

# NORTHERN LIGHT

*Digest*

Grace Communion International Canada / Communion Internationale dans la Grâce, Canada MARCH 2015

## **Snowflakes**

***We're told that each and every snowflake is unique. Each one is slightly different from any other snowflake. When you think of the billions of snowflakes that fall just in Canada each year, it is a stunning fact to contemplate.***

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Human beings also reflect that incredible variety God has designed into creation. Have you noticed how each and every person is unique? Physically, as well as in terms of personality, temperament, and background everyone has a unique place in the human family with a distinctive story to tell. I

never tire of listening to the life stories of older people. They have lived many years, and have experienced things and learned vital lessons that can be shared, if they find willing listeners.

When God looks upon humanity, what does he see? Do you think he sees swarms of us running around like ants milling about in an ant farm? I don't believe he sees us that way at all. I believe he sees each person individually, and is aware of each and every human being, and the details of the condition they are in. Jesus tells us, "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Luke 12:7). If God is aware of such a minor detail as the numbers of hairs on our head, you can be assured he is completely aware of the bigger issues we face in our lives, and the details of our circumstances.

We human beings have great value in the eyes of God. We were created in his image, destined to live in intimate relationship with the Trinity—Father, Son and Spirit. The Bible teaches us that when Adam and Eve were created they initially experienced that relationship, but tragically rejected it, no longer trusting their Creator. This decision impacted how human history has developed, and accounts for the terrible problems and suffering so common in our world. However, due to God's great mercy he has a plan of redemption by which through the life and sacrifice of Jesus, humanity may be brought back into relationship with God again. We are destined to share in the very relationship the Son enjoys with the Father, as adopted children of God.



That central truth undergirds the true value of each human life. When we grasp that, we begin to understand who we were meant to be, and begin to live out our true destiny. But that understanding applies to each and every other human being who has lived. They are destined to be our brothers and sisters for eternity, and to participate in the life of our triune God, just as we are.

As we understand that, how we view other people changes. We no longer view people apart from Christ and his ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16a). We see people as God does, with the incredible value and future he has prepared for them. Whether they yet see it and embrace it themselves or not, we know that this is

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what they were created for. This powerfully impacts how we view others. Each person becomes important, regardless of their status or lack thereof, in this society.

I’ve heard the story that Mother Theresa was asked why she bothered saving the lives of the discarded babies thrown on the garbage heap by the poorest of the poor of Calcutta, India. Her answer was, “they are important to God, and therefore they are important to me.” Her words—and more importantly her life—reflected the fact she truly believed what she said.

Each and every person is valuable and important to God, and therefore, as we grow to see things the way God does, they will be important to us. Just think of what a changed world it would be if everyone had that point of view. Let us show that kindness and love to all those we come in contact with, and truly see them as God does—unique individuals, of great worth and value!

**Gary Moore**

**Ordinary?**

***I attend a lot of funerals. Not because the members of my congregations are dying at an accelerated rate—but because I serve as Padre of Branch 70, of the Royal Canadian Legion in North Battleford, SK.***

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As Padre, in addition to leading the annual Remembrance Day service, I also am asked to at the end of the regular funeral service. After calling the Sergeant-at-Arms to attention, I read a prayer for the departed comrade, which is followed by the playing of

the last post and rouse. I then repeat the Act of Remembrance:

They shall not grow old,  
As we that are left grow old.  
Age shall not weary them,  
Nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun,  
And in the morning,  
We will remember them

To which the honour guard responds, “We will remember them . . .”  
The honour guard then places a poppy on the casket or wreath.

Recently, I lead the Legion Rites for John, a 92 year old veteran of World War II. Before my portion of the funeral service, I along with the honour guard sat and listened to John being eulogized by one of his children, along with the family stories read by my minister friend Francis.

John, like many his age, grew up on the family farm just outside our community. After leaving High School, he joined the Canadian Army and served in several theatres of war in Europe. Returning home, he married, and worked for some time as an engineer on the CP railroad in British Columbia. He then moved back to North Battleford with his new family and worked at a local car dealership. After retirement, he volunteered for various community organizations, curled, gardened, and spent many hours with his adult children and grandchildren at the lake.

While standing at the pulpit, during the playing of the last post, I glanced over at the montage of photographs that stood behind John’s funeral urn. Here was a photo of his wedding over 50 years ago. Over there was a picture of John in his army uniform, with some of his army buddies. Another photo featured John standing beside a snow covered locomotive somewhere in the Canadian Rockies. And of course there was a photo of John sitting in his favourite chair surrounded by grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Now as they say, I didn’t know him from Adam, which is often the case in Legion funerals, but I couldn’t help but think during the



© Bernhard Richter

mournful playing of the last post—here was a man who lived his life to the fullest. He wasn't famous in the way our society would define famous. He didn't have a lot of people going to his page on Facebook, or following his Twitter feed (if he had them at all). Instead, many would think his life was just, "ordinary."

A week after John's funeral, Thelma, a sweet senior lady who used to attend my congregation passed away. We hadn't seen her for a few years because she came down with Alzheimer's. As a result, Thelma needed to live in a care facility that was closer to her family in Saskatoon. But upon her death, her family decided to have her funeral in our community.

It so happened that my friend Francis, also officiated at Thelma's funeral. So I gave her a call to tell her my stories about Thelma. I told her about how Thelma always brought fresh cookies for our fellowship time after church, and how she helped us prepare and serve our annual fall supper. I included the fact she also regularly volunteered to make coleslaw for, and work during the beef-on-a-bun fundraiser for our food bank.

After I shared my stories with Francis, she related a few of her own she had learned from Thelma's family. After our talk, Francis added, "You know Bill, there are no 'ordinary' people."

Francis put into words exactly what I had been thinking!

This discussion brought me to the time when I was giving my "Be the hands and feet of Jesus" sermon a number of years ago in the Battleford congregation. Just as my latest admonition about being more involved in our community left my mouth I had this incredible realization. Staring back at me were the faces of those members who:

- sat with dying palliative care patients so that their family could take a break.
- were involved of their condo association.

- sat on their local school board.
- drove cancer patients to the cancer clinic for their chemo treatments.
- volunteered at the local food bank .
- provided a taxi service for their fellow senior neighbours to the grocery store or to coffee.

For the average observer it may appear that these are just "ordinary" people—just like John the "ordinary" grandfather, or Thelma, the "ordinary" cookie baker and friend. But what would the world be like if they never existed?

Michael Horton the author of the book, *Ordinary: Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World* (Zondervan 2014), in his article "The Ordinary Christian Life" makes the following observation:

"Ordinary does not mean mediocre. Athletes, architects, humanitarians, and artists can vouch for the importance of everyday faithfulness to mundane tasks that lead to excellence. But even if we are not headliners in our various callings, it is enough to know that we are called there by God to maintain a faithful presence in His world. We look up in faith toward God and out toward our neighbors

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perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16-17, RSV).

Would God have lived among us and died for us, if he thought we were only “ordinary”?

***Bill Hall***

in love and good works. You don't have to transform the world to be a faithful mom or dad, sibling, church member, or neighbor.” (From Ligonier Ministries and R.C. Sproul. © *Tabletalk* magazine. Website: [www.ligonier.org/tabletalk](http://www.ligonier.org/tabletalk))

Yes, there are no, “ordinary” people.

This is especially the case when it comes to how our Triune God views each and every person. It is one of those profound truths that when I think about it, still makes me stand in awe.

The writer of the book of John when writing to his audience about Jesus, penned the now familiar words: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not

## **Leaving a Legacy Gift**

Over the years our church has benefited from the regular donations of our membership. Weekly offerings collected at church services have enabled us to support the various ministries in local congregations along with national and international initiatives.

Another way individuals have supported our denomination is through leaving a Legacy Gift. Such Legacy Gifts are an important way in ensuring a lasting gift to Grace Communion International Canada through estate planning.

There are several ways to leave such a gift:

### **Bequest through a will**

There are several forms of planned gifts, but they are usually gifts that are pledged through an individual's will.

### **A gift of stocks**

This can also be made through ones will.

### **A gift of life insurance**

This allows one to make a significant contribution to the church for a relatively small payment.

If you should choose to make a legacy gift, your financial advisor, along with discussions with your family, can help you determine the best options available to you.

Legacy donations that are directed to Grace Communion International Canada will benefit the work of the Canadian denomination, while donations directed to local congregation (Grace Communion International Canada with the name of the local congregation, or city location) will be credited for the use of the local congregation.

(Grace Communion International Canada still holds the registration, Worldwide Church of God Canada and any previous Legacy gifts using that name will still be credited to our church)

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