason?

[Bruce Yocum is President of Christ the King Association and a member of the International Executive Council of The Sword of the Spirit. This article was originally published in New Covenant Magazine, February 1989.]

LIVING BULWARK sources of strength and renewal for Christian life and mission

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Members from 17 communities mixed freely in sharing festive meals, games, hikes, singing, prayer, and workshops

A Taste of Heaven Together On Holiday

A happy holy holiday with 640 men, women, and children from Christian communities in Europe and Lebanon

by Tadgh Lynch

Seven days – seven nights – [on holiday](#) with 640 people – men, women, children of all ages – singles, celibates, married couples and families – who journeyed hundreds of miles by boat, plane, train, bus, car, and motor bike – from Lebanon, Ireland, Poland, Spain, and Russia – just to name a few of the places from which members of more than a 17 Christian communities of the Sword of the Spirit gathered together in De Vossemere, Belgium, during the week of August 3 – 10, 2007.

Tadgh Lynch is a youth leader and member of Nazareth Community in Dublin, Ireland. For the past year he has served as a Gapper in a London-based evangelistic training program for university students sponsored by Kairos in Europe and the MiddleEast, an international youth outreach organization of the Sword of the Spirit. Tadgh shares his experience of this remarkable community vacation.



Young and old alike enjoyed rich times of entertainment, fellowship, praise, and singing

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen (Hebrews 11:1).

Some things are not simply hard to describe or explain in words, they altogether elude our human senses and our normal perception of reality. Who can describe the invisible world of angels and demons, God's glory and his kingdom, the resurrection and the afterlife in paradise?

Joining some 640 other Christians for a week of prayer, fellowship, and holiday together in the lovely forests and lakes surrounding De Vosseren, Belgium, I experienced God doing something quite extraordinary. The word I wanted to use to describe it was "intangible" and yet I felt that that didn't quite fit.

Well, the English dictionary gave me some idea of what this elusive word means, such as:

1. Incapable of being perceived by the senses
2. Incapable of being realized or defined
3. Incorporeal.

I didn't feel as though any of these really expressed what I had felt over the week or what the Lord had been about.



Cars were banned in De Vosseren Park to make way for bicyclists, strollers, roller skaters, boarders, and walkers

To describe *[On Holiday](#)* as “incapable of being perceived by the senses” wouldn’t really make sense. There was something uniquely sensuous about ***On Holiday*** – you couldn’t miss it. Families inviting each other to share wonderful meals tickled our palettes. Foamy, frothy Belgian beer, sharp, rich coffee and dark chocolate were excellent accompaniments to serious chats and informal gatherings alike. The dulcid tones of the ***On Holiday*** choir delighted us in the evenings. Sculptures, paintings and photographs drew the eye as we walked in and out of our conference center while times of vibrant worship lifted our hearts and our hands. As if to remind us that we had yet to reach heaven, a generous portion of rain landed upon De Vossemeren in the final two days and assailed virtually every sense but couldn’t dampen the spirit. In fact, my senses were in need of a good break as we returned home.

Was ***On Holiday*** “incapable of being realized or defined”? In a way what was amazing about ***On Holiday*** was that it was realized at all. The amount of work involved in transporting and catering for over 600 brothers and sisters of many languages and cultures was immense and yet was coolly realized and managed by an efficient and unhurried group of volunteers. A motto of one of our Sword of the Spirit communities in Europe is “service equals growth”. The Lord blessed our brothers and sisters in their service and allowed their efforts to grow the very project itself, until the amazing number of 640 people from 17 communities (from Europe, Lebanon, and some other continents as well) came to celebrate with each other.

Our focus at ***On Holiday*** was to “experience a taste of heaven together” and yet the Lord called us to continue stepping out in faith here on Earth during this special time. John Keating, an international leader in the Sword of the Spirit, exhorted us to train our spirits to hope in God and to believe in the promises the Lord had for us, as Abraham believed in God’s promise for his people, though he would only see the seed. Bruce Yocum, one of the founders of the Community of Communities movement, encouraged the body to “get back in the boat” and cast out our nets afresh for a new catch. Young people from across the region exhorted, encouraged and insulted their ancestors in community as they spoke of the need for a fresh fire and zeal to proclaim the gospel amongst us. Not only was the spirit of ***On Holiday*** capable of being defined – it was being realized in our midst that week.



Catholic Archbishop George Bakouni from Tyre joined some 90 other people from Lebanon communities attending ***On Holiday***

To describe something as “incorporeal” is to suggest that it has no body, no physical existence in the material world. This, one could be tempted to suggest, is true of community. Have you ever tried to explain to another person what it is that you do on a Sunday after church? Or on a Tuesday night with your small group? Or have you ever told them how you do that thing with 600 other people on holiday? In a way, community is incorporeal – it has no body, it is difficult to grasp, to touch, to take hold of. Yet this is only so because we ourselves are the body that make up community, we ourselves make it corporeal, we ourselves – talking, sharing, praying, living together on holiday made up *[On Holiday](#)* in a way that could be seen, experienced, realized and yet not fully grasped.

Abraham, we are told, “looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). In De Vossemeren, Belgium, we were given a chance to see what those foundations may look like and hear the Lord’s call to dig them together. Intangible is nothing...

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Participants from the Genesis Academy also attended [On Holiday](#)

Living Generous Lives

by Brian Shell

Putting it all on the line

This past August I was at the [On Holiday](#) gathering of 640 people from the Sword of the Spirit communities in Europe and the Middle East Region, in De Vossermeren, Belgium. The Lord spoke a word to those present, and particularly to the young men and women there, people my age. The word is that he is calling us to live generous lives. He does not want a generous gift, nor is he asking for us to live a decent Christian life, but rather to put it all on the line and to give our last penny.

To live a generous life does not mean to go on a mission trip, or to give more than the usual to the church or a Christian community, nor even to sign up for a service over and above what we are asked. These might all be aspects of living generously, but what the Lord was telling us was that to live a generous life was first and foremost a question of the heart, mind, and will. From these flow actions. If these are set on living for others — far beyond the proverbial “call of duty” — then our giving, our going, our living will reflect that.

Transforming one's heart

In reality, our living always reflects what is in our minds and hearts (Matthew 12:33). As I thought about this I wondered at the fact that I do not always know what is in my heart, and when I do, it is often a very blurred knowledge. I recalled a story of a hermit who was sitting in silence beside a small pond and a traveler passing by saw him. He approached and asked the monk why he always sat in solitude and silence. The peaceful hermit dipped his hand into the water and scooped up some water and let it fall back into the pool. He asked the traveler to look into the pool and tell him what he saw. The traveler responded that all he could see was water. The monk went on to explain that our heart is like this pool of water, and then he asked the pilgrim to look again. He saw his own perfect

reflection in the now still water.

This was a simple story I heard as a child, but as I thought about living generously, about not giving money or even time, but giving my whole self, I knew that I must teach my heart and my mind a new way. So this is the first step to living generously: knowing and transforming my heart.

A new response to the Lord's call

This call at De Vossermeren was given in a special way to the young people in the Sword of the Spirit, but also to the less young. Peter was a grown man when the Lord called him; Abraham was an old man. Yet God asked them the same question that he asked the rich young man in the tenth chapter of Mark. After the young man affirmed that he had kept all the commandments from his youth, Jesus said lovingly to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” The call that we received in De Vossermeren is not a new one, but our response must be new.

So it is not only a matter of the heart, but also of letting this “heart condition” change our actions, letting it affect our whole lives. For the young, like myself, this can feel daunting. We plan on having many years left in our life, and just the simple phrase “our life” seems to be taken away in this invitation. Yet if we can trust in the promises of Christ before we trust in our emotions or fear, then we will remember the promise he makes twice in Matthew, that “whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Responding with faith and hope

We are surely rich men and women. Not only with our modern world's long-life expectancy and our comforts unimagined in Jesus' time, but also in the possessions that cannot be priced: our families, community life, and not least the costly salvation Jesus bought for us with his blood. How many of us, will hear this invitation from the Lord and, like the young man in the Gospel, be “disheartened by the calling, and go away sorrowful” because we love our possessions too much? Or will we rather respond in faith to this call, setting our hope “fully on the grace that will be brought to us” when we say yes to the Lord (1 Peter 1:13). With the help of this continued grace, and with real decisions, this way of generous living can permeate our Christian communities, our homes, our workplaces, and produce a deeper conversion of heart. So let us follow the example of the widow, putting all we have (even if it is only two pennies) onto the altar; and after we have put all, to give ourselves and let us see where that takes us.

[Brian Shell is an affiliate member of the [Servants of the Word](#). He is currently a university student in Beirut and actively involved in [University Christian Outreach](#).]

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Preparing Children for a Spirit-filled Life

by Jerry Munk

“You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you. It is also for your children” (Acts 2:38&39 ICB).

Grace for Spirit-filled family life

The whole of the Christian life can be summed up in one word: grace. Grace is God’s undeserved gifts, which He pours into our life each and every day. Through God’s grace I came to know Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Through His grace I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Through His grace I was introduced to the [Work of Christ Community](#), where I received the teaching, fellowship, and tangible support needed to sustain my Christian life through the years. And, through His grace I met and married a wonderful Christian woman: my wife Jan.

The Lord has continued to pour His grace into our family. When our children were quite young, many parents in our community came to the conclusion that our children should share fully in our life together — including the charismatic aspect of that life. We began praying for them to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and they were. About this time, the community developed a special prayer meeting so the children could experience charismatic worship with their peers. We also made room for the children to exercise their charismatic gifts in the adult gatherings. In addition, the Work of Christ began a summer children’s camp. The week contained all of the things you would expect: games, crafts, boats, swimming, and, of course, camp food. It also featured a lot of activities aimed at spiritual development. But, the most important event at camp was the “Gathering for Christ” where we would pray for the children to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. At camp, the children would be prayed with year after year: not because what happened the previous year did not “stick” but because the children had matured and were ready for more.

Daily life in the Spirit

The charismatic life is not just about summer camp and prayer meetings; it is mostly about day-to-day life. Families in our community were encouraged to have family prayer — including charismatic prayer — on a regular basis. This, too, was a gift of God’s grace.

Somewhere in all of this, it seemed right to take our own children, one by one, through the Life in the Spirit Seminar. We wanted to be personally involved in our children's spiritual life and to share with them this material that had been so pivotal in our own lives. For several weeks in a row, Jan and I would sit down with one of our children and work through the outlines with them — making the content understandable at a child's level. (I have a strong opinion that it is especially helpful for Dad to be the visible leader in all of this, but I will spare you that lecture.) When it was time for the prayer session, we invited another family for the Lord's Day meal and afterwards prayed with the child to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

What a blessing it has been to see our children grow up living a Spirit-filled Christian life. They were blessed with regular opportunities to exercise their spiritual gifts at both children and adult gatherings. They first attended and then served at summer camp. They participated in regional youth retreats and conferences. They went on mission trips, joined [University Christian Outreach](#), and lived in Christian household. As young adults, they, and many of their peers in the community, have a maturity in the Holy Spirit that comes from many years of living in the Holy Spirit.

[Jerry Munk is a coordinator of the [Work of Christ community](#) in Lansing, Michigan, USA. His wife Jan serves as a senior woman leader in the Work of Christ. Their three grown children, Ruthie, James, and Christina, are actively involved in [The Sword of the Spirit](#) and its outreaches. This article is excerpted from Jerry's recent book, *Life in the Spirit Seminar for Children* and is available from [Tabor House](#).]

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photo illustration by Jamie Treadwell

Answering the Cries

A post-graduate American finds hungry searchers for God in London

by Hannah Gornik

Crying out for a savior

I was watching the movie *Superman Returns* the other night, and the hero said something which really struck me. “You say that the world doesn’t need a savior — but everywhere I go I hear people crying out for one.” In 2005, I was just finishing my studies in psychology at Notre Dame University, and I heard the same cry. I had applied for a variety of business jobs, but gradually realized that what I wanted to do was share the gospel, particularly with university students. I worked as a resident assistant in halls of Norte Dame University, and every day I saw the brokenness of lives lived without a savior. My own faith and my experience of living in Christian community had convinced me that I wanted to share the gospel in the context of a faith-filled Christian environment. When I heard that [Koinonia](#), a university student outreach in London, was looking for a staff worker, I jumped at the chance. It was a two year commitment, in a different culture and a new community, but I heard the cries of those students and knew this was where I had been called.

Planting a seed of faith

The idea of western Europe as a mission field might seem a bit odd to some — but after spending a summer in Dublin in 2004, I had felt a call to the particular challenges found in the “post-Christian” societies. The students I have met in London seem a long way from a living faith in Jesus Christ. Growing up in the UK and in western Europe, a majority of them have seldom, if ever, been to church. Most of their parents did not attend church, so their attitude towards religious belief is either complete apathy or slight curiosity. Some also have strong intellectual arguments against faith. Many of them have not thought about God, let alone death or sin. That is where our work begins. For most of these people, a short conversation when we give them a free cup of coffee is the only chance we get to share the gospel. In that brief window of opportunity, we try to plant a seed of faith.

Helping searchers of the truth

This past academic year we ran a lunchtime course in which we examined some big life questions, such as why suffering exists and whether God is relevant, and we presented the Christian response. We had quite a few people come along, and our hope is that through hearing the presentations and getting to know us, they will eventually come to faith in Jesus Christ. But they are in some ways the exception, willing to engage the big questions and search until they find the truth. Many more students here in London will not even approach the questions.

This may seem like a bleak environment in which to spread the gospel, but I see a lot of hope here. There are students who are really searching, and in some ways they are more open and curious than in other places. The difficulties people face in living and working in this city make our community life in Koinonia that much more visible. People see our life and are drawn to it, because it shines so brightly. Non-Christians come to events like our Lord's Day celebration because there is a sense of belonging there, and their curiosity gives us the chance to speak to them.

One girl who had lost her faith as a teenager got to know us through social events, and accepted an invitation to come to one of our weekly prayer events. She felt welcomed and began attending regularly, but during the times of prayer she sat in the back and just watched. She saw something in our communal prayer that answered the questions in her heart, and after a few months of just watching, she talked to me and said she was ready to commit her life to the Lord. Our willingness to love her where she was at and help her to join in our life allowed her to take that step.

A shared life in Christ among students

In addition to our evangelistic efforts, we do a lot in Koinonia to build the life of our core students. The highlights of this past year were our prayer and fasting week, our Holy Spirit night, and an all-night prayer vigil. These were all opportunities to get out of our comfort zones, to really re-dedicate our lives to God by taking another step towards him. And those times, as well as the regular life of Koinonia, equip us to reach out to the students we meet. They give our students the opportunity to tell their friends what they do every Thursday night, or explain fasting when their friends ask — and that has an impact. Through our prayers (and yours too!) and constant focus on drawing closer to God, we have the opportunity to answer the cries we hear around us.

[Hannah Gornik, a member of [Word of Life Community](#) in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, recently served for two years as a staff worker for [Koinonia](#), an outreach ministry to university students in London.]

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UCO students pray during their mission trip to a Christian Center on Mount Lebanon

A Time to Till and a Time to Harvest

A time of grace for University Christian Outreach in Lebanon

By Sleiman Manassa



Theme of the August mission trip was on the "Two Kingdoms"

"A time to till and a time to harvest..."

For the past two years in Lebanon we have experienced a time of abundant grace in our University Christian Outreach (UCO). This mission targeting university students from all the main universities in Lebanon started nine years ago as an outreach of the People of God, a member community of the [Sword of the Spirit](#). Challenges and opportunities coexist in the work of God in UCO as we live in political and economic unrest, in a torn country that stands between the West and the mainly Muslim Middle East.

The lack of security among the Lebanese in general and the Christians in particular has affected everyone, especially university students. Over the last few years we have had a significant increase in emigration, mostly the departure of the young graduates to start careers abroad.

Despite this environment of insecurity, along with the disappointment from the political and economic turbulence, UCO has been prospering and growing in breadth and depth, proving again and again that God is faithful and "a help in times of distress." Our number grew to some 80 committed members and more than 130 students attending our

evangelistic prayer events.



UCO students did volunteer renovation work at the Christian Center on Mount Lebanon

This growth is the fruit of the labor of many brothers and sisters of the community and in UCO in various schools and universities, as well as from the amazing turnout of community children wanting to live the call and the experience that their parents had before them.

The Sword of the Spirit youth programs (Kairos) has contributed tremendously in this respect through the summer programs, including the bible week. However, without the full support of our local community, such growth wouldn't have been possible.

The level of commitment and radical discipleship is a striking feature of UCO in such times of trouble. Last year, the number of attendants of the summer mission trip almost doubled (from 30 people to 55) even in the middle of the devastating war that was going on (2,000 dead and more than 10,000 injured). Many challenged the situation — and at times their parents — to be serving God and searching for more of him in their lives. This year even a larger crowd gathered at Theopolis, a Christian Center in Mount Lebanon, to do some hard work of renovation, listen to Christian teaching, and experience shared life together.



UCO students gather for an evening of song and celebration

Growth in depth can be clearly seen in the increasing number of young men and women joining households where they share a life centered on Christ, daily prayer, bible reading, service, and openness to share their life in Christ, both with fellow Christians and with those who haven't heard his message of life. Last year there were two men's households and a women's household. As Elie, a young business student at the Lebanese American University puts it, "This was the best year in my entire life, which I am looking forward to live again with my brothers and sisters. It is the best, because it was centered on Christ in a real and practical way, day in and day out." This coming year around 18 men and 7 women want to enroll for this kind of household life.

Another example of the growth in depth is the number of young men considering a vocation to the celibate missionary life within the [Servants of the Word](#), making concrete steps to offer more and more of their lives to the Lord, hoping that he would call them to this wonderful way of life and give them the grace to live it well. Joe, one of these young men, shares: “If the Lord wants my entire life, I am more than glad to give it all to him who did not spare his own to save me. It is a real honor to be called to give our all to him.”



With the hope and confidence that the master of history is God and God alone, and that our lives can lie secure in his hand, in him who is faithful, we continue to labor full of faith that, he who started the good work in us and through us will bring it to completion, and that he will never cease to amaze us with his love and goodness, gathering to him a new generation to carry on the torch to the glory of God the Father.

[Sleiman Manassa is the director of University Christian Outreach in Beirut, Lebanon.]

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Africa Spring Rain Tree - watercolor by [Jamie Treadwell](#)

New Springs Rise

poems by Ana Teresa Carranza

Trees by the Stream

See the dry land, so thirsty,
A lifeless place without water?
See how the people look for truth,
Moving blind in the darkness?
They know no light.

Know that old things will pass
All is made new,
And He will make new springs rise
Gushing forth fresh water
For the peoples in need.

They will seek, and ask, and knock.
We have been planted here
To give them fruit, to stand as signs,
To guide men to the Light.
May we be deeply rooted, and shine.

Stephen (A garland)

His blood fell
Like the first drops of paint
On the white canvas.
Witness witnessing,
Because he had seen
First jewel of the crown.

And life kept dripping, mixing, creating
Of colours and shapes,
Of light and of shade,
Beauty.
And what you and I do, today, and tomorrow —
We paint;
Because we have seen,
Witnesses witnessing,
Living or dying, we paint
New jewels of the crown.

[Ana Teresa Carranza, 21 years old, moved from [Jesed Community](#) in Monterrey, Mexico, to [Antioch Community](#) in London, UK. She is currently studying English literature and participates in [Koinonia](#), the university outreach of Antioch Community in London.]

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New Vision - Fresh Hope

a photo journey through Poland and Europe

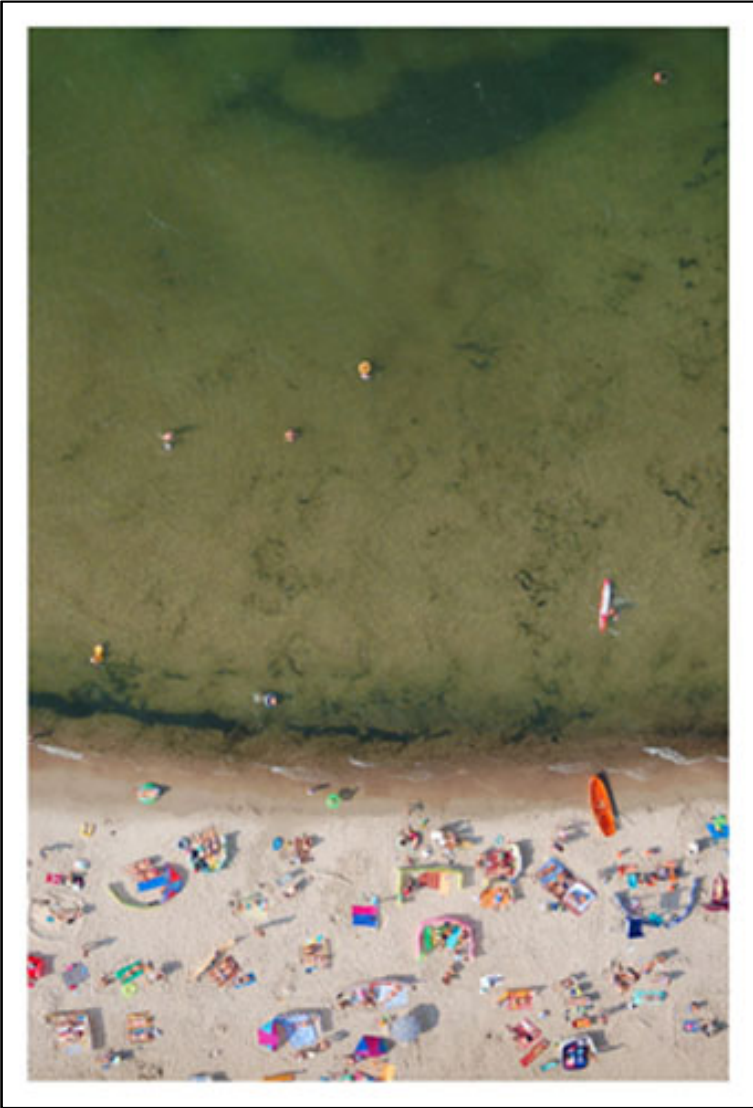
by Wojtek Solecki

Wojtek is a graduate medical student. He is a member of [City on a Hill](#), a community of the Sword of the Spirit in Bielsko-Biala, Poland. Wojtek is also actively involved in [SENS](#), an evangelistic outreach to university students in Poland.

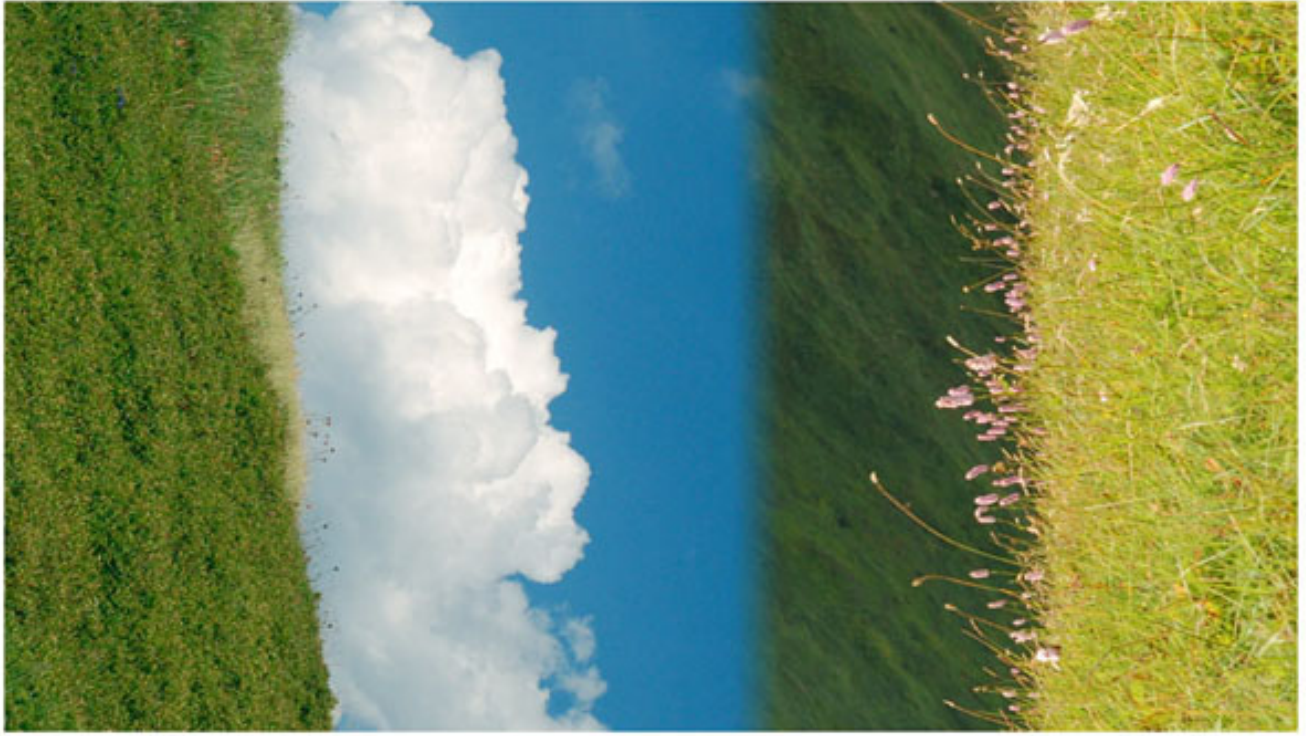
In his spare moments when his camera is at hand, Wojtek's eye captures the beauty of his native Poland and a fresh vision of the European landscape.

Visit his [photo website](#) (in Polish) to see more of his creative work.





Google beach





early morning mist rising over the Beskids mountain range in Poland



Nautical Da Vinci



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