

The Way I See It

It's the season of Lent and, especially this year because of Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, there is a lot of talk about the passion and suffering of our Lord. It's amazing how much discussion this movie has evoked in believers and non-believers alike. Elsewhere in this issue you can read a somewhat different perspective on the movie, a perspective that I believe deepens our insight into the cost of salvation.

This year, there also seems to be more emphasis on giving things up for Lent. Personally, I'm not all that much in favour of doing this. In my upbringing, every day was Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost – all rolled into one. After all, Jesus was born, has died, has risen and is ascended, and the Spirit has come. And the way to remember and to celebrate this, I was taught, is by living a life of gratitude and service. But, if you want to give something up, why not give up favouritism, greed, envy,



malice and power, and why not give these up the whole year around. At least, that's what I think. How about you? *HER*

OCSTA is a community of professional Christian school educators working to equip and enable its members to provide Christ-centred education.

Within Our Membership

- ◇ On February 16, **Monica Paulin** (Ottawa Christian) gave birth to her first child, a daughter whom she and her husband Christian have named Amber Sara.
 - ◇ On February 25, **Jennifer Noordam** (Wyoming Christian) gave birth to a healthy son, their first child, Ryan Jacob. Her husband Chris is doing well and is awaiting word as to when he is able to return to work. Chris and Jennifer thank everyone for their prayers for healing for Chris after his serious accident last fall.
 - ◇ **Paul Triemstra** (Ottawa Christian) was married to Kim Rhebergen on March 12.
 - ◇ On February 24, **Lloyd Ambler** (Metcalfe) underwent extensive back surgery. Although it was quite difficult at first, he is improving and is waiting on God's grace for healing and a return to his previous lifestyle. Lloyd is experiencing the power of prayer as he has never before and thanks everyone for their support. We continue to hold Lloyd and his family in our prayers.
 - ◇ **William Rang**, former Christian school teacher and principal (Strathroy, Ottawa, Kingston, Dunnville) and honorary OCSTA member, died earlier this month. We express our sympathies to the Rang family and pray that they are and will be comforted by the hope of the resurrection as they adjust to this empty place in their family circle.
- We congratulate the Paulin, Noordam and Triemstra families and wish them well as they embark on these new phases in their life journeys.

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WITHIN OUR MEMBERSHIP CONT'D

◇ *An apology:* Ina Deline's (Laurentian Christian, Kitchener) husband's name was *John* (and not Bob, as given in last month's OCSTA News). We apologize to Ina and her family, and continue to pray for them as the reality of John's death is setting in.

- ◇ Please remember our colleagues who are struggling with physical or mental health-related issues.
- ◇ This being contract time, we remember our colleagues who are anticipating a change in employment, whether by choice or out of necessity.

◇ We also remember the schools that are dealing with redundancy issues. These are tough decisions and we pray for much wisdom for the Boards and staffs.

N.B. Staff reps, please inform the OCSTA office of items to be shared with our members.

BOARD REPORT

The Board met on February 26 to finish its agenda of the previous meeting (February 5). Among other things, we discussed:

① how OCSTA and OCSAA can best work together, given that we share a common vision but have different roles and responsibilities. OCSTA is interested in polling members who are administrators about some of these issues. We have asked OCSAA to join us.

- ② how to better assist our members who are experiencing difficulties on their local Contract Partnership Committee. We have scheduled a workshop at the 2004 convention to deal with issues around contract negotiations and to help develop skills for assertive negotiations.
- ③ how to advise the teachers regarding the recently published OACS *Human Resource Committee Manual*. Since this manual will go into effect in September,

we will come up with some suggestions at a later date, before the end of this school year.

The Board is always looking for your input. Please contact a Board member or the office if you have thoughts on these or any other issues of OCSTA business.



THIS AND THAT

Christian School Teacher's Certificate: The Credentials Committee is meeting on April 29. If you are applying for your CSTC this spring, make sure the OCSTA office will receive the necessary information in time to be included on the agenda. The application is available on our OCSTA web site.

Christian Schools Canada is organizing an educational conference in Calgary, September 23-25, 2004. The theme of the conference is *Educational Leadership for Canadian Christian Schools*, focusing on curriculum and school leadership. OCSTA strongly encourages our principals, vice principals and curriculum coordinators to attend. More details will be available in the April issue of the OCSTA News.

Christian Schools International: The 2004 CSI convention will be held in Washington, D.C., July 22-25, with pre-

convention workshops to begin on July 21. The convention theme is *Habits of the Heart and Mind*. Keynote speakers are Os Guinness, Mike Goheen, Ken Myers, Jim Skillen, Dan Vander Ark and John D. Hellinga. Contact James DeKorne at CSI (800-635-8288) for more information.

Advanced notice: Next year we are planning a banquet at convention time to honour OCSTA's 50th anniversary. The celebration will be on Thursday, October 28, at Michaelangelo's in Hamilton and will feature a performance of the Toronto Mass Choir, directed by Karen Burke, music teacher at Toronto District Christian High School.

A service opportunity: After almost 10 years of civil war, children in Sierra Leone are going back to their school sites. However, they have no school supplies. We are asking schools to gather educational supplies for the students in Sierra Leone. Needed are pencil cases holding 5 pencils, a red

pen, a blue pen, a small pair of scissors, a small ruler and an eraser. Other items being collected: glue sticks, solar calculators, rulers, packs of paper, notebooks, children's picture dictionaries, packages of markers, masking tape and National Geographic magazines (ANY usual school supplies). A container of school supplies will be sent to Sierra Leone mid April, 2004. If you want to participate in this project, please contact Prof. J. Kuyvenhoven (Faculty of Education at Redeemer University College, 905-648-2131, ext. 4256). She has more information, will pick up materials and, if you like, will speak to your school about children in Sierra Leone.

OCSTA is in the process of working out an arrangement with *CompuSmart* for special computer prices. Look for the specific details in the April issue of the OCSTA News. Meanwhile, if you're interested feel free to contact Daxon Flynn, Corporate Sales Consultant, 905-681-2561, ext. 25.

SUMMER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Redeemer University College, the OACS and OCSTA have finalized their summer programs. Included in this mailing are brochures outlining the courses and workshops available through our three institutions. Please note you must register at each individual institution but OCSTA will have a web site link to the other two. We encourage as many teachers as possible to sign up for one or more of the offerings. These opportunities make us better teachers, and the fellowship and sharing encourage us professionally.

Other summer professional development opportunities:

- ✓ The *Educational Leadership Development Institute 2004* (sponsored jointly by CSI and Calvin College) is soliciting applications from teachers who might

be considering a position in administration. Contact Jim DeKorne at CSI (1-800-635-8288) or check the Calvin College Graduate Studies website for more information.

- ✓ The February 2004 issue of *Christian Educators Journal* has a listing of the graduate workshops Calvin College is offering this summer.
- ✓ And, just in case you're looking for a workshop on team building, how about connecting with *Interactive Training Solutions* (ITS), a company that "leads people to value themselves and others." ITS has created a team building program that helps you to:
 - ① understand yourself through your personality style;
 - ② understand another person through their personality style;

- ③ adapt your style to create better relationships;
- ④ build better teams through role and responsibility dynamics.

For more information, contact John Knox Christian School in Woodstock or phone *Interactive Training Solutions* (519-421-1921) or e-mail colin.nanton@interactivetraining.ca.



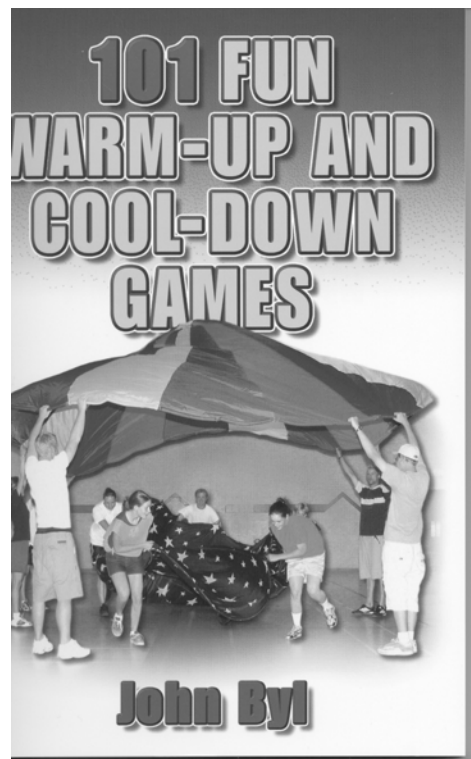
A NEW TEACHING RESOURCE

In 2002, Dr. John Byl, professor of Physical Education at Redeemer University College, was asked to do a Phys. Ed workshop at the OCSTA convention dealing with warm-up and cool-down activities. As he researched this topic, Dr. Byl discovered there was little material available, so he decided to write a book, which has now been published. Entitled *101 Fun Warm-up and Cool-down Games*, the book is a valuable resource for Phys. Ed teachers K-12 and for others who have to teach Physical Education. See the beige insert for table of contents and other details.

In order to encourage schools/teachers to purchase this book, OCSTA and the Redeemer Campus Book Store have worked out a special promo price of \$22.00 a copy which includes tax and shipping. If you're interested, please send a cheque payable to OCSTA and we'll take care of the rest.

Other books by Dr. John Byl:

- * *Co-ed Recreational Games*. Champaign: Human Kinetics, 2002.
- * *Organizing Successful Tournaments* (Second Edition) Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1999.
- * *Intramural Recreation: Step-by-step Guide to Creating an Effective Program*. Champaign: Human Kinetics, 2002.
- * *Physical Education, Sport and Wellness: Looking to God as We Look at Ourselves*. John Byl and Tom Visker (eds). Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 1999.
- * *50 Games with 50 Tennis Balls and Why Paper & Scissors Rock*. Co-authored with Herwig Baldauf, et al. Hamilton: Canadian Intramural Recreation Association of Ontario, 2003.



THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE CROSS AND ‘THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST’

Following is a chapel speech given at Redeemer University College by Dr. Mike Goheen. Since there is a lot of discussion about the Gibson movie, I thought it might be good to share his perspective with the OCSTA members since no doubt many of you are discussing the movie with your students and/or colleagues. Reprinted with permission.

He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities (Is.53:5). Thus begins Mel Gibson’s movie *The Passion of the Christ*. After you watch the movie you will never read those words in the same way again. Nor will you likely read the crucifixion accounts in the same way. Perhaps also lines in various hymns will take on new meaning. That is what happened to me. After seeing the movie, the words “Alas and did my Saviour bleed” and “He groaned upon the tree” stood out in bold relief. The memorable scene where the crown of thorns is forcefully crunched down on the head of Jesus, and the blood drops in slow motion, made the words “I love Thee for wearing the thorns on my brow” (from the song *My Jesus I love Thee*) come alive in a new way.

The reason these words come to us with fresh relevance is because the movie does what all good art should do: it gives us images, symbols, and pictures that deepen our insight into the world. Gibson has given us some powerful images to deepen our insight into the crucifixion. Indeed those images will deepen our insight into the very gospel. The gospel is about events that happened. It is not as if the theological meaning of those events is what matters and the event itself is less important. Central to Paul’s proclamation of the gospel is the very event itself. God was acting in history. So if the movie gives us new understanding of those events it gives fresh insight into the gospel itself.

In this brief reflection I want to focus on one theme that Gibson’s movie will help us understand. This is something that all early Christians would have understood well, something the early church would have felt deeply in their very ‘guts’ as it were. Christians living in the Roman empire would have experienced an unbearable tension, a profound contradiction between the horrific brutality and shame of the cross, and their confession of the

cross as the mightiest act of God in human history. On the one hand, they understood the barbaric cruelty and savage brutality that characterised crucifixion in the Roman empire. On the other hand, they confessed that the cross was the fullest revelation of God’s glory (John) and the centre of world history (Luke-Acts). How is it possible to witness the repugnance and gruesome torture of a Roman crucifixion *and at the same time* confess that in this event God has accomplished the salvation of the entire creation? What absurdity!

This is the tension that Paul describes in I Corinthians 1:18-2:5: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” These are words that arise out of twenty years of missionary activity. Paul had proclaimed the cross throughout the Roman empire and had heard the taunts and ridicule of Jew and Gentile. He had heard Gentiles deride his proclamation as utter foolishness (cf. Acts 26:24). Perhaps a better translation here is complete absurdity, absolute madness, utter stupidity. The cross as the central act of God—what folly! He had heard Jews mock and oppose his proclamation of the cross. ‘Crucified messiah’ is an oxymoron, a blatant contradiction. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* states: “No Messiah that Jews could recognize could suffer such a death; for ‘he that is hanged is accursed by God’ (Deut. 31:23).” The Jew of Paul’s day would have felt the same.

The reason why Jew and Gentile simply could not accept the cross as God’s mighty act is because they knew well the brutality, the degradation, the horror of

the cross. Perhaps it is difficult for us living 2000 years after the fact to comprehend just how ghastly and loathsome the cross really was for the Roman citizen; it was a horrific and brutal affair. As Martin Hengel puts it in his classic book on crucifixion in the Roman empire, the cross was “an utterly offensive affair, ‘obscene’ in the original sense of the word.” The cross was a gruesome business and utterly abhorrent to the Roman citizen. Cicero says that “the very word ‘cross’ should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears.” Roman citizens were not crucified; crucifixion was reserved for the worst criminals. Crucifixion was a horrifying and grisly way to torture and kill a victim. The Roman empire had ‘perfected’ crucifixion as the ultimate execution. The physical suffering and pain were drawn out and maximized. Death came slowly and the victim was utterly degraded in the process. The extreme pain, drawn out over many hours, even days, exacerbated by the shame of hanging naked and suffering the jeers and taunts of enemies made crucifixion an utterly revolting and eminently cruel event. Crucifixion was supreme torture and ultimate humiliation. For the Roman citizen the cross signified shame and agony. Josephus calls crucifixion “the most wretched of deaths” and Cicero simply “that plague.”

Consequently unbelievers found the Christian confession absurd. They heaped ridicule on the Christian message. They called it a “sick delusion”, a “senseless and crazy superstition”, a “perverse and extravagant superstition”, a “perverse superstition”, and a “monstrosity.” Caecilius, an early opponent of Christianity, says, “To say that their ceremonies centre on a man put to death for his crime and on the fatal wood of the cross is to assign to these abandoned wretches sanctuaries which are appropriate to them and the kind of worship they deserve.”

The OCSTA Newsletter is produced monthly during the school year by the Ontario Christian School Teachers Association.

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