

The Servants of the Word

Easter & Pentecost 2011

Ted Kennedy: Master of Intelligent Living

Ted Kennedy is one of the most inspiring Christian men that I know—and I say this even after living with him in close quarters for more than ten years.

At first glance, Ted comes across as an impressive, efficient, and cheerful fellow. He is the do-everything vice-president of strategy and special operations at Service Brands International, a franchising company based in Ann Arbor, Michigan; he is the unflappable household steward of our Ann Arbor-based formation house and student outreach center; and he even arranges the paper clips on his desk to near perfection.

The brothers in the house have dubbed Ted the “master of intelligent living.” This is because Ted will periodically point out the “intelligent” way to park the cars, or to pass the food, or to record financial transactions, etc. It’s not clear to me that all of the brothers actually *adopt* these intelligent ways of living and acting, but those who know him are struck with Ted’s wisdom and knowledge. He is an engineer to the core.

But when you get to know Ted better, all these things at the surface are deepened by his love for God and his desire to take all his gifts and put them at the generous service of others. Ted enjoys mentoring younger men and passing along practical skills in living Servants of the Word life well. He is constantly going here and there in the evening to help someone in need, often to sort out a computer problem. He loves to be of service to people. He is also known in our circles for being a gifted worship-songwriter and musician.

Moreover, Ted has also been a model for all of us in care for his family. Since the death of his father some years ago, Ted has been impressively steady in care for his mother. But he also looks out actively for his brothers and sisters, and shows special concern for his nieces and nephews. I can testify that their spiritual and material welfare is constantly in his prayers and thoughts.

Some years back he started a small check-printing company for the sole purpose of having a vehicle for teaching his nieces and nephews how to work in a real business. The company is doing quite well, actually, but more important to Ted are the beneficial effects on his younger family members.



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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 nothing will ever be the same again. The course of human history has been changed forever by his death and resurrection, which have opened the way for us to eternal life! We pray that in this season you might be filled with the joy of Christ's victory over sin, and with the sure hope of his triumph over death. And in this second year in a row 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 fervor that our risen Lord will bring about the full unity of his body, by the power of his Holy Spirit.



The course of human history has been changed forever by Christ's death and resurrection, which have opened the way for us to eternal life!

This is my final newsletter greeting to all of you as presiding elder of The Servants of the Word. By the time our fall newsletter comes to you, I will have handed the baton to Ken Noecker, and it will be his smiling face that will greet you in September. My own face will be doing its best to avoid being burnt in the tropical sun of the Philippines, where I will be serving in the coming years.

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. ▲

In Christ our risen Savior,

John Keating

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Ted doesn't give many talks and lectures, but when he does speak the impact is significant. He likes to call the younger brothers onwards and upwards, to give everything they have, to hold nothing back, to "make it all count" for Jesus Christ. What makes these simple words so powerful is that Ted lives them so deeply and simply. He is a man of many outstanding gifts, yet he carries them humbly and delights in seeing them used for the Lord and others. And at the venerable age of 60 he is still going strong.

As I prepare to move to another household, I look back with great gratitude for the years of living and serving side-by-side with Ted Kennedy. He is not only a master of intelligent living; he is a true-hearted servant of Christ and a great brother. ▲

-Dan Keating

Serving Faith to Youth from Down Under

This past January, I had the opportunity to travel to New Zealand to lead a short-term summer household of young men ages 15–25 from The Lamb of God Community. In the land “down under,” their summer is during our winter in Lansing, Michigan, so the timing for me could not have been better.

Many New Zealand youth are facing a severe loss of faith. One study suggests that religion there will die out within this generation. This is what was on my mind as I asked the Lord how I could serve the young men living there. I decided that the opportunity to take such a trip was a total gift from God, but I knew I’d need to receive more from him in order to be a servant down under.

After the long travel and a mandatory session with my host family where we covered the rules of cricket and rugby (you have to get over jet-lag somehow!), I was ready to see some young people. My main purpose of the trip was to lead a household of young men in the city of Christchurch. Household move-in was Saturday, and we were immediately thrown into a big event together called “Summer Oasis” on Sunday. Can you imagine being thrown in to lead a group of eight young guys from four New Zealand cities, without ever having met any of them? Questions hit me, like, “Where’s the grocery store?” “Have they even heard of Jesus?” “Are these guys going to be bored?” I prayed, “Lord Jesus, I need your help!”

By the grace of God, I was able to deliver some meaningful material to the 75 youth at the Oasis event. One presentation was on the Christian martyrs. To introduce these heroes from history, I used some multimedia profiles that I helped make for a previous youth conference. Not only did the students learn what a martyr is, but each student learned about a particular figure through a creative activity. Each group had to use only newspapers, tape, and sticky notes to transform a group member into a famous martyr of old. The best costume was one of a martyr from the Boxer Rebellion in China. Of course, according to local custom, that team was rewarded with a big bag of “lollies.” (From what I can tell, all candy isn’t “candy” there, but “lollies.”) The Summer Oasis for me overall? It “went off a treat!” as they say.

My personal highlight of the whole trip was the second-to-last day in our household. I gave the men the story of the prodigal son along with a frank discussion about sin. We considered James 5:16: “Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” We did just that, taking a time of confession and prayer for one another. For most of the men, it was the first time they’d ever opened up like that. Later that night, we visited two fathers in the community, Darren Humphries and Mark Challies, both of whom had spent time living with us in The Servants of the Word. We did an evening of “ask anything,” and the young men received some great advice for living out a Christ-centered life. That was “Sweet as!” (Everything is “something-as” down there, so I always asked them, “Sweet-as *what?*” “Funny-as *what?*”)

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Exploring a cave near Nelson



Reenactment of saints during the recent Oasis weekend

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Sadly, after I left New Zealand, a devastating earthquake hit Christchurch in February. Another Servants of the Word brother, Bruce Yocum, arrived in New Zealand the day I left and was there during the quake. He described the experience:

On Tuesday 22 February at 1pm we were in the midst of a planning meeting when a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck the Christchurch area. This earthquake was not as strong on the Richter scale as the September earthquake, but was far more violent and far more devastating. The September earthquake caused no loss of life, in part because it hit in the very early hours of the morning when people were at home. This time many people were on the streets or at work in the city center, and there were many deaths and injuries as a result. But also the nature of this earthquake made it far more destructive than the first.

Thanks be to God none of the brothers and sisters in The Lamb of God Community were harmed in the quake. A number of them were at work in the center of the city, where several large buildings collapsed, and a number of children were at school in the center, but all returned home safely. We quickly made a round of the cluster area to see how the brothers and sisters were doing. (There was no availability of mobile phone or internet communication at that moment, and only some land-line contact.) All were safe, but several of the homes have had to be abandoned as unsafe, and a few families are now camping out in temporary locations: by my reckoning at least seven homes are uninhabitable. The community center is badly damaged and probably unusable. Normal life will not resume for quite some time. In addition, there is the great uncertainty that results from the nature of this earthquake activity, including almost 5,000 aftershocks.

Our brothers and sisters in Christ living in and around Christchurch remain in my prayers. My personal connection with them has continued and so, when I heard of the quake, I built a website to connect our network of Christians here in North America with those in Christchurch. If you'd like to read more about their reactions to this earthquake, visit <http://christchurchquake.posterous.com> ▲

—Brian LaLonde



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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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