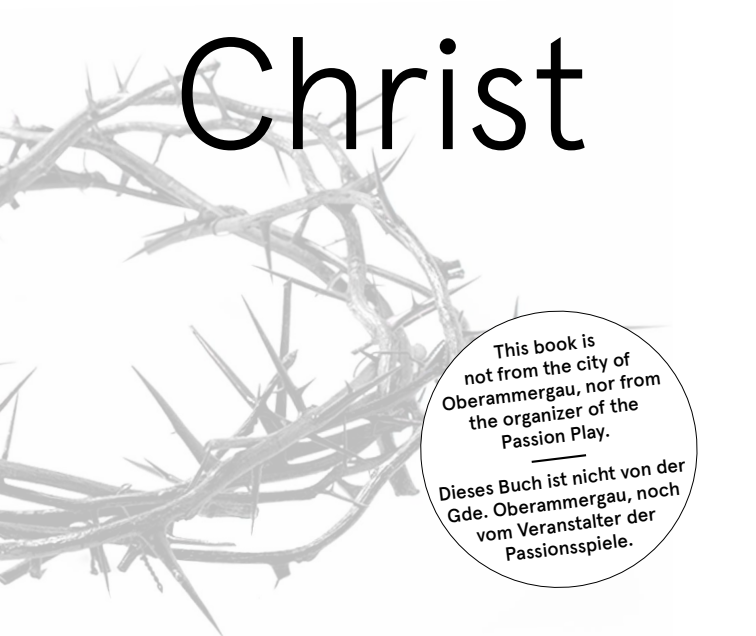


Andreas Alt · Joschi Frühstück

Jesus Christ



This book is
not from the city of
Oberammergau, nor from
the organizer of the
Passion Play.

Dieses Buch ist nicht von der
Gde. Oberammergau, noch
vom Veranstalter der
Passionsspiele.

A Passion Play
in three acts

1st edition 2022

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One-time special edition on the occasion of the Passion Festival.

This book may not be sold.

Welcome to Oberammergau!

With this booklet we would like to give you a lasting impression and a nice memory of the Passion Play. This book consists of three parts:

1. The history of the Passion Plays. Are they an oversized nativity play or something more? What is it that fascinates us so much about the Passion Plays? Andreas Alt, a freelance journalist from Bavaria, describes the historical background and the changes in the Passion Plays over time. Embark on a journey into the history of the Passion Plays!

2. The Gospel of John, chapters 12–21. The original account and origin of the Passion story. Powerful and unmistakable. The Word of God

3. The story of the life of a local resident of Oberammergau. An insight into Oberammergau in the sixties. Joschi Frühstück, a refugee child, tells of his youth, his life and of his encounter with Jesus, which changed his life and which carries him through to this day.

We wish you a good time in Oberammergau and a blessed future!

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Andreas Alt

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Joschi Frühstück

»Life with Jesus, that is the normal.«

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Jesus' sacrificial death in front of millions of spectators

What makes the
Oberammergau
Passion Play so
unique.

A crowd of children enters the Christmas service. Dressed as shepherds, as angels, as Mary and Joseph. All line up behind a manger in which a doll lies. A nativity play – still widespread and familiar to most. Or children ring the doorbell at the apartment door. When you open, you see that there are three of them and they are dressed up; usually they wear oriental robes and cardboard crowns on their heads. One carries a star on a pole, and one has a blackened face. The carol singers.

In Catholic parishes, processions and Stations of the Cross are held in early summer. The parish priest walks in the procession 14 stations decorated with flowers, branches and candles. Here there are no disguises and no scenic play, but people remember together the stations of Jesus on the way to the crucifixion.

In Oberammergau, Bavaria, something similar happens every ten years, albeit on a much larger scale. Here, in a performance lasting about six hours, the suffering, death (“Passion”) and resurrection of Christ are re-enacted. There are mass scenes involving more than 1,000 performers. In a sense, the Passion Play is in the same tradition as the Nativity plays.

The origins go far back into the Middle Ages. For the first time, a supplement to the Gregorian Easter service is documented in the 10th century, the so-called “Quem quaeritis” trope. The Latin phrase means, “Whom do you seek?” It is the question of the angel at the empty tomb to the women who are about to anoint

the body of Jesus. But the body is no longer there, the tomb is empty. Jesus Christ has completed his sin offering and has risen from the dead. Around the 10th century, such a conversation between angels and women was inserted into the liturgy (order of worship).

Biblical scenes for simple people

The purpose of this dialogue was to vividly explain to the worshippers what the Bible records about the resurrection. Most people at that time could not read, and they did not know Latin. Therefore, the Easter events were conveyed to them in this theatrical manner, most importantly in their own language. Soon other central events of the New Testament were also brought closer to the people in this way. Later, the play scenes were moved from the church to the village square. Long before the people of Oberammergau came up with the idea of staging their Passion Plays, there were similar spiritual plays all over the German-speaking world and far beyond, always with lots of participants and a long playing time. Often the plays were expanded to include scenes that were not part of the biblical tradition. They thus gradually paved the way for secular theater as well.

Many participants and an extended playing time – this is also found in Oberammergau. The Passion Play – in vernacular language “der Passion” – consists of two parts. In the past, the play was performed throughout the morning, followed by a long lunch break, and then

it continued until sunset. In the meantime, it has been agreed to begin in the afternoon; in exchange, the performance is extended into the evening. In the course of time, according to the Gospels, the following core presentation has emerged: The journey of Jesus Christ in his last days – from his arrival in Jerusalem to his death to the empty tomb.

The content of the Passion Play

Shown in the first part,

- how Jesus enters Jerusalem in the manner of a king and is anointed in Bethany,
- how he expels the merchants from the temple,
- how the disciple Judas Iscariot betrays him to the Jewish High Council,
- how Jesus celebrates the Last Supper with the apostles and calls out the betrayer, and
- how he prays in the Garden of Gethsemane and allows himself to be captured by the Romans.

The second part is about

- how Jesus is interrogated by the High Council,
- how Peter sneaks after his Lord, but denies him,
- how Jesus is handed over to King Herod and then to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate,
- how Pilate condemns him to death under the impression of an agitated crowd,

- how Jesus carries his cross to Calvary himself on Good Friday and is crucified, and finally
- how the women and the disciples meet the Risen Christ on Easter morning.

There were many such Passion plays – until they were banned by the rulers during the Enlightenment. What is special about the Oberammergau version? Where does its unique reputation come from? The main reason is probably its long existence – almost 400 years. Only a few similar play traditions have survived until today, hardly any without longer interruptions in between.

Why the people of Oberammergau persevered

Even in Oberammergau, there would have been many reasons to stop performing the Plays. Until almost the 20th century, the Passion Play was an enormous effort for the village, financially a minus business in any case. In addition, the pious custom was repeatedly opposed and even forbidden by the authorities. And then there was the accusation, which troubled the people of Oberammergau until the recent past, that the Passion Play was hostile to Jews. But they did not let themselves be distracted by all this and stubbornly held on to their tradition.

On the occasion of the 1990 Passion Play the German paper FAZ examined what kind of people the Oberammergauers are. They were aware of their impact with which they attracted hundreds of thousands of people

again and again, but they also wondered about it. The Passion is important to them, he said. But why it is so important to the spectators from near and far, why they let themselves be so taken by it, is something the Oberammergauers cannot quite understand. After all, they are not professional actors, but step out of their ordinary lives at certain times to embody biblical characters. As a rule, an actor can be present three or four times and portray different biblical figures during this time.

The FAZ suggested that it was not so much the vow that drove the Oberammergauers to the stage, but rather the pleasure of slipping into divine or mean, pious or lying, faithful or fickle roles that touch other people. They do not claim to have special acting abilities, but only want to make visible what is found in the Bible, especially the Gospels. The locals of Oberammergau are reserved and also authentic. They left it to representatives of the church to state, "the Passion Plays are not theater, but proclamation".

The performers did not want to be too kitschy, but also not too dry, either, the FAZ continued. The performers, meanwhile, were happy to be praised for their naturally grown talent for the Passion. King Ludwig II of Bavaria had expressed his appreciation for the play of 1871 by a large crucifixion scene, which was erected in the village and on which is to be read: "*To the artistis of Oberammergau and their faithful devotion to the traditions of their Fathers*". The Passion drives them

to their limits, the FAZ concludes. But they could also teach the audience humility by avoiding any star hype. To prevent any vanity, since 1980 all main roles have been cast twice and played alternately by one of the two actors. Who appears when is decided by lot.

The history of the Passion Play:

The oath of 1633

This is how the Passion Play in Oberammergau came about: in 1632/33, in the middle of the Thirty Year-War, the town was hit by a severe plague epidemic. A good 80 of the approximately 600 inhabitants died of the Black Death. Since the cause of the plague was unknown and there was no cure, this was a catastrophe for the village. The community vowed that if God took away the plague, they would stage a play every ten years in the future. And this vow has been taken very seriously over the centuries.

Some claim that even after that, two villagers still succumbed to the plague. But the plague finally gave way, and the Oberammergauers moved to the cemetery immediately the following year, 1634, at Pentecost, to perform the Passion with about 60 performers and a text that had come from Augsburg and was partly written by Meistersinger Sebastian Wild. For this purpose, a simple wooden stage was set up; costumes were borrowed from surrounding Passion play locations. The

cemetery was a fitting location for the play, since it was about the victory over death.

The first own Passion version from 1750

Priests and monks of the nearby Ettal monastery subsequently revised the text several times. After it was decided in 1680 that the play would always be performed in a full ten-year cycle, the theater-loving Ettal Benedictine monk Ferdinand Rosner wrote his own Passion, the “passio nova”, for the first time in 1750. He laid down the form of the Passion, the basic features of which still exist today and for a long time also served as a basis for other play communities.



OBERAMMERGAU PASSION PLAY, CRUCIFIXION, 1871, PHOTOGRAPH

The scenes of the plot, the last days of Jesus before his crucifixion and resurrection, are repeatedly interrupted by reflections: by images from the Old Testament, which show that the sacrifice of Jesus is integrated into God's plan of salvation. This plan of salvation became effective immediately after the Fall – Adam and Eve's disobedience to God. The living pictures ("tableaux vivants") are meant to resemble paintings, that is, the actors remain motionless and do not speak.

Rosner's dialogues are written in verse form in keeping with the baroque style of the time. The author also embellished the plot with characters such as the devil and certain personifications of sin. Since 1811, the Passion has featured musical accompaniment with singing and instruments, originally composed by the Oberammergau innkeeper's son and composer Rochus Dedler and since then reworked and expanded several times.

Living pictures convey the Old Testament view of Jesus

First Passover meal in Egypt

Stage designer Stefan Hagenieier is responsible for the living pictures in 2022. Among other things, they show the Passover meal of the Israelites before their exodus from Egypt. Not only did Jesus celebrate the Passover meal with his apostles on the evening before his death – this meal also points to Jesus' death in its symbolism.

The Israelites at that time were to apply the blood of spotless sacrificial animals on their doorposts. This was because a strangling angel went through Egypt that night and killed every firstborn male. This was in response to Pharaoh's refusal to let the people of Israel go. The families on whose doors the blood could be seen were spared. Like the sacrificial animals, Jesus also gave his blood for the people; those who invoke his blood are spared eternal death, hell.

Abraham sacrifices Isaac

A similar meaning is conveyed in the sacrifice which God demanded from Abraham. He was to go up a mountain with his son Isaac (the mountain on which Jesus was crucified some 2000 years later). God wanted



THE LIVING PICTURE "THE EXPULSION FROM PARADISE", 1870



KING LUDWIG II OF BAVARIA HAD THE CRUCIFIXION GROUP BUILT
IN OBERAMMERGAU BETWEEN 1890 AND 1900.

to test Abraham's obedience and required him to sacrifice his son. Abraham was convinced that this command had meaning and raised his knife. Then God commanded him to obey and showed him a ram that

was caught in the bushes nearby. Abraham sacrificed it instead of Isaac. A substitutionary sacrifice, as Jesus offered through his death for all mankind.

Joseph saves his brothers

Jacob's son Joseph also points to the saving act of Jesus Christ. He, though innocent, was hated by his brothers. Therefore, they threw him into a cistern and sold him as a slave. Joseph came to Egypt and a few stations later arrived at the court of Pharaoh, where he worked his way up through diligence to the highest administrator of the empire. When a severe famine broke out in Israel and the sons of Jacob came to Egypt seeking help, Joseph provided them with food and made himself known to them. Like Jesus, he saves the people even though they have rejected him. A living image shows Joseph as the savior of Israel.

The living pictures are still part of the Oberammergau Passion, while the verses went out of fashion and the embellishments were an annoyance, especially to the representatives of the Enlightenment. In 1770, all Passion plays were banned by the Bavarian Duke Maximilian III, including those in Oberammergau. When Elector Karl Theodor came to the throne in 1777, he allowed the Passion Company to play again in 1780. It was an exceptional permission – all other Passion Plays continued to be affected by the ban. This gave Oberammergau a prominent position in the country.

The Passion Play in the Age of Secularization

The play was thoroughly revised and greatly shortened. However, Napoleon and secularization soon came. The Bavarian state modernizer Maximilian von Montgelas banned the play once again, and in 1810, the Passion was cancelled again. In the abolished monastery of Ettal, the monk Othmar Weis revised the play anew. He rewrote the verses in prose and brought the dialogues closer to the language of the Bible. He eliminated the last remaining Baroque show effects, such as demons feasting on the entrails of the dead traitor Judas. As early as 1811, Montgelas granted permission for the play and attended one of the first performances himself, thoroughly impressed.

In 1850, the village priest, Joseph Alois Daisenberger, took over the direction of the Oberammergau Passion. He was the first to devote himself to this task in a quasi-professional manner. Daisenberger also corrected Weis' text and later rewrote it in essential parts. He took ancient Greek tragedies as his model, which can be clearly seen above all in his prologues. His version of the Passion remained authoritative for more than 100 years. His followers would have liked to hold on to it even longer.

The path to worldwide fame and mass spectacle

From the middle of the 19th century, the reputation of the Oberammergau Passion Play spread beyond the

borders of southern Bavaria. The list of powerful, rich and beautiful people from Germany and abroad who visited it grew longer and longer. Increasingly, the village and its most important Passion Play performers were marveled at. Almost a cult like Hollywood actors developed around the Jesus actors. In 1900, for the first time, a large hall was available for the audience to watch the Passion Play in all weathers. This hall still exists today.

The potter Anton Lang, who embodied the Christ from 1900 to 1922, maintained his stage appearance even when the play was not in progress. And he strove to imitate the gentleness, wisdom and authority of his character in real life as well. At the same time, he remained modest. Although he knew that he was a star in a certain sense, he did not make much fuss about his person and his role. A female viewer once demanded that Lang remain celibate like his role model. Yet he was a family man with a wife and five children. An American cardinal said to him, *“What bliss it will be to one day face the one you have been allowed to portray so often!”*

Conversely, the Judas actors suffered from the confusion of performer and role. As a sign of his appreciation, King Ludwig II had a silver spoon presented to each of the apostle actors at a private audience in 1871 – only Judas actor Gregor Lechner received one made of sheet metal, with which the ruler wanted to express his disdain for the traitor.

How director Christian Stückl sees the Passion

In the time of the current director Christian Stückl, some things have changed. He wants to keep the Passion as cool as possible, the FAZ found. Stückl is a trained sculptor, but went to the Munich Kammerspiele as an assistant director without ever having practiced his profession. In 1990, when asked if he believed what he put on stage, he replied: *“Let’s say yes. Besides, there’s something fascinating about Christ, even for atheists.”* In his second season in 2000, Stückl pointed out that “it is not the Bible that is being played, but an interpretation.” Of course, that was already the case in earlier times.

The performers and much of the help behind the stage are amateurs, but many trained artists have also helped create the Passion since the 18th century. In 2010, Stückl said in an interview, *“With my people, we’re on a journey to find out about Jesus.”* And shortly before the current performance, he noted in a press conference, “It’s an unwritten law that we don’t invent Jesus’ words. But some of Jesus’ words seem quite funny on stage. We must succeed in presenting him as a true man and a true God.”

Stückl as innovator and fighter against anti-Semitism

Initially, Stückl’s candidacy was controversial among the local council and the Passion Play committee. The community elected him as play director by a narrow

majority because a modernization of the Passion Play seemed unavoidable. The committee almost dismissed him again. There was a collection of signatures against him, in which 1,200 Oberammergau residents signed. In the beginning, Stückl had to stick to Daisenberger's text and the traditional design of the stage sets. Only in the selection of the actors did he have a free hand.

But the next time, when he was more securely in the saddle, he set out in particular to refute the accusation of anti-Semitism against the Passion Play. Already in the Middle Ages, the view had been widespread that the Jews in particular had been to blame for Jesus' death. They had, admittedly incited by their religious leaders, the priests, scribes and Pharisees, demanded his crucifixion. The governor Pilate, who was ultimately indifferent to Jesus, finally gave in. The fact that many Jews – including Nicodemus, a high Jewish dignitary – were on the side of the Messiah went unnoticed.

The Gospels express: the natural man rejects Jesus as his Savior; whoever recognizes that Jesus died vicariously for all sinful men can be saved. Whether someone is a Jew or a Gentile is irrelevant.

However, the Oberammergau Passion Play gave the impression for a long time that it was the Jews who brought Jesus to the cross. This also suited Adolf Hitler and his brown cronies perfectly in their world view. The National Socialists strongly promoted and supported the Passion Plays in the 300th year of their

existence, i.e. 1934. Joseph Goebbels noted: *“The scenes before Pilate were virtually model lessons about the Jew. That’s the way he always did it, and that’s the way he still does it today.”* Hitler reinterpreted the Passion as a *“peasant play from the blessing power of the sheol.”* He pushed the Christian message completely into the background. In 1940, the Passion Play was cancelled due to the Second World War – probably better than if there had been Nazi plays again.

Since Jewish organizations were critical of the plays after 1945, reform efforts gradually emerged. However, many in the village stuck to the stage version of 1934 and the previous years, and were able to hold their ground again and again until 1990. Stückl, then only 24 years old, has been in office as play director since 1986. Under his leadership, there was a legal dispute as to whether a married woman could also portray the Virgin Mary. The court said: Yes.

The Passion Plays in 2000 and 2010

For the years 2000 and 2010, Stückl and his deputy Otto Huber wrote new texts based on the Daisenberger draft. In these versions it became apparent that there were groups among the Jewish people who were partly positive and partly negative about Jesus. Jesus no longer appeared as a sufferer alone, but as one who fights for faith in God. Judas was assumed to have hon-

orable motives for his betrayal of Jesus, although these are not to be found in the biblical sources.

However, Stückl was also concerned with keeping the play contemporary. It was always important to him to find good young actors. Their nationality and religious affiliation have not been important since 2000. Since the 1970s, the younger generation in Oberammergau had increasingly withdrawn from the Passion Play, because it seemed as if the stage version of 1850 was still being adhered to.

There are still two groups in Oberammergau: one that wants to modernize and one that prefers to preserve the tried and true. It was not until Stückl was elected that the reformers gained the upper hand. Stückl has great support among observers and not least among the audience, so that the traditionalists dare less and less to oppose him.

The success proves him right: After the plays in 2000, the following balance was drawn: 110 performances, more than 2,200 participants, 520,000 visitors from Germany and abroad. The premiere was attended by Rabbi Leon Klenicki of the Anti-Defamation League, an American organization that campaigns against the defamation and discrimination of Jews. Other prominent guests included (among others) Minister President Edmund Stoiber with almost the entire Bavarian cabinet, Bundestag President Wolfgang Thierse, former German President Richard von Weizsäcker, ski stars Rosi Mittermaier and Markus Wasmeier,

the artistic director of the Bavarian State Opera, Sir Peter Jonas, and the director of the Munich Kammer-spiele, Dieter Dorn, Curia Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Cardinal Friedrich Wetter and State Bishop Johannes Friedrich.

In 2010, there was a slump in the American market. According to Stückl, 80,000 tickets destined for the U.S. were returned. The Passion Plays are very popular there. Americans, who are often outspoken Bible believers, had been traveling to Oberammergau in droves since the mid-19th century because, in their view, no movie or imitation Passion Theater in the United States can match an Oberammergau performance. However, economic problems had hit the U.S. in 2010. But for the people of Oberammergau, that meant only minor losses. There were 102 performances and about 500,000 visitors, including German President Christian Wulff, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Cardinal Reinhard Marx and New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan.

Passion Play 2020 postponed for two years

In March 2020, less than two months before the premiere, organizers were forced to take an almost unprecedented step: the Passion Play was postponed for two years. The safety rules of the Corona pandemic made performances impossible. One year would not have been enough to refund the price of the tickets



GAME DIRECTOR CHRISTIAN STÜCKL

sold. At the end of 2021, preparations and rehearsals began anew.

There are fixed rules for the production in Oberammergau. Anyone who wants to take part must be a native of Oberammergau or (as an adult) have at least resided here for 20 years. However, everyone who comes forward and fulfills this requirement must also be given a task, even if it's just a performance within the popular crowd.

Some have moved away since 2020, others now meet the requirements that should not have been there back

then. But on the whole, the same play comes on stage as two years ago.

Today, almost every other villager takes part in the Passion Play. This time there will be 1,850 adults and 550 children. By the way, anyone who misbehaves and possibly harms the Passion Play loses his or her right to participate. But this happens only very rarely.

As is well known, the male Oberammergauers have to let their main hair and beard grow some time before the Passion Play. It may not be cut again until the last performance. And there are other fixed program points: The bearers of important roles travel to Israel with the directing team to be inspired in the country and at the holy sites. There are also promotional tours through the USA or in Berlin. In advance, a play based on the novel by Leo Weismantel “Die Pestnot 1633” was traditionally performed. Depicted is how it came to the Passion Play vow in Oberammergau.

In 2015, Abdullah Kenan Karaca, of Turkish origin from Oberammergau, became the second play director. He also portrays Nicodemus, the chief of the Jews. He comes to Jesus in the night to question him about salvation and later becomes one of his disciples. Judas is also played by a man with an immigrant background, Cengiz Görür. Stückl defended the choice of the Turkish-born Oberammergau native: “As a high priest or as Pontius Pilate, for example, he would have been too young. So it was simply the most logical decision for me to give him this character.” He added: “*Turkish*

families are already living with us in the third generation. And at some point, they just arrive in the Passion Play.”

For the first time, more women than men are participating in the performances this year. For the time being, however, there is nothing to change the fact that there are fewer supporting roles for them than for the male performers. More is possible in the artistic tasks backstage. Eva Kammerer has taken on an important function there as second conductor. Another new feature is that there will no longer be any prologues before the scenes. The stage management considers it superfluous to recite to the audience what they can see for themselves. Instead, the vow will be presented on stage: 200 Oberammergauers repeat the promise to perform the Passion every ten years. This promise was not only made in 1633, but it is renewed again and again. Here it takes place in the context of a scene from the year 1900.

The interpretation of the Savior Jesus Christ

As with previous seasons, Stückl works through the question: Who was Jesus Christ? So far, he has brought the figure of the Redeemer more and more into focus. If Jesus had comparatively few lines before 1990, he now speaks much more. In the past, he was primarily the suffering Christ who endured all the reproaches, the mockery, the mistreatment and finally the execution without fighting back. Now it will become clear how he

innocently got into this situation. It is also shown that Jesus himself was a Jew, well acquainted with Israelite customs and traditions, who practiced them and who could argue about them competently with the leaders of the people.

Stückl is increasingly concerned with the fact that Jesus took care of the people who came to him and that he called for radical conversion. He sees a key in the historical situation of the Roman province of Palestine (as Israel was then called). There were oppressors and oppressed, but also rebels. The Jews longed for the promised Messiah who would free them from foreign domination. They could only imagine him as a military leader. For Stückl, Jesus wanted to end this conflict, but in a completely different way, as a social reformer, through mercy and through faith in God. Stückl now bases this interpretation more on the Gospel of Matthew than – as before – on the Gospel of John.

Who was Jesus really according to the testimony of the Bible? According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus exhorted his listeners to seek the kingdom of God, not the things of the world (chapter 6, verse 33). By the kingdom of God, Jesus meant eternity with God. You can only get there through a narrow gate of forgiveness of sins, not through the wide gate of forgetting God (chapter 7, verses 13 and 14). What remains most important, however, is what Jesus, according to John's Gospel, said:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (Chapter 14, verse 6)

Andreas Alt

The Gospel of John (Chapter 12–21)

The original account
of the passion story

Mary Anoints Jesus

12 Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. ³ Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, ⁵ “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?” ⁶ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. ⁷ Therefore Jesus said, “Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. ⁸ For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”

⁹ The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. ¹⁰ But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

¹²On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.” ¹⁴Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, ¹⁵“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.” ¹⁶These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. ¹⁷So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. ¹⁸For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. ¹⁹So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.”

Greeks Seek Jesus

²⁰Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; ²¹these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew

and Philip came and told Jesus. ²³ And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. ²⁶ If anyoneserves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyoneserves Me, the Father will honor him.

Jesus Foretells His Death

²⁷ "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." ²⁹ So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." ³⁰ Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. ³¹ Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." ³³ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. ³⁴ The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain

forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁵ So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. ³⁶ While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light."

These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. ³⁷ But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" ³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them." ⁴¹ These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. ⁴² Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. ⁴⁵ He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. ⁴⁶ I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷ If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸ He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

The Lord's Supper

13 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. ² During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going

back to God, ⁴ got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

⁵ Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶ So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." ⁸ Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹ For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹² So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I gave you an example that

you also should do as I did to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. ¹⁸ I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.' ¹⁹ From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

²¹ When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." ²² The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. ²³ There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. ²⁴ So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." ²⁵ He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What

you do, do quickly.”²⁸ Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him.²⁹ For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we have need of for the feast”; or else, that he should give something to the poor.³⁰ So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

³¹ Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³² if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.³³ Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

³⁶ Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.”³⁷ Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.”³⁸ Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly,

truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

14 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Oneness with the Father

⁷ If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

⁸ Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do

you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. ¹¹ Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. ¹² Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

¹⁵ “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Role of the Spirit

¹⁶ I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. ²¹ He who has

My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?”²³ Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”²⁴ He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you.”²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.²⁷ Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.²⁸ You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.²⁹ Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe.³⁰ I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;³¹ but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I

do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

Jesus Is the Vine—Followers Are Branches

15 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. ⁹ Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Disciples' Relation to Each Other

¹² “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. ¹⁷ This I command you, that you love one another.

Disciples' Relation to the World

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. ²² If I had not come and

spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ He who hates Me hates My Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. ²⁵ But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

²⁶ "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, ²⁷ and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

Jesus' Warning

16 "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. ² They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. ³ These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. ⁴ But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

The Holy Spirit Promised

⁵ “But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

¹² “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

Jesus’ Death and Resurrection Foretold

¹⁶ “A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.” ¹⁷ Some of His disciples then said to one another, “What is this

thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?"¹⁸ So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about."¹⁹ Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.²¹ Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world.²² Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

Prayer Promises

²³ In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.²⁴ Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. ²⁶ In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; ²⁷ for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. ²⁸ I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”

²⁹ His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. ³⁰ Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.” ³¹ Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? ³² Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. ³³ These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

The High Priestly Prayer

17 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, ²even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. ³This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

⁶“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; ⁸for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. ⁹I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; ¹⁰and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the

name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. ¹² While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

The Disciples in the World

¹³ But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

²⁰ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Their Future Glory

²²The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. ²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

²⁵“O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; ²⁶and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Judas Betrays Jesus

18 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples. ² Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. ³ Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ So

Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"⁵ They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them.⁶ So when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.⁷ Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene."⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,"⁹ to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one."¹⁰ Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus.¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

Jesus before the Priests

¹² So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him,¹³ and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.¹⁴ Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

¹⁵ Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the

high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, ¹⁶ but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. ¹⁷ Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." ¹⁸ Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.

¹⁹ The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said." ²² When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" ²⁴ So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Peter's Denial of Jesus

²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it, and said, "I am not." ²⁶ One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" ²⁷ Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

Jesus before Pilate

²⁸ Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. ²⁹ Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" ³⁰ They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you." ³¹ So Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," ³² to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

³³ Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Are

you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" ³⁵ Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." ³⁷ Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." ³⁸ Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"

And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him. ³⁹ But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" ⁴⁰ So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

The Crown of Thorns

19 Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. ² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; ³ and they began to come up to

Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face. ⁴ Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." ⁵ Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!" ⁶ So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." ⁷ The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."

⁸ Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; ⁹ and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" ¹¹ Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." ¹² As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."

¹³ Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" ¹⁵ So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

The Crucifixion

¹⁶ So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

¹⁷ They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. ¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." ²⁰ Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not

write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

²³ Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. ²⁴ So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture: "They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." ²⁵ Therefore the soldiers did these things.

But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. ³⁰ Therefore when Jesus had received

the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Care of the Body of Jesus

³¹ Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; ³³ but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. ³⁵ And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. ³⁶ For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced."

³⁸ After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also

came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

The Empty Tomb

20 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. ² So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." ³ So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; ⁵ and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. ⁶ And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but

rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. ⁹ For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. ¹⁰ So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

¹¹ But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³ And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene

came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.

Jesus among His Disciples

¹⁹ So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."²⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.²³ If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."

²⁴ But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.²⁵ So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

²⁶ After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors

having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." ²⁸ Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

Why This Gospel Was Written

³⁰ Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Jesus Appears at the Sea of Galilee

21 After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him,

“We will also come with you.” They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ So Jesus said to them, “Children, you do not have any fish, do you?” They answered Him, “No.” ⁶ And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch.” So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. ⁷ Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.

⁹ So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have now caught.” ¹¹ Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus Provides

¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples ventured to question Him, “Who are You?” knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. ¹⁴ This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

The Love Motivation

¹⁵ So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.

Our Times Are in His Hand

¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you

wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.”¹⁹ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!”

²⁰ Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?”²¹ So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, “Lord, and what about this man?”²² Jesus said to him, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!”²³ Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?”

²⁴ This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

²⁵ And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

»Life with
Jesus, that is
the normal.«

Testimony of the life
of Joschi Frühstück
from Oberammergau

Childhood in Oberammergau

I was born in Oberammergau in August 1950. My sister and I grew up with our grandmother in a barracks camp. In this camp, probably a former prisoner of war camp from World War 2, were refugees from all over Eastern Europe. Most of them came from the former German territories. Only a few families had fathers. Many had been killed or missing in action during the war.

My father was a refugee from Hungary. He was employed in the American barracks in Oberammergau in the professional fire department. I can't say much about my mother, I hardly knew her. When I was five years old, she disappeared from my life. My younger sister Kathi, a year younger than me, and I don't remember much about her. Strangely enough, I have more memories of my father, although I was only three years old when he emigrated to Canada.

As a refugee, my father saw no chance for a good life in Germany. Therefore, with my mother's consent, he emigrated to Canada. We were to join him as soon as father would find a job and an apartment. In May 1953 he boarded the ship that took him to the New World. Only one year later he had arranged everything in Canada so that mother could have followed with my sister and me. As emigrants, we were under the protection of the United Nations. My father gave me the original passports during a visit to Canada in 1993.

My mother eloped in June 1953. I saw her again briefly when I was 16 years old. Why mom did not move with us to join Dad in Canada, I do not know to this day. I only know that she disappeared from our lives. So we children grew up with grandma.

Our childhood was not always easy. Grandma took care of us as best she could. She loved us, but she couldn't make any big leaps financially. She had a small pension and got some allowance from the social welfare office for us children. Twice a year there was a small allowance for clothes and shoes. Although there wasn't much material wise, we didn't really miss anything.

I remember that there was a small store in the "camp". The owner was also a refugee from the German eastern territories. He had the habit of dropping every 5-mark coin on the counter to check it for authenticity by the sound of it. One day, I must have been about five years old, Grandma came to our kindergarten and told us that an ice cream had been paid for us at the store. How proud I was when I was allowed to pick up the chocolate ice cream "Jopa" on a stick – it had cost 10 pennies.

However, there was often not enough money for the things we needed at school, exercise books, pencils, sharpeners and the like. One event in 6th grade at school is deeply imprinted in my memory: For handicraft lessons we were supposed to bring some raffia. It

cost 35 pennies and Grandma reacted as she always did when extra expenses came up. So I had to go to class without the necessary handicraft materials. Out of shame I concealed from my teacher that I had not been able to buy it.

Mr. W., a war invalid with only one leg, was one of the nicest teachers of my school days. So I lied to him and said, that I had forgotten the bast at home. Actually I had hoped I would get some at school, but unfortunately that was not the case. Mr. W. sent me to fetch the bast. The mockery of my classmates was great and I was ashamed of myself. I had no other choice – I had to go.

There was only one store where you could buy raffia. 35 pennies – unaffordable for a boy like me! I huddled around the store, waiting for a favorable opportunity. My heart was beating up to my neck. But when no one was looking, the raffia quickly disappeared unnoticed into the pocket of my leather pants.

In this way I "got" some of my necessary school supplies. But I always felt remorse. At that time I resolved, "Once I have children, they should always get everything they need." Thank God, I was able to keep this promise.

Living in Oberammergau was not easy for us refugee children at that time. For the locals, we were intruders who did not belong here. Our "camp" was like a ghetto and we were the "refugees from the Glasscherbenviertel", the "pieces of broken glass quarter".

But we camp kids stuck together and there was always a big crowd playing together. However, not everyone was allowed to play with everyone. The children who had a father and mother were apparently “better” than those whose fathers had stayed in the war or elsewhere. Since my father lived in Canada and my mother had a bad reputation, I was not one of the “better ones”. We children were partly to blame and had to see how we got along.

Of course, my closest friends were also boys who didn't have a father. Most of them were in the same class at school as I was, including the brothers B. and Rudi N. We were up to a lot of mischief together and shared a lot of fun. Especially the B. boys were free to do whatever they wanted. We stole boards and beams and built a shed next to their barracks. In this shed we spent many pleasant hours together. Those were particularly close ties that only broke off years later, after our apprenticeship.

Dangerous games

In Oberammergau there was the “Große Alpenbad”, a wonderful outdoor pool with a huge swimming pool. But it was too expensive for us refugee children: admission was 50 pennies. Where were we supposed to get so much money from? We therefore very rarely had the opportunity to go to the “Alpenbad”. Sometimes we climbed over the fence in the afternoon and hoped not



MY MOTHER AND MY SISTER IN FRONT OF THE CAMP, 1960

to be seen. I don't remember that we were ever caught doing that.

Mostly, though, we went to the "Ammer", the river that gave Oberammergau its name. Near Ettal, a small stream flowed into the Ammer, and at that point the water was very deep. There you could swim and fish, illegally of course. Because the water was very cold even in the hottest of summers, we called the place the "ice cellar".

We had another bathing place in the “little Ammer”, in the direction of Linderhof Castle. There one day we found ammunition from the 2nd World War. There were some boxes of MG cartridges, a bazooka and bullets of caliber 22. We called this “board ammunition”.

We brought this “treasure” to our shed in a cart. With a pair of pincers we bent around the cartridges until the tips were removed. We filled the powder into small glass bottles or into tin cans. Then we lit the “bombs” and threw them into the air. The cans flew through the air and burst with a loud bang. It was tremendous fun. Most of the time, adults from the camp were standing by having as much fun as we were.

One day, while we were at school in the afternoon, H. B. was not in class. He had skipped class and was playing around with the ammunition. At some point the news came to the school that H. had had an accident. Allegedly, he had put gasoline in a soda bottle and set it on fire. In any case, the bottle had exploded and his face had been injured considerably. Our teacher said at the time, “He should have better drunk the gasoline.” We knew better. It was not gasoline, but gunpowder. H. had filled a bottle, lit it, and thrown it away. But it hadn’t gone off right away. After a short wait, he went to check. Just as he was bending down for the bottle, it detonated and his face was badly injured by the glass fragments.

Since no one outside the camp knew anything about our ammunition, they believed the story about the

gasoline. Nobody investigated further and so we could continue to fiddle with it. Until the day when a school-mate visited us. He lived at the other end of the village. We proudly showed him our "treasures". He secretly took a few cartridges and experimented with them at home. As far as I know, he put a cartridge in the fork of a tree and a friend hit the fuse with a hammer. There was a detonation and he was injured so badly in one eye that it had to be removed.

This accident brought us to the attention of the police. They searched our shed and the apartment of family B. What they found was only a pitiful remnant. We had already "processed" hundreds of cartridges at that point. When I think back on it now, in retrospect I still get scared and anxious. Today I am convinced that God already back then was keeping his good hands over us.

Some time later, we were about 14 years old, we found egg grenades. Martin H., the brothers J. and I went on a mountain tour. We wanted to go to the Laber (1684 m), to which a cable car led. Of course we did not hike on the normal paths. We always climbed up the steep mountain below the cable car up and arrived totally exhausted on top some time later.

On the way back, same again: off the beaten track, always along the ridge, we descended towards the camp. In front of us was a large dump of rocks that we had to cross. What we did not know: below this dump

a steep rock formation fell almost vertically into the depth. We only saw this when we were back at the bottom and went over our route again in our minds. If we had even suspected the danger, we probably would have looked for another way.

We came to an area with lush meadows, where we took a little rest. There we discovered a lot of small caves, probably created by collapsing rock. Martin and the other two guys went inside the caves. One of them had to stay outside to get help if necessary. So I was standing outside when Martin suddenly shouted, "Catch!" And already he threw me a hand grenade, then another and another. We packed the dangerous WWII weapons into our backpacks and slid down the steep meadows on our pants bottom.

We ran and stumbled home over vstick and stone. In the meantime, the barracks had given way to a housing development. In front of one of the blocks of flats we played with the hand grenades, throwing them at each other. Suddenly the police came – in a VW Beetle. That was the usual police car at that time. The officer asked us where we got the grenades from and after a lengthy lecture, took them away from us. I can still see it in my mind as if it were yesterday: how he carefully put the fully functional grenades on the passenger seat, turned on the sirenes and held them tight with his right hand. Then he drove very slowly to the police station, almost at walking pace.

"If he had only seen us bring those things down the hill ...," we laughed at the time. Today I am only grateful that nothing bad happened. Here, too, I see God's great protection in my life.

Education

In September 1964, I began an apprenticeship as a car mechanic with the German Federal Railroad. The training workshop was in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. There I received a 1 1/2-year basic training in metalworking: filing, drilling, milling, forging, welding, working on the lathe. After that, I continued at the "Kraftwagenbetriebsstelle" (KbSt) in Murnau, where train wagons were repaired. Our service included various container vehicles, rail buses and VW buses, as well as rail vehicles such as trolley cars.

Since my confirmation in the spring of 1964, I could actually do whatever I wanted. I left my apprentice's salary with my grandmother and got some pocket money in return. So I could go out with my friends in the evening for a couple of beers.

During this time I was friends with Hansi and we met almost every day. He played soccer, I played handball. So we were always together on the sports field of TSV 1861 Oberammergau. Forest runs, hikes, pubs, cinema, girls, that soon became our life. Since there were always many tourists in Oberammergau, it was easy to constantly pick up new girls. However, it never came to the "extreme", at least not with me. We were

inexperienced and the girls usually had a healthy sense of shame. Of course we tried, but it never worked for me.

In love

Then came the year 1966. My maternal grandmother, a dear, elderly lady, was now living in Bonn. Grandma Wilma invited me to visit her. As a railroad employee, I had free tickets, so I could go visit my grandmother in Bonn during the summer vacations. I felt very comfortable there, she always called me "Sohne", even years later when I visited her. Actually I wanted to stay 14 days, but after a good week I got homesick and went back home. On the train, I stood in the hallway in front of the open window and let the wind blow around my nose. At the other end of the carriage was a girl. Two guys were bothering her and so she came over to me to escape the guys'. Uschi was very pretty and had big, dark eyes. I fell in love with her immediately. I was 16 years old at the time.

We had a wonderful trip to Stuttgart. There she had to change trains, because she was actually going on vacation with her parents and siblings. We exchanged addresses. A year later, Uschi came to Oberammergau.

We were very much in love and I am sure that if we had not been so young, we would at least have been engaged. After all, I was longing for a steady life and founding a family. On Saturday, July 24, 1967, Uschi

went back to the Ruhr area where she was at home in a large family. She had three sisters and a brother.

Her parents were wonderful and I was allowed to call them father and mother. Paps, the father, died a few years ago. I am still in touch with Mutti to this day. Uschi and I wrote each other rather irregularly, but we stayed in contact with each other.

It was in October 1967. I received a letter from Uschi. She wrote that she had to break up with me. The reason surprised me: She had accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior and now she could no longer go with me because she would rather have Jesus Christ than me. I did not know what to do with it. What was all of this about all of a sudden? Had she gone crazy because of religion, or what had happened? Gosh, I was a "Christian", too. A very special one at that !. Baptized Catholic, confirmed Protestant. I have to explain that briefly: When I was six years old, I went to elementary school in Oberammergau. At that time it was divided into two religious groups. There was a Catholic and a Protestant school. Due to the war and the expulsion, Protestant refugees had come to Oberammergau, which was almost 100% Catholic. The Protestants had the right to have their own classes, and they were given the opportunity to do so. However, the Protestant school, which was housed in the same building as the Catholic one, was very small. Two classrooms, that's

all. In one room was the first to the fourth school year and in the other the fifth to the eighth.

In the Catholic school we were already a good 50 children per class in the first two school years. Because the teacher bullied me a lot, I became a Protestant.

I hated this teacher for a long time. Whenever I thought of my school days, everything boiled up inside me. My child soul was very hurt. About 24 years later I went to see him and tried to talk to him. It was impossible for me, as a committed Christian, to live with such resentment in my heart. So I got into the car and drove to Mr. S. He opened the door and looked at me questioningly. I told him who I was. He immediately remembered me and asked me into the house. I confessed to him the hatred I felt toward him and that I could not live like that as a Christian. While I was talking to him, all the resentment, everything that had built up, fell away from me. He still knew exactly my “key experiences”. It was good that I had been able to settle everything with him and good that my resentment was gone, and good that I could tell him about my faith in Jesus Christ. Later it would have been too late.

How I found Jesus and became a real Christian

So I was now “Catholic”, baptized Catholic and a confirmed Protestant. We were three confirmands at that time. What confirmation meant, I did not understand at all. But I still took my promise to be faithful to God

very seriously. I sang in the church choir and helped the pastor wherever necessary. At funerals I carried the cross in front of the funeral procession to the grave. For this I received a proud two Deutsche Marks. In the small church I usually lit the candles, took up the collection and rang the only bell. All in all, I felt like a good Christian. And now the great love of my life was breaking up with me because she believed in Jesus Christ. I could not and would not accept that. Therefore I wrote several letters. Of course first to Uschi.

I told her about my service in the church and that I would learn to play the organ. In addition, we wanted to perform the St. John oratorio with the choir and I should sing the part of John.

Uschi answered very sweetly and was happy about my zeal in church, but she stuck to her decision. I wrote to her friends, I wrote to her parents – all to no avail. Even her friends were not able to bring Uschi back to "normal". It was exasperating. All writing and pleading hadn't helped a thing !

The fact that I was in the middle of my journeyman's exam at the time made everything even worse. By mid-February 1968, I had passed all the exams and was now an automotive mechanic with a journeyman's certificate. Since I still had a few days of vacation left, I took the train to Mülheim/Ruhr. Uschi picked me up at the station, beaming. That gave me hope that everything was okay again. She dragged me to a house bible circle

and on Sunday morning to a free church. Just to be with her, I went along wherever she took me. It was in a home Bible study group that I became aware of real Christians for the first time. I had been to church and imagined that I was a Christian. But now I realized that being a Christian meant more than belonging to a denomination, more than church choir and working for the pastor.

The home Bible study group consisted of about 14 to 15 young people and took place in the apartment of a young couple. They sang joyful songs that I could sing along with from the heart. Then someone prayed and a text from the Bible was read. Everyone was free to participate. This impressed me, everything was new to me. Some from the circle shared what they had experienced with Jesus during the past week. I had never heard anything like that in my life. Everyone radiated such confidence and actually seemed to be convinced of what they were saying. This appealed to me very much, but I did not dare to ask what was behind it. One thing, however, had suddenly become clear to me: Despite all my religiosity – I did not have such a faith.

After this evening two sleepless nights followed. I tossed and turned in bed and began to sweat, even though the room was not heated. Inner restlessness overcame me and I thought about what would happen to me if I died now. Still, I didn't ask anyone; I was ashamed of my ignorance.

Then Wednesday came. It was February 21, 1968, an icy wind was blowing, it was very cold. We went back to the Free Evangelical Church where some of the church members were meeting to discuss a street outreach. They wanted to distribute Christian flyers in front of the factory gates of Thyssen in Mülheim on Thursday. A man from Oberhausen, calling himself an "evangelist," led the evening. I had no idea what an evangelist was. Today I know: That is someone who tells people about Jesus in a simple way and tries to win them for him. His name was Emil Böhnke and he worked for a free missionary association.

Well, Emil read a text from the Bible that hit me like a club. All at once I realized the difference between the others in the room and me. Emil read from the Gospel according to John, chapter 3, verse 16: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*

The others, the Christians I had met in the last few days, and Uschi, they knew where they would spend their eternity. They would one day be in heaven with Jesus. And me? I didn't know. I was a lost person, that had suddenly become clear to me. Then everyone knelt down and prayed together. I had never experienced anything like that, either. In church, only the priest prayed, and he read the prayers from a ring binder. But these Christians here prayed freely and talked to God as if they knew Him personally, as if He were in

the room with us. I knelt down just like the others. My heart was pounding, restlessness had taken hold of me. Outwardly, there was no difference at all between these people and me. None of them had a halo, all of them looked quite normal. But inwardly there was probably the most enormous difference that one can imagine. They were Christians, and I only took myself as one. They knew God personally, and I knew almost nothing about Him.

After the common prayer there was a general atmosphere of departure. A time was arranged for the outreach the next evening and for the meeting on Friday in the city center. Then most of us said goodbye and went home. Uschi beamed at me, perhaps she had noticed what was going on inside me.

Emil Böhnke came up to me and asked a simple question, "*When do you want to take this step to Jesus?*" That was the chance of a lifetime for me. Could I, too, now get to know Jesus? Did I too now have the opportunity to have peace with God and eternal life in heaven? I answered him, "Now." Then we both went out to his old VW bus and drove off. My imagination was running away with me. Were we now going to a grotto like the ones that could be found in many places in Bavaria? Did spherical, mystical organ sounds now await me? Statues and dim candlelight? Nothing of the sort. We drove with the VW bus to an already closed gas station.

Why we didn't stay in the church rooms, I don't know. Maybe no one lived there and the room had to be locked. Anyway, we were now standing with the old bus at this dark gas station. The vehicle was rebuilt inside and there was a kind of corner bench in the back. Emil turned on the camping gas heater. Then he took his Bible and read a few passages to me. Some of them are still in my memory today. Emil showed me from the Bible that I was a sinner. I knew that, but now I heard it from God's Word: "For there is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). No difference! All people are guilty before God, including me. That was clear to me! Emil turned the page a little further and showed me that the payment for sin is death: "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God's grace is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 6:23). The wages of sin is death. Then everything is over, then there is no salvation, right? But wait! The verse goes on: "*But the gift of God's grace is eternal life.*" That's it! God pardons me in Jesus Christ. He loves me, I had heard that before. He loves this world so much that He gave His own Son.

My wounded soul absorbed everything like a dry swamp. We knelt down in this old VW bus and I prayed by myself for the first time in my life. I prayed something like, "*Lord Jesus, if you really exist, and if you can still do something with my life, let it be yours.*" What happened then I cannot explain. You have to experience it

for yourself. All at once I knew: It is true, God loves me and He gave His Son to save me.

Emil showed me several other important passages from the Bible that are still a great help to me today. Now I knew: I am saved, come what may. Nothing and no one can snatch me out of God's hand. We drove to the family where the home cell group had taken place the Saturday before. There I was allowed to confess my new Lord for the first time. When I said that I had accepted Jesus into my life, a great joy came into my heart that has lasted until today. We all prayed together again and then I went back to my quarters.

The next evening I stood with the others outside the factory gates at Thyssen to hand out tracts. Despite the cold, my heart was burning with joy for this new life from God. And so, on Friday, I was also eager to attend the meeting. I knew nothing from the Bible and little about God, but Jesus was in my heart. There were many a discussion at this outreach. I especially remember some philosophy students I talked to. They questioned everything I said. And what did I know? Not much, but I knew one thing: that God can be known personally. He had forgiven my sins through the Lord Jesus, and Jesus was now living in my heart. No one could take that away from me, really no one.

Many things change

The following Sunday I had to go back home. I did not know anyone in Oberammergau who believed in Jesus

as I did. My pastor laughed at me as I handed out tracts in front of the church. My friends couldn't make sense of it all. They first gave me a week to get back to "normal," then three weeks, then a year. Now, over 52 years later, I am still normal. Because life with Jesus, that is what is normal.

The next Sunday was approaching. I had told everyone who wanted to know what God had done for me. But I also told those who didn't want to know. God's love burned in my heart and I had to tell others about Jesus.

At the Passion Play

Every ten years, the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus is re-enacted in Oberammergau. In 1960 – I was just 10 years old – I was allowed to take part in the Passion Play. We children belonged to the "people" and were especially present at the entry into Jerusalem.

"Hail, hail, O Son of David! ... The throne of the fathers is yours!" ... "Hosanna to our King's Son." Full of fervor and from multiple throats this is sung every time at the "Entry into Jerusalem". This song is something like the national anthem of the Oberammergau people.

Singing had always given me joy. So I sang in the "Liederkranz", a men's choir, and in the youth choir of Oberammergau. We had a great community and I enjoyed being part of it. From these two choirs, the Passion Choir was recruited for the 1970 Passion Play.



PASSION FESTIVAL 1960 WITH JOSCHI, HIS AUNT
AND SISTER (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

Almost all of the village is involved in the Passion Plays, and to be able to sing in the choir is a great privilege. The songs we practiced were great. But I realized that I was actually out of place.

That's why I unceremoniously signed out before a rehearsal of the youth choir. I no longer saw myself in a position to continue singing. I was persuaded to stay after all. The choir had had a very successful trip to Ireland. Now they were going to make recordings of the repertoire and I was going to participate. Besides, if I left now, I would lose my chance with the Passion Choir. I let myself be persuaded and stayed. Irish folk songs, German folk songs, religious songs. It was nice to be there, and yet my conscience was not at rest. Then we sang the song, "Jesus, forgive me all my sins." "Jesus, forgive me all my sins." A very moving song that went to the heart. And I could also sing it from the heart. The last note had not yet faded away, I don't know why, suddenly there was a big laughter in the choir. Everyone was laughing and didn't seem to take the lyrics seriously. Somehow this did not fit the mood that the song had evoked in me. Suddenly it was clear to me, "You don't belong there anymore." I stood up, went to the person in charge, and told her to take me off the choir list immediately. That was the last time I sang in one of those real wonderful choirs.

In the summer of 1970, during the Passion Play season, I briefly visited my hometown. I met some of the old singing buddies there. They told me how much they regretted that I was no longer in the Passion Choir, and what a great fellowship they had in the choir. After all, they spent five days a week together from May to September. It also made them “known” in the village and got them money. But for me, that couldn’t be everything in life. God had another plan for me.

Becoming an evangelist

Since my conversion – from the very first moment – I knew that I should go to a Bible school like Emil Böhnke and become an evangelist. So in October 1969 I went to the Brake Bible School in Lemgo, Westphalia/Lippe.

This time was very important for me. I still did not know much about the Bible. Although I still faithfully went to church, the teaching from the Bible there was not what I needed.

I was still in contact with Uschi, but we did not become a couple. She had married another young man. God gave me a wonderful wife whom I had met during Bible school. We were married in September 1972 and have lived in the northern Black Forest ever since. We have three children and now 8 wonderful grandchildren.



STREET USE, 1980

My mother passed away in April 1978 in Mississippi, her last place of residence. Years later, in early 1993, I learned that she had found living faith in Jesus Christ, only five months before her death. What grace! She unfortunately lived to be only 47 years old. My mother is now with Jesus! I could not believe that. This woman with her troubled past has experienced forgiveness of guilt and sin. She accepted Jesus Christ into her life

and asked him for forgiveness. And Jesus forgave her! For me, this is one of the greatest miracles in my life.

In 1980 I went into full-time ministry as an evangelist. That means I've been on the road a lot – now for 42 years. Today, at the age of 72, I am still enthusiastic about my Savior Jesus Christ, I still like to be on the road.

And I tell people what great happiness I have found in Jesus Christ.

Joschi Frühstück