

# Graffiti and the call of Christ – How do we respond?

By Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB, St. Patrick Church

Last week, the Gazette Times published the very shocking news of graffiti drawn on some churches and elsewhere. Confronted with the emerging details of this bad news, we feel numb and distressed. In the context of what has happened, I thought of making my reflections for this week on this.

The first reading from Prophet Jonah (3: 1-5,10) is an invitation to Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and preach the Good News of God. He walked around the city of Nineveh and preached; they listened and amended their ways and averted the wrath of God on them. We may see that, as in the city of Nineveh, God is asking every one of us to pay attention - to the needs of family and oneness of family. For instance, spend time together with the family instead of electronic gadgets and detaching oneself from the family koinonia communion. I think the present-day Lord is calling all of us who are addicted to social media and influenced by social media to "leave the NET and follow me." In today's world the first thing we look around for when we reach a destination is net connectivity and access to the Wi-Fi so we can sit back comfortably and get hooked to what is on the NET.

The Gospel of Mark, chapter 1: 14-20, speaks of the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. He started his public ministry by preaching about the kingdom of God. He too begins his preaching with the topic "repent and believe in the gospel." The Lord calls all of us to have a change of mind and attitude and turn to Him. As far as we know, every one of the disciples was chosen and called personally by Jesus. We believe that God calls each one of us. God not only calls us to follow Jesus, but also calls us into the fields and careers of our lives. The call of these first four disciples shows us that he looks not externally but inside every one of us. He calls the unqualified and He qualifies them according to the nature of His call and mission.

As He walks on the shores of Galilee, Jesus meets Simon and his brother Andrew casting the nets into the sea. Jesus told them to just follow him without a second thought, and we see these brothers following Jesus. How did they know him? Whether they had known him early, we have no idea. Jesus enters into the lives of these brothers to heal them. In the present-day context, we can see several people who go through sadness, desperation, brokenness, melancholy, exactly like Peter. These people certainly see Jesus entering into the lives of others, healing them, curing them, giving them peace in their hearts, becoming their Savior – all these and more do they see. But they do not follow Jesus. Why? Because they put

their entire trust and hope in their boats and nets of this material world. These boats and nets might be the physical and material security and wealth they enjoy. It might be the position they hold in the community, in society. It might be the material wealth they possess. It can also be the public influence they have. It can even be the love and encouragement they receive from others. It might be the education they have, the job they do. When all these are there, they won't feel the need to follow Jesus.

Jesus talks through our failures. I am sure we condemn and neglect some people with certain labels – maybe those who have graffitied - but Jesus loves those individuals, too. He desires to make them also His disciples. He leads them through failures and defeat by urging them to give up their boat and nets. The Lord wants them to trust Him entirely. The Lord enters into our lives in a special way, in a personal way when our lives become a failure in the eyes of the world, when we are hated by others, when we feel discouraged and when we feel neglected. When we bend our heads with shame and sorrow, when we can go to no one for consolation, then we will be able to hear the loving words of our Divine Savior telling us, "Son/daughter, I love you; come, follow me." Do we listen to this affectionate calling of the Lord?

With "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men," the four fishermen are called with no further instructions whatsoever. They are called to a totally uncertain future and would surely have been scared out of their wits had they known what lay in store for them. God's call is always into an uncertain future. When we enter into our callings, we have no idea how it will all end up. We choose our careers and jobs, hoping that we can use the gifts and talents God has given us, but there are no guarantees. This call actually leaves us with challenges. How to put Christ first in everything of our life: A) Prioritize: Lk. 10:38-42 (Like Mary, you must make a decision to put Christ before everything.) B) Set Your Mind on Heaven: Col. 3:1-2 (Don't be too absorbed with earthly goals. Instead, make heaven your goal.) C) Invest: Mt. 6:19-21, ("Jesus said your heart will be where you put your treasure. If you invest the treasure of your time, money, and effort in the Lord's work, the Lord will become more important to you.")



Fr. Thankachan Joseph

## Good News Only

By Doris Brosnan

Welcome to "Good News Only." As long as individuals are willing to share their good news, this column will serve to get it out to the GT readers.

Sometimes good news can be something as small and simple as City Manager Kraig Cutsforth's at City Hall, "No one has COVID, we are all here and the sunshine is great."

And sometimes, good news becomes the silver lining of a negative event, as what is true of a runaway airplane at the Lexington airport earlier this week. Apparently, the airplane had the potential of wreaking havoc, but it was brought under control, and the good news is that no one was hurt.

Community support is always good news, and we celebrate this fact time and again following critical situations faced by our neighbors. Latest example: Jackie Alleman sent out a Facebook request last week that the grandsons of Claudia Ramirez (recently deceased) needed help clearing out her house. For two days, almost forty people showed up to assist this family that has faced some overwhelming hardships. The Mormon Church fed the crew with help from the Catholic Church. Millers were efficient with providing dumpsters for items not going with family or to



Community members help grandsons clear out deceased grandmother's house.

storage. Hats off to all.

Another joint effort was also initiated by a single individual, resulting in a lasered metal silhouette sculpture in the Heppner Cemetery. Eileen Wilson reports that Joyce Kay Holomon presented her idea to the cemetery committee, they approved it, and Dana Wilson and John Healy installed the sculpture of a soldier carrying a wounded soldier, a memorial to the "Wounded Warrior." It shares space at the turnaround with a previously installed plaque dedicated to members of the military who have served in wars.

The Ione Community Church has reached its goal, so after a few days' work in the second week of February, members of the congregation will be enjoy-

ing new carpeting in three of the church's areas that have had the most use over twenty years of service. Determined not to replace the carpeting until they had enough money to cover the cost, the trustees have announced that they have now made carpet selection and are eager for the update. (A lesson in the importance of support and patience.)

Good news for the US Forest Service and for the vitality of our area is the recent filling of two positions that had been empty for a while, archeologist and silviculturist. These two newcomers are joining the new wildlife biologist who recently moved to Heppner. Cindy Doherty reminds readers that, although the doors are locked because of COVID-19 rules, staff members at the office are available for appointments.

Patience seems incredibly necessary in the wait for the COVID-19 vaccine to come to southern Morrow County, but the good news is that Ann Murray is hopeful that this will happen soon, and Murray's Drug has prepared for their role in administering it, "Ready to go as soon as we get it." They plan to extend hours to expedite the process, and Ann reports that they do take names of individuals requesting the vaccine and will call those people to set up appointments. Although there is no cost to the in-

dividual, she notes that individuals on Medicare will need to bring their red, white and blue Medicare cards with them.

"Babies" are one topic of good news at Les Schwab Tire Center right now: John Gould reports that in about a week, son Thomas and his wife, Riley (daughter of Stacey Wilson), expect the birth of their first child, a son. Soon-to-be-grandparents-Gould plan to fly to Georgia in three weeks to meet the grandson, their third grandchild.

Puppies are babies, too, and Brian Holtz became the proud owner of seven wee Jack Russell Terriers about four weeks ago. Good news that these rambunctious short-haired cuties are growing quickly and will soon be available to good homes. Brian reports, however, that only two have not yet been spoken for.

Eastern Oregon University has spoken, and Madelyn Nichols has accepted its offer of a \$1,000 running scholarship and a \$3,000 academic scholarship for next fall. Madelyn reports that she is looking forward to sharing a home with her brother, Hunter, and running with him for EOU. Good news for the siblings.

Kimberly George, daughter of Kit and Shirley, is pleased with the challenges of her new position with Sedgwick, the organization she has worked with for twenty years. Good news for Kimberly is that she has filled several roles within the company over these years, keeping refreshingly new her responsibilities in each position. (Note that an article on George's latest news appears in today's paper.)

Mike Brosnan looks forward to the arrival of what wife, Dawn, calls a "monster sprayer" that he

# Larry Allen Mills

Larry Allen Mills passed away on January 8, 2021 at the age of 84 at OHSU in Portland. Larry lived a life dedicated to hard work, service to others, and love of family. "His boisterous laugh, keen wit, leadership, and giving spirit will be greatly missed by all that knew him."



Larry Allen Mills

Larry was born in Rockford, WA to parents Harold and Mary (Loftin) Mills. He grew up on a farm northeast of Rockford and graduated from Rockford High School. His love of the family farm would play a major role in Larry's chosen path in life. After graduation, he settled in Spokane with his wife Betty and attended Kinman Business College and worked for Armour and Company in the industrial engineering department. In 1958, Larry went to work for the Odesa Trading Company. His bookkeeping skills led him to eventually be promoted to assistant manager.

In 1969, he accepted a position at the Morrow County Grain Growers (MCGG) where his love of working around the farming community resulted in him serving as general manager for 29 years. During his time at MCGG, he served as the president of the Pacific Northwest Grain and Feed Association and on the board of the National Grain and Feed Association. It was said that he was "the kind of leader that exists to serve the people. He would never back away from a challenge and wasn't afraid to make a hard decision, all while carrying himself with humor and humility."

Larry would often say, "Community service is the rent you pay for the space you occupy on earth." There is no doubt that Larry's rent was paid in full. Though the ways in which he served his community are too numerous to list, a few of them were: Morrow County Agricultural Museum board member and volunteer; board member for the Red and Gina Leonard Foundation; interim city manager in 2005; 15 years on the Morrow County Health District Board, 25 years of service on the county budget committee; served on the Willow Creek Economic Development Board; volunteered to read to children at the Heroes

Reading Program after he retired; recognized by the Heppner Beautification Program for work to establish and maintain a welcoming line of shade trees and shrubs to the northwest entrance of town; master of ceremonies for numerous community events including the rodeo, St. Patrick's Day parade, and of course, the Heppner Mustangs football team. Larry loved football and relished his over 28-years as the voice of the Mustangs.

But even above his dedication to work and community was his dedication to family. Larry and Betty were married for over sixty years and raised two children, Dianne Stickney (Mills) and Michael Mills. Despite a busy schedule, Larry always made time to attend his grandchildren's sporting games, birthdays and other significant events. He worked with his brothers Bob and Dan Mills to make sure that their families got together for a family reunion every year-- a tradition almost forty years running, with only one brief interruption in 2020 because of COVID. In the end, above all, was family.

Larry is survived by his loving wife, Betty (Jahns) Mills; son, Mike and his children, Chloe and Chandler; daughter, Dianne (Bob) and her children, Kellie Hoiland (Zach), Richard Stickney and his children, Rebecca, RJ, Mandy, Tiffani and Angelika (Lars), and great-great grandchildren Jaxsyn, Rhyson and Amara.

Due to COVID restrictions a graveside service will be held for family only at the Rockford Cemetery on Jan. 23 at 1 p.m. A memorial service will be held in Heppner at a later date.

The family has requested that remembrances be made in the form of contributions to the following charities: Pioneer Memorial Foundation, Box 424, Heppner, OR 97836 or to the Farm Foundation, Box 611, Heppner, OR 97836.

Sweeney Mortuary of Heppner is in care of arrangements. You may sign the online condolence book at [www.sweeneymortuary.com](http://www.sweeneymortuary.com).

ordered from a business in South Dakota, hoping to begin in February his new agricultural spraying business. Good news also is that Mike has taken and passed the required classes to gain his license, so now he waits, a bit frustrated with a delay resulting from a breakdown of the delivery truck.

Babette Wall reports that this great weather is certainly good news, since she feels like "the Energizer Bunny." as she bustles around town on long-awaited walks. After surgery four weeks ago, she is finally happy to feel so good and so free.

Some good news for readers who have not been aware of is a great, low impact outing about Heppner that young and old, individuals and families can enjoy while learning many things about the town. "The Talking Rocks" provide discovery of Heppner's eventful history by follow-

ing their route. On the brass plates of the sixteen rocks are brief explanations of sixteen important components in the town's history (i.e., Individuals, events, industries). Brochures that show the locations of the rocks and offer more detailed accounts of each of those entities are available at the Chamber Office, City Hall, Murray's Drug and Central Market.

We all appreciate opportunities to smile over someone's "good news," so this column will appear as long as individuals are interested in sharing their good news with the GT readers. Anyone who doesn't get contacted by me but has something to share is encouraged to email it to [dbrosnan123@gmail.com](mailto:dbrosnan123@gmail.com). A phone call will also get the job accomplished: 541-676-5382.

Hoping all eyes reading this experience some good news to share next time.

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