
❖ Restoration Village ❖

April 2013

“On cross-examination, defense attorney Rob Swanton asked the girl who was at home the first time Jones reportedly abused her.
The girl said Jones and Jesus were the only ones there.
Swanton asked how she was sure that Jesus was there.
The girl said, ‘He’s always with us,’ making several of members of the jury smile.”¹

HE’S ALWAYS WITH US

(REFLECTIONS ON THE EASTER SEASON)

My wife, Beverly, was quietly crying one evening and I am intelligent enough to ask the minimum question, “What’s wrong?” Without divulging the details she told me how our daughter, Natalie, who is the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner at the Children’s Advocacy Center, came into her office that same day and broke down and cried for a long period of time after a physical exam of a young girl. I don’t know when it happened in my life, but I have learned that I may be a “rational” thinking person, but I do not disconnect emotion from reason, for to do so may look like sociopathy. At that moment I did not attempt some vague reasoning, but quietly was emotionally, empathic and fellow-feeling for both Beverly and our daughter.

The oldest book of the *Bible* according to Biblical scholars is the book of *Job*. The beginning premise of the book is a wager between God and Satan when Satan contends that faith is driven and sustained by rewards and or punishments. Satan’s wager is that if “You take away Job’s possessions, he will curse you.” Three friends come and sit with the suffering Job and eventually begin a series of “rational” words of theological concepts such as God rewards the faithful and punishes the wicked. Finally during the course of dialogues Job replies: “Yet if I speak, my pain is not relieved; and if I refrain, it does not go away.”² That verse speaks volumes about the limits of theological verbiage in the midst of humanities pain, suffering and horrors. These years of experiencing vicariously in the life stories of man’s inhumanity to man, most often their own families, that Job’s response becomes a criticism of every theology that lacks human compassion.

Marilyn McCord Adams writes “Paradigm horrors include the rape of a woman and axing off her arms, psychological torture whose ultimate goal is the disintegration of personality, . . . child abuse, . . . parental incest, participation in the Nazi death camps, the explosion of nuclear bombs over populated areas, being the accidental and/or unwitting agent in the disfigurement or death of those one loves best.” These types of horrors are “reason to doubt whether the participant’s life can be worth living, because it engulfs the positive value of his/her life and penetrates into his/her meaning – making structures seemingly to defeat and degrade his/her value as a person.” She summarizes all that to say. “. . . what makes horrors so pernicious is their life-ruining potential.”³

Adams proposes that there is no simple theodicy explanation for horror, but she has a simple analogy that illustrates the passion and intensity of the Easter remembrance so important: “victims of horror from the vantage point heaven,

“Yet if I speak, my pain is not relieved; and if I refrain, it does not go away.”

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when they recognize how God was with them in their worst experiences, will not wish to eliminate any moments of intimacy with God in their life histories.”⁴

They put him to death by hanging him on a tree (Acts 10:39), Jesus, an innocent victim of mob hysteria and an Imperial nation in compliancy that cooperated with the local religious leadership. Stripped to be deprived of dignity, paraded before the masses to be mocked, tortured, beaten, whipped, spat upon, all to strike fear in the crowds and destroy the dignity of the accused. Jesus being born in a barn and dying on a cross is the exact reverse of what any would expect of a “Messiah” – redeemer of the peoples. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “The Bible directs (us) to God’s powerlessness and suffering. Only a suffering God can help.”⁵

“Victims of horror from the vantage point heaven, when they recognize how God was with them in their worst experiences, will not wish to eliminate any moments of intimacy with God in their life histories.”

The Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga has written: “As the Christian sees things, God does not stand idly by, coolly observing the suffering of His creatures. He enters into and shares our suffering. He endures the anguish of seeing his son, the second person of the Trinity, consigned to the bitterly cruel and shameful death of the cross. Some theologians claim that God cannot suffer. I believe that they are wrong. God’s capacity for suffering, I believe is proportional to his greatness; it exceeds our capacity for suffering in the same measure as his capacity for knowledge exceeds ours. Christ was prepared to endure the agonies of hell itself; and God, the Lord of the universe, was prepared to endure the suffering consequent upon his son’s humiliation and death. He was prepared to accept this suffering in order to overcome sin, and death, and the evils that afflict our world, and to confer on us a life more glorious than we can imagine.”⁶

A young girl came forward in 2005 and made an accusation against the youth pastor for inappropriate advances to her. The leadership of the church ignored her accusation and asked few questions when the accusation was made. There had been some accusations about the new youth pastor from his previous intern position but they were dismissed as “...just a misunderstanding.” As more allegations were made in the coming months and an investigation was conducted by outside resources, the truth was revealed and the youth pastor was arrested. During the early days of the investigation and eventual trial some church members wrote letters to the presiding judge praising the youth pastor’s character; some members blamed the victims for the abuse; other members would say, “Why can’t they just get over it?” On March 26, 2011, a row of young women sat in the back pews of Vienna Presbyterian Church in Fairfax, Virginia to hear these words of Senior Pastor, Peter James: “We failed as leaders to extend compassion and mercy that you needed. Some of you felt uncared for, neglected and even blamed for the abuse. I am sorry. The church is sorry.” Pastor James continued as he spoke to the congregation of 2,500 that the ordeal of the young ladies was “far more devastating and horrific than we had imagined. The churches response was inadequate and that we now know what happened affected an entire generation of church youths. It drove them away from the church and some of them from the faith altogether.”⁷

From the cross the suffering Savior, the one who is a victim also says in his final words: to the tormentors, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.” To a fellow sufferer, “Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” Then he sums up his entire life, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Word of forgiveness, mercy and hope; may we do the same.

Grace means that the power of the victim can and does free us all. But not only does grace free us the victims, but gives us authority to bless everybody else.

As the little girl said on the witness stand, “He’s always with us,” and I smiled just like the jurors did.⁸

David Engle

Village News

Finally, the “Wall – Breaking” for the innovative project that will eventually be the National Child Protection Training Center was this past month. Mock court room, a two story house for investigation training, class rooms, medical exam rooms, a two story mock house to learn of what to look for in an “alleged” abusive home and more is now in progressive stages of construction and should be ready by August of 2013. An amazing story of what will be one of only four training centers in the United States. The project is not yet completely funded and your prayers and financial support on behalf of the completion project is important.



(Amy Benincosa, Development Coordinator of the NCPTC introduces: Dr. Becky Paneitz, President of Northwest Arkansas Community College; Stephanie Smith Southern Regional Director of NCPTC; and Andrew Lentz, Forensic Interviewer, Children’s Advocacy Center of Benton County)



Becky Paneitz and Melba Shewmaker get the first swing in the demolition to begin the remodel of the building to become the NCPTC.



Andrew Lentz shares the impact the NCPTC makes for forensic interviewers and other professionals.

LAST MONTH WE TOLD OUR READERS OF A COMING FACE LIFT AND RENOVATIONS TO THE RESIDENTS ROOMS AT THE MAIN LODGE and the work has begun. Employees of Home Depot, Rogers, Arkansas are diligently painting the commons area, fixing light fixtures and taking up the old carpet for removal. The next week end another crew of volunteers is giving up their free time and laying wood floors in the commons area. All of this renovation begins after this newsletter has been published and once again we will post some pictures on the web and facebook accesses.

DURING THE MONTH OF APRIL ON SATURDAY’s members of Junior League, NW Arkansas will begin painting the bedrooms at the main lodge in anticipation of getting a head start on the June project of redecorating seven bedrooms. Paint, pictures, lamps, new dressers and night stands and linens for the same are a part of their diligent endeavors to allow Restoration Village to appear as a home instead of a “shelter.” Thanks with a deep debt of gratitude to all of these marvelous volunteers and their endeavors.

REFERENCES FOR THE QUOTATIONS IN THIS MONTH'S VILLAGE NEWS LEAD ARTICLE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

¹ Waco Tribune, March 7, 2013, *Child Testifies About Alleged Child Abuse*.

² Job 16:6

³ Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 32-34.

⁴ Ibid, pages 40-41

⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York, McMillian, 1974) 361.

⁶ Alvin Plantinga, *Self Profile*, cited in William Lane Craig, (*Hard Questions, Real Answers*, Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books, 2003) 109.

⁷ *Washington Post*, "Vienna Presbyterian Church seeks forgiveness, redemption in wake of abuse scandal, by Josh White, April 2, 2011.

⁸ The perpetrator received a 49 year prison sentence. Waco Tribune, March 7, 2013, *Child Testifies About Alleged Child Abuse*.

ON APRIL 1 Restoration Village staff will join with the Children's Advocacy Center of Benton County to place 432 pinwheels at six different locations throughout Benton County. Each pinwheel represents one child that was a confirmed case of child abuse in Benton County in 2012. There were 7,293 confirmed cases in the state of Arkansas in the year 2012. We will post some pictures on our web page: restorationvillage.net and at <https://www.facebook.com/RestorationVillage> during the week of April 1.



April 19th: There will be a 5k Glow Run, a 1-mile fun walk, and a 400-yard Superhero Dash through the streets of downtown Rogers, Arkansas during the evening hours. A fun evening that attracts families and children to enjoy a festive event that raises funds and increases awareness of the Children's Advocacy Center of Benton County. Readers of the Village News are invited to participate in this event and know that your entry fee not only aids children, but also allows you to receive a souvenir t-shirt and gift-filled swag bag. Register online at nwacacglow.com or for more information cabcantonco.com