

The Servants of the Word

Easter & Pentecost 2007

Pepe Vásquez: Faithful Servant of the Word

Pepe Vásquez has been a faithful Servant of the Word for more than thirty years. As a student at the University of Michigan he heard God's invitation to be a missionary and to give his life to God and his work as part of our brotherhood. Of Mexican descent, he is "Texan" by birth and has lived and served in many places, including Ann Arbor, Lansing, Colombia, Belgium, and México.

During the 1980s Pepe fruitfully served the young people of North America, especially in Lansing, Michigan. In the mid-1970s he helped establish a Servant of the Word household in Belgium to begin a Christian community there. For the last thirteen years he's been living in Monterrey, México, mainly serving the young professionals of the Jésed Community and leading an evangelistic outreach for singles called "Ven y Sígueme" ("Come Follow Me"). His service as its Director (for more than ten years now) has been very fruitful, and he is well known for his order, diligence, and responsibility in running it and for being very personal, caring, and loving toward his brothers and sisters, both in Ven y Sígueme and in Jésed (where he is sometimes warmly called "Don Pepone"). Pepe is a wise man, who after living many years for the Lord, understands many things. Often, when Pepe speaks or is about to say something, everybody else pays attention.



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But above all, Pepe has been a model of a Servant of the Word among us, especially in Monterrey. His contribution to our household as a man who loves God and who lives our ideal faithfully is priceless. Young men who come to our life are inspired by his daily zeal and faithfulness. He continually looks for ways to enhance our life and to fraternally support and care for us (both the young and the older among us). He has a way of taking initiative as a loving brother and has been a source of blessing for many of us. Over the years he has also contributed much in many practical aspects of our life: construction, repairs, cooking, and gardening. (Pepe is really an excellent gardener, God bless him!)

More recently, Pepe has joined the group of brothers who travel to help other Servants of the Spirit communities in their formation. Each year, for several weeks, he visits other communities, mainly in Latin America, to help them in the development of the life and care for their single professionals and to establish outreaches for young professionals. More communities want him to visit them every year than he is able to, but time just will not allow that.



Filled with the Joy of Christ's Victory

Beloved family and friends,

On behalf of all of The Servants of the Word, I wish you a joyful celebration of Easter. The Lord is risen indeed, and that fact has utterly changed the course of human history, and has opened the way for us to eternal life! We pray that this season for you might be filled with the joy of Christ's victory over sin, and with the certain hope of his triumph over death. And in this year in which Christians from East and West coincide in our calendars and share the same date for the feast of Easter, we pray with special earnestness that our risen Lord will bring about the full unity of his body, by the power of his Holy Spirit.

As always at such times of feasting and of celebrating God's goodness, we remember before him with gratitude all the ways that he has so richly blessed us. We count you among the great blessings of God to us, and we thank him, and you, for your love and your support. And we pray that you may also know, in countless ways, the riches of his blessing in your lives. 🌱

With love and affection, in the risen Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Keating".

John Keating
Presiding Elder

Crown Him with Many Crowns

*Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o'er the grave
and rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save.*

*His glories now we sing, who died and rose on high,
Who died, eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.*

*Text: Matthew Bridges, 1800–1894;
Godfrey Thring, 1823–1903*



Pepe showing some of the fruit of his labors in Monterrey.

Pepe Vázquez, continued from page 1

Pepe is a man, as one of the pillars of our Ideal says, with a “single-hearted devotion to the Lord” that has been a great gift to us in The Servants of the Word. May we all continue to receive God's blessing through him for many more years to come! 🌱

–David Mijares

Affiliates Moved by Micro-Mission Trip Experience

Sitting in a *Denny's* restaurant in Tucson enjoying a nice dinner, none of us felt good. I had come down with some Mexican illness the past day, we were all tired, getting ready for our “red-eye” flight home, and most of us had school or work to look forward to in the morning.

Our discontentment, however, wasn't rooted in any of these things.

The tone of our re-cap discussion was sober – we had each been reflecting on our experience of the trip and what the various highlights were. Brendan Murray, one of the affiliate members of our eight-man, American team, somberly reflected, “You don't necessarily come away from a mission trip like this feeling good about yourself.”

He was right.

To be sure, it's not as though we didn't have our share of fun on the trip: scaling a volcano, a “close encounter” with a pair of wild boar, a few rowdy games of soccer with the lively orphans at Naco, Mexico, and a big Lord's Day celebration with the affiliates from Mexicali, Mexico, were among the many highlights of the trip. On another level, our times of prayer together with our Mexican brothers were particularly anointed, and it was amazing to experience having the Lord in common with them, despite all of our differences.

Indeed, taking a four-day weekend in January and turning it into a full-scale mission trip is, in itself, quite an adventurous endeavor. After a brief stop in Ejido Cuauhtemoc on the way to Agua Prieta, Mexico, however, our adventurous spirit was replaced by one of powerlessness.

Crippled by high unemployment and extreme poverty, this village is painful to look at. Lean-to shacks and poor excuses for houses stood quietly in the bitter wind, surrounded by trash and an occasional three-legged dog. We visited one particular family (one mother, seven children) bringing sorely-needed warm, donated clothes, blankets, nutritious food, and some chocolate for the kids.

The next day, while I was at the height of my sickness, I remember thinking: soon I'll get better and go home to central heating, a college education, and a future. These orphans and those kids won't have a story like that. How easily we forget these simple realities!

Most people hear a lot about poverty, and many are roughly aware of how big of a problem it is. When one comes into direct contact with those whom it affects, however, everything changes. When one gives poverty a face – scruffy and unwashed – things come into clearer perspective. Namely, it's not about us and our weekend of philanthropy, or the stamp on our passports, or our “goose bumps experience” of seeing an orphan smile.



Our affiliates group based at our weekend home in Agua Prieta, Mexico.



Mexican affiliates setting sidewalk forms in Agua Prieta.



American contingent on a hike in Chiricahua National Park.

As one member of the team later commented, maybe the Lord leads us to do this kind of work so that we wrestle with these questions, and let the painful reality of a broken world sink in. God wants us to realize our own helplessness in these situations, lest we begin to rely on ourselves. Furthermore, we may reflect on the great poverty we knew before we found the ultimate treasure in the field, for which we have given all our lives. 🌲

–John Hughes

Faith on Campus London

Wednesday was a day of contrasts. I had met up with a young British man whom I had been helping with his faith following a family crisis. But that evening he told me he wanted to stop the search and get on with life without Christ. Earlier in the day I had met a Kurdish student who was interested in Christianity; I had explained the gospel in brief and we talked about the Bible; he was very interested. For Jamie Treadwell and me – the two Servants of the Word brothers working with our university outreach in London, *Koinonia* – the contrast between the lack of responsiveness amongst British students,

Many drift away as their beliefs are challenged by the secular London culture around them.

and the relative responsiveness, and interest, of international students, is no surprise since British society has been moving in an increasingly secular direction for many years.

Jamie and I started working together in *Koinonia* this fall. We are fortunate to have a large team: one staff woman, Hannah Gornik, and four recent graduates (from Belgium, Ireland, and Poland) who joined for a year as part of the *Timothy Project*, a programme designed to help recent graduates be trained in university evangelism and discipleship.

In September we realised that *Koinonia's* number one priority was to connect with and help young Christians arriving at university, recognising that many of them fail to connect anywhere and often drift away as their beliefs are challenged by the secular London culture around them. However, as the term progressed we moved our strategy to focus on those who are not yet Christian by running social and service events where we could get to know one another's friends. But the next step for these people was not so clear. The traditional Alpha courses we had run in the past were "too Christian" in their content for the people we were in contact with. The result was the development of a new five-talk course "Apologetics to Faith" that starts with a typical objection to faith, answers the objection, and then uses the answer as a launch pad for explaining the Christian perspective. The first talk dealt with *the problem of suffering* as a launch pad for explaining *God's love*. Then the second talk asked the question *Is everything relative?* as a launch pad for talking about *sin*. So far the results have been promising if still difficult to measure. Do keep praying for us – every day we depend on your prayers. 🙏



Cutting the cake at the end of a mega-meal event for new students.

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–Andy Pettman

WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP

The Servants of the Word gets its support through the financial earnings of the brothers as well as by donations from our benefactors. Many of our brothers work for sacrificial wages or for no pay at all. Please consider if you can become a financial sponsor of The Servants of the Word. Your prayers and support are appreciated in our work with young people and our community development work.

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