

## Tending Ancient Paths

### The Paradigms, Posture, and Practices of Jesus

#### ***‘Fleeing West; finding God among the poor and most vulnerable.’***

An article written by Catholic author Katie Warner in 2018 (title above) gives a dramatic real time challenge for western Christians. She begins with a quote from Pope Francis who said:

***“...in the poor [vulnerable], we find the presence of Jesus, who, though rich, became poor.. in their weakness, a saving power is present. And if in the eyes of the world they have little value, they are the ones who open to us the way to heaven.”***

But then she writes this provoking piece about Mary the mother of Jesus, *who did not yet understand the fullness of what was happening when Joseph told her they had to leave in the night, but she believed him... Quickly she packed the child’s clothes and the gifts that had been given. How much could she bring? Where would they go? What would happen when they got there? Too many questions for a chaotic moment like this. They would flee but likely while she is praying to the God who had encountered her those many months prior.*

*As they made their way out onto the road she could feel her heart quiver. Today they were leaving their homeland and the life they had hoped for together. Their unlikely story had brought them to this unlikely place and their beautiful boy had been born in this land, but the celebrations had ended and the reality of death and violence was all around them. With their feet they would set out on a journey in search of safety and shelter in a distant land. She no longer needed to be convinced they would walk, they would take the road less traveled—through the desert and rocky terrain—to an unknown land where they would seek refuge and asylum. Each step a prayer...200,000 steps from Bethlehem to Egypt. During Advent, the vision of the Holy Family traveling through the desert by night, fleeing the king’s army as they desperately do all they can to save the child King Herod seeks to destroy, is a far different scene than the one we are used to retelling of sweet songs and Jesus in the manger. The scene of fleeing to Egypt, on the run from a madman so enraged with fear and jealousy that he would shed the blood of the innocent, separate children from their beloved parents, and stop at nothing so he can maintain his grip on power.*



*Here, Mary and Joseph are running with our God, clutching him as they run through the darkness seeking a new home that is safe from chaos and destruction as asylum seekers, refugees, and migrating pilgrims. They are not alone but among others who have fled and would end up losing their babies.*

*The remarkable reality of the incarnation is that God became one of us to make a way for us, becoming the most vulnerable among us—a poor, migrating infant born of a young woman. As the world waited for a Messiah in the form of strength and power like David the warrior king, God came in the fragility and vulnerability of Moses, a baby set adrift out of desperation and survival. Through this choice we see God’s intentionality – not through riches and power would God save his children, but through the earnest of heart, the dedicated, the outcast and the poor. In this perfect paradox, humanity is made aware of the nature and heart of God. In turn we are called to love the poor because in loving the poor we love God and ultimately, as the Holy Father reminds us, to know the poor of this earth is to know the power and way of God.*

*If the God of the heavens has chosen to enter into humanity in the most vulnerable of ways, in the most chaotic, violent, and precarious moments of time, what then does this mean for his followers? Perhaps it means that our calling is to know the ways of the poor and vulnerable, to walk with them in the darkest and most violent of moments in order to know intimately the sacredness of God among them and to focus on the full context of the story from Nazareth to Cairo.*

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And the secret is simply this: **Christ in you!**

Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all glorious things to come. Col 1:27b, JB Phillips

*Loving and serving the poor among us only increases our service and faith and moves us closer to God. To know the vulnerable, the weak, the suffering, and the fleeing and their plight, is to know the God of the most high and to know Jesus who as God is found in the most unlikely places of human existence – among the poor, wrapped in swaddling clothes, awaiting his dedication, and as an asylum seeker on the run with his refugee family in tow.*

She concluded her article with another challenge from Pope Francis:

***“If God could embrace this experience, can I also embrace the plight of the most vulnerable among us?”***

As I grew up, and throughout my experience of the Church over most of my life, I have seen a lot of time and energy given to topic of Jesus ‘return’. I am provoked by Katie Warner’s article to challenge myself with a much more relevant question - where will I find Jesus today? Maybe exactly where Jesus said we would find Him - in the face of our neighbor.

In this year of dramatic uncertainties our ministry of care for the needy in El Salvador seems more relevant now than ever. To partner with some of the most vulnerable and needy is to love Jesus well. As has been the case for us each year every dollar given to help the needy in San Pablo Taco Chico is used directly to give food, seed, fertilizer, dresses for children, repairs to homes damaged by floods, care for the sick and dying, and to those who literally have nothing.

What began as a ministry of mercy continues but has grown from a monthly gathering of encouragement into a vibrant spiritual community led by men and women within the community. It is one of the most authentic expressions of mercy ministry I have had the privilege of being a part of. This year Pastor Louis Alvarado and his wife Doris will be going in April for 3 weeks to minister in San Pablo Taco Chico. We invite you to join us in this ministry. If you choose to participate please note: Gift for El Salvador on the memo line.



### **El Salvador Outreach—2024**

- We will again be sending a team to El Salvador April 8-27 of 2024!
- Over the last several years we have partnered with Pastor Louis Alvarado to minister to some of the poorest and most needy of El Salvador.
- Our annual offering has helped to rebuild homes, pay medical expenses, pay funeral expenses, purchase wheel chairs, provide seed, fertilizer, food, and more. All funds given go to minister to the people of this community.
- As a result there are regular monthly gatherings naming the name of Jesus in San Pablo Taco Chico that have reached hundreds. The Good News is Preached to the Poor...
- Last year we were able to help over 55 families and continue our on-going monthly work.
- Please pray about participating in El Salvador this year as we send a team—this offering is a combined effort of Praise International, TAP Fort Wayne, and Pastor Luis Alvarado.
- Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

With gratitude and integrity we steward your gifts. Thank you for partnering with the mission the Lord has given us in this hour as we partner with Him for His kingdom to expand.

Please make your **tax deductible** contribution to:

**Tending Ancient Paths (TAP) Fort Wayne**  
**5907 West Wallen Road,**  
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Ben and Denise, Please agree with us over these prayer needs for the next month...

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