

Saints Alive!

The Quarterly Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

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“Our spiritual life moves in stages and we should never be content with the stage that we are in.”

—Michael Timmis,
Prison Fellowship
International

Never Say Retire

Remaining fruitful and productive even in “old age”

By Rich Cleveland

As I approach my 65th birthday, friends and family often ask what my plans are for retiring. But I can't imagine doing anything other than what I am doing, or anything that could be more fun or rewarding. I think that's the way it is supposed to be, for the psalmist speaks of continued usefulness and productivity even in old age: “They still bring forth fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green.”

Speaking of the parable in Matthew 13:23, “As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit, and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty,” Michael Timmis, International Director of Prison Fellowship relates, “To the men and women hearing that parable, most of whom were involved in some form of farming, it had to appear to be an incredible challenge. I can imagine that if they received a three- or four-fold yield on their crop they would be very happy. But now Jesus is talking about thirty and sixty and a hundred fold.

“Jesus often used numbers of such magnitude that they were almost incomprehensible to his listeners. Why? He was demonstrating that what appears impossible to men and women is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

“As I read about the lives of the great saints over the centuries, each had a common goal to move deeper and closer into a holiness of total abandonment to Jesus. To the great saints, retirement was never an issue, but to many of us the work of God seems to become stale. I hear the expression often in the west that says, ‘I have been there and done that,’ as if to say I have no more responsibility or I'm getting too old or too

tired or too burned out or too worn out to continue doing what I was doing when I was younger, and yet the opposite should be true. Our spiritual life moves in stages and we should never be content with the stage that we are in.

“... As God tells us in the book of Revelation, the one thing he absolutely despises is lukewarmness. And yet so often in the work of Christ it appears that we are lukewarm and that's because we are concentrating on the work and not our relationship with Jesus. . . . I believe that we can only accomplish what God has called us to if we develop a greater passion for him. We lose passion as our relationship with him diminishes. We gain passion as it intensifies. One of the great problems of the believer is that we take for granted our spirituality. Most of us pray daily, read the word, and worship God and make this routine. What we consider basics are never basics, they are essentials.”¹

No one more epitomized these concepts than did the late, beloved, Pope John Paul II. As one reads various biographies of his life, it is obvious that though he had a productive ministry all along in his vocation of serving Christ it was in those latter years as Pope that his life brought forth abundant fruit. Though his frail body was wracked with pain and disease, and though many in pity looked at his stooped form and difficult speech suggesting that he should retire, his mind and spirit were “full of sap and green” burning with a passion for Christ, for the Church, and for the world.

His fruitfulness in old age was consistent with his life of devotion to Christ and his teachings on fruitfulness: “Engrafted to the vine and brought to life, the branches are expected to bear fruit: ‘He who abides in

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Emmaus Journey Mission Statement

Emmaus Journey is a Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry that is conducted primarily in and through Catholic parishes. Emmaus Journey has embraced Goal 1 of *Go and Make Disciples: A Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, produced by The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

Emmaus Journey's Goals are:

- To help enable non-practicing Catholics, occasional Catholics, and nominal Catholics experience conversion to Christ, transformation in Christ, and mobilization for Christ as Catholic disciples.
- To encourage Catholics to embrace Jesus' call to advance the Gospel and his Kingdom by becoming laborers who live and disciple others from among the nonreligious.
- To help mature and gifted Catholics discover a particular call to participate more fully in the task of evangelization.
- To indirectly serve Catholic parishes' evangelization efforts through small-group materials, evangelization and discipleship resources, seminars, ministry events, and messages that move them forward in their efforts to make Christ known, and to nurture mature Catholic disciples who can help others experience conversion, transformation, and mobilization for Christ.



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Multiple copies of *Saints Alive!* are available upon request.

From the Heart By Rich Cleveland

Fruitfulness Is Essential

The Scriptures reveal that Jesus puts a premium on fruitfulness. One place he does this is in the parable of the fig tree that bore no fruit. He stresses the vineyard owner's severe judgment that the fig tree should be removed because it is totally unproductive. In addition he stresses the importance of being fruitful by underscoring the vinedresser's unusual concern and attention to try and insure the fig tree's future productivity. Both in the vineyard owner's judgment and the vinedresser's care, one message comes through loud and clear: fruitfulness is essential.

This focus on bearing fruit takes on added importance when we recall in John's Gospel Jesus' last conversation with his disciples prior to his crucifixion. Jesus said, "You did not choose me but I chose you and I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last," (John 15:16). Earlier in verse 8, he stated that this is the way his Father is glorified, "that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." Clearly, as Jesus was preparing to leave his disciples and begin the ordeal of his crucifixion he did not discuss merely trivial things with them, but shared his very heart and soul. And at the heart of his concern was his expectations for their fruitfulness.

When the subject of fruitfulness comes up, it is not unusual to see opinions vary regarding what is meant by fruit. Some would suggest that fruitfulness is simply Christian character, others that it is Christian deeds, and still others that it is Christian converts. I would suggest that to some degree it is inclusive of all of these because the three types of fruit mentioned are interdependent and interconnected.

If we as a community of believers are not seeing conversions take place through us, we need to be concerned.

It is interesting when we study the nature of fruit to discover that fruit always contains the seed of new life. So it is with both Christian character and Christian deeds, they are never intended to dwell alone but are the seeds that are instrumental in creating new life, or converts. Jesus infers the connection this way: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Our Christian lives and deeds should result in nonbelievers recognizing and desiring Christ. If we as a community of believers are not seeing conversions take place through us, we need to be concerned.

The Holy Spirit enhances our fruitfulness by pruning and cultivation. As we focus on Christ, and add to our lives disciplines that enhance our spiritual consciousness and receptivity to him, it allows the Holy Spirit to begin tilling up the hardness of our hearts and adding ingredients to the soil (our lives) that prepare us to be fruitful. Participation in meaningful worship, studying and discussing sacred Scripture with others, and faithfulness in daily prayer and reflection are all means which the Holy Spirit can use to rework the dry, hard ground of our hearts. As these stony portions are broken up, and turned over, our hearts become more receptive to the nourishing nutrients that bring about growth and fruitfulness, and that produce positive Christian character and Christ-revealing deeds that draws the nonbeliever to Christ.

We are faced with the same decision as the disciples. Will we, or will we not go and bear fruit so that the Father is glorified? Pope Paul VI in *On Evangelization in the Modern World* clearly calls us to this realization. "The Church is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the Twelve. She is the normal, desired, most immediate and most visible fruit of this activity. . . ." And he earlier states, "Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it."

We are becoming today what we will be tomorrow. Let's begin putting into place those disciplines which will enable us to become lifelong, fruitful disciples.



Saints: The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary People

Saint Timothy: Living for Others

Saint Timothy is a good example of the maxim “that as the twig is bent so grows the tree.” Born to a Greek father and a converted Jewess mother, Timothy was raised to believe in God and taught sacred Scripture. It is likely that he became a follower of Christ through the ministry of Saint Paul, following the faith of his grandmother and mother.

We primarily learn about Saint Timothy through the writings of Saint Paul. Paul both refers to Timothy’s youth and simultaneously calls him “man of God.” He gives

Timothy high praise when he says, “you followed my teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me” (2 Timothy 3:10 NAB).

We can learn about Timothy’s heart for evangelization by referring to Paul’s account of his, Silvanus, and Timothy’s ministry in Thessalonica. We can induce the following four characteristics of their evangelization from

1 Thessalonians 1,2: First, he worked among those they were trying to reach and lived both an exemplary and blameless life amidst persecution. This is reminiscent of Pope John Paul II’s description of the role of the laity who are called by God to live in the secular world, manifesting Christ to others by deed and word.¹

Second, Timothy ministered the Word of God from sincere motives keeping the Good News pure and simple while relying on the power of Truth to bring about conversion.

Third, he imparted not only the Gospel to the Thessalonians but also his own passion for Christ. Consequently when the Thessalonians believed in Christ they were able to emulate Timothy’s devotion.

Lastly, he was fruitful, resulting in joyful believers who “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to await his Son from heaven,” while simultaneously reaching out to others with the Gospel. As Pope Paul VI implied, this was the ordinary affect the Gospel should have “making up a community which in its turn is evangelizing.”²

Saint Timothy had the same choices we do, and determined that he would center his passion on loving and knowing Christ and on making Christ known to others. His life ended in martyrdom, a martyrdom made possible by his lifelong habit of dying to self and living for others.

Michael Timmis: Spreading Hope

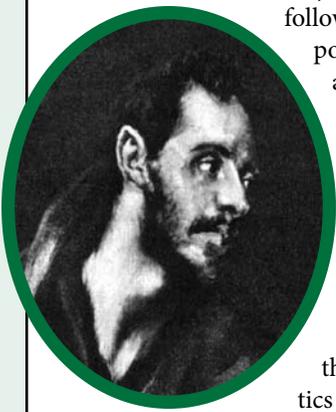
Michael Timmis is a successful attorney and businessman whose life is characterized by his love for Christ and his involvement with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. His travels as Chairman of the International Board of Prison Fellowship take him around the world to both deplorable prison facilities and to the homes of the wealthy and powerful. As he travels, he is aware of the powerful truth that Jesus primarily is recognized by others through the lives of his followers.

“When the resurrected Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, she does not recognize him until he calls her by name. When he appears to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, not until he blesses and breaks bread with the disciples do they recognize him. When he appears on the shore of the lake, not until he tells his apostles to cast their nets on the other side of the boat for a great catch of fish do his friends recognize that this man is Jesus himself. In all three cases, Jesus does not reveal himself by his facial features but by his actions. Why would he put his friends through this moment of non-recognition? He did it for us. He did it for all his friends throughout history who would not recognize him through his physical being but would recognize him as present in other people; his followers whose actions replicate his own and witness to his presence here and now.”

As Michael travels around the world from one prison to another he is aware that the “miracles of the book of Acts continue” through the lives of Jesus’ followers. Though helpless, weak, and simple, these followers of Jesus “are transformed because he is with them in his mercy and love as the living hope of Christ.” Michael says, “Now, we can truly understand the passage ‘the word was made flesh and dwells among us’ as these and others, minister as the face and words of the Savior.”

Michael would be the first to tell you that in spending his time, energy, and money spreading the Gospel of Hope which Jesus brings that he is the recipient of far more joy and grace than he gives. He returns from each trip with his faith strengthened both by the prisoners who have found Christ in such desperate straits and by those who voluntarily enter these terrible facilities to bring the love of Christ.

Quotes are from a message by Michael Timmis given at the Hong Kong Prison Fellowship International Conference (2005). Learn more about Prison Fellowship International at www.pfi.org.



1 Composite of thoughts from John Paul II in *Christifidels Laici*, (15).
2 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, by Pope Paul VI, (13).

Tools You Can Use

***Sharing Christ*, a new multi-media teaching tool**

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”
—Jesus Christ

“Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it.”
—Pope Paul VI

“No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.”
—Pope John Paul II

“Anyone who has discovered Christ must lead others to him. A great joy cannot be kept to one’s self. It has to be passed on.”
—Pope Benedict XVI

The vision is clear—and preparation to fulfill it has just become more practical.

Sharing Christ, a new seven session multi-media teaching tool produced by ChristLife is designed to equip every Catholic with the practical tools necessary to proclaim the Gospel, draw others into a dynamic personal relationship with Christ, and to invite them to become members of the Church as his disciples.

Sharing Christ is ideal for use in small groups and for stimulating evangelization initiatives by parishes or dioceses. *Sharing Christ* includes video teaching segments, personal stories of Catholic evangelization, prayer, small group interaction, and weekly action steps. The seven sessions are:

- Called to Share Christ
- Friendship: A Way to Share Christ
- Sharing the Journey
- The Power to Share Christ
- Presenting the Good News
- By Personal Invitation
- Missionaries—Anytime, Anywhere!



***Sharing Christ* Teaching DVD set**

- Price: \$33.00
- Consists of seven video teaching sessions and life changing testimonies on three DVDs.

***Sharing Christ* Introductory Kit**

- Price: \$65.00
- Consists of all the material needed to preview the *Sharing Christ* Course: Teaching DVD Set, Director’s Handbook, Facilitator’s Guide, Participant’s Guide, Characteristics of New Evangelization, and Resource CD.

Available through *Emmaus Journey* (www.emmausjourney.org) or *ChristLife* (www.christlife.org).

Never Say Retire *continued from front page*

me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit’ (John 15:5). Bearing fruit is an essential demand of life in Christ and life in the Church. The person who does not bear fruit does not remain in communion: ‘Each branch of mine that bears no fruit, he [My Father] takes away’ (John 15:2).

“Communion with Jesus, which gives rise to the communion of Christians among themselves, is an indispensable condition for bearing fruit.”² Thus Pope John Paul II remaining in communion and devotion to Christ in his old age, remained fruitful.

The question of whether one will be fruitful in old age is really a question of whether one is passionate for Christ and serving him in one’s earlier years. The old adage “that as the twig is bent so grows the tree” does not only refer to horticulture, nor need be applied only to raising children,

for it is also true of our spiritual formation. If as Christians we develop a heart to know Christ and a vision for taking Christ and the Gospel of his Kingdom into the world, so will we see it expressed in our latter years. It is important to grasp the concept Michael mentioned above, “we can only accomplish what God has called us to if we develop a greater passion for him.”

We cannot determine our fruitfulness, for only the Holy Spirit knows how he desires to use us, but we can control our passion, making sure that it is centered on loving and knowing Christ. This is something we can do; this is something we should do.

¹ From a message to Prison Fellowship International by Michael Timmis, given in Hong Kong (2005).

² From *The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People*, by Pope John Paul II, (32).