

'... to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord' (1 Corinthians 7:35)

Undivided



FROM THE
EDITOR ...

JESUS FELLOWSHIP/
MODERN JESUS ARMY

**CELIBACY
INSPIRATIONAL
NEWSLETTER**

FEB 2007 NO.24

The Jesus Fellowship is just about to publish a new edition of Seven Silver Rings which has been updated and expanded. This account of celibacy now includes chapters on the history of celibacy, its biblical support and the practical considerations of living out this radical, undivided life. You can order the book by going to the Jesus Fellowship web site www.jesus.org.uk

This is a short extract:

'Certainly the world is looking for heroes and, in an age of ever-increasing materialism, many still esteem most highly those who choose the path of selfless love for others, particularly the poor and marginalised. Interest in Mother Teresa's order, for instance, has been huge. At the turn of the millennium, The American 'Time' magazine readers voted her amongst the top twenty most influential figures of the twentieth century.

Perhaps what will determine the future of the gift of celibacy is whether it can be seen as something attractive, a treasure to be prized and sought after, as has often been the case in days gone by. It must be understood as a gift which only lives and flourishes when it is breathed into and empowered by God Himself - and poured out in love for others. The needs, both spiritual and practical, of the twenty-first century are enormous. One hopes that, again, many will lay hold of the gift of celibacy and, in so doing, will be equipped in a special way to serve the needs of a rapidly changing and needy world and bring many into a transforming faith in Jesus Christ.'

Huw Lewis

French celibate apostolic leader of the fourth century: church planter, servant leader and pioneer of celibate communities

MARTIN OF TOURS was born in 316 in what is now Hungary. When Martin was still a young boy his family moved to Italy.

From an early age Martin was interested in Christianity which at that time was still a minority movement in the Roman Empire. When he was ten he made his way to a church against his parents' wishes. There, he found birthed within himself a great love for God and at twelve longed to depart to the desert where many at that time were going in their efforts to get away from the distractions of life and find a deep relationship with God. His parents would not allow him to do this - nor would they allow him to be baptised.

At fifteen, Martin was forced to join the Roman army as a reluctant recruit. Here he held fast to the high principles he had learned as a Christian. He had a servant and treated him as an equal, insisting on switching roles with him so Martin cleaned his boots instead of the other way around!

One day, in the midst of a very harsh winter, when many were dying from cold, Martin was marching with other officers and soldiers into Amiens in France. Here, at the city gate, he met a poor man, almost naked, trembling and shaking from cold. Impulsively Martin took hold of his sword and cut his soldier's cloak in two and gave half to the beggar. That night Martin had a dream: Jesus stood before him, dressed in the half of the garment which Martin had given away and said, "Martin, though not yet baptised, has clothed me with this garment."

Martin, now 20, was hurriedly baptised. As soon as he was discharged from the army 20 years later, Martin set out for Poitiers in France as his heart's desire was to be trained by a man named Hilary. In 361, Hilary gave Martin some land in France. Here Martin was soon joined by other hermits who settled roundabout him in caves or little shacks. This 'place of little cells,' evolved into a community under Martin's leadership and has been described as the first monastery in France.

Martin frequently left the community to evangelise and found himself moving in the spiritual gifts of healing and miracles mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.

There are various reports of him raising the dead as well as bringing healing to people.

Martin's reputation grew and in 371 he was forced by the citizens of Tours to be their bishop. Contrary to all expectations, he delegated the business and pastoral affairs of his new office to others and built himself a little wooden hut at Marmoutier, a few miles from Tours. Men of all ages, placing all that they possessed in a common pool, joined him and again a community was formed under his leadership. At its height there were 2000 celibate men. A large number of celibate women lived in a similar way in Tours. Martin trained leaders at Marmoutier and many of these monks went on to be influential church leaders.

Martin travelled from house to house, speaking

to people about God and bringing many to the Lord, particularly after the miracles he

'Jesus stood before him, dressed in the half of the garment which Martin had given away'

performed. When people were converted, he organized them into a community under the direction of a celibate brother (a priest or monk.) He returned to revisit these new communities regularly. He also went out of his way to assist the sick, the poor and those with mental health difficulties

Martin helped the people get rid of some of their many superstitious practices. He and his followers personally destroyed many temples of idols and he immediately supervised the building of churches and monasteries in their place.

Martin was not afraid to challenge the Roman Emperor at times when he saw him doing things he did not approve of - particularly if he knew his actions would lead to the death of innocent people - or people the church branded as heretics.

When Martin died at the age of eighty one the whole city came out to accompany his body and there was great mourning.

Martin of Tours had a huge influence on the growth of Christianity in the west, including the Celtic church of the British Isles. He both provided a great example of - and stimulated - the vision for celibacy, servant leadership and community living which many were to follow.



The tragic loss of her family caused Ivy to find Jesus – and an unexpected call to celibacy

'Married to Jesus'

IVY NGOMA was bought up, along with her nine brothers and sisters, in a small village near Chipinge in Zimbabwe. Life was hard and wages low and the villagers often blamed their misfortunes on evil spirits, turning to the local witch doctors to rescue them from their influence.

When she was ten Ivy joined a church which was a mixture of tribal religion and Christianity. Its darker side was that sometimes members cast spells on people as revenge for some misdoing. Ivy could not stomach this and eventually left.

Ivy married a local man called Joseph when she was 18 and had two sons, Johnnie and Loveman. Tragically, all three were killed when the boys were still teenagers as they sought to resist soldiers of Robert Mugabe's tyrannical regime. Destitute and beside herself with sorrow, Ivy sought to end her life. She continues the story: "My sorrow caused me to think of Jesus again. It was raining hard and I went out to the bush with a rope and began to pray, 'Lord, come and take me, I want to die; it is

best that I follow my family.' Still with the rope in my bag, I went to say goodbye to my friend. Then I heard music in the distance. It was a joyful sound and I knew it was coming from a church. I went into the church and told the pastor, 'I want to receive Jesus into my life.' He called a lady in the church over and together they put a red cloth on the floor and asked me to sit on it; they then prayed with me to receive Jesus. After this, I threw away my rope!"

Ivy found her spiritual home there and soon discovered that some of the women in the church were celibate, having made a deliberate choice to be single for Jesus. In the church they were known as those who were 'married to Jesus'. One of the celibate women, called Elizabeth, looked after Ivy in her poverty and each month provided for all her needs out of her own wages.

In July 2001 Ivy came to England to escape the regime that had caused her so much heartache. A social worker involved with Ivy at the time offered to help and, after searching

for a church in the phone directory, rang the Jesus Fellowship.

"Lesley, a sister from the Jesus Fellowship, came to pick me up to take me to church. 'Are you married?' I asked her in the car. 'I'm married to Jesus,' she replied. "I felt so happy!" continued Ivy. "I

thought, 'I've found a church like the ones we have in Africa!'"

Ivy felt at home at once. "I thank God for this church," she related. "I knew it was my church. I don't have a family or a husband but I saw my husband Jesus there and He gave me a family - daughters, sons, brothers and sisters and they were all loving me.

"I love being part of the church, serving everyone and cooking African food for them all. I feel so free. When I want to sing, I sing, when I want to dance I dance, when I want to jump I jump, when I want to scream, I scream!"

In December 2005 Ivy made a vow to be celibate all her days in a gathering for all Jesus Fellowship Church members - a commitment she had already made in her heart whilst in Africa.

Ivy finds inspiration as a celibate from the story in the New Testament of the old widow and prophetess, Anna, who "never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying" (Luke 2:36-38). Her vision as a celibate is

to carry such a devotion to God and His people.

Ivy's first language is Shona and she goes to English classes.

"I tell people about Jesus there," she said. "Some of my fellow students are Muslims and think He is a prophet alone. 'No, Jesus is God', I tell them - 'and I'm married to Him! - He is my husband!'"

'I've found a church like the ones we have in Africa'



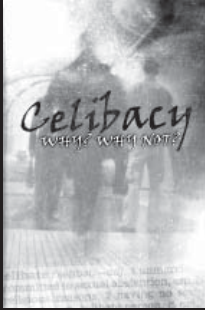
QUOTE

'From this evening to all eternity, Thy will, not mine, be done. Command, and rule, and reign in me. I yield myself up without reserve and I promise with Thy help and power, rather to give up the last drop of this my blood, than knowingly and willingly, in my heart or in my life, be untrue and disobedient to Thee. Behold Thou hast me wholly and completely, sweet Friend of my soul. Thou hast the love of my heart for Thyself and for none other. Thy Spirit is my keeper, thy death the rock of my assurance; yea, amen, may Thy Spirit seal that which is written in the simplicity of my heart...'

Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769)

FEEDBACK

We are always pleased to hear from any who read 'Undivided' and will always try to answer any questions directed to the Editor. Address correspondence to: The Editor, Undivided, Jesus Fellowship Central Offices, Nether Heyford, Northants NN7 3LB or email: huw.lewis@jesus.org.uk



Have a look

The video, 'Why? Why Not?' Six men and women speak about what it means for them to have chosen to be celibate for God and the path that led them to make that decision

AVAILABLE FROM JESUS PEOPLE SHOP, NETHER HEYFORD, NORTHAMPTON NN7 3LB, UK
TEL: 0845 166 8172 www.jesus.org.uk



Seven Silver Rings



NEW SEVEN SILVER RINGS OUT SOON!

An updated and enlarged Seven Silver Rings will be published shortly. This will include new chapters on the history and biblical background to Celibacy as well as answering some of those frequently asked questions about living single for Jesus. Comprehensive and challenging, it sets out to show how a radical lifestyle of undivided love for Jesus and His

church is possible in the 21st century. This voluntary choice is far removed from the institutional forms of celibacy.



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