

May 1, 2014

Dear Friends & Family,

“MISS-A-PROP-priate”?



(3/31: my 40th spiritual bd) I returned home late yesterday afternoon from a young adults retreat in the middle of nowhere in W. Pa. I preached 4X, the 3rd time of which, expounding on sovereign grace, turned into a lively debate afterwards, which carried the meeting over 3+ hours! During another session that weekend, my hostess friend for the event told me later that one of her friends had to use the rest-room quite urgently while I was preaching. “I have to go potty so badly but I don’t want to miss a prop!” She was referring to one of my countless object lessons & visual aids I used for the weekend. My hostess friend told me her group doesn’t typically see ministry done in this way. I thought it was very cute. Well, after preaching 4X with my usual intensity, I got everything loaded up [it was snowing on March 30th!] & drove 4+ hours home. After unloading the truck, I eventually headed down to my own church to begin the massive task of setup for Via Dolorosa. I’m basically doing so, including costuming people & taking care of last-minute tweaks, right up until the 1st of al-most 100 episodes I’ll perform the 4 days that Via runs.

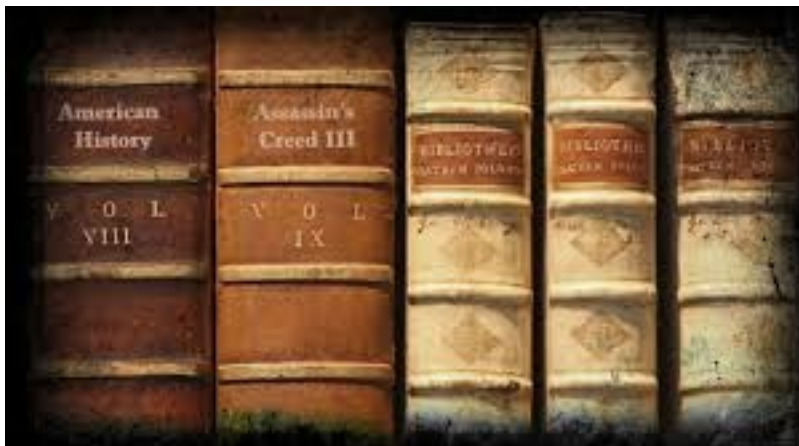
“QUO VADIS, DOMINI?”



Anyone who has known me long or well knows I have been an avid collector, lover, & re-enactor of biblical epic movies, particularly of the **50's & 60's**. If one was very up re: biblical & Roman epics, they would recognize several of my lines as Pilate in Via are "borrowed" & inserted into my monologues for that yearly event. One of these lines came into very important play for me while preparing to preach at [Elim Bible Institute](#), my alma mater, this past March. It is such a huge honor for me, & one I treat very seriously. I've often said it is the most revered pulpit of the many I have stood behind for almost the past three decades. In my ache & hope that God would use me & move among the students, there is always that fleshly, human element of pride ever present that would always want to rise up should He do so. I want to believe it was the Holy Spirit's prompting that brought a line from the 1951 epic "**Quo Vadis?**" [Latin for "Where are You going, Lord?"] to mind. As **Marcus Vinnicius** [played by Robert Taylor], the conquering Roman general is riding in his chariot during the celebrative triumphant processional through the streets of the empire's capital city, there is a man riding in the back of his chariot. As he stands behind him, he is repeatedly quoting a line to him as the Roman throngs are wildly cheering his recent victory over their enemies with his legion: "Remember, thou art only a man". How grateful I am to the Holy Spirit for doing so. I truly believe our Father brings His preachers into & through the most severe trials, revealing to them what they are without Him, into dark nights of the soul, to where they despair of ever coming out of it or of ever changing into Christ's glorious image, so that when He *does graciously* decide to

use them for His work, HE gets all of the credit & glory for it. Faithful God-You are ever so “zealously protective” of Your glory, & O, so very rightly so!

“VIA 11 NOW ‘HIS-STORY’”



Our church hallways & rooms are empty & silent now, from the “two-millennia-old” **Roman** & **Jewish** artifacts & props that have been strewn all over it for 3+ weeks. The “organized clamor” that the Immanuel Church *Via Dolorosa* cast & crew both ignited & controlled that week, stuffed with over 1,000 people grouped in clusters of 25 or more over the span of 4 evenings, with [via real & sound effects]-neighing, galloping horses, bleating sheep, rattling chains, weapons being forged by Zealots underground, rioting mobs, cracking whips, & weeping women —has all ceased. **The Roman Courtyard**, **The Jewish Marketplace**, **The Last Supper Room**, **The Garden of Gethsemane**, **The Sanhedrin**, **Herod's Palace**, **Claudia's Quarters**, **The Fortress Antonia**, The Dungeon, **Calvary**, & the **Jewish & Roman** hallways & staircases are all taken down & once more our two “Via” storage rooms are full to the hilt until another year, Lord willing. Things are “back to normal” now at IC—well, compared to the organized mayhem of Via, which is our church's biggest event of the year by far, encompassing its largest outreach & the widest use of its congregants. For the 3rd year in a row, the Lord graced us with **1,000+** visitors walking through it, by far the vast majority not being from IC.

“VIA 11 ‘GRACE ENABLED’ PRAISES”



The following are various praise & feedback reports we received throughout the presentation:

*Vicki & I enjoyed the performance last night. It was an uplifting & motivating experience. We were both impressed with the amount of work that went into setting it up & the attention to detail. The acting was excellent. We were especially impressed with the role of one of the characters. He articulated a wide range of emotions quite skillfully & captured the attention of all the attendees. We even thought he bore a strong resemblance to one of our neighbors. (>: Thank you for inviting us & providing us with an entertaining & though provoking experience. Kudos for a skilled performance. Who would have thought?

*I went through last night with my neighbor and a co-worker. It was so moving. My neighbor said that was the BEST Easter activity she had ever seen. Your room as always is very thought provoking as the struggle over Jesus is presented...
[Becky]

*"Dear Michael, Just want you to know that my friend Debbie & I went thru 'Via Dolorosa' last night & I want to commend you & your cast on another awesome job. It was wonderful. I had it put in our church bulletin when I received your notice so I pray many attend. [she attends a Methodist church in Claymont]. Thank you for thinking of me. You are amazing as "Pilate"...Love, Pat

*My father & stepmom (both unbelievers) came through Via on Wed as this was their second year through, & they thought it was great, even better than last year. My stepmom particularly thought that the letter given to each person at the end was very well done & just this morning requested about 12 copies because she knows friends who would appreciate them. I'm praising God because I know He's work-ing in their lives! Blessings, Dana [came from NJ]

*[From Julia, aka, "Herodias"...here are a couple of praise reports from friends & family throughout the week's performances: A guy friend said, "Thank you for a lovely evening! The cast was great, the props, music, & costumes completed the performance, & you were simply breathtaking...Hepburn-like! (LOL Spoken from a true friend). It was very solemn at the end & reminded me of what's truly important in life. God Bless you!" My sister said "Great job last night. Part not big enough for you though"... (as only a sister could say). My Jewish friends (the lady w/the dog) said "Amazing show. Great scenery & costumes!...the actors were fab :-). Amazing job! Please tell all". My 2 bosses & our other friend, 2 of whom I saw today at work said, 'it was amazing & fabulous & over the top with scenery, etc., but in a good way - we were blown away. From the minute we got there & seeing the horses & the tent - everything was amazing.' Our mutual friend said she & one of the bosses were very emotional at the end, as well. My one boss asked "who does all that set up?"...of course, EVERYONE raves about Pilate - the BOMB!!! :0)

*All of you do a fantastic job. It feels like we are there with Jesus when he is going through all that suffering. **We really appreciated being able to experience Via Dolorosa last Thursday. We had another couple with us & they were flabbergasted at the detail & extent of the program.* [Ken-came from Lebanon, PA]

*"...Some of the cast were really very good-Pilate's wife from the bedroom scene was very good...JESUS in the upper room did a very good job too...[Herod's Palace dancer] did a great job in the dance...The scene in the prison was a good one too...the market...Caiaphas was Really Good...Their costumes were really spectacular Pilate did a Great Job too...It was cool that he appeared in several scenes...it was well worth the trip...I was glad that we had our little greeting without [you] breaking out of character...Great Stuff though...Thanks for setting up all your stuff... [Rob -came from Reading, PA]

*Ever since the first season my boys 'played' the thieves [Zealots in the Dungeon in Via] on either side of Jesus, I have sat in that room & considered - that is what I deserve, that is what my boys deserve...fully justified in treating them/me that way, & yet... tears streaming down my face even now as I think about it ... God's beloved Son took it for me, for my children. What love, what grace, what mercy!!!! What a powerful visual reminder The Dungeon is for me, made all the more real, by my own son, portraying the thief, being treated so-it is so necessary- If I am not careful I can become so complacent about the price paid, the substitutionary work of the cross...have mercy [Linda-mother of a Zealot & King Herod]

"VISION FOR THE 'TELL-A-VISION"



Each night in the frenzy & scurrying that was happening before the first of about 12 groups which came through, I would try to assemble the cast in each of their rooms to pray with them & impart vision to them. On opening night, Luke 16's parable of **The Rich Man & Lazarus** came to mind. This very sobering account coming from the lips of the Son of God Himself revealed to us what was happening each night "beneath our feet" as we tried to reach with a dramatic/spoken gospel those who were still "upon the surface of the earth". Countless souls of the past who had died in their sin were screaming, begging for water, & wishing someone "up on top" here would warn their friends & relatives still alive

not to follow their example & suffer the resultant eternal repercussion that was theirs. This horrific phenomenon is hap-pening still-while I type!

“MEANWHILE, BACKSTAGE”

On another night, I shared with the cast one of the most clear & sobering truths in all of Scripture: Judgment Day. I told them every one of the guests who walked through Via this year would “see Via again”, on That Great Day, when the works, thoughts, & motives of men would be revealed, judged, & either recompensed or rewarded. This included us in the cast as well! If the visitors rejected the gospel & died in their sins, Via Dolorosa would be one of the many “evidences” brought against them to convince both them & all who knew them the just & righteous nature of the sentence passed upon them on that dreadful day for the light & truth they rejected while here upon earth. For us in the cast, every single episode we will all watch again! This rattles me to my very bones, as so many times during Via in the past 11 years I have seen “self” rise up in my heart while acting. No one but the Lord & I know how many times I have asked Him to forgive me while right in the middle of my episode! There is *nothing* hidden that will not be made known. O God! O God! What a day that will be! “Therefore, we make it our goal to please Him...for each of us must stand before *the Judgment Seat of Christ...*” [II Cor. 5:9,10]. My deepest fear re: decades of ministry is not that some man will take my crown or rewards—it’s that *I myself* will forfeit so many, due to impure motives. May He help me. May He help me. What dumbfounded me once again through this Via season, as so many times in past ones, is how many times people would praise my performances, while I myself was going through the deepest struggles within re: my motives! And yet—here our God was still blessing the audience while His son & servant Michael was in the fire. O wondrous grace! One of my best friends in the world & little brother in the Lord, told me recently as I struggled re: “flesh in the ministry”, “It’s always a mixed bag”. Oh, how very right he was. I pray as I age & continue to serve there is less mixture in my bag! O Father—my only hope re: this is because of Who You are—&--You promised to do so! For JESUS’ glory alone, O Lord!

In case you didn't get to see Via Dolorosa, below are two YouTube links to the two different episodes I would do each night.

The Fortress Antonia:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaH2A_HOleM&list=UUEXuHp_0KOpBg-PsV_uCl_Q

The Dungeon:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSatzNwnUNQ&list=UUEXuHp_0KOpBg-PsV_uCl_Q

*[Michael is an ordained **Elim Fellowship** "itinerant" home missionary & is also licensed to preach the gospel by the local church he attends, **Immanuel Church**. **Caboose!** is also an affiliate ministry of the **Hopewell Network of Churches**. For 14 years he served on various local church staffs full-time. Since 2000, he & Kim have lived by faith, having no salary or retirement to speak of-yet this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches **God's Word & systematic theology**, using both visual aids & drama, **to all age groups** either separately or combined, as the Lord opens doors. To help support this work, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485], denoting it for the home-mission work of Michael Robert Guertin. If your church would be interested in ministry or helping to support our missions' work in the U.S. to both old & young please feel free to contact us. Thanks



Ministry/events for MAY & those not listed in last month's newsletter: **Caboose!** on the loose:

April 23: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Tabernacle of David: worship leader

April 24: Grace Nazarene Church, Newark, DE: EMF pastors' mtg.

April 25: Covenant Fellowship, Glen Mills, PA: one day conference attendee re: Kevin DeYoung book

promotion, "Why You Can Trust Your Bible"

May 1: New Covenant Church, Audubon, NJ: children workers' workshop

May 4: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Warehouse youth group: ministry of the Word

May 6: Petra Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA: hsc board mtg.//Hopewell Network pastors' mtg.

May 15: a.m.: Faith Baptist Church, Newark, DE: EMF pastors' mtg. // p.m.: Petra Christian Fellowship, New

Holland, PA: "PULSE" young adults' group

May 17: Hope of the Nations Church, Reading, PA: "Chosen Generation" youth conference

May 18: Immanuel Christian Fellowship, Manheim, PA: Sun. a.m. service

May 21: New Covenant Church, Audubon, NJ: Elim Fellowship credential holders' mtg.

May 30: Hopewell Mennonite Church, Pottstown, PA: Shantz' ministry-retirement celebration attendee