

Audio sermons: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/cabooseministriesaudiopodcast/id506049887mt=2>

*Note: since my last newsletter I've posted several dramas & sermons on my **YouTube** channel, "Michael Robert Guertin".

May 2018

"VIA DOLOROSA '15' NOW 'HIS-STORY'"



Dear **Friends & Family**,

[4/2] What began months ago, even well into last year, even before Christmas, i.e., Via Dolorosa 15, has now been recorded in Heaven's books as His history. As much as we Via room captains strive not to think or talk about Via until after the Christmas season is over, to give that glorious season of our Lord's incarnation its due glory, we never seem to succeed. Via is such a huge production for our church of about 250 people-the biggest event by far in our annual church calendar, that it is virtually impossible not to. Of those 250 or so church members, approximately 100 of them are involved in some way in Via's production, mostly as cast members but also numerous & various other services such as: setup & tear-down, administration, tech, narrators, communion servers, etc. I've often likened Via to a huge aircraft carrier that pulls into Immanuel's port every year. Every other ministry "ship" must needs move out of the harbor, so to speak, re: room use, schedules, etc., to accommodate it. This does not imply by any means that these other ministries are not important, but that is how big & involved Via is. Given Via involves "humans", not a year goes by that there are not issues to deal with. We have our usual struggles & meltdowns [often it's me, but not only me! 😊], but each year our gracious Lord pulls us through. I've often said that ministry would be great if you didn't have to work with people-& gulp-I'm sure a # of my pastors have felt that way about ME! 😊 And yet, Via is made up of people, & ministers to so many people, both sinners & sinning saints, that struggles are inevitable!

“GROWTH IN SPACE-& GRACE!”

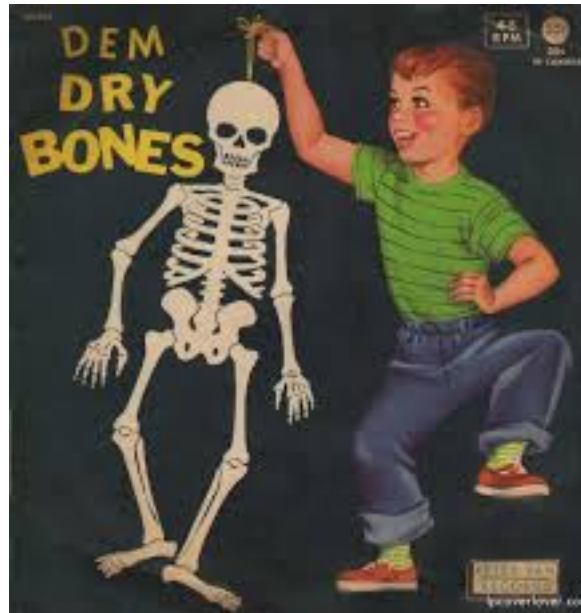
Via was conceived by my pastor & our church business administrator 15 years ago after watching Mel Gibson’s movie “The Passion of the Christ”. Via had small beginnings-our 1st year we only conducted it one night-Good Friday-& had just 4 rooms to walk through & visit. That 1st year we had 60 people go through. Last week we the cast performed 5 nights [including Monday night of Holy Week which was our dress rehearsal & not open to the public]. We now have 11 “stops”, or rooms, 9 of which are dramas, & over 1,100 people walked through, the vast majority of which do not attend our church. Imagine your own church & its size-then multiply that times 4. That is what Via Dolorosa is to our church.

“NOTHING ‘PERSONNEL’!”



Of the 15 years we’ve done Via now, this was the hardest hit re: personnel issues, re: losing trained, seasoned, veteran cast members. It wreaks havoc on an already stressed-out Roman procurator! 😊 After having done literally hundreds of Via episodes with the same personnel over the many years & knowing the part & also the fellow cast member’s idiosyncrasies & personality, you get in a groove with them & develop a flow. When a new member joins the team, the “chemistry” must be tapped & developed all over again, & that’s IF the new recruit has “the goods” to do it! It’s not uncommon that new recruits *don’t* have acting skills. It can be disastrous for a Via episode. We room captains then must scramble to delicately adjust roles, etc. You also have people scheduled to perform in a certain role for the week & then they suddenly, unexpectedly drop out for various reasons. Yes-this produces stress & panic. To survive, we piecemeal & patch cast members re: their schedules. It’s not ideal for running Via but we must survive.

“HOW DRY I AM”



Another unique, curious, & to be honest “distressing” thing for me this particular Via season, was how “dry” I felt in my role as **Pilate**. The way I’m wired [a dear friend who has studied personality types for decades once described me as “99% sanguine”!], being an “emotionally-wired”, feeling-type person, I need to “feel” my part every episode, of the almost 100 I do every Via season. Yes. That is an unrealistic goal given how physically & emotionally draining Via is, but nevertheless, it is always my goal. I keep reminding myself & the cast that although we have done the episode several times, the group that is seated now before us in the room is seeing it for *the 1st time*. To be honest, I have found it impossible ever to achieve this goal. Hence, it’s a constant casting one’s self upon the Lord to enable & anoint for the task.

“NOT-SO-GOOD-FRIDAY”



Because Via is such a deep passion of mine [no pun intended], because in my mind I virtually *live* in the Fortress Antonia in my mind for weeks, both in character prep, during the performances, & to be honest, for days after Via, I always get depressed on Good Friday, as I know before I realize it another Via season is coming to an end. I listen to my Bible movie/Roman epic movie soundtracks for weeks before, during, & after Via. I often “live” inside these movies, particularly “The Robe” [1953], “Quo Vadis” [1951], “The Greatest Story Ever Told” [1965], “Day of Triumph” [1954], etc. Via is a love-an outlet for me, that I cannot describe. It’s almost as if **The Fortress Antonia** room & its accompanying Dungeon where my two episodes are performed each night, is my Time Machine, which I use throughout the rest of the year, to strive to make the Scriptures come alive. I told Kim the other day in the light of this I feel like “I was made for another time”. I want Via to continue for weeks. It takes a long time for it to be “out of my system”. 😞

“THE ‘PLAYBOOKS’”



The goal of Via? To first & foremost bless the heart of the Lord, Whose Story we strive to tell, via drama & words. Then, to stir, stun, bless & reinforce His people. Finally, but not less important, to reach the lost. I told the cast in the Dungeon one night as we gathered there for focus & prayer before the night began, that we, the cast do two things via Via: we provide the means [vis, the gospel] by which I Lord gathers the lost into His fold. And, for the lost going through who do not receive the message & die in their sins?, we provide *evidence*. On Judgment Day, that Great Day, when every person, one by one, shall take his turn to stand before the Lord Jesus on His glorious throne, to give an account of his life, “the books shall be opened” [Rev. 20:12], & each shall be judged according to the things written in the books. It will be a day of rewards for God’s people. I will be perfectly honest with you, Beloved-I’m very well aware I shall lose much of my possible rewards for my years of service in Via, because so many times I have done my performances “as unto men”, & not as unto God. It is one of many weaknesses with I strive with in the annual labor of love. For

the lost, Via Dolorosa will be one of countless evidences “placed on the table” before the lost soul as he stands before the Lord to prove the sentence he is about to hear re: his eternal destiny is fully-deserved. The evidence will be overwhelming. Every mouth will be stopped. As the renowned 19th century Princeton theologian Charles Hodge wrote: “every person will be self-condemned...every man’s conscience will be an indelible register of everything he has done...” et al. Hence, I strove to help the cast, all of whom, including myself, struggle to keep focused performing the same episode about a dozen times each night, to keep in mind the seriousness & severity of that which we were involved in.

“WORTH THE WORK”

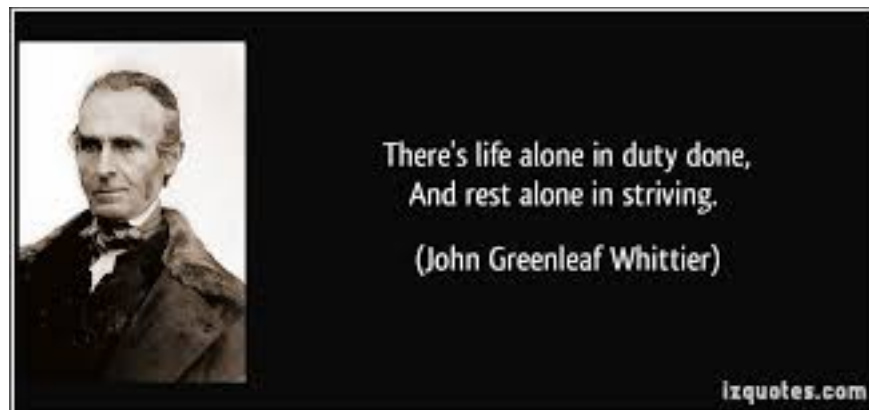
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We receive feedback each year from the public re: Via & this year was no different. In the Sanhedrin room where Jesus is so vehemently accused & mistreated by the priest, when Caiaphas asked Jesus, “Are You better than me?!”, a little boy in the audience blurted out, “He IS better than you!”. 😊 In that same room, when Caiaphas was doing the same, a woman stood up & cried out, “You’re accusing yourself by accusing Him!”, et al. She then walked out of the room! This speaks well of Jon Rigby who plays Caiaphas, that his audiences are being drawn into the moment, which is one of our major goals as cast members. While watching Pastor Will Donato portray King Herod Antipas, a member of the audience asked why he was drunk! 😊 That’s how convincingly Will played his part! Two dear friends from over 90 minutes away came for the 1st time this year—a husband & wife. Here are their comments: “Wow!!! That was Amazing!!! Very powerful night and brother YOU are Pilate! we were blessed!..Via Dolorosa was great...it

was AMAZING! We were thinking of going to *Sight 'N Sound* [S&S is a Broadway-quality Christian theater in Lancaster, PA]...no need. THANKS! I am STILL blown again! All the stuff I saw keeps going over & over in my mind! The passion came alive for me! So grateful for the thousands impacted over the years...even saved as a result. I knew it would be good, butwow!" A friend/brother who leads the women & children's division of a downtown mission here in Wilmington wrote: "We were really blessed by the passion drama. All the ladies I brought from the mission were seeing it for the 1st time & were very moved." A relative of mine & his wife who came all the way from VA to see *Via* for the 1st time wrote: "Ugggh the last scene brought tears to my eyes. I should have just walked up on stage & sat with the rest of the people that "crucify" him even still...but thank you & your whole team for such a wonderful display of real truth & honor of Him." A woman who is starting up a drama ministry at her nearby church came through *Via* for the 1st time this year. She wrote: "Hey brother! I cannot tell you how fabulous *Via* was, it was an unbelievable experience! You should do video interviews for next year as advertisement!" A legal professional from Wilmington wrote: Well, another successful year of the *Via Dolorosa* – "Well done, good & faithful servants". Thank you all for your efforts. I'm sure you are all exhausted – & hopefully exhilarated by your efforts in sharing the "Word" with the community. I have been attending the "*Via*" for close to ten years I believe – & each year since the first I have brought people with me – as your office staff can well attest. I thought this year was remarkable, but then I think every year is remarkable. I work in the court system & this year brought four judges with me. Three of them have attended several years now. I thought I would share with you the comments of one judge who has attended probably at least five years now. He said, "*Well, I thought it was one of the best, if not the best, I have seen. I used the "lag time" as an opportunity for some quick reflection. It was good to see some new faces in the cast. I am amazed at their ability to present a breathtaking pageant every year even though we all know the outcome before entering.* (The "lag time" he refers to is the fact that he attended on Wednesday evening – & wrote the note on Friday evening.) Thank you again for an incredible outreach ministry. In Christ, [Susan]. A "rookie" actor this year who was one of my Dungeon "hanging zealots" wrote of his experience: "I have had the pleasure of joining the cast of *Via Dolorosa* this week. I wanted to thank you for having me & for the warm welcome I have received from almost every member that I met. The sincerity & joy was very touching & impressive. What an amazing experience! The show was nice, somewhat tiring, & a major commitment for everyone. Yet, I witnessed the enthusiasm & dedication of all of your members without hesitation. It was not any different in the Dungeon. God put us together for a reason & it was no coincidence that people from different backgrounds, different countries, different education levels, different social & family status, sick & healthy, rich & poor, single & married got together without any pretenses or prejudice with only one focus: The King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, the healer, the teacher, & our Savior! It was not about Pastor Bill, not about "Guerty", about me, or anybody else. It was about Him & to glorify Him! The friendships we formed, the testimonies we shared, the prayers we cried were

all for Him. I felt the Holy Spirit in my bones. The goose bumps at times, turned into tears that turned into prayers. Thanks to all of you, my faith has gained strength & my relationship with Him has become deeper. I became the follower of Jesus Christ in 2010. I certainly hope that you keep me...in mind for next year's production of Via Dolorosa." [a former Muslim]. Another man from a local Chinese church wrote: "Hi Michael. When we talked after your last sermon at Wilmington Community Evangelical Church, & I said to you your presentation was so strong that you didn't need any props; I knew you were good, but your character portrayal at Via Dolorosa simply blew my mind. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed watching you perform the night we stopped by with the Chinese church group. Everybody who performed did a really good job, & I was really looking forward to seeing you perform...& when I did I was taken aback by your performance...I had brought my son, his wife, & my granddaughter with...my wife & I. My granddaughter is going to be 2 on the 16th of this month. When we first walked in & the Roman guards were yelling & doing their thing, when they walked out of the tent my granddaughter happily told them, "Bye-bye" & everyone in the crowd lost it, except for the actors. I don't know how they kept it together when she said that. During the part with the three priests, I thought she was going to go up & talk to them in the middle of their performance, so my son took her out for safety's sake. She was very sociable that night. Wow is all I can say about what you did on the stage. It was really great." [John]

"STRIVING-TO REST!"



This past year has been the busiest re: ministry that I can remember. I went from Via & 4 camps last year into the busiest Fall & Winter ministry seasons ever in 18 years of itinerant work, only to enter right back into Via this year! I am glad my schedule below right now is "sparse", as I need some time to recuperate & regroup & prepare for the rapidly approaching 4-camps' season. May it be so.

***Caboose! Commentary Corner:** [My daughter Laura once said she'd love to have my old Bibles when I passed for all of the notes I have written in them over the decades. This was quite humbling to say the least, especially coming from one of your own children. Hence, I've decided to post each month random notes/comments from various Bibles I have studied from. *About a year ago I was asked by a potential ministry site leadership who had never heard or seen me minister "what I was into-what I was 'about'. I told the youth pastor who asked for them: "I'm into Jesus Christ-& Him crucified. If they don't want that, they don't want me." Enough said. They had me come. 😊



Caboose! On the Loose:

***Lookin' out for the little guys..._**

Ministry/Events for MAY & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

April 25: IC, Wilmington, DE: Tabernacle of David worship leader

May 1: Petra Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA: hsc board mtg.

May 4: Hockessin Evangelical Community Chinese Church: children's service

May 9: Glad Tidings AG, Wyomissing, PA: Devin Blankenbiller ordination service: sponsor

May 16: Word of Life AG Church, Springfield, VA: mid-week family service

*Michael is an ordained *Elim Fellowship* itinerant Stateside missionary & is also licensed to preach the gospel by the local church he attends, *Immanuel Church*. *Caboose!* is also an affiliate ministry of *The Hopewell Network of Churches*. For 14 years he served on various local church staffs as their children's pastor. Since 2000 Kim & he have lived by faith, having no set salary, retirement, etc. to speak of. Yet this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches God's Word & systematic theology, using both drama & visual aids, to all age groups, from children to senior citizens, either separately or combined. To help support this work [any amount no matter how small is greatly appreciated!], please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, c/o 1703 Dalton Rd., Lima, NY 14485,

marking it "Preferred-Michael Robert Guertin" or you may click on the link below to give directly. Any sized amount would be greatly appreciated! Thank you! [click here](#)

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