THE CRY
for Humility
“Nothing is more deceitful,” said Darcy, “than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast.”

— Jane Austen, “Pride and Prejudice”

I often struggled to “keep myself humble,” which really was nothing more than an attempt at its appearance. After all, humility is one of those virtues we hold with such high esteem within our Christian circles, especially in a pride-driven world.

Trying to be humble is not humility at all. I’ve become convinced that humility ought not to be a goal, lest we boast in such an achievement.

So what is the goal?

To “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14), a King born in a stable amid farm animals and hay, laid on a lowly manger; a man who embodied a love so extravagant that no greater love could exist — a love exhibited by Jesus in the deliberate laying down of His life for His friends (John 15:13).

The humility of our Savior is overwhelming when He washed the disciples’ feet or insisted that it would be John the Baptist who would baptize Him, and not the other way around. Or when “He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross…” (Philippians 2:8).

As often is the case, when we look at the person of Jesus and then examine ourselves, we fall infinitely short. This should bring comfort to us! We could never become like Him. To attempt at its appearance. After all, humility would only drive us to cover our nakedness with deceit and put on the appearance of humility and love.

Instead, we must embrace that without Him we could never become like Him. To put on “humble” versions of ourselves (or whatever notions we have about humility) is to leave the Lord Jesus Christ off. It is He who has the ability to shine through us and is to leave the Lord Jesus Christ off. It is He who has the ability to shine through us and is to leave the Lord Jesus Christ off. It is He who could never become like Him. To see crazy as foolishness among the broken.

So what is the goal?

To follow the Christ who is the Shamed One. To cease holding our pride so that the cross is revealed in all we do and say.

I pray that as you read this issue and as we are heading into Advent, that you will be prepared to be moved by the words of humility and wisdom found in its pages. I hope you are profoundly touched by the word “humility” becoming flesh, as it were, first in Christ and secondly in the people whose stories make up this issue. No appearances here. Just the real thing.

We celebrate humility before God and humanity.

From the Editor

“Humility ought not to be a goal, lest we boast in such an achievement.”

Editor Jorge Castorena

The Cry is an advocacy publication of Word Made Flesh that invites readers to learn and share in the stories of our friends who suffer under poverty and injustice.

To request a quarterly subscription, contact us at 1-859-388-4646 or visit wordmadeflesh.org/the-cry

Issues of The Cry are available at: wordmadeflesh.org/the-cry

Copyright © 2017 by Word Made Flesh. All rights reserved.

To obtain reprint permission, e-mail your request to: jorge.castorena@wordmadeflesh.org

CONNECT WITH JORGE:

jorge.castorena@wordmadeflesh.org
From the Executive Director

“Tell me the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it” (Mk. 10:15).

“Truly, I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Mat. 18:2-4)

To lack humility is to be missing a vital component of being like children and not being like children is concerning enough to God that He lets us know: it is a deal breaker related to living eternally in the Light of God. On the other hand, exhibiting humility as a component of childhoodness is in fact so vital that God lets us know that it moves us into a category of exemplifying the very best characteristic of bearing the image of God. Is it that when we exhibit humility we become the greatest; that is, at the point of caring the least about being the greatest, we become the greatest.

Humility noted as placing a person in a position of “greatest” categorically puts it alongside another biblical characteristic of “greatest” — Love.

What does biblical Love/Humility look like?

“God’s love was revealed among us, and by God’s grace we are able to share such a gift with others too. Love is a gift. It is a gift to us and by God’s grace we are able to share a gift with others too.”

If you have been around children during their earliest years, you will have seen that they are curious, they ask questions — often quite a lot of questions: they seek to learn. You will have seen that children are quick to forgive a harm done and that given a moment’s space for reflection they will often choose to share what they have with others if they see another person lacking. You will have seen that unless tragically hindered, children love with expansive breadth — all are welcomed. This is the kind of Humility and Love that God seeks from us.

Throughout this issue of The Cry that is focused on our Lifestyle Celebration of Humility you will encounter material from our communities, from friends of Word Made Flesh, and from resources that we have found that encourage our hearts and souls toward compassionate Humble Love. We hope that these stories move you to seek to be more like Jesus in your own daily rhythms of life. Please pray for us and for the ongoing work of Word Made Flesh among those around the world today in harmful and oppressive situations that are like those people that — in the midst of loving all people — Jesus particularly saw and loved in His days here on earth.

Examination is not our work alone, but a partnership between us and Jesus. We should not waste our time in useless looks at our own miseries, but should lift our hearts to God and let His light enlighten us.

If you are humble, nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are. If you are blindered, you won’t be discouraged; if anyone calls you a saint, you won’t put yourself on a pedestal. If you are a saint, thank God. If you are a sinner don’t remain one. Christ tells us to aim very high, not to be like Abraham or David or any of the saints, but to be like our heavenly Father.”

CLINT BALDWIN
Executive Director, Word Made Flesh

CONNECT WITH CLINT: clint.baldwin@wordmadeflesh.org

The Gift of Slippers

By Angelene Samuel, Field Director, WMF Chennai

Oh how she loved it! It was just an ordinary pair of slippers. The kind with a flat base and Y-shaped plastic molded straps and a printed cartoon on the sole. She held it close to her and kept saying how lovely it looked. The sparkle in her eyes and the smile dancing on her face were enough to melt any heart. The letters L and R were marked on the soles with markers to help her fit her feet in the right ones. She tried them on and took them off for safe keeping. This could have been just any child’s reaction, except for the fact that Sasi (name changed), was being given her very first pair of slippers!

Sasi was three years old and she came along with her younger infant sister Sumi of 15 months. They had lost their mother very early, and the father, who had a daily wages job, was not sure of keeping both the little ones safe. They joined our family of other children used to our open arms. It was the fact that Sasi was barefooted. She had walked over rugged paths from her home town, travelled in the city bus and walked on the tar roads of the city all barefooted to reach our home. One of the very first purchases I did for Sasi was a tiny pair of slippers. She had been talking about having a pair of her own, when she saw all the other children in the home wearing theirs. When I handed over her pair of slippers, she jumped up and down with pure delight of having received something very new for the very first time. Her reaction would have been just normal, had it not been for the fact that she had never been bought a pair of slippers. It disturbed me deeply to realize that infants could not have enjoyed these simple pleasure of basic needs like footwear, food and clothes.

We continued to ooh and ah over her beautiful slippers while I said to her that I like her slippers very much and that I was sure they would look lovely when she walked with them. She just looked deep into my eyes and smiled the most brilliant smile. I asked her if she liked them and she responded, “I love them.” It’s difficult to describe what happened next. She took her brand new slippers, box and all, and gently placed them on her hands and said, “You should have these because you love them so!” I was astonished! I was expecting a little child deprived of basic needs to grab the gift, mumble a quick thank you and make a dash with her precious gift. But here was I encountering something sacred, beautiful and deep. She simply looked at me and said, “Take it, it’s all yours!” I was astounded. It was like a dam breaking loose within me. It is not every day I encountered such a giving, such a humble herself as a child to receive the fullness of Christ. This was the gift of the highest order which only the greatest in the kingdom can give. The truly humble child in whose soul Christ abides.

We continued to ooh and ah over her beautiful slippers while I said to her that I like her slippers very much and that I was sure they would look lovely when she walked with them. She just looked deep into my eyes and smiled the most brilliant smile. I asked her if she liked them and she responded, “I love them.” It’s difficult to describe what happened next. She took her brand new slippers, box and all, and gently placed them on her hands and said, “You should have these because you love them so!” I was astonished! I was expecting a little child deprived of basic needs to grab the gift, mumble a quick thank you and make a dash with her precious gift. But here was I encountering something sacred, beautiful and deep. She simply looked at me and said, “Take it, it’s all yours!” I was astounded. It was like a dam breaking loose within me. It is not every day I encountered such a giving, such a humble herself as a child to receive the fullness of Christ. This was the gift of the highest order which only the greatest in the kingdom can give. The truly humble child in whose soul Christ abides.

Sasi was barefooted. She had walked over rugged paths from her home town, travelled in the city bus and walked on the tar roads of the city all barefooted to reach our home. One of the very first purchases I did for Sasi was a tiny pair of slippers. She had been talking about having a pair of her own, when she saw all the other children in the home wearing theirs. When I handed over her pair of slippers, she jumped up and down with pure delight of having received something very new for the very first time. Her reaction would have been just normal, had it not been for the fact that she had never been bought a pair of slippers. It disturbed me deeply to realize that infants could not have enjoyed these simple pleasure of basic needs like footwear, food and clothes.

We continued to ooh and ah over her beautiful slippers while I said to her that I like her slippers very much and that I was sure they would look lovely when she walked with them. She just looked deep into my eyes and smiled the most brilliant smile. I asked her if she liked them and she responded, “I love them.” It’s difficult to describe what happened next. She took her brand new slippers, box and all, and gently placed them on her hands and said, “You should have these because you love them so!” I was astonished! I was expecting a little child deprived of basic needs to grab the gift, mumble a quick thank you and make a dash with her precious gift. But here was I encountering something sacred, beautiful and deep. She simply looked at me and said, “Take it, it’s all yours!” I was astounded. It was like a dam breaking loose within me. It is not every day I encountered such a giving, such a humble herself as a child to receive the fullness of Christ. This was the gift of the highest order which only the greatest in the kingdom can give. The truly humble child in whose soul Christ abides.

She gave her everything when she had nothing. It humbled me to know that I did have many resources from which I was giving, and sometimes not so very cheerfully. She personified the beautiful woman whom the Lord commanded for giving, not from her abundance but from her poverty. The gift was so powerful that it twisted its gentle power deep into my heart and sent vibrations all over my being, leading me closer the greatest giver of all — Christ. I saw Christ in this child. I saw the suffering Christ and Christ the life giver all entwined into one. I saw his footprints clearly before me, to humble myself as a child to receive what he was willing to pour in. Care giving can be so work related that it can snap the very essence of serving with humility the Christ we worship. Yet, Christ often comes in guise to keep us humble and filled, sometimes in the child we encounter, or in the very depths of our soul, where a child waits to be acknowledged in humility to receive the fullness of Christ. This was the gift of the highest order which only the greatest in the kingdom can give. The truly humble child in whose soul Christ abides.

I knew that they would have never been held with love and that they would soon get used to our open arms.

About Angelene

Angelene was born and raised in the southern most state of India, Tamil Nadu. She was influenced by the work and dedication of her parents who were full time workers in Child Evangelism Fellowship for more than 15 years. She did her undergraduate studies in Psychology and post-graduate studies in Clinical Psychology. Meanwhile, her parents Patrick and Victoria, transitioned into work with WMF Chennai. During her studies and her job as a lecturer in Psychology, she was constantly aware of the nudge that she had much more to do in life than teaching psychology. As Angelene began working alongside her parents with Word Made Flesh, she also worked as a counselor in the Phase I HIV vaccine trial — a project of the New York-headquartered International AIDS Vaccine Initiative — which was the first of its kind in India.
John Wesley offers another model of incarnational humility. For Wesley, identification with the poor was not intentional, at least not at first. Much to his consternation, he was forced out of his native Anglican cathedrals by fellow clergy and bishops who did not simply collect money for the poor, as most aid organizations did. He did not tolerate “voluntary ignorance as an excuse for their hardness of heart.” By contrast, Wesley told his congregations, “in the place of every poor [person] and deal with him as you would [think?].”

Living with the poor—even becoming poor themselves—generated within the early Methodists a feel for the warp and woof of poverty. After extensive travel and research on the problems of hunger and unemployment, Wesley blamed government policy, economic management, and societal choices more than indigent drunkenness and idleness. He wrote, “One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor is because they so seldom visit them.” Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it—and then plead their voluntary ignorance as an excuse for their hardness of heart.” By contrast, Wesley told his congregations, “in the place of every poor [person] and deal with him as you would [think?].” God should deal with you.”

This emphasis on incarnation had profound consequences. Identification with “the other” provoked “a holy dissatisfaction,” according to theologian Theodore Runyon, that “goes beyond any status quo.” It provoked Wesley to object to industrial capitalism, the slave trade, patriarchy, and a religious establishment that valued intellectual assent and doctrinal conformity above all. Runyon suggests that the poor of England, as Wesley attended to them with humility, “found their voice.”

When Wesley declared that “the world is my parish” at Fetter Lane Chapel in London, it was not an imperial order from the upper classes to conform. “We require no unity in opinions, or in modes of worship,” declared Wesley, “but barely that they fear God and work righteousness.” An incarnational humility characterized his mission.

What we believe is important. But Wesley’s example—and the approaching Christmas season—remind us that how we believe is just as important.

ABOUT DAVID:
David R. Swartz began teaching history at Asbury University after earning his Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame. Areas of teaching and research interest include American religious history, Anabaptism, global religion, and issues of war and peace. He is the founder and faculty sponsor of Plowshares, a Central Kentucky group that promotes peace and reconciliation. David published his first book in 2012 with the University of Pennsylvania Press, garnering positive reviews from The New York Times, Journal of American History, Christian Century, Huffington Post, and Books & Culture. His second project is forthcoming with Oxford University Press and deals with global evangelicism. David also regularly writes at the Amusing Bench blog at Patheos.

CONNECT WITH DAVID:
david.swartz@asbury.edu

EXPERIENCE THE MISSION. JOIN A WMF DISCOVERY TEAM. MAY 2018
FOR MORE INFORMATION EMAIL OPPORTUNITIES@WORDMADEFLESH.ORG
CLICK HERE

From Oxford Don to Field Preacher
By David R. Swartz

The gospel narrative depicts God becoming flesh. Living a fully human life, Jesus of Nazareth was born to a laboring mother in the throes of birthing pains. He experienced the fears of childhood, the angst of late childhood and the temptations of mature adulthood—all (and this is where the similarities end) without succumbing to sin (Hab. 4:15). Jesus was Emmanuel, God with us (John 1:14; Phil. 2:6-7), and God’s identification with humanity changed everything. At the “heart of the gospel of salvation is God’s incarnation,” says Methodist theologian William Willimon. The ineffable Yahweh was embodied in Jesus, a lowly carpenter in ancient Nazareth.

Over time Wesley reincarnated from Oxford don to field preacher. Covering over quarter a million miles on horseback and preaching forty thousand sermons, he went to the people. He generally preached in the open air: in the fields, in the middle of streets, the main city square, the meat market, and on a flight of steps outside a malt house. He also went inside prisons, asylums, private homes, and hostels. According to theologian Albert Butler, the evangelist encountered what became his chosen constituency: “Christ’s poor.” Wesley embraced the heckles and odors of the “uncouth mob.”

His ministry took particular shape: not just to, but among the poor. He did not simply collect money for the poor, as most aid societies of the time did. In the context of a deeply stratified society that often blamed the victim, Wesley and his Methodist colleagues ate with, confessed with, and prayed with the poor. Class meetings were intimate, consisting of each member relating his own experience during the previous week, his joys, and his sorrows; his hopes and his fears; his conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil.” The rich and poor alike sought to relate “the state of his or her soul.” Like Christ who “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” (Phil. 2:6-7), Christians should adopt a “gospel poverty.” Said Wesley’s brother Charles, who believed that Christ and the first apostles “were themselves deliberately poor” because the poor “uniquely bear the image of Christ.”

Living with the poor—even becoming poor themselves—generated within the early Methodists a feel for the warp and woof of poverty. After extensive travel and research on the problems of hunger and unemployment, Wesley blamed government policy, economic management, and societal choices more than indigent drunkenness and idleness. He wrote, “One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor is because they so seldom visit them.” Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it—and then plead their voluntary ignorance as an excuse for their hardness of heart.” By contrast, Wesley told his congregations, “in the place of every poor [person] and deal with him as you would [think?].” God should deal with you.”

( opposite) A depiction of John Wesley preaching in the street. Photo courtesy of Wiki Commons.
Humility vs. Humiliation

By Doris Monasterios, Executive Director of WMF Bolivia

Where I live, humility is often measured by the size of one's paycheck. In this context, the word humble is not reserved for the meek and holy — rather it is used to describe people of poor and lowly stature. In my culture, wealthy people are esteemed while “humble” people with less money are seen as less and less significant. While, yes, it often tends to be easier for a person of humble means to better practice spiritual humility than someone of great wealth, it is also easier for their humility to be turned into humiliation as their rights are stripped from them along with their dignity.

My home city of El Alto is one of the largest cities in Bolivia. It is known for being the highest city in the world — the city that sits at the highest altitude of any city in the world. Even though this city reaches such great heights, you might also say it is a humble place. Seventy-three percent of its inhabitants live in poverty, 12% of whom are considered to be living in extreme poverty.

Almost 30 years ago, my family of eight (two parents, four sisters, a brother and myself), moved to El Alto from the mining centers of Coro Coro, Bolivia. Growing up in our family, money was always a struggle. So, people grouped us with the humble and poor people of El Alto. Being a Christian family, we didn’t mind being labeled as such. We knew that humility could take on a different, spiritual meaning. We actually liked the phrase. However, we quickly learned the difference between being humble and being humiliated — the difference between merely living in poverty and being made vulnerable by having our rights taken away due to our humble position.

My family had been living in El Alto for 10 years when my only brother got seriously ill. He started bleeding from the nose and then suddenly lost his ability to move at all. Doctors couldn’t tell us what was going on. They ran several tests and then biopsied my brother’s skull, eventually detecting a tumor that turned out to be tuberculosis.

The doctors operated on my brother and, in the process, they mistakenly left a piece of cotton in the right side of my brother’s skull. This formed a cyst, causing need for the doctors to operate once again. Because of this injury and the subsequent faulty surgeries, my brother ended up living with a life-long motor skill disability.

I could hear the doctors saying to one another that our family would not say a word about all of this trouble because we were a “humble” family. We wouldn’t be able to do anything to right their mistake. Despite this hardship, I thank God my brother was able to accomplish many of his goals, like finishing school and making a career in music. As my brother worked to achieve these goals, he did so with much humility, recognizing his limitations even as he walked toward his dreams.

In 2002, my father passed away. Unfortunately, his death was due to medical negligence once again. After entering the hospital with severe appendicitis, he died out of surgery, his poor condition merited the need for him to be in intensive therapy. The hospital didn’t offer this service and was going to need to transfer him to a different hospital. However, we owed money on medical bills and hospital fees there. We didn’t have the money to pay for these things. We were working as hard as possible to get the money, but were having very little luck. During this time, my mother said to the hospital staff that my father was dying. She asked, “Why didn’t you do anything sooner?”

When the doctors saw my mother, they told her that, being such a humble woman, she didn’t have the right or ability to claim anything or prove anything. They unkindly reminded her she didn’t even have money to pay for her medical bills, much less for the court costs and legal fees that would be necessary to right this medical injustice. In the midst of all of this, my father died.

In the wake of my father’s death, I resented my family’s humbleness. I prayed and wished it away — wished we could simply have money. If being humble meant being destitute, fatherless, and causing my brother pain, I wanted nothing to do with this so-called humility. When Scripture called me to be humble, I felt confused and afraid.

In the years since these events, the Lord has restored my heart. He has written His truths in my heart and showed me the true meaning of humility—that being humble doesn’t mean not having money; being humble is having a willing heart to listen to the Lord’s call despite adversities. He taught me how to recognize His will in humility. It is with that newfound and redeemed sense of humility that I can now say that God has had mercy on my life—even in the hard moments. He has forgiven my pride, and blessed my humble family beyond measure.

ABOUT DORIS

Doris Monasterios is a powerful example of perseverance, strength hard work and an unending faith in God. She has lived in El Alto, Bolivia for most of her life. Growing up, she experienced the cycle of violence that affects so many firsthand in this chilly, sprawling city.

In 2003, her family began hosting WMF Servant Team members in their home and a friendship grew with the WMF Bolivia community. In 2009, Doris joined the WMF Bolivia administrative team. Her dedication and passion led her to transition to the role of Executive Director in 2015. “The past is still there, but God healed everything,” she says. “This community has been my biggest support.”

Doris is also wife to Daniel and mother to Adria.

CONNECT WITH DORIS:
doris.monasterios@wordmadeflesh.org
@WordmadeFleshBolivia
The Least of These

By Papanie Turay, WMF Sierra Leone Staff

I grew up with my aunty, my father’s sister. My parents gave me to my aunty to raise me with my older sister because I was my mother’s first surviving male child. To protect my life, my parents decided it was best to give me to my aunty, who did not have a child. This is a common thing to do when one’s sibling is childless.

I was sent to my aunty when I was when one month old. My experience with my aunty was terrible. At a very tender age I was introduced to street life at Victoria Park, a popular market in Freetown, where my aunty was petty-trading cooked food (Cookery). I mostly spent my time in the street, and my friends were the street children in Victoria Park.

Victoria Park was a dangerous place where drug abuse, prostitution, fighting and gambling were the order of the day. It was not a place for a kid who had dreams and aspirations to succeed in life. There were bad influences everywhere. Because of the crime rate and all the bad activities that go on in Victoria Park, the Sierra Leone police raided that area at least twice a week. I experienced an excess of child labour while growing up. Neglect, loneliness, rejection and other abuses were a major part of my pain. Through all these pain, struggles, and difficulties in my life I chose to be humble and save my aunty.

When Jesus was grown, He was known to have spent time with “the least of these” in society. He walked in the company of prostitutes, of hated money launderers, thieves, beggars, the sick, oppressed widows and little children. This was what was like to grow up in my community. I neither celebrated holidays nor played as a child. All I knew was working.

As I was growing up, I saw an excess of teenage pregnancies, which were a result of poverty and street living. Girls and boys in the streets had no sexual education, and there were those who would also take advantage of them because of their vulnerable situation. This resulted in the bearing of more street community’s situation. I wanted to see a change in my life and in the lives of the other young people. However, I was incapacitated to enact that change. I wanted to chase my dreams and finish my education like anyone else.

Before my father died, my aunty said he sent for her. My father was living in a village and he told my aunty to “Make sure Papanie went to school.” She told me that was my father’s last word. But still, she was having a difficult time paying for my school.

In 2003, I encountered Word Made Flesh Sierra Leone, which helped me to get out of the streets and go to school again. When I joined the Lighthouse program, everything in my life changed and I started to see a new world. Through their Lighthouse program, I have moved from despair to hopefulness, and have learned to share God’s love to others. I have developed a passion to do things which give hope to my family and to my community. When I saw WMF’s humility and how they loved us, I wanted to do the same thing for others by helping children and youth that were going through difficult times. I started with my small income I get from the Lighthouse program. They pay me to clean houses and do laundry for my leaders. I use some of the money given to me for my work to help with lunch and to buy sweets for the Victoria Park children.

Jesus’ humility demands our own. If you walk with a prideful heart, with your head so high you cannot even see the ground, humble yourself and recognize the one, true King. Know the truth of this Christ King. He is at home among the lowly, the humble and the poor. He is not ashamed of us in our weak love. But one day, He will come as a conquering king and our pride will not stand against Him.

ABOUT PAPANIE

Papanie first arrived at Word Made Flesh Sierra Leone in 2003 and was one of the initial members of the Lighthouse Program, in which vulnerable youths are intentionally discipled and mentored through various activities. It was then that Papanie began his Christian walk and later went on to serve with Mercy Ships for three years, travelling the world to preach the gospel. He is now back in Sierra Leone working as an intern with the WMF community and serves primarily with the children and youth.
As we reflect on this lifestyle celebration, we invite you to explore some of our staff top picks from media and resources that deal with humility.

**DOROTHY DAY** was a highly revered 20th-century figure. When she died in 1980 among the underserved of New York City, archbishops compared her to Gandhi and Martin Luther King, the New York Times spoke of the “end of an era” and homeless men wept. In her early years, Day had strong ambitions of becoming a famous writer. Soon after her conversion, she dropped everything and devoted herself to helping people in poverty, spreading a powerful message about Christian devotion. She fought for social justice, nonviolence, and passionate care for the marginalized. In this book, you will find a refreshing humor and honesty as she addresses her hopes and fears and her sources of inspiration that daily led her to abandon everything just to love God and people.

**YO-YO MA** and Allison Krauss recorded a wonderful rendition of “Simple Gifts,” a Shaker Thanksgiving hymn about humbly accepting the simple gifts of God’s grace. The Shakers are most commonly known for their communal lifestyles and simple living. Established in 1770, the Shakers emphasized total devotion to God and believed that a life of simplicity and communal labor was the model leading them toward redemption. But simple living was not without rich culture. The Shakers loved art, dancing, and music.

Additionally, reflect on the lyrics of “Bow Down Low,” another Shaker hymn capturing meekness in serving Christ.

**CONTEmplate**

― WENDELL BERRY, THE ART OF THE COMMONPLACE: THE AGRARIAN ESSAYS

We have lived by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. And this has been based on the often illusory assumption that we could know with any certainty what was good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world — to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity — our own capacity for life — that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never know with any certainty what is good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world — to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity — our own capacity for life — that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never know with any certainty what is good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world — to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity — our own capacity for life — that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never know with any certainty what is good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world — to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity — our own capacity for life — that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never know with any certainty what is good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world — to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity — our own capacity for life — that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never know with any certainty what is good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world — to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity — our own capacity for life — that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never know with any certainty what is good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world — to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity — our own capacity for life — that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never know with any certainty what is good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world — to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity — our own capacity for life — that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never know with any certainty what is good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world — to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity — our own capacity for life — that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never know with any certainty what is good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world — to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity — our own capacity for life — that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.
Meet our Staff

Leah Abraham
Assistant Editor
The Cry

Hi, there! I’m Leah. Loved ones call me Athu. I’m a storyteller + writer + journalist + creative + empathizing romantic + pessimistic realist. I’m ISFP + Enneagram type 2 + much more. I live in the Seattle area where I work as a community newspaper reporter.

Having spent half my life in India, I consider myself an immigrant/citizen hybrid. This is perhaps why I have a heart for the underdog and the “least among us.”

What brings me joy? Korean food, Mary Oliver poetry and my dorky, immigrant family. What makes me feel alive? Coffee dates, dance parties, asking BIG questions and being a midwife of stories.

That’s exactly why I’m grateful to be a part of the WMF family. I get to be a part of bringing the important stories to life.

CONNECT WITH LEAH:
leah.abraham@wordmadeflesh.org

Anca-Aurora Chiosea
Communications and Fundraising Coordinator,
WMF Romania

Anca was born in 1975 in Pechea, a county of Galati, Romania to an Orthodox family. She has 3 brothers and 2 sisters. In her last year of high school, she started to understand how there were many kids, youth and families affected by poverty, diseases and other difficulties around the community she was in.

When she finished high school, she already knew that she wanted to help the vulnerable, especially children. She didn’t know how exactly, but she had this in mind when she began deciding where she wanted to work. From 1999 to 2011, Anca worked through a few NGO’s with abandoned children affected by HIV/AIDS and other effects of poverty and marginalization. She has studied social work, sociology and psychology.

In 2011 Anca became a part of Word Made Flesh, first as a volunteer and then came on staff in 2012. She oversees communication and fundraising in the community.

Anca believes in the power of personal example to change things that are not how they are supposed to be. She also believes that whatever one decides to do must be done with gladness and love. “Whatever you do, do it with all your might.”

CONNECT WITH ANCA:
anca.archip@wordmadeflesh.org

END OF YEAR Gifts

Thank you so much for your love of Word Made Flesh. Your support sustains our work. Please help us end the year well and begin the next year strong. Visit wordmadeflesh.org/donate with your end of year gift. Thank you.

Hi! Visit smile.amazon.com, choose WMF as your charity, and bookmark it to your browser!
“Recuerda que tú también tienes a una madre-” (Remember that you also have a mother), the man said, just loud enough that you also have a mother. “...to serve on the board of WMF Peru.”

By Brian Langley, Board Member, WMF Peru

“(Above) Graffiti in Lima, Peru for “Woman’s Day 2008” - the murals read: “Woman, remember your battle” and “Woman, you deserve respect.”

”Tú También Tienes a Una Madre”

By Brian Langley, Board Member, WMF Peru

“Recuerda que tú también tienes a una madre-” (Remember that you also have a mother), the man said, just loud enough to be heard but soft enough to not further aggressivate. On that dimly lit street, and for reasons that I don’t fully understand, this phrase defused the rage in the other man, who slumped his shoulders, and shuffled down the street. Moments before, I had tackled the enraged man and forcefully confiscated his kitchen knife. Although still very risky, this seemed the better option rather than let him attack his former partner and mother of their child, who had run up to me in hysterics hiding herself behind my back.

And yet, to remember that we come from somewhere, that our lives are more than just random tragedy, that there might be, hopefully, someone who still cares about us, is power. A good power, the kind that helps us get up in the morning, to hold our heads up high in the face of struggle and suffering, also the kind that reminds us it’s time to calm down, to stop hurting each other and remember that we are connected.

Until, that is, he was gently reminded to whom he owes his life, and from where, and whom, he came. I was surprised and amazed that this actually worked, more so because it didn’t seem to be the result of any plan or strategy - it just came out, from the heart, right when it was needed most. One more glance over at this soft-spoken man revealed numerous scars and tattoos up and down his arms and neck. Seemingly, he was also familiar with the street - the fear, the cravings, the loneliness, the pain. So often those who find themselves on the street try really hard, daily, sometimes moment by moment, to forget where they are from because there is so much pain there.

And yet, to remember that we come from somewhere, that our lives are more than just random tragedy, that there might be, hopefully, someone who still cares about us, is power. A good power, the kind that helps us get up in the morning, to hold our heads up high in the face of struggle and suffering, also the kind that reminds us it’s time to calm down, to stop hurting each other and remember that we are connected.

Our team had been trying to de-escalate the growing tension between this couple the whole afternoon. To add more fuel to the fire, he had been drinking - able to have a conversation but with much less of a filter. Nothing was working, and as evening became night, the tension between them was growing and finally exploded into his knife attack. Even after his knife was confiscated, he promptly found a glass bottle, broke off the end, and began threatening his former partner. Even after his knife was confiscated, he promptly found a glass bottle, broke off the end, and began threatening his partner once more. If anything, he appeared more angry than before.

And yet, to remember that we come from somewhere, that our lives are more than just random tragedy, that there might be, hopefully, someone who still cares about us, is power. A good power, the kind that helps us get up in the morning, to hold our heads up high in the face of struggle and suffering, also the kind that reminds us it’s time to calm down, to stop hurting each other and remember that we are connected.

Peruvians, I think, uniquely understand the importance of place. Every child growing up in Peru hears their family members, preschool teachers, newscasters, and professional athletes talk about the “Orgullo de ser Peruano.” (The Pride of being Peruvian). I, of course, didn’t “get it” for many years, even after learning Spanish and living and working in Peru, one of the most cherished and repeated military stories in Peru, is of when the horse-mounted general Ugarte rides off a cliff into the great divine story of abundant and eternal life. God was always there. The places from which we come become the fertile ground of our new identity for those who receive what God is doing through the salvation story. It is the pride of realizing that God not only joins us in our story but has done everything needed to include and embrace us into the great divine story of abundant and eternal life.

To remember that we also have a mother is a powerful reminder that our lives are connected to others and to shared experiences. For most Peruvians, this is a path that reminds them of the difficult circumstances of their childhoods - households often lacking, rarely winning against opponents of all kinds, and being taken advantage of by those more powerful. A path of shared humility for sure. And yet, it is these very circumstances that, surprisingly, become fertile ground for a robust sense of identity and belonging.

The Advent season involves movement on this same path - remembering that we all “come from somewhere,” that no matter how humble, painful, sinful or tragic our beginnings, God was always there. The places from which we come become the fertile ground of our new identity for those who receive what God is doing through the salvation story. It is the pride of realizing that God not only joins us in our story but has done everything needed to include and embrace us into the great divine story of abundant and eternal life.

ABOUT BRIAN & RACHEL LANGLEY

Brian and Rachel Langley, moved to Peru in October, 2000 to work with the Word Made Flesh community serving among young people who were living on the street. They served 17 years based out of Lima. In June 2017, their family moved to Columbus, Ohio. Both Brian and Rachel continue to serve on the board of WMF Peru. 

CONNECT WITH THE LANGLEYS:
Brian.langley@wordmadeflesh.org
@PalabraHechaHombre
Humility  We celebrate humility before God and humanity.

(Left) A doodle of Philippians 2:7 (quoted in English and Tamil) by Angelene Samuel, Field Director of WMF Chennai. “It depicts the feet of Christ, incarnated,” she said. “These feet lead us in paths of humility and peace. Feet being the lowest part of the body are the least revered. They are symbolically the measure of the depth of Christ’s humility in reaching out to us.”

our vision

Word Made Flesh is called and committed to serve Jesus among the most vulnerable of the world’s poor. This calling is realized as a prophetic ministry for, and an incarnational, holistic mission among the poor. We focus our energy to make Jesus known among the poor while reconciling the church with the poor.