



from Garth...

Humility, service and love...

"The world tells us to seek success, power and money; God tells us to seek humility, service and love."

Pope Francis

These words come from a recent book of Pope Francis called 'The Spirit of St Francis', which is one of those books to have by the bed and to read a page every night.



My biggest surprise this autumn has been that Tom, our oldest son, went to meet Pope Francis. Tom has a charity called **Surfers Not Street Children**, which has been doing a wonderful work empowering former street children as they move from childhood into adulthood, journeying with them towards their own independence.

Their strapline is "Transforming lives through surfing and mentorship."

Tom got to meet with the Pope because of some surfing supporters in Argentina, who knew the Pope - I'm not quite clear whether the Pope is a surfer! But he is very committed to work with street children, and when Tom talked to him about their commitment to the liberation of street children the Pope grasped his hand with both hands.

It now looks as if Pope Francis' social justice organisation Scholas Occurrentes will be partnering with **Surfers Not Street Children**, which is very exciting - I will give you

more details as this develops. Meanwhile do have a look at the [SNSC website here](#) and see if it is something you would like to support.

I am a trustee of SNSC and in our Trustees meetings it has been very exciting to hear of leading surfers who are committed to SNSC - sometimes names I am not immediately familiar with (as I haven't got too far on my boogie board) but who happen to be the most famous surfers in the world, like Kelly Slater and Dane Reynolds, or Jordy Smith. So for me to have the name Pope Francis come up was at last a name I could get thoroughly excited about!



Justice, equality, simplicity and sharing...

Here are some more of the words of Pope Francis which get right to the heart of the way of Jesus:

"In the poor and outcast we see Christ's face; by loving and helping the poor, we love and serve Christ. Our efforts are also directed to ending violations of human dignity, discrimination and abuse in the world, for these are so often the cause of destitution.

When power, luxury and money become idols, they take priority over the need for a fair distribution of wealth. **Our consciences thus need to be converted to justice, equality, simplicity and sharing."**

The Spirit of St Francis, P103

The power of these words I find quite staggering. There is simplicity and a clarity about what it means to be walking in the footsteps of Christ.

I was listening the other day to the last album that Peter, Paul and Mary did together, not long before Mary died, called 'In These Times'. It has a song on it called 'Have you been to jail for justice?' Some of the lyrics say,

**Have you been to jail for justice,
I want to shake your hand;
'Cause sitting in and laying down,
Are ways to take a stand...
Have you been to jail for justice,
Then you're a friend of mine.**

[see them sing it here on youtube](#)

Every time I hear this I think of my friend Jim Wallis from the Sojourners community in Washington, who has been to jail for justice many times. He was arrested once again last week in the Senate building as he and other faith leaders read out passages from the Bible about serving the poor; they were particularly concerned about the forthcoming tax plan which in fact did get passed. They wore stoles of sackcloth, and they read from the Bible and sang. [Click here to see what happened](#). I found it very moving to watch this. People standing so clearly for justice. It was inspiring. But as I saw them put the handcuffs on Jim and the others, and push them into the police wagon, I thought of the costliness of this stand, and yet the deep value.



Jim Wallis and others being arrested on November 30th at the Senate building

These are consciences that are converted, as Pope Francis says, to justice, equality, simplicity and sharing. This is why the message of Christmas is so important - it is so easy not to spot it in all the materialism and glitter of Christmas. When the Wise Men came they started by talking to the local politician of power, but of course this is not where God is to be found.

"Because instead of coming in status and power the birth of the prince of peace is in vulnerability and humility. And soon Mary and Joseph and Jesus are fleeing as refugees to find safety in Africa. So these are the huge clues that show us that God is the God of the poor, the marginalised, those for whom there is no room - and this is why Bethlehem theology gives such hope, because no one is forgotten."

Occupied Territories p 30



Looking across Bethlehem from Dheisheh Refugee Camp

As our thoughts go to Bethlehem at this time of year, Palestine is being mistreated once again. Why is there no equality or justice for the Palestinian people? The Christians of Palestine - Kairos Palestine - have issued a Christmas Alert and it is very good material to bring into our church services and into our personal thoughts and prayers during this time of Advent and Christmas. You can [download it](#)

here. It was written before the
current crisis.

Voices of Palestine - Join Amos Trust for Christmas Carols in Trafalgar Square - Saturday 16th December 4pm - 5pm

A last Amos activity this year you may want to join in - come to Trafalgar Square and sing carols - Gill and I can't be there as we are away with family but we'll be thinking of you.

Prayer for much needed leadership of humility, service and love

God of gentleness and humility
Becoming human in simplicity
Bringing joy to the world
We pray for the leadership of the world at this time

We see power, luxury and money becoming idols
We see the domination by the richest one percent of the world
The face of Christ is not being seen in the poor and the outcast

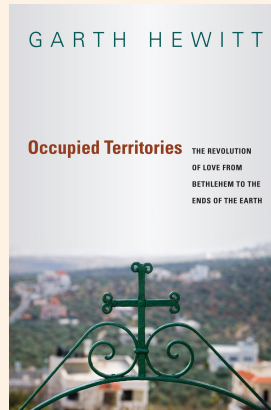
We pray that the hearts of leadership will be changed
From arrogance, injustice, greed and prejudice
To humility, service and love

Lord grant us the power not to surrender to the bullying of empire
And the courage to challenge the tyranny of the powerful

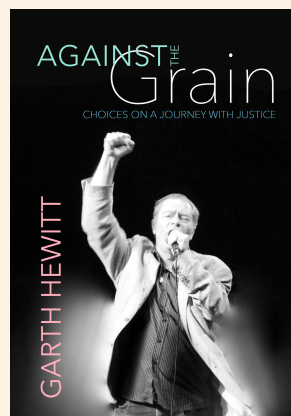
In that child of Christmas we find meaning and dignity
May we show the love and humility of Jesus
Teach us to be meek
Treating this beautiful world with gentleness
Turning to our neighbours
And studying war no more
So we bring a blessing of joy to others
This Christmas and throughout the year

Garth Hewitt

(with thanks to [Sabeel Wave of Prayer](#) for the line 'Lord grant us the power...')



Garth's book [Occupied Territories](#), from which Garth quotes above, is available to order [here](#)



To pre-order Garth's new book [Against the Grain](#), click [here](#)

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