

Religion

Two stories reflect on the Body of Christ

By JIM RYAN
Corpus Christi
June 2, 1991
Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26
Two stories about the Body of Christ

1. In the film, *A Trip to Bountiful*, Academy Award winner Geraldine Page plays an old woman who goes on a journey in search of salvation. She gets on a bus named, "Corpus Christi", which is destined for Corpus Christi, Texas. A man at the bus stop tells her and her fellow travellers that Corpus Christi means Body of Christ.

On the bus she sits with a young woman and talks about her life. She has no illusions; she is honest about her disappointments; she faces the reality of her life. ("I never loved my husband.")

Oddly enough, she is now prepared to receive the fullness of life. When she returns to the work-a-day world with her family, she does go transformed, with a sense of serenity and new hope.

2. George Thompson wandered out of the hardware store on

Euclid Avenue, and looked up and down the street. Another gray day, another rejection, another day without work. He walked back down to Bloor Street; the tavern would be open by now.

George hadn't worked since last year. In fact it was a year ago today, but George didn't remember that. George didn't remember much these days. He blamed it on the scar above his left eyebrow; others might have blamed it on the ten to twelve beers he drank in the afternoons and early evenings in the tavern on Bloor Street. But something nagged at him. There was something, but he couldn't quite grasp it.

If George had grasped it, he would have walked with a firmer step, he would have looked about him at the houses, at the melting snow in the January thaw; he would have heard the birds who were anticipating spring.

For it was a year ago that it had happened, the scar was proof of that. And sometimes when



Religion and Reality by Jim Ryan

George dried his face on a towel in the mornings before the mirror, some fragmentary image came back to him of that day.

George was known at Queen St., at the mental hospital; he was known at the welfare office and down at the police station. He had a sheet as long as your arm, and even the greenest social worker out of university, even the youngest chaplain out of theology school, would not have given George more than a second

chance. George had what you would call a "history", and all of it bad. The psychiatrist, who saw George after his assault charge ten years ago, said that George was plagued by many dragons and that he would have to learn to live with them. He said that it would have taken a miracle to begin to sort out the dragons and kill them one by one.

But a year ago that miracle had taken place, and George's dragons had been slain neatly and cleanly. The miracle had been unexpected, as miracles are, and George's history had been changed from bad to good.

All of this had been done very simply and in an unspectacular fashion, by what one of those chaplains from theology school might have called an act of love.

The only thing was, George couldn't remember. The psychiatrist might have said that what happened was so foreign to George that he had no way of accepting or understanding it.

This is what happened. One year ago today George had been beaten up by a couple of fellows whom he had been drinking buddies with for years. They had stolen his cheque and left him in an alley just north of Bloor and Christie. They had beaten him badly and had given him the gash that was now the scar above his left eyebrow.

As George lay there, helpless, unable to move or cry out, he remembered a long history of rejection and betrayal, and as helpless and silent as he was, he hardened himself. There was nothing new here; what did he expect from life?

This was when the miracle had taken place. Someone had come along, someone that George couldn't see because of the blood in his eyes, and that someone had loved George. As simple, but as unexpected as that.

Someone had taken George to a room above a tavern on Bloor Street and cleaned his wounds. That same someone had left money with the tavern keeper, and had continued to pay the rent of the room during months. George had also received an anonymous cheque each month from a bank on Ossington Avenue.

When George got back to his room above the tavern, about 7:00 p.m. on the first anniversary of that miraculous day, he found an envelope waiting for him. Inside was a sheet of paper on which was written, "Hope you're feeling better. Love from someone who cares."

George wept and touched the scar above his eyebrow, and prayed the prayer of thanksgiving that he had uttered almost unconsciously every day in the past year.

United Church of Canada relocating national offices

A year ago the General Council Executive approved the relocation of the national offices of The United Church of Canada to somewhere within the region of the communities of Kitchener-Waterloo and Guelph. "Now we are one step closer to actually knowing where the move might be," says The United Church of Canada's General Secretary, the Reverend Dr. Howard Mills.

Dr. Mills' comments followed approval by the General Council Executive to authorize the senior management team, the General Council Secretaries, to proceed to

the final negotiation stage for acquiring a site and building of a new national office facility for The United Church of Canada.

"We haven't identified the specific site by name, but we do have three contenders," says Dr. Mills.

He adds, "The complexity and sensitivity of the next stage of negotiations make it necessary to maintain confidentiality until there is some conclusion to these negotiations."

Finalist developers from the four Ontario communities of Cambridge, Guelph, Kitchener and Waterloo, submitted pro-

posals. These proposals were rated according to ten major criteria.

In the final report of the Church's consultants, OBC Office Building Consultants Incorporated, one of four proposals was effectively eliminated from further serious consideration. Of the remaining three proposals, all met in varying degrees, the project's major criteria.

The Executive has now given the go-ahead to proceed toward signing a development agreement with one of the contenders.

Failing a successful agreement with that developer, the Executive has authorized that the other two proposals be actively pursued.

The General Council Secretaries will also proceed to negotiate a firm sale of the present General Council properties in Toronto. A condition for the sale of those properties is that the selling price provide a surplus sufficient to ensure the self-financing of the relocation project. Offers to purchase from five potential buyers have already been selected as finalists in the sale of the General Council properties at 85 St. Clair Avenue East in Toronto.

The proposed time-line for the sale and purchase of properties is for contracts to be signed by July 31, 1991 and relocation to happen on or about September 1, 1993.

If the General Council Secretaries are unable to meet either the financial or time-line objectives authorized by the Executive, the General Council Sub-Executive will oversee and authorize any changes to the relocation goals.

Bible Digest

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Hebrews 2:3.

How can you continue to ignore the fact that Jesus died on an old rugged cross for you? Look to Jesus today and ask for His forgiveness. He loves you.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26

The Lord is the master physician of real heart transplants. He can heal an old, tough hardened heart and make it tender and compassionate. Let Him give you a new heart and a new life.

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." I Corinthians 1:18.

Have you put your faith in the Christ of Calvary? To accept Him is life eternal, but to reject Him is an eternity in Hell. The choice is yours to make.

"Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart upon them." Psalm 62:10.

Do not fall into the trap of trusting riches. Place your trust in the Lord. He never changes.

"But God commandeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.

Jesus loved you before you ever thought of loving Him. The love of God is truly great and amazing.

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