

ON THE SPOT

DECEMBER 2014

Joy to the World!!

There was great joy with Mary & Joseph, with the angels & the shepherds, with Simeon & Anna, and, much later, with a few magii from the East. But there was no joy for King Herod, nor for the theologians summoned by him. Wherever Christ is not welcomed, how could there be the joy of heaven?

Four hundred years before the birth of the Savior, Nehemiah and his men were busy restoring the walls of Jerusalem. It was “wall-fare”, never far from “war-fare”. They were dangerous and nerve-wrecking times. But in chapter 8, Nehemiah and Ezra encourage the people with these words:

Jim van Heiningen
Apartado 31, 29700 Vélez-Málaga,
Spain
Phone: +34 - 952 501 867
E-mail: pressingonstill@gmail.com
Website: www.ntmu.net/
Working with: **New
Testament
Ministries -
Unlimited**

“The joy of the LORD is your strength!”

In John’s Gospel, in the last chapters, Jesus mentions his joy eight times. It is the joy that is to fill the hearts of his disciples - in the midst of sorrow and anguish. It is experienced in the midst of a world that rejects its God and Savior.

It is the joy that we are singing about to the world. The Savior’s joy is what Paul reminded the Thessalonians about: **“You became imitators... of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit!”**

May the world take note these days, and throughout 2015, that it is the Lord’s joy that radiates from our hearts!

Jim

DRESSING ON!

**NOW IN HARDCOPY AND PDF!
LET US KNOW WHICH YOU PREFER.**

“GOD’S MISSIONARY”
“A BLESSED PARTNERSHIP” (Joy’s Epistle)
“The Torch Must Shine”
“God’s Astronomy & God’s People”
“China’s Underground Church”

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JANET'S ANGLE

Yes, Janet is still staring you in the face from this page, but it is the last time. Her pictures have become a very dear memory of 51 years, 6 months, together in the Lord's marvelous service.

She herself, as most of you already know, left us for her heavenly home on November 5. Not only is she at peace there, she is also greatly rejoicing in her Lord's presence, as the Scriptures so clearly tell us!

The very day after she died was the 48th anniversary of our little boy, Stephen, being taken home by the Lord. The engraved stone on his tiny grave said that we would be looking forward to seeing each other in heaven. So I ask, won't their present reunion be a wonderful source of joy also, not only for the mother, but for the son too? The apostle Paul made it clear that in eternity the redeemed will have that incredible privilege of totally unclouded vision, recognition and communication: "**Now we see in a (brass) mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known**" (1 Cor. 13:12).

In all these years we have often been struck by the obvious competence of the Spanish medical profession. Yet, believe it or not, both these deaths were the direct (human) results of perplexing and pathetic incompetence of the key persons involved.

As you will remember on December 3, 2013, Janet seemed to come out of her 4-hour hysterectomy quite well and cheery. Then the next day, when she was in pain, it was realized that a staple had been forgotten inside, which meant that she needed a catheter in the left kidney. It complicated things in different ways, and her hospital stay, in stead of a few days, lengthened into nearly 2 months. She lost all ability to stand and walk and so had to go into a senior citizen home to get regular physiotherapy. That lasted another 45 days. From then onwards there were constant appointments with doctors, specialists and other personnel in clinics and four hospitals, here and in Málaga City, all with an eye on a new operation that would have to remedy the situation.

Almost 11 months after the original one, she had the new operation in Málaga on October 28. Twelve hours later with her blood-pressure very low, it was realized she had to be opened up again. It was found that the blood was not coagulating. Then 24 hours later, the same thing - this time it seems they were more successful, but with three operations in 36 hours, her vital body functions started to decline. They now kept her in coma, and that is how Lydia and Andrew found her when they arrived on the 30th.

It is a pity, of course, there never was any reaction when we kissed her and

spoke into her ear, nor when I sang to her the little chorus about heaven that she had translated into Spanish many years ago: “When **you** get there before I do, look out for me, for I’m coming too...” But who knows what was registered in her spirit!

A week went by and then, with massive organ failure, the dialysis-machine was shut down and the mechanical ventilation disconnected - dear Janet was gone: “**absent from the body, present with the Lord**” (2 Cor. 5). How my heart praised the Lord! He was in charge! He does all things well! In spite of the broken ties and the great void, there is - deep in the believer’s heart - the joy of the Lord. Pain and sorrow may seem overwhelming; uncertainty and confusion may press in, yet his unique joy is there - more real than ever. It was so too when little Stephen left us!

In that last week there was time to think about the arrangements to be made. In Spain burials are held on the following day. I prayed for a ‘reprieve’ of two extra days, so that, for the Saturday afternoon (Nov. 8), loved ones from England and Holland could make it, plus many from Southern Spain. And that is how it worked out. Janet’s insurance (dating from only 3 years back) was a tremendous help. Everything was taken care of. That included the use of a hall at the cemetery, where some 200 friends were accommodated, the headstone for the ‘niche’ in which the coffin is usually placed (see next page), and the publicity all over town.

Michael led the service, Andrew spoke briefly and I gave a Bible word. We sang, “**HOW GREAT THOU ART!**” in Spanish, **and** the chorus mentioned earlier. There were lots of tears, but our prayer is that many hearts may yet react on a much deeper level to the urgent call, and respond to the great love of the Savior. All were very grateful for the specially printed leaflet with Janet’s photograph and life-story, plus a Gospel challenge. Altogether 400 were printed. I am still giving out the ones left over.

Since then, some routines have had to be somewhat adapted, and there is no lack of challenges, but at every step the Lord is there with his encouragement, and He leads the way. Yes, I am truly grateful to HIM, and to **so** many who have prayed, and demonstrated by various means of communication their deep interest, love and sympathy!

Times of tribulation and bereavement come to all of us. Only just the other day, our great friend and brother, Klaas Bakker (Nicholas), who was our ‘best man’ on May 11, 2013, at our golden celebration, called from Holland. The news? He has inoperable lung-cancer. The Bible asks, “Who is sufficient for these things?” And God’s answer always comes back:

“My grace is sufficient!”

Fanny Crosby

The Illustration

The hymnwriter, Fanny Crosby, gave us more than 6,000 gospel songs. Although blinded by an illness at the age of 6 weeks, she never became bitter. One time a preacher sympathetically remarked, “I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when He showered so many other gifts upon you.”

She replied quickly, “Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I should be born blind?”

“Why?” asked the surprised visitor.

“Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior!”

One of Miss Crosby’s hymns was so personal that for years she kept it to herself. Kenneth Osbeck, author of several books on hymnology, says its revelation to the public came about this way:

“One day at the Bible conference in Northfield, Massachusetts, Miss Crosby was asked by D.L. Moody, the well-known Gospel preacher, to give a personal testimony. At first she hesitated, then quietly rose and said, ‘There is one hymn I have written which has never been published. I call it my soul’s poem. Sometimes when I am troubled, I repeat it to myself, for it brings comfort to my heart.’ She then recited it - while tears flowed:”

*Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing;
But oh, the joy when I shall wake
Within the palace of the King!*

And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story—Saved by grace;
And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story—Saved by grace!

*Some day my earthly house will fall.
I cannot tell how soon ’twill be;
But this I know—my All in All
Has now a place in Heav’n for me.*

*Some day, when fades the golden sun
Beneath the rosy tinted west,
My blessèd Lord will say, “Well done!”
And I shall enter into rest.*

*Some day: till then I’ll watch and wait,
My lamp all trimmed and burning bright,
That when my Savior opens the gate,
My soul to Him may take its flight.*

At the age of 95, Fanny Crosby passed into glory and saw the face of Jesus.



In case you’d like to see what Janet’s headstone is like, here is a photograph. All is in Spanish, including her first name, but no doubt, you’ll be able to decipher it. Our hope is that it might be a real testimony to many, for a long time.