

THE JESUS POST

CHRISTIAN NEWS DAILY

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CHRISTIAN NEWS DAILY

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Palestine's "Tree Man" Given New Lease of Life by Israeli Doctors

Mohammed Taluli from Gaza has suffered for over 10 years from epidermodysplasia verruciformis (EV), a rare skin disorder characterised by eruptions of wart-like lesions.

EV is an autosomal recessive inherited disorder, which means that 2 abnormal EV genes (one from each parent) are needed to have the disease.

Thanks to a team of medical experts at Hadassah University Medical Center in Israel, 42 year old Mohammed is completely healed! The doctors discovered a ground-breaking method of dealing with this debilitating disorder that has plagued him for years. They removed skin from his affected hands, millimeter by millimeter and grafted healthy skin in its place. The new tissue has prevented the return of EV and given Mohammed a new life.

"I've suffered for 10 years. After years of shame and loneliness, unable to work or show myself to anyone, I finally have the chance to have a normal life," Taluli said.

Dr. Michael Chernofsky, Chief Surgeon, explained that, "As well as the pain caused, the disease is very dangerous as it can very easily develop into (skin) cancer." He added that, "The patient could no longer move his hand. He kept his hand covered all the time and lived a horrible life."

The news that Israel has discovered a solution to such a serious disease and has used it to restore the life of a Palestinian, has gone completely unnoticed by the media.



No Whites: The Changing Face of America

"America's Changing Religious Identity", is a report that was published last week by the research organization Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), and concluded that white Christians were now a minority in America. The survey was based on "a huge sample of 101,000 Americans" from all 50 states. The results were interesting, but not surprising, considering current trends:

If we look at what the figures were a few years ago it puts things into perspective:

In 1976, 80% of Americans were white Christians (55% of which were Protestants).

In 1996, white Christians were two-thirds of the population.

As the recent study found, in 2017, white Christians make up just 43% of the American population.

It's not just white American Christians that are 'disappearing'. America's white majority has been slowly eroding due to Asian and Hispanic immigration, and the consolidation of already established immigrant populations. It is estimated that by 2042 white people will be a minority and by 2023 white under-18s will be a minority. Pew Research Centre projects that between 1965 and 2065, white people will have gone from 85% of the population to 46%.

Robert P Jones is the author of "The End of White Christian America". According to him, the reason for this remarkably fast shift is twofold: Firstly he claims that fewer and fewer young people consider themselves 'Christian'; and are no longer affiliating themselves with Christian churches.

Two-thirds of white Christians are senior citizens, compared to only around a quarter of people 18-29 are. This trend has affected almost every Christian denomination with nearly 40% of young Americans saying they have no religious affiliation at all. Secondly, those faiths with the largest number of young members are non-Christian, namely Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. He claims the "youngest" faiths in America – those with the largest proportion of young adherents – are Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

With the white Christian grip becoming weaker and weaker, what will that mean for America, a country that has been shaped by Protestant persecution, as much as it has been shaped by progressive struggles championed by Protestant clergy.

Republican policies and priorities continue to reflect the values of white evangelicals: commitments to anti-abortion measures, condemnation of same-sex marriage, the wall and immigration crackdowns.

Democrats on the other hand, are considered to follow current trends and are seen as more diverse. They have been urged to reach out to Latinos by creating immigration reform. Latinos, African Americans, and other non-white groups are currently more loyal Democrats but this may not always be the case.

Reminding us how close the 2016 election was, Jones says, "sooner or later these demographic realities will show up" in national elections. He admits that we are seeing a lag but that by 2024 the changes will have become electorally decisive.

For Republicans this will create a big problem. When their white Christian base becomes smaller and smaller, what voice will drive policy then?



Charity Gone Wrong: Free Abortions For Harvey Victims

When disaster strikes, it's amazing to see how people band together to lend a helping hand. Even uncharitable hearts are moved to give of themselves to help others who have lost homes, belongings, even loved ones. There's always that nagging question in the back of our minds as we witness other people's misfortunes: "What if that had been me?"

Charity can take many forms; whether it's local heroes risking their lives to save others, neighbours opening their homes in times of need, or generous donors giving their money, each charitable act goes some way to help people rebuild their shattered lives...

But one organisation's "charitable" offerings to Hurricane Harvey victims begs the question: Can we really call it "charity" when there are major, life altering costs to the recipients?

Whole Woman's Health Clinic, a national abortions provider with four clinics in Texas, is offering free abortions to Hurricane Harvey Victims. It has offered six free-of-charge abortions in the clinic's San Antonio location and nine in Austin and many women have already signed up for the offer.

Amy Miller, founder of Whole Woman's Health, was quoted in SELF Magazine as saying, "There are countless ways a natural disaster can make it difficult to find a health center that offers abortions or make it possible to pay for one. That's why we're here to help."

When asked why such a service is needed, Miller summarized the logistical headache that women would have to face getting to the clinic given the damaged caused by the hurricane. The organisation also plans to provide transport and cover the costs of accommodation.

Anti-abortion group, Texas Right to Life, have opposed the move stating, "There is no such thing as a free abortion... Abortions are never free." Dailywire have called it an "unholy charity", emphasizing that while others are trying to help victims find housing, food, clothing, etc., Whole Woman's Health Clinic are offering them a way to kill their unborn babies at "no cost".

CBN News quoted Dallas Morning News saying that 80 women had already taken up the provider on their offer. They also encouraged Christians to become the "hands and feet of Jesus and to help pregnant women in need."

If we add the 80 abortions mentioned above to the current Hurricane Harvey death toll, it would double it.



12 Year Old Takes Mother's Estrogen Tablets to Become a Girl, Then Changes His Mind

From a young age Patrick identified more with girls, enjoyed dressing up in girls clothing, baking and doing gymnastics. When a friend introduced him to the term 'transgender' he began reading up on the subject and was convinced that he was supposed to be a girl. He became obsessed with finding out about different treatments that would stop his body from naturally developing the way a boy's body would, and make him more like a girl.

His desperate mother trying to understand her confused child, who was being bullied at school and was on the verge of depression took him to see a 'professional' who diagnosed him with gender dysphoria. Patrick was 12 years old. In Australia, a child has to be 16 and have court approval before they can begin hormone replacement therapy but as Patrick convinced his mother that he was tormented by the thought of becoming a boy, she started giving him her own estrogen tablets.

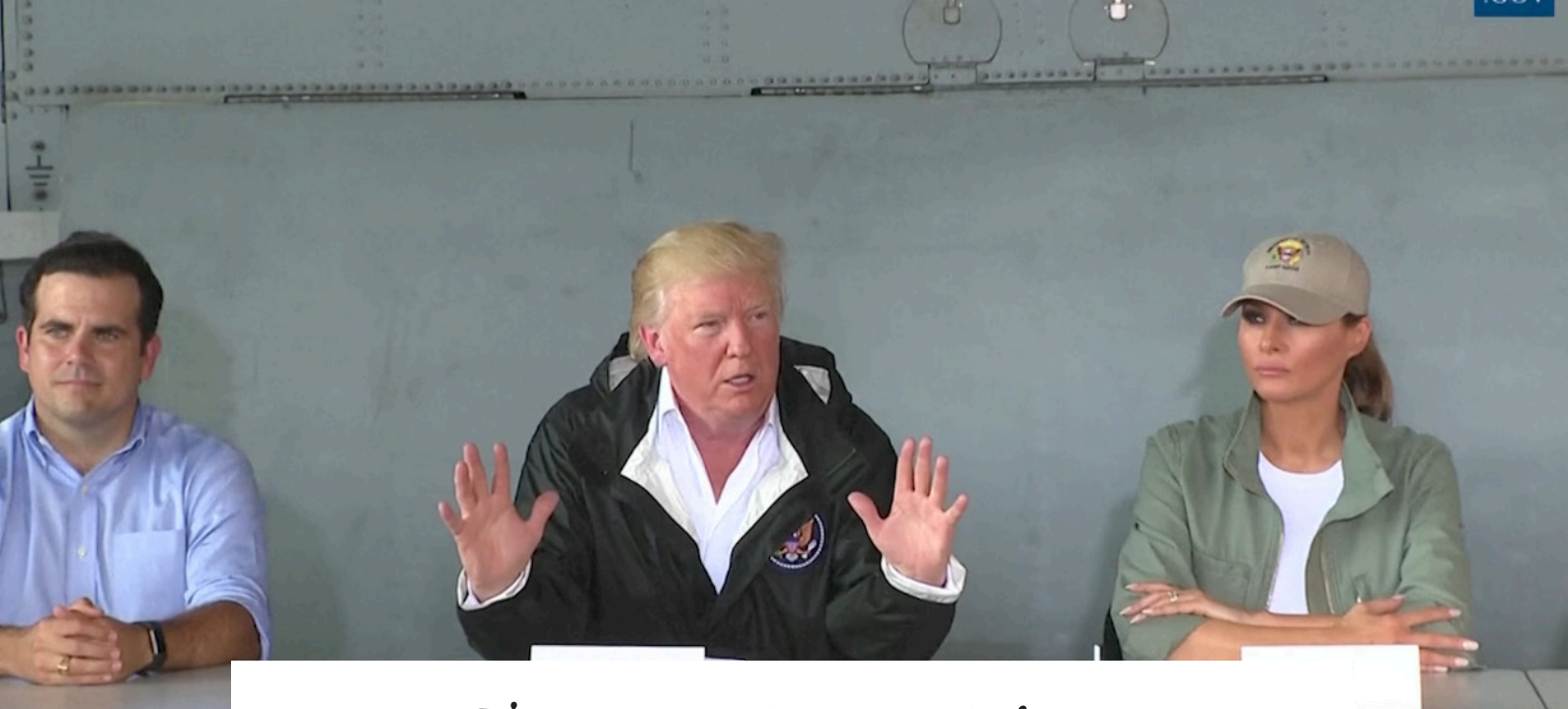
Two years later, you wouldn't have been wrong to think the 14 year old you were looking at was a girl. Long hair, soft facial features, and breasts were just a few of the giveaways. But as Patrick's body began to change, and his teachers started referring to him as a girl, he started to have second thoughts. Had he made the right decision?

It was then that he says he started to feel more comfortable as a boy. "Every day I just felt better." He cut his hair, started dressing like a boy and will have to undergo surgery to have his breasts reduced after 2 years of DIY hormone therapy.

Pediatrician John Whitehall joined other professionals who have warned against diagnosing minors and then attempting to treat them as if they were transgender. He explained that it is not uncommon for children to be confused about their gender, but they grow out of it. By meddling in this normal phase, he gives a strong warning: "Don't mess them up!"

Due to growing public awareness, more and more people are being labeled with gender dysphoria, a disturbing trend, especially among children and teenagers.

Patrick's case will certainly not be the only one.



Trump on Puerto Rico: “It’s now acknowledged what a great job we’ve done”

Calvary Chapel Evangelical Church in San Juan, Puerto Rico has become a relief aid centre since Hurricane Maria devastated the island 2 weeks ago. The church was also where President Donald Trump brought his unconventional style to handing out aid to the hurricane victims. He began by throwing rolls of paper towel into the crowd, and then dishing out a few tins of canned meat before exclaiming, “never seen that before”. The crowd seemed more interested in taking selfies with the president and filming him on their phones, than taking the handouts. Trump then stopped and turned to the cameras behind him to say, “There’s a lot of love in this room.”

Two weeks before Trump’s visit, Hurricane Maria ravaged the island, leaving it entirely without power, very little clean running water, destroyed roads, buildings and homes. During these past 2 weeks, Trump has been criticized for not responding quickly enough to the island territory, most notably by San Juan’s Mayor, Carmen Yulin Cruz. After an urgent, public plea for help from President Trump, in which she accused the administration of “killing us with the inefficiency”, Trump responded via Twitter criticizing her of “poor leadership”.

Trump seemed to spend much of the time defending the White House response to the disaster. He started by offering his administration an A+ grade for its disaster relief efforts in Texas and Florida, adding that Puerto Rico was “right up there with them”. At one point he handed out flashlights while saying, “you won’t need those anymore.” Maybe he misheard that power had been restored to less than 7% of Puerto Rico, and thought that just 7% were now without power?

And to encourage the Puerto Rican’s further her rounded up by telling them how much this was all costing: “Now, I hate to tell you, Puerto Rico, but you’ve thrown our budget a little out of whack because we’ve spent a lot of money on Puerto Rico...”

With half the population still without clean drinking water and an increasing number of reports of people without food, shelter and medicines, it’s hard to see where all the money has been spent. And it seems the only people who are satisfied with the response to the Puerto Rican crisis are White House staff...

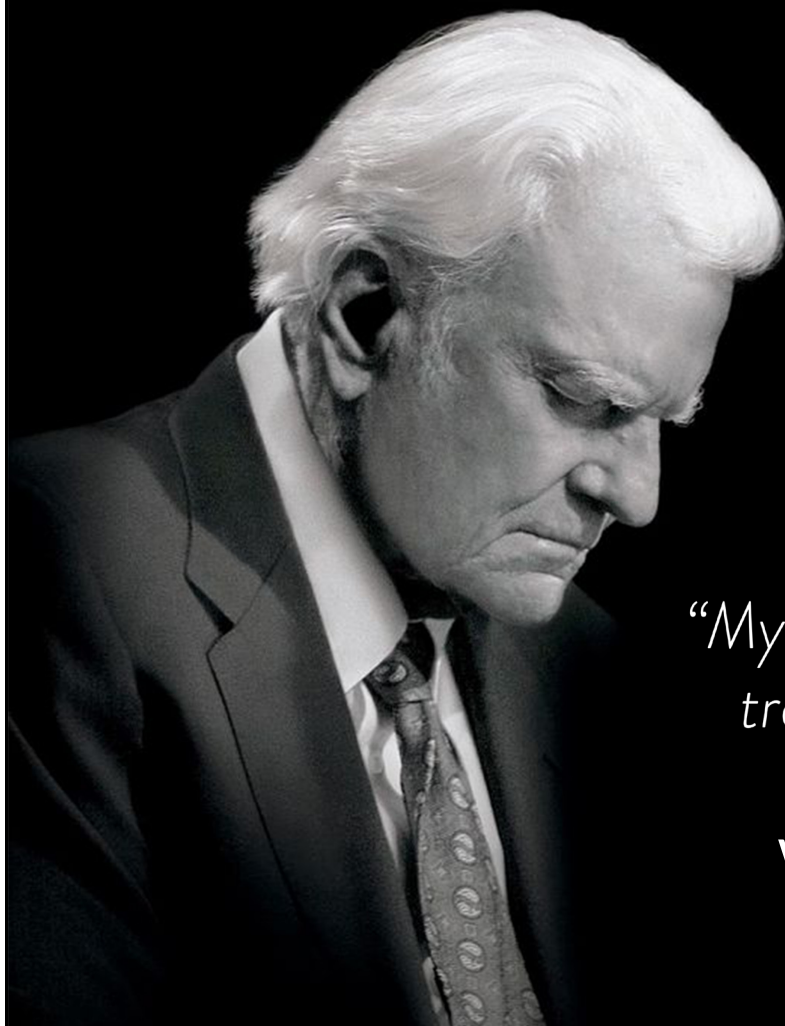
The Hernandez family home’s roof was ripped roof off during the hurricane. Edwin Hernandez patched the roof over one of the rooms so that he, his wife and their two daughters, ages four and five, could have some shelter at night. With tears in his eyes he told CNN News: “I just tell them that it’s gonna get better, we believe in God. We believe we’re gonna get back up.”

When all was said and done San Juan’s mayor had one hope: That the government had seen the reality happening on the ground compared to what they said was happening.

BILLY GRAHAM

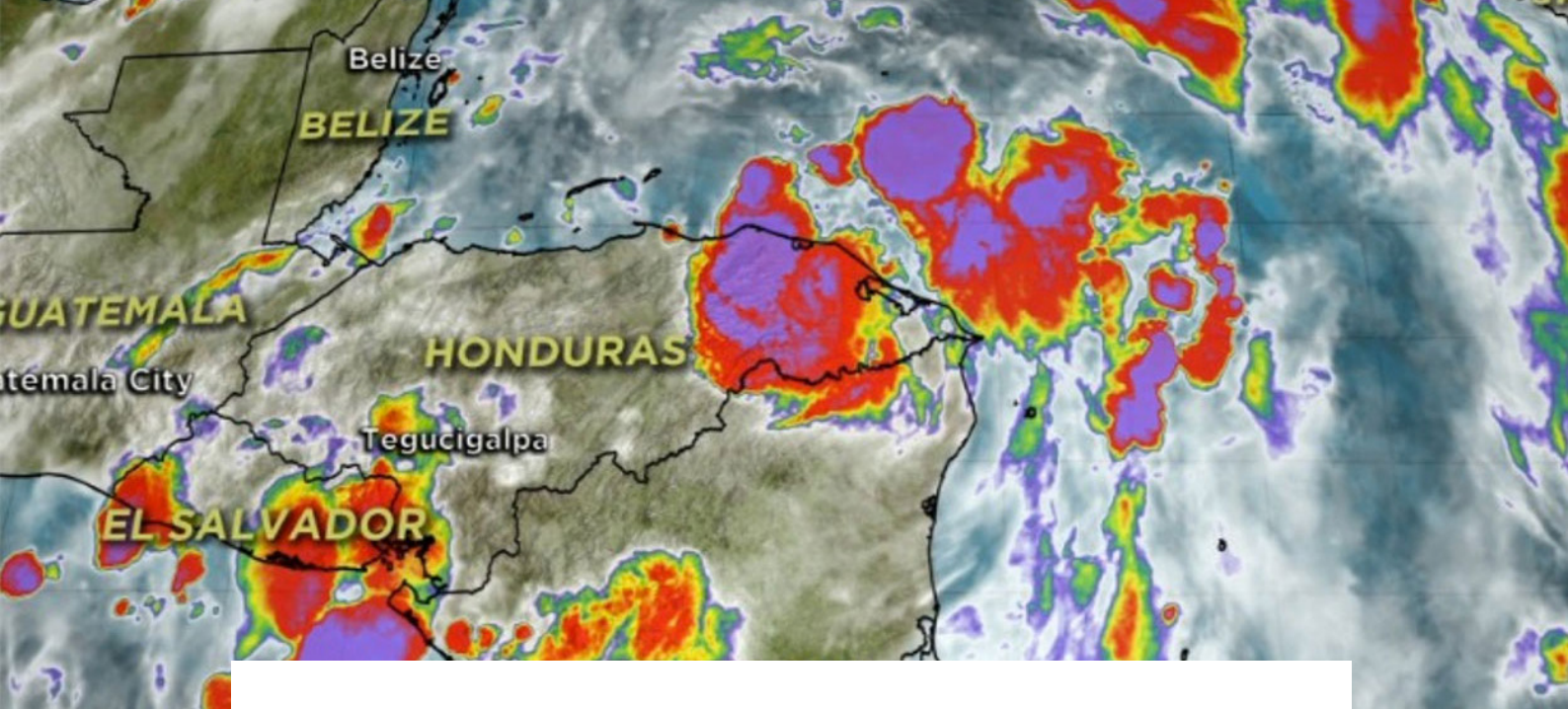
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Storm Nate Kills 22 in Central America

A state of emergency is in place in the Central American nations of Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras, where 22 people have been killed and another 20 people are missing due to Tropical Storm Nate which hit on Thursday. The storm caused heavy rain, landslides and floods which have cut off roads, broken bridges and damaged homes and buildings.


In Nicaragua 11 people have died, seven others are missing and thousands have had to leave their homes due to flooding. In Costa Rica, eight people have died, including two children. Another 17 people are missing, while thousands more are taking shelter. In Honduras, two young people have drowned and a man was killed in a mudslide. One other person is missing.

The tropical storm is on a path towards the US Gulf Coast where it is expected to strengthen to a hurricane and potentially make landfall near New Orleans. Several offshore oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, including Chevron, BP plc, Exxon Mobil Corp, Royal Dutch Shell Plc and Statoil had shut production or were withdrawing personnel from their offshore Gulf platforms, they said.

A state of emergency was declared by Louisiana's Governor, John Bel Edwards, who has sent National Guard troops to New Orleans to monitor the fragile pumping system that struggled during flash floods in heavy August rainstorms and several hundred properties damaged by floods. 12 of the city's 120 drainage pumps were out of service on Thursday morning for repairs or maintenance, according to the city-owned Sewerage & Water Board.

"We've had a number of threats this hurricane season, and we've been blessed when Harvey went left and Irma went right. That is not what we anticipate out of Nate, so everyone should take this very seriously," Gov. Edwards said.

New Orleans residents have been warned to stay put over the weekend, which is when Nate is predicted to hit.

A photograph of Stephen McGown, a man with long, curly brown hair and a full beard, smiling and speaking into two microphones. He is wearing a blue shirt. In the background, there is a banner with the text "Gift of the" and "FOUNDAT" visible, and a South African flag is partially seen on the right.

Gift of the
FOUNDAT

Six Years a Prisoner: Stephen McGown Freed From Al Qaeda Captors

Stephen McGown, a South African who was abducted nearly six years ago from an inn in Timbuktu, Mali, by the North African branch of Al Qaeda, has been freed, officials said on Thursday. McGown appeared in a proof of life video released in July by a coalition of jihadist groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda, together with 3 missionaries and 2 other captives.

He was captured in November 2011, along with two European tourists: Sjaak Rijke of the Netherlands, who was freed by French commandos in Mali in April 2015, and Johan Gustafsson of Sweden, who was released in June of this year. The 3 men were taken from the inn they were staying in and forced at gunpoint into a van. A German tourist who refused to get into the truck was shot and killed.

McGown spoke to the media in South Africa about his time in captivity in the the Saharan Desert. Conditions were harsh and the first few months they were badly treated, not knowing whether they would survive. But after a while he said their captors "relaxed" and things improved, although there was no end to their imprisonment in sight.

McGowan told the media that he had converted to Islam while in captivity: "Before the desert, I was a Christian. They did not force me. I entered (Islam) of my own accord." When asked whether he would return to Christianity he said he needed to read more and added: "I see many good things in Islam. It requires a very good character, a very strict character."

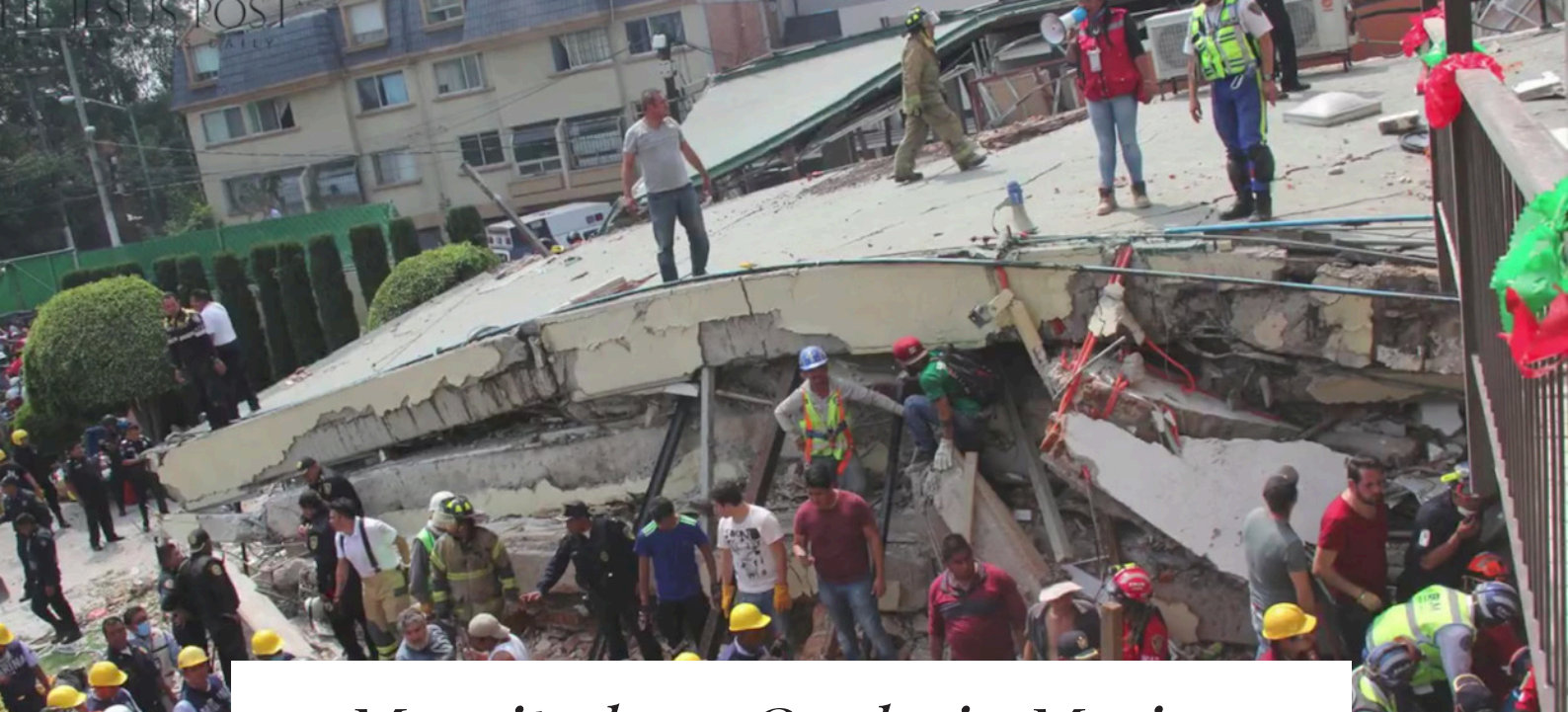
Mr McGown has returned to his wife and father. Unfortunately his mother passed away while he was in captivity, something he is struggling to come to terms with. He learned of her death on the day of his release.

Stephen's wife Catherine told South African media: "There were times where I wanted to give up hope... One's got to believe in God's plans to prosper and not to harm us. And I really believe that everything is going to be okay."

It is alleged that a large ransom was paid for Mr McGown's release, although South Africa's foreign minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, responded vaguely to a reporter's question about whether ransom had been paid, after she announced Mr. McGown's release at a news conference in Pretoria on Thursday.

Al-Qaida-linked Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen, Al Qaeda's official branch in North Africa, were the ones who captured the 3 tourists and are well known for their large ransom requests or prisoner exchanges. Since 2003 the group has kidnapped dozens of foreigners, including travelers, aid workers and journalists, and amassed large wealth through the payment of ransom.

Extremists are still believed to be holding Gloria Argoti, a Colombian nun taken from Mali, Ken Elliott, an Australian doctor, Béatrice Stockly, a Swiss missionary and Iulian Ghergut a Romanian man seized at different times in Burkina Faso, and Jeff Woodke, an American who was working with a non-profit organisation in Niger.



Magnitude 7.1 Quake in Mexico Kills Over 200 With Death Toll Very Likely to Rise

Just 2 weeks after an earthquake of magnitude 8.0 killed 90 people in Mexico, a second earthquake rocked the city on Tuesday. At least 225 people have already been confirmed dead. Many are still unaccounted for and it is believed that the death toll will rise.

Rescuer workers and the general public continued through the night on Tuesday to attempt to find survivors trapped in the rubble. Over 40 buildings were leveled, including churches where several worshipers were killed, and schools. Volunteers tried frantically to rescue children from the rubble of one school where 21 children and 4 adults were crushed to death.

The quake struck at around 13:00 local time as was described as heavy with prolonged shaking that lasted about 8 minutes. Thousands of people flooded the streets in an attempt to save themselves in case buildings collapsed. People could be seen sleeping outside their homes with their children, for fear that they may be unsafe should aftershocks occur.

People were attending special memorial services and an earthquake drill was being held in the city to mark the 32nd anniversary of the deadly 1985 earthquake that killed around 10,000 people and injured around 30,000. Just after the memorials the latest quake hit, on the very same day as in 1985.

Volunteers have been bringing food and water to those in need as rescue efforts continue in the hope to find more survivors. Many areas are still without power as people are coming to terms with the shock of what has happened.

Mexico is one of the most seismically active countries in the world and has experienced 19 earthquakes greater than magnitude 6 in the past century alone.



Missouri: First-of-its-Kind Transgender Clinic For Kids

A first-of-its-kind clinic for transgender kids and teens has opened at St Louis Children's Hospital in Missouri. The "Transgender Center of Excellence" opened its doors last week, although physicians in the region have been taking care of transgender kids for over 8 years already. The growing demand for their services saw the need to open a specialized clinic.

The new clinic will offer medical care and counseling such as mental health resources, hormonal therapy, voice therapy, and reconstructive surgery to children. According to Dr. Chris Lewis, a Pediatric Endocrinologist and the director of the centre, patients as young as 3 can already have a "strong fixed gender identity".

The centre is expected to "help hundreds of children and their families in the region". A 15-year-old transgender teen, Leslie Seay and her/his father explained how happy they were that the clinic had opened in their area after facing much discrimination over Leslie's "gender fluid" choices.

Leslie explains that things were always a bit confusing for her/him and when she/he was in high school she/he started to express to her/his family how he/she was really feeling. "I was in the car with my dad and brought up starting testosterone or hormone blockers. I explained that I didn't really want to be on those, that I didn't really feel like that would be right for me. That's when I told him how I had been feeling, that I don't identify as female, but I don't really want to just identify as male. He was like 'that makes sense.' Then I told my mom too, and she said the same thing. And of course my little brother was supportive. He's always supportive of me."

Child professionals in America as well as Europe have been outspoken about the harm in teaching young children about gender ideology, especially at an age when they are not mature enough to make decisions that will affect them for the rest of their lives. They speak about

the unscientific nature of the claims that are being made by clinics such as the one in St. Louis. Some have even gone as far as to call the 'medical care' and treatments being offered to children "large-scale child abuse".

What was once treated as a psychological problem that resolves in the vast majority of patients by late adolescence, is now being embraced, nurtured, encouraged to the point of no return. Centres like the one at St Louis Hospital are helping young people, like Leslie, take steps to transform their young bodies to the point of no return.

Young Leslie didn't realize when she/he said, "This is definitely who I am and I doubt I'm going to change..." how right she/he was: She definitely is who God intended her to be, and once she starts down the path of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and sex-reassignment surgery, I doubt she's going to change either.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6



The Next Move is North Korea's, But Does Trump Really Hold All the Cards?

Following President Donald Trump's threats of "fire and fury" to North Korea earlier this week, it has responded with its own warning to the US. In a statement released on Thursday, North Korea said it was planning launch four intermediate-range ballistic missiles towards Guam in the Western Pacific. If launched, the rockets will pass over Japan and land into the sea just 17 miles from Guam's coastline.

Although new sanctions were approved by the UN Security Council on the weekend, it seems most people are relatively unfazed by the threats and counter threats. Even for the most casual onlooker, it's obvious that picking a fight with the US will yield only one result for North Korea.

Playing down Trump's harsh words, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson reassured Americans that North Korea does not pose an imminent threat, and told them to "sleep well at night". Whether or not North Korea has succeeded in making a nuclear warhead small enough to fit inside its missiles is unconfirmed. Most analysts are sure that North Korea are unlikely to launch an attack on the US, no matter how "bereft of reason" they may think President Donald Trump actually is.



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Child Sexual Abuse Secrets Swept Under the Confessional Carpet

If a child confessed to you that they were being sexually abused by an adult, or an adult confessed that they had sexually abused a child, would you not want to report it to the relevant authorities in order to protect the child in question, or any further children from falling prey to the same abuse? Sounds like the most sensible and responsible thing to do. But in the Catholic Church things aren't that simple...

What is said to a priest in the confessional remains in the confessional. Confession, or the Sacrament of Penance, is one of the "seven sacraments of the church". What takes place there is protected by the "Seal of the Confession" which has been in place since as early as 1215. If the priest breaks the seal, or in other words reveals what has been said in the confessional, he is automatically expelled from the church.

Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has ruled that priests, or clergy, who do not report suspected child abuse cases should be punishable by law. This means that even those priests who have heard things in the confessional, would be obliged by law to report them, in other words, breaking the "Seal of Confession". It is not surprising then that the Roman Catholic Church in Australia is against such a law being passed. Some priests have said that they would rather go to prison than break the seal.

Stephen Woods who was abused as a child by a priest and 2 other men, welcomed the commission's findings but said they were long overdue. "Victims have always been advocating that there is no logical reason, none whatsoever, that child abuse should ever be hidden. It is the most heinous of criminal activity you can imagine, and for a religion to declare that it's their right to hide it is a most disgusting argument. It's immoral!"

The Royal Commission said the recognition of the right to freely practise one's religious beliefs must be balanced against the right of children to be protected from sexual abuse. The Royal Commission has been examining abuse accusations in the Anglican Church, the Jehovah's Witnesses and Orthodox Judaism and other religious institutions in Australia. Considering that it has estimated 7 percent of Catholic priests in Australia had been accused of sexually abusing children between 1950 and 2010, as well as the fact that abusers had confessed to priests that they had sexually assaulted children and then went on to reoffend, before coming back and confessing and seeking forgiveness yet again, the church will have some tough decisions to make if this law is put in place. Is keeping the law of the church religious freedom? Or social irresponsibility on a grand scale?



Assisted Suicide: Putting a Final Nail in the Coffin

A Californian doctor was put in a tricky position recently when approached by a colleague. In whispered tones her colleague explained that he had been asked by a patient about the 'End of Life Option Act' and he didn't know what to say in response. In fact he wasn't even sure whether it was legal in California...

The 'End of Life Option Act' is a law that allows doctors to administer, to a patient who requests it, a cocktail of drugs that will kill them. There are certain criterion that the patient needs to meet before the doctor can oblige; namely, the patient must be an adult, in a mental state where they are able to make such a decision about ending their life, and they must be able to administer the drug cocktail themselves. Only patients with a life expectancy of less than 6 months are eligible.

This Act became legal in California in June 2016. Oregon was the first state to pass the law 20 years ago, and was followed by Washington and Vermont. Colorado has recently done the same. So, out of 50 states, the 'End of Life Option Act' is legal in just 5 of them. As Dr. Zitter points out in her article, this complex subject becomes even more complex, because what the law doesn't stipulate is the finer details: The individual patient selection process, and the composition of the drug compound used to kill the person. These details are left to the doctor or hospital to determine.

Another Californian doctor, Dr. Lonny Shavelson, founded 'Bay Area End of Life Options' and he provides education for doctors, advice for patients, and the lethal dose of drugs, which he has found varies from patient to patient, to those patients who meet the legal criteria. He says that his greatest successes are those where the patients change their minds about assisted dying, because they are no longer depressed or distressed for any number of reasons. Often, other avenues can be explored to improve a patient's quality of life, making them much less likely to want to end their lives prematurely.

According to Dr. Shavelson there are currently no formal protocols, official procedures, outcome measurements, certificates of expertise or an oversight board, in any of the 5 participating states. And Dr Zitter poses a very important question: "All medical procedures require training. Why should one this weighty be an exception?"

Assisted suicide, like abortion, is another fiercely debated subject. Christians are dead against it... and I'm sure I don't need to explain why. But something Dr. Zitter said in her article really struck me: "Over-mechanization of dying in America has created a public health crisis. People feel out of control around death. A life-ending concoction at the bedside can lend a sense of autonomy at a tremendously vulnerable time."

I was saddened when I thought that this "tremendously vulnerable time" could have been the last time in that person's life where they felt the need to question what awaits them after death. It could have been the last time where their vulnerability and fear would remind them of a God who loves them, and who died so that they could live. Assisted suicide is just another way for us to take control of our lives, but it's the last time we will ever be able to do so. The saying "putting a final nail in the coffin" has never sounded so chilling.



Human Trafficking – It's Time for the Church to Wake Up

The 30th of July was designated as the United Nations 'World day against trafficking of persons' – deemed necessary in order to "raise awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights."

Nadia Murad Basee Taha was kidnapped at the age of 19 by Islamic State. She joined thousands of other Yazidi families and children who were "exchanged as gifts" and taken "as war booty, as merchandise to be exchanged..." She recalls how absolutely petrified she was when one of the men approached her wanting to take her. She was later beaten, burned with cigarettes and raped before she was able to escape.

According to the U.N., human trafficking "is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights". Each year, thousands of people, predominantly women and children become victims of traffickers, either in their home countries, or abroad. Most countries in the world are affected in one way or another, "whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims."

One of the reasons it's such a huge industry is because it is extremely lucrative. The International Labour Organisation estimates that human trafficking activities generate in the region of USD 150 billion a year in revenues. Tiffany Atkinson, president of the anti-trafficking organization Freedom's Promise, told The Gospel Herald that trafficking brings in more money than the drug industry. She also said that although estimates have been made as to how many people are affected globally each year, it is impossible to know how many are really affected: "Statistics are very underreported... It's very difficult to track humans and the real scope of this issue."

During his traditional Sunday prayer on the 30th of July, Pope Francis once again called for increased efforts to end human trafficking, calling it ugly, cruel and criminal.

Nestled comfortably into my couch with my laptop perched on my lap and a cup of hot chocolate within arms reach, it's difficult to fathom figures in the billions, and people that could be so desperate they would be willing, in this day and age, to send their own children away with complete strangers who in return promise money, education and the like...

We can pray, of course. We must pray. But an encouraging article published last year in Christianity Today, Gary Haugen, CEO of International Justice Mission (IJM) explains how local churches need "to join the fight". IJM's vision is big... Their aim is to engage the whole church by equipping people to bring the message of justice to their own communities. Laws are not being enforced and it's the church's job to "wake people up". He is not daunted by the figures which he admits are greater than they have ever been. Rather he sees "a historic opportunity" for local churches to join the struggle and bring an end to human trafficking. Sound like an impossibility? Gary says it so well: "We will always end up feeling overwhelmed by the size and scope of the problem, but the answer from Jesus has always been the Body of Christ."



Are Planned Parenthood's New Sex & LGBT Guidelines Shattering Children's Innocence?

Planned Parenthood: To some – a reproductive health care and sexual education provider, helping millions of young adults and vulnerable low income families. To others – a barbaric institution that ends the lives of hundreds of thousands of unborn babies every year. It has been estimated that close to 7 million abortions have been performed by Planned Parenthood since it was founded 100 years ago.

Planned Parenthood is also funded by the government, which leads those in the second group baying even more loudly for their blood. According to Planned Parenthood, those federal funds don't pay for abortions, but are rather Medicaid (the government-funded health insurance plan for people with low incomes) reimbursements.

Whatever your view on abortion, the law of the land is that it is legal in every state, although restrictions vary from state to state with regard to late term abortion, parental consent etc. It certainly can't be true for every case, but can be assumed that the majority of the women seeking abortions are adults (18 years and older). They are pregnant as a consequence of their actions and they have the legal right to terminate their pregnancy if they so wish, and Planned Parenthood will gladly provide them with that service.

But there is a group that Planned Parenthood are targeting that are not as capable of making such decisions just yet. Preschoolers. Planned Parenthood's new guidelines for educating preschoolers includes entire sections about transgenderism and masturbation. If you have a 3 or 4 year old you may be wondering whether what you've just read is one big type-o. Unfortunately not.

We recently published an article about developments in the area of sex education in France, which resembles the line being taken by Planned Parenthood. A group of professionals in France have labelled the new measures and 'dangerous, intrusive and harmful to the development in young children'.

Another introduction to the Planned Parenthood education for preschoolers is transgenderism: "Gender identity isn't about what kind of anatomy you have", with a whole section dedicated to how to "support your child in making their own (gender) choices". According to the The Christian Post, their new parenting guidelines have come at a time when some Planned Parenthood clinics have begun to provide transgender hormone services, such as male-to-female and female-to-male hormone therapies.

This is another point the French child-professionals have opposed very strongly. They denounce the teaching of gender ideology which they say has no scientific basis. Planned Parenthood doesn't back up any of their claims with science, and a recent disturbing report by paediatrician and president of the American College of Pediatricians, Michelle Cretella, has drawn attention to the way in which children who express 'gender dysphoria' are being treated today. This is in stark contrast to how they were treated a few years ago, and the long term effects this could have on them psychologically and physically. She goes so far as to say that "transgender ideology is producing large scale child abuse".

The need to protect our innocent children from the system of the world has never been greater. But we need not fear – we have Jesus in our hearts and the Holy Spirit as our guide. If we accept God's Word as truth and leave no room for the 'wisdom of men', our children will grow to "give us comfort and delight our souls"!



Ladies and Gentlemen Are No Longer Welcome

Transport for London (TfL) who run the London Underground services announced last week that they will be changing the tube announcement greetings to say "Hello everyone" instead of "Ladies and gentlemen". They have acknowledged how important language is to the LGBT community and want to ensure that all passengers, regardless of their gender, will feel welcome when using the underground service.

A couple who have raised their child for the past 5 years as 'gender neutral', have finally revealed that the child is a boy. They continue to dress him in girl's clothing, saying that they don't want to "push him in any direction". The same article, includes comments from a psychology lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University, Dr Daragh McDermott, who says that the effect of raising a gender neutral child is not yet known. He goes on to say that it's difficult to know whether the child will suffer psychologically in the long term because there is so little research around this topic.

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These are just a fraction of the articles that appear daily around LGBT issues. Views on them tend to be wide and varied among American Christians, or confused, like we've seen from retired pastor, Eugene Peterson, the man behind 'The Message' Bible translation. He said he would perform a gay marriage if asked to, and the following day, after a media storm, retracted his comments saying, "I affirm a biblical view of marriage: one man to one woman. I affirm a biblical view of everything."

Research shows that acceptance of homosexuality has risen in recent years, with younger Christians tending to be more accepting than their elder counterparts.

Dare I say it, ladies and gentlemen, the world we live in is changing drastically. We know that the divorce rate for Christians and non-Christians alike continues to rise. We have seen first-hand the effect that broken marriages have on families; especially children, and the far reaching implications that these effects can have for society as a whole. But there are changes happening today, the effects of which are "as yet unknown". We haven't had enough experience of certain family situations to know how they will affect the people being raised in them. And we are experiencing many 'firsts', even today: in the past couple of years we've seen huge leaps in LGBT laws concerning marriage and adoption, gender ideology is conditioning young children to impersonate the opposite sex, and just in recent weeks the first, but certainly not the last, gender-neutral baby...

We are raising our children in a society very different to anything we have seen before, and the love, respect and obedience that we train them up in will cause them to stand out in a world where rebellion and confusion reign. It is Christian families that will be shining lights: beacons for the lost and testimonies of the truth of God's Word. "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify God".

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Patterns of Past Abuse: Australian Catholic Church Falling Short on Safeguarding Children

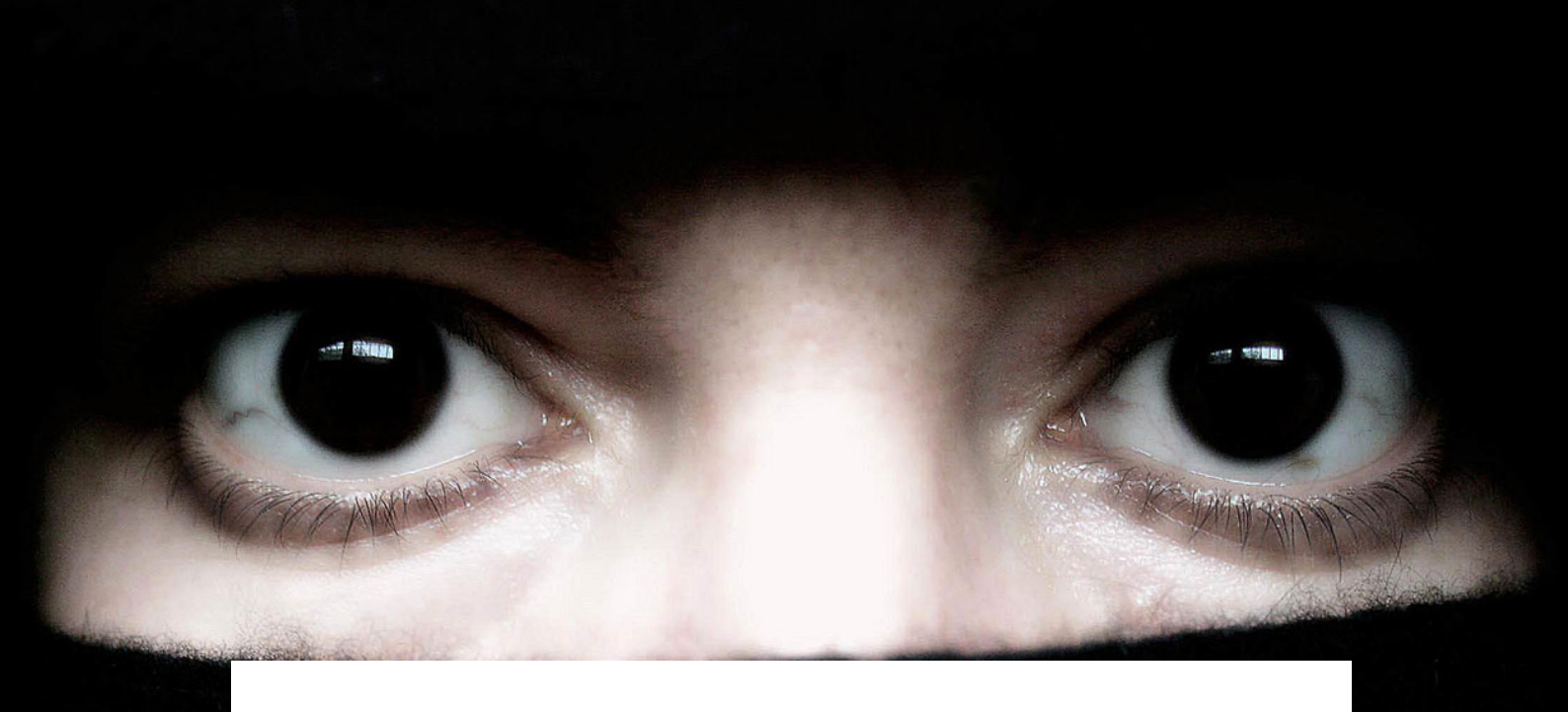
The Catholic Church in Australia is making headlines once again following a report published on Wednesday by the Center for Global Research at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. The study examined child sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church worldwide and found that compared to the Catholic Church in other countries, Australia has fallen short on protecting children in its care from abuse. Australia is the focus of this latest study which looks at the history of child sexual abuse across the global Church in not only parishes, but also orphanages and boarding schools run by the Church.

This report comes just a month after a study into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse by Australia's Royal Commission made a number of recommendations, one of which was that priests who failed to report suspected child abuse cases should be punishable by law. If implemented it would mean that priests would be forced to break the "Seal of Confession" and risk excommunication from the church if they learned of child sexual abuse during confession. Some Australian priests responded by saying that they would rather go to prison than break the Seal of Confession.

In June of this year, Cardinal George Pell, Australia's most senior Catholic figure and the 3rd highest ranking figure in the Roman Catholic Church, was charged with "multiple sexual offenses" by police. When Cardinal Pell was arrested, Victoria's deputy police commissioner Shane Patton said that Cardinal Pell was "facing multiple charges" from "multiple complainants" and he said the charges were "historical sexual assault offenses".

This latest study has come at a time where Jesuit priest Hans Zollner, a founding member of Pope Francis' Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, has been quoted as saying Australians "have lost trust completely" in the (Catholic) Church. Speaking along the same lines as the study, Zollner said that countries outside of Europe and North America had yet to properly tackle the issue of child sexual abuse within the church.

What now for the Church, whose seemingly unending child abuse scandals has sent shockwaves throughout the world? Dr Wilkinson, a consultant on the Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, said, "To regain trust, not only within the Catholic community, but trust in the church within the nation, the church has to undertake a metanoia — that's a complete transformation, a change of heart and culture."



Baby in One Hand, Detonator in the Other

Victory hobbles towards the finish line, his weary body beaten and ravaged by the war that has waged for 9 months. As he pushes through the narrow winding paths, clambering over rubble, burnt out vehicles, and rotting corpses, people reach out to him, calling his name. The finish line is in his sight but he's gasping for breath, not sure if he can find the strength to take those last few steps. He focuses hard as hundreds upon hundreds of empty eyes stare back at him, their bodies broken, their mouths silenced, their hearts desolate. He stumbles and falls into the dust...

It's hard to imagine anyone jumping for joy or doing a celebratory dance in the city of Mosul, where thousands of people have suffered in ways that are too terrible to imagine. With each passing day the atrocities increase. Hundreds of civilians, most of them children, who have been affected by war, wait to be taken to safety, with no idea what tomorrow holds.

There is nothing 'nice' about war. It's bloody, aggressive, destructive and deadly, its effects are life-altering and often irreversible. Mosul's victim's stories are dreadful but not surprising. But something surprising and disturbing about this war is the number of women who have sacrificed their lives as suicide bombers.

It has been reported by Iraqi security officials that 38 women have blown themselves up in Mosul, attempting to kill security forces and civilians. 20 of those female suicide attacks have been reported in the last week. One particular story which has made headlines around the world was of a woman carrying a baby who was caught on camera by al-Mawsleya TV, an Iraqi TV station, just moments before she detonated the bomb that was concealed under her hijab. It killed her and the baby instantly, and injured a few other people around them.

On images captured by the TV station's cameras, the woman's face is clearly visible. It's difficult not to stare at her eyes and wonder what was going through her mind at that very moment – baby in one hand, detonator in the other. She knew without a shadow of a doubt that the minute the bomb went off, she and her child would die. Is the faint smile on her face a hint that she is proud of what she is about to do, and believes that it will bring her great honor and reward in paradise?

"Jihadist brides" is how these women have become known and one news article speculates that they want to play more of an active role in jihad alongside their husbands and, rather ironically, that they are no longer satisfied to simply stay home and "take care of the children"...



Mosul: As One Battle Ends Another Begins

The estimated 300 remaining ISIS fighters in Mosul are desperately clinging on despite their imminent defeat. They have increased their use of suicide bombings, with reports of women suicide bombers including teenage girls, and even men disguised as women, blowing themselves up in a final stand.

As the battle is nearing an end fighting has intensified and is becoming more difficult due to the nature of the Old City with its numerous narrow winding roads. The UN Human Rights Office believes that there may be up to 100,000 civilians being held hostage by ISIS to be used as human shields when the need arises. They are being held in appalling conditions, with little access to food, water or medical care as has been reported by civilians who have managed to escape.

Reuters have reported that Iraqi forces expect to regain full control over the city by the end of this week and the Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, will travel to Mosul to formally declare victory, after which the entire country will enter into a week-long celebration.

But the celebration is sure to be bitter-sweet. Those 'celebrating' will be the brokenhearted survivors, many having lost their loved ones, and shattered by what they have recently lived through. The battle may be over, but another battle is yet to begin: to restore a city destroyed by war, and the overwhelming task of rebuilding people's lives and bringing them out of the 'grinding cycle of violence and poverty'.



ISIS Victims Aren't Crying Over Spilt Milk

The good news that ISIS is close to defeat in Mosul is almost overshadowed by the stories of lives that this war has destroyed. A recent BBC report states that many civilians remain trapped in the west of the city, and those trying to escape are in great danger. One man who managed to reach the Iraqi position, was holding his dead 4-year old son in his arms. The boy had been shot by IS snipers while he and his family were trying to flee. However, it was the last sentence of a related report that really struck me: "Children are showing severe signs of trauma – such as excessive crying, mutism, bed-wetting and fear of leaving their parents."

I had a flashback to breakfast... A messy affair that was mostly enjoyable, especially the animated conversation of little people grappling with the English language. But there was also some crying over spilt milk (literally), and some sulking because the spoon was the wrong color and there wasn't enough sugar on the cereal.

These are all common occurrences around the miniature plastic table that sits in the middle of our kitchen floor. Bed-wetting, yes, we've had our fair share of incidences, and of course the inevitable tears as we part for the day, or "separation anxiety", if you want to give it a name.

Knowing how the normal day-to-day can produce a whole range of emotions, which our toddlers clearly have little or no control over, leaves me wondering how children cope psychologically in a situation like the one in Mosul. How do they recover? Or rather, do they ever recover?

Staff from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who are supporting Mosul's General Hospital, explain how the "scars from a battle like the one taking place in Mosul are often, especially for the youngest, mental as well as physical". A physiotherapist working with these children says that they cry for their parents and ask to go home. When I read that it felt like someone had put a knife through my heart.

Although it doesn't come close to what the children of Mosul are experiencing, a recent article by Christian author Philip Yancey, about growing up 'fatherless', brought home to me the needs of young people living right on our doorsteps. Yancey believes that today nearly one quarter of children in the US are living in a home with no father present. This sounds almost luxurious in comparison to the situation in Mosul, yet it is something that should concern us as Christian parents, who understand the role that a father plays in the family.

God tells us to protect and care for the "fatherless" (Psalm 82:3, Psalm 10:18) as He does: "A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, Is God in His holy habitation." (Psalm 68:5) I may not be able to reach out to the children whose lives have been changed forever by the war in Mosul, but I don't have to look very far for a child who needs the influence of a loving family. It's time to open our eyes and our hearts because they're all around us: in our immediate families, in our churches and in our neighbourhoods. If today God has blessed me with a family that is serving Him, then already I have everything I need to make a difference to a child 'in need'.



Katy Perry is a Heartbreaker

In a recent interview with God TV, Mary Hudson, mother of pop superstar Katy Perry, speaks about how difficult it is to watch her daughter drifting further and further away from the values she once taught her.

The superstar's religious upbringing has been widely publicized. While accepting a prize at an LGBT rights advocacy, she told the audience how she used to "pray the gay away at Jesus Camps". In an interview with Vogue, she spoke about how she would hand out tracts at rock concerts: "We knew about Madonna and Marilyn Manson in my family because we picketed their concerts." Her interpretation of growing up in a Christian home was being carefully sheltered from worldly influences in a "bubble beyond the bubble".

When Katy shot to fame with her song, 'I Kissed a Girl', Mary describes feeling devastated and "flattened to the wall" when she heard the lyrics. Katy's latest single, 'Bon Appetit', has been described as "soft porn created for the Food Network". As Katy's life is splashed across every tabloid and social media platform for the world to see, her parents, who have their own ministry together, continue to preach the gospel and pour out their lives to help others. To "fight depression", Mary turns to God's Word which she says has been an anchor for her soul in very hard times.

It can be easy to pass judgment on a life as public as Katy's, and to look to her parents and wonder where they went wrong. In fact people often do, and Mary speaks about the negative vibes she feels from people and hurtful things they say about her daughter. But rather than play judge, I believe this should be a warning to all Christian parents. As a mother to a 3 year old girl, I can only imagine what the Hudson's must be going through, watching their 'little girl' living her life apart from God.

There is certainly no guarantee that our children will serve the Lord, simply because we are Christians. But God's Word tells us, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6).

We live in a world overflowing with iniquity, where approximately 45% of marriages end in divorce, and families are in tatters. How much do our children need us to be pillars, spiritual parents, rooted and grounded in God's Word, living in the light of the gospel? On this foundation we will be able to love, teach and discipline our children with God's heart, and give them the freedom to be who He intends them to be.

It's time to look inward. If our lives are not right with God, we will not be able to impart anything to our children. As parents we have a great responsibility, but not an overwhelming one, because Jesus accomplished everything for us on the cross. If we follow Him and obey His Word, we will have victory!

When Mary was asked what counsel she would give parents carrying the burden of a child who has turned their back on God, she said, "It's only the love of God that will bring them back. Don't cut them off. You have to rise above your feelings. You must stay in communication."

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