

An aerial photograph of a city, likely St. Louis, with a dense urban landscape and a large river. Overlaid on the image is a stylized, orange-colored map of the state of Missouri. The map is cut out to show the city's skyline, with the Missouri State Capitol building prominently featured in the center of the state's outline.

THE LORD IS my INHERITANCE

A Compass in Times of Testing

*Sister Joela, Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary,
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(International Christian Chamber of Commerce)
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The greatest promise that God has ever offered is found in Deuteronomy 18:2. It is given to the priests, and with them, to the entire tribe of Levi:

They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.

These words apply to us too, because in the New Testament, in Revelation 1, we also read that Jesus has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be kings and priests to serve his God and Father. As those who have been redeemed by Jesus, we belong to this New Testament priesthood and the incredible promise made to the Levites refers also to each of us.

Although the Levites did not own a square inch of Canaan, they were the wealthiest of the Israelite tribes because God himself had promised to be their inheritance. And because in Jesus all God's promises are Yes and Amen, we too are to receive the greatest inheritance of all.

The Letter to the Romans records a further significant promise concerning our inheritance:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:17

Here suffering is mentioned as a condition to gaining our inheritance and sharing in His glory.

How do we come into our inheritance? The Lord gave me a verse for this conference and I think it may be the key to understanding our theme. It is from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:8:

**Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.**

We will see God face to face. If Jesus is our sole attraction here on earth, we shall begin to experience this glory here and now.

To be pure in heart means to turn to him for guidance in every decision, seeking his face at all times; seeking his face for his sake, not for our own benefit. It means that we hunger and thirst for Jesus himself. It means that our heavenly inheritance is of more value to us than anything else. This we can see in the lives of your founder, Gunnar Olson, and our late founder, Mother Basilea (1904-2001). Both are people whose lives testify to the purity of their fervent love for God. This is the secret of their effectiveness.

This should actually be typical of each of us. However, over the many years of my life as a Christian, I have gradually come to recognize the truth about myself, and I am shocked at the depth of self-love within. Beneath the exterior, protected from exposure, I think, speak and act with my own interests in mind, sometimes even covering my real motives with a show of piety.

In my earlier years I loved to proclaim that in Christ I have received every spiritual gift and grace, including authority over the enemy. That is correct. And yet I was wrong. I was wrong because

I focused on the gifts rather than on the Giver. First the Lord had to turn my heart around and away from the gifts. He had to convert me to himself, the Giver. This is a lengthy process and something we all have to go through many times in our lives. It is not a once for all event. Experiences of this nature are among the most important in my life as a Sister of Mary.

To illustrate this, just think of Abraham. In Genesis 15:1 the Lord promises him something even greater than Isaac, his son:

I am your shield, your very great reward.

This is perhaps the earliest indication of a theme that runs throughout Scripture: I myself am your reward! Thus Abraham becomes the father of many nations without possessing any part of Canaan. In Hebrews 11:9–10 we read:

By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country ... For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Abraham was looking forward to his heavenly inheritance. That is how he managed to persevere on dark pathways and was enabled to become the father in faith of every nation. The description of Moses in Hebrews 11 is similar:

He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

We might find it helpful to look at this verse from a different angle. For example, let's ask ourselves about our attitude towards Israel. Can we apply Moses' attitude to ourselves on this issue? Does it describe the present and hopefully the future attitude of the Body of Christ? Are we, like Moses, prepared to make a deliberate choice to be mistreated along with the people of God? Are we willing to regard disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the acknowledgement and treasures of the world, even of the Christian world?

This is another example of the same thing: our inner eyes must be fixed on the invisible, on the Lord alone. Moses accomplished great things on earth but at the same time, his heart was focused on his heavenly inheritance.

Paul, the missionary apostle, is a New Testament example of the same thing. In Philippians 3 he says of himself that what once was to his profit, he now considers as loss, even as rubbish for the sake of gaining Christ. His desire is to know Christ whom he loves – Christ and the power of his resurrection. And strange as it may seem, his greatest longing is not to attain to the power of the resurrection, but to be considered worthy of sharing in the fellowship of his sufferings. Only when we love, are we willing to suffer and consider this a privilege.

Let me add a further thought here: something which some of you may find helpful in your own situation right now. Suffering is never meaningless! When we are able to accept it in union with our Lord, finding our strength in his sacrifice, suffering becomes deeply meaningful. And he will enable us to bear it through the power of his own suffering.

The greatest work of our Lord was his suffering on the Cross for you and me and for the whole world. As he hung there totally broken in body and in spirit, and with nothing remaining of his years of ministry, he won the greatest victory of all – the victory over sin, hell and death for all eternity.

The Lord promised his disciples a rich harvest as long as they too would follow a similar pathway. It was in this context that he spoke of the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies there in the darkness. Perhaps you also are in a place where your life and ministry are broken: you have reached the end of your strength and everything seems to have been in vain. Be assured and encouraged that all that you are going through has a deep meaning and that one day you will reap a great harvest.

In Paul's description of his life, we understand that he considered even suffering a privilege. For those who have become pure in heart, this is one of the deepest revelations and we find similar experiences throughout Mother Basilea's writings.

These are some illustrations of what it means to be pure in heart. But the idea of purity, of being pure in heart, leads us on to yet another thought. Scripture refers in a number of instances to the Bride of Christ. John the Baptist says: 'The bride belongs to the bridegroom.' (John 3:29) Jesus is the bridegroom and Israel is his bride. But now the bride consists of Israel and of Gentile believers. The true meaning of the word 'bride' lies buried beneath the filth of our present age. But if we want to be a part of the bride, we must rediscover what purity really means.

The Lord wants us to understand what it is to be his bride. Our inward motivation is directed by what

we love most. In Revelation 2, Jesus did not question the church in Ephesus about their ministry, or about any of their many positive achievements. He was concerned solely about their first love.

First love is not a once and for all attainment. It is an attitude of the heart. There will never be a time when we can say, 'Now I have it!' Not unless we are like the Christians in Laodicea who said, 'We are rich and do not need a thing.' The true bride is always seeking, always full of desire. She longs to know Jesus better and more deeply. She can never say, 'Now I'm there!' Rather, with Paul's words in Philippians 3:12, she says:

**I press on to take hold of that for which
Christ Jesus took hold of me.**

It's exciting that now we are finally hearing talk about the bride. For many years Mother Basilea was one of the very few people who spoke of the bride of Christ. Now you can hear about the preparation of the bride in just about every lively fellowship. Why? The bride is getting herself ready right now in the present day. Surely nothing gives us greater joy or better describes the purpose of this conference.

The shortest and most apt description of the bride is found in the Song of Songs. Let me just quote one verse that touches on our theme of light, purity and pureness of heart.

**Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair
as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an
army with banners?**

Song of Songs 6:10, RSV

This is the bride. She is like the dawn – there is no stopping the coming of daylight. Jesus as the light of the world says that we too are the light of the

world. It is the bride who is placed on an equal footing with Jesus. She is being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18). His light triumphs and drives out every form of darkness. The Lord is intent on transforming us into light that is totally without shadow, utterly pure, just like the increasing light of dawn.

But the beauty of the bride is also likened to the moon. Nowadays everyone knows what the moon really is: a wretched lump of crater-scarred rock! Not even a blade of grass grows there. There are no precious metals, nothing that makes it attractive in itself. The moon is lovely because it reflects the light of the sun, and for no other reason. If we desire to belong to the bride, we must learn in the depths of our inmost being that we too are mere wretched lumps of crater-scarred rock. There is nothing whatsoever within us or about us that is worthy of praise.

The greatest work the Lord can accomplish in us is to make us absolutely aware that any beauty we have comes only from him. Then we will stop counting on our own goodness and rely instead on Jesus' sacrifice, putting on the garment of his righteousness.

By nature we love the image we have of ourselves so much that we guard it fiercely against even the slightest damage. Oh, the many needless tears I shed in my early years as a Sister of Mary on this very point. Happy are those who cooperate with Jesus in this process! Then his victory will be revealed in us more and more.

The bride is further described as 'bright as the sun.' Jesus triumphs within as our sun of righteousness. As his light in our lives increases in

strength, those around us will experience the reality of Judges 5:31:

May they who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength.

Jesus himself, the light of glory, is reflected in His bride. The threefold light of dawn, moon and sun – when these three meet together the result is tremendous! The bride is ‘terrible as an army with banners’, so that the enemy flees at the sight of a bride. This will be the army of the future that fights the final great battles for our Lord.

All of this has to do with being pure in heart. The bride longs to be free of everything that is not Jesus. There are no hidden motives within. This is the greatest transformation of all, and is a sure way to transform our surroundings, our cities and our nations.

If we desire to gain the Lord as our inheritance as true brides and priests, we can expect to go through the experience described by the prophet Malachi:

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Malachi 3:2–3

This is a description of the purification process through which the Lord takes us. And if we are not undergoing it yet, we soon will be. Perhaps we fear the launderer’s soap; we almost certainly fear the refiner’s fire. But if we truly desire to belong to the royal priesthood that is Jesus’ bride, there is no avoiding them. The wonderful result will be: we will reflect Jesus, nothing but Jesus.

There is a verse in Matthew that I did not understand for a long time. 'For many are invited, but few are chosen' (Matthew 22:14). I found it unfair that of the many who are invited, only a few are chosen. Later it became clear to me: Although many are invited, only few are willing to persevere in times of testing. Thus only few are finally chosen. After all, who really wants to endure the furnace of affliction described by Isaiah?

**See, I have refined you, though not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.**

Isaiah 48:10

And verse 11 continues:

**For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this.
How can I let myself be defamed? I will not
yield my glory to another.**

The Lord must take us through a process of purification so that his bride will fit the description: 'fair as the moon.' God will not let another touch his glory. It is reserved for himself alone. It is so easy to say, 'Praise God!' when deep down we are thinking, 'I made a pretty good job of that!'

God must lead us through deep places so that we learn not to defame Him with our own glory. But only few are willing to pay the cost – the cost of our self-love. Many are invited, but only few are willing to be tested and purified in the furnace of affliction. If we want to survive the times ahead, this is a lesson we must learn.

The purification process also involves the discovery that God dwells in darkness. He has chosen to dwell in darkness.

**Moses approached the thick darkness where
God was.**

Exodus 20:21

Mother Basilea conveyed this to us unforgettably from her own life and testimony that 'God's greatest love is tough love!' At a time of deepest darkness, she prayed: 'My Father, I do not understand you, but I trust you.'

In Revelation 1:7 it says, 'Look, he is coming with the clouds.' Whenever the greatest glory approaches, it is heralded by clouds and darkness. The darkness surrounding God is the precursor of the mightiest revelation of his love. Acts of judgement and natural disasters precede his second coming. In our present times we will find increasingly that the Lord is treating us in a way that is incomprehensible.

We remember the parable of Jesus about the poor widow and the unjust judge in Luke 18. The decisive words are found in the last sentence. Jesus asks:

**However, when the Son of Man comes,
will he find faith on the earth?**

Jesus' question makes it plain that he is referring to the time before his second coming. He wants to teach His disciples that in the last days we may get the impression that God is not listening any more, or that He no longer intervenes. He is like the unjust judge who seems to take no interest in me and does not want to help me. Jesus is asking us today, 'When I come, will I still find faith within you?' We are already living in a time when his words in Luke 22:31 are a reality in our lives:

**Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have
prayed for you...that your faith may not fail.**

The question is: How can we find our way in the darkness of our times? Jesus says: 'I am the way'. This is the way that we as his disciples must follow.

As Jesus gave his life for us, he can expect that in the strength of his sacrifice, we too will be able to follow his example. In John 15:12–13 Jesus gives us a special commandment as part of his legacy to his disciples.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

We have already been hearing about the vital guideline given us in Revelation 12:11 for the battles lying ahead of each of us. We will overcome Satan in the power of the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony. Both of these work together. And our testimony is undergirded by personal sacrifice – by our willingness to lay down our lives.

We cannot expect persecution to bypass our own countries. In Revelation 12:17 we read of those against whom Satan will make his greatest attack: those ‘who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.’ All of us here are Christians who have committed themselves to keeping the Lord’s commandments. And we are living in a time when this commitment is going to be severely tested. Our obedience to the Lord may cost a high price in the near future. Let us be prepared because this too is part of our way of discipleship.

A way is not something we just think about; a way is meant to be embarked on and followed. We cannot afford to shorten it, but must continue on it step by step until we reach the end. One of my favourite book titles is *THE WAY UP LEADS DOWN*. This is actually the German title of a book by Derek Prince. If we are determined to take the way that brings us to our heavenly inheritance, we have no

other choice. The way up goes down. There is no easy way to get there.

Unless we want to lose time on detours, we will need a compass. I have to confess that every day my chief concern is keeping my heart-compass pointed at Jesus and making sure I am still heading in the direction that leads to my inheritance. Then any ulterior motives will take care of themselves because the Lord is able to reveal the hidden darkness in me so that I can bring it to his cross. Our compass requires regular re-adjusting, otherwise we could end up far removed from our desired destination.

The title of one of my favourite books by Mother Basilea reveals the real secret behind a pure and undivided heart. It is expressed in just four short words – MY ALL FOR HIM. Quite simply this means: I give my all to him who gave his all for me on the cross. And thus he will in turn be my all, my inheritance, my very great reward.

Let us pray:

Our Lord and Saviour – here we are.

We offer ourselves to you.

We offer you nothing less than our all –

not 50% – not 80% –

no, you are the only one who is worthy to receive 100% of our heart.

In this hour of darkness in world history,
accept our lives;

cast out our darkness and make us light.

Be our purifier and refiner –

expose our selfish motives –

reveal all the hidden darkness

and speak your mighty word over us at this very moment: 'Let there be light!'

We thank you that you are the guarantee that this light will break through.

We worship and adore you
as the beloved Bridegroom of our hearts,
as the most precious Pearl of our lives,
as our great Reward for all eternity. Amen.

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For your further interest, by M. Basilea Schlink:

MY ALL FOR HIM 160 pages

BRIDE OF JESUS CHRIST 64 pages

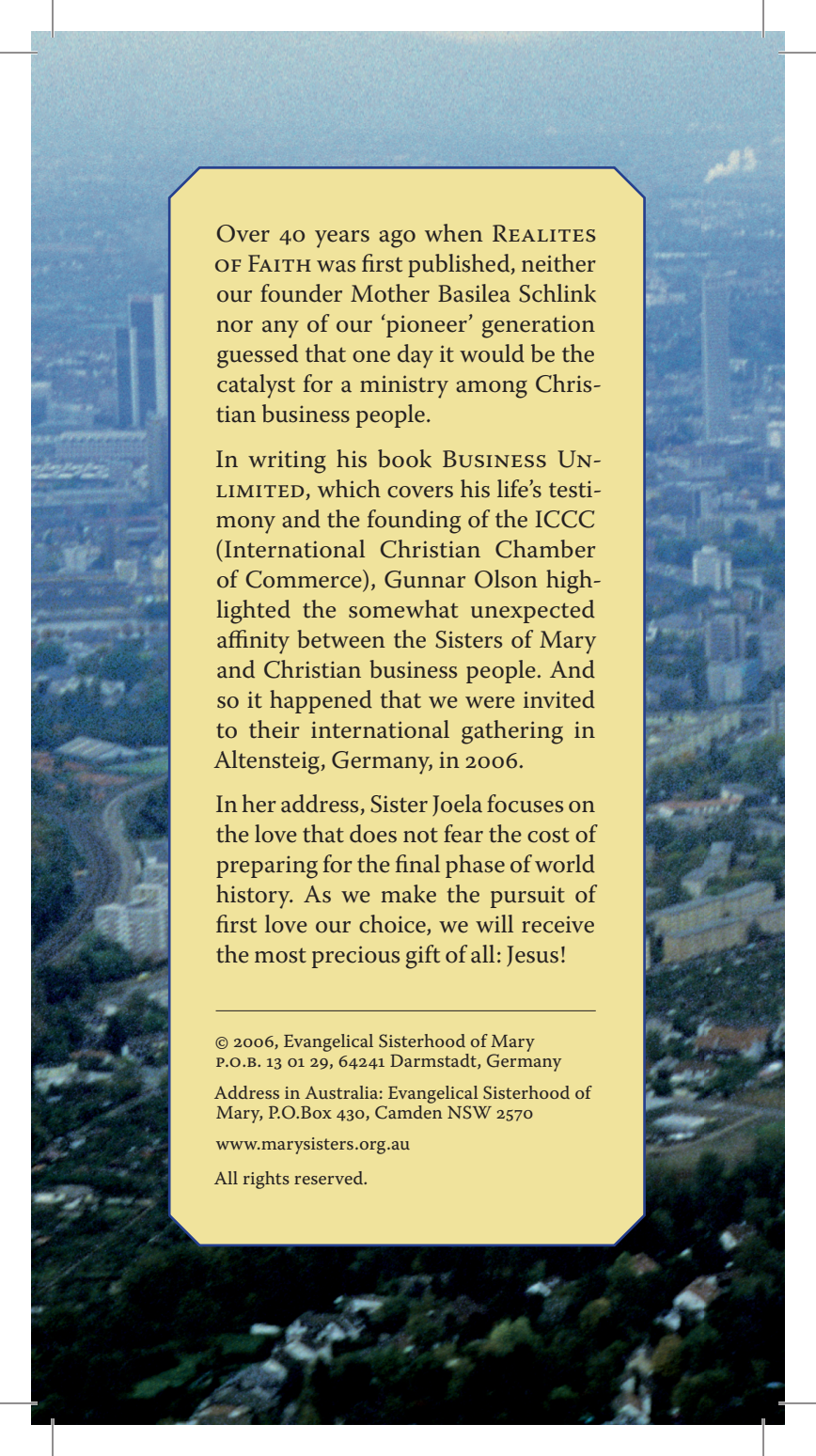
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Autobiography, 416 pages

SOWN IN WEAKNESS, RAISED IN GLORY 168 pages

From the spiritual legacy of Mother Basilea Schlink

Large format, hardback, with colour photos and graphics

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Sydney, Australia, serves as the background. The image shows a mix of urban buildings, green spaces, and a winding road. A large, semi-transparent yellow rectangle with a thin blue border is centered on the page, containing text. The text is in a serif font, with some words in all caps.

Over 40 years ago when REALITES OF FAITH was first published, neither our founder Mother Basilea Schlink nor any of our 'pioneer' generation guessed that one day it would be the catalyst for a ministry among Christian business people.

In writing his book BUSINESS UNLIMITED, which covers his life's testimony and the founding of the ICCC (International Christian Chamber of Commerce), Gunnar Olson highlighted the somewhat unexpected affinity between the Sisters of Mary and Christian business people. And so it happened that we were invited to their international gathering in Altensteig, Germany, in 2006.

In her address, Sister Joela focuses on the love that does not fear the cost of preparing for the final phase of world history. As we make the pursuit of first love our choice, we will receive the most precious gift of all: Jesus!

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