

# Smokey Mountain Ecstasy

by Róderick T. Leupp

On August 20, 1994 about three dozen members of the Seminary community, guided by Youth With a Mission, went to Smokey Mountain in Tondo, Manila. While there they painted, installed a roof, cared for babies, ministered to children, and cleaned a drainage ditch. For at least one person, it was an unrepeatabe experience. Terry Baldrige of Mid-America Nazarene College, Olathe, Kansas, taught at APNTS from June to October. On August 20 he was unsurpassed as a ditch cleaner.

On a sun-splashed day with hardly a care  
We took a trip--a trip to where  
The fabric of your heart will rip and tear

We gathered around the hour of seven  
When angels arouse souls in heaven  
Hearing a moving presidential prayer  
We loaded up, and gulped for air

Air--yes air--we filled our lungs  
Steeling ourselves against that smell  
That covers all, the old, the young  
Were we really going to hell?

But at that early hour  
When seraphs kiss the earth  
We still glowed with Spirit's power  
And packed the van for all we're worth

Launching forth, pilgrims all  
We battled buses and trucks  
One false move, another close call  
These were not the streets of luck

But true believers laugh at chance  
True believers hold to God  
Drawing breath by providence  
Needing only the Lord's staff, and rod

So we all knew why we went  
Driven by Holy Spirit  
We were called, chosen, sent  
Although we doubted as we drew near it

The last few meters were especially rutted  
Blaring horns, crowded spaces  
And rag pickers on the roadway juttred  
We looked skyward, expecting graces

But dominating every view  
This great smoking pile  
Could we our covenants renew?  
If not that--at least a smile?

Was this after all God's beckoning  
Not just another tattered landscape  
God's wake-up call, a reckoning  
Of a truth we can't escape?

Half a day on Smokey  
Might not change Tondo's folks  
But if our hearts were truly broken  
What can we give in exchange for our souls?

For in our Father's ripened time  
Through the Spirit's witness  
There are moments, there are signs  
Indelible images, as this is

God's ineffaceable image there  
Yes, there upon that burning hill  
Not plastic earth or putrid air  
But God's blood for all souls spilled

God forgive our crippled vision  
Help us flee from every savior  
But Christ--who's slain, entombed, yet risen  
Proclaim we now God's year of favor

Elevate our seeing, Lord  
Give us hearts like thine  
Purify our beings, Word  
Of the Father, lest we miss your sign

For on that day of August twenty  
If our visions could be raised  
Our Heavenly Father had more than plenty  
Of reasons for us to sing God's praise

We had come, as one has said  
To where the ragged people go  
Would we find hope, or fear and dread?  
Welling up within our soul?

How does God view Smokey?  
Is it just a trash-strewn mountain?  
Or is it where his Spirit Holy  
Bathes sinners in blood from Calvary's fountain

Garbage, smell, and flies  
A Smokey Mountain trinity  
But look again, look through God's eyes  
And open wide the door of ministry

Admit it--first you want to vomit  
Then fly away in haste  
Could it be God's Son, our Servant  
Was crucified outside the gate?

Would Jesus sumptuously feast  
With Imelda in Makati?  
The Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief  
Would sooner join a Tondo party

He calls us too, as Bonhoeffer said  
Not to dine, but to die  
To where the poorest lay their head  
To where soot rains from the sky

Let us go outside the camp  
Bearing Christ's abuse  
Fearing no ill circumstance  
To be and live and die in truth

Nothing dims God's radiant peace  
Not filth, disease, or shacks  
Yet sometimes God may show us these  
Lest we forsake the straight and narrow track

To bring us to accounting  
To learn a different song  
God leads us to the mountain  
God leads his dear children along

But what did you see, sir?  
And will you always remember  
Your slowly simmering silent anger  
While passing the children's scavenger drop-in center?

When I was a child, of tender age  
I never had to sacrifice  
Never had to pick through garbage  
To buy a few dried fish and rice

When I was a child, protected  
Always enough to eat  
Never abandoned, never rejected  
Life was glorious and sweet

Was it an accident of birth  
To be born free and well  
With abundant laughter, joy, and mirth  
Worlds away from a child who sells

Whatever he can scavenge  
A life that exacts its price  
That's raw and brutal and savage  
That sweeps away like a fetid tide

And not just him, but also her  
Can you tell the folks back home  
How a girl, alongside her sister  
Sleeps in a shack on moldy foam

And spends her days not diligent  
Not studying the golden rule  
But thinks all her days already spent  
Her body someone else's tool

Why was I born there  
Why were they born here  
I: where life is mostly fair  
They: where life grinds year to year

Is life more than justice?  
Is that what heaven is for  
For those who put their trust in  
God, he'll even out the score?

Is this life at all?  
This hand-to-mouth existence  
Held night and day in poverty's thrall  
No freedom, no power, but only subsistence?

Standing on top of Smokey's mount  
Surveying wind-whipped scenes  
What kind of world was all around  
Loving and kind--or vile and mean?

What kind of a world have I made  
I forced myself to think  
Is my life in God's hands clay  
Have I given the parched to drink?

There were almost as many thoughts  
In my head as flies  
So many shoulds, and musts, and oughts  
I almost missed God's great surprise

That surprise is simply this  
That all the trash, and muck, and gutters  
Pollution, fire, or sewage ditch  
Could not quell what God did utter

Life does happen on Smokey trail  
And where life is, is grace  
God's grace there for us to avail  
Healing, filling the empty space

Let it be understood  
Said Augustine of old  
Whatever is, is good  
To have, to cherish, to hold

But wait a minute, Roderick Leupp  
Are you that naive?  
To think there's beauty, joy, and truth  
Where babies squall and mothers grieve?

"Rabbi, who did sin"  
They said to Jesus Christ  
"This man or his kin  
To be born with no sight"

Those who work in filth  
May yet have perfect hearts  
Trash is not their essential self  
Slop is not their better part

Lord, deliver us from condemnation  
Forbid that we should boast  
Give us to tell of full salvation  
In God alone, the Lord of Hosts

Shine your Spirit's light within  
And listening, we reply  
We are mercy's children  
There but for the Grace of God go I

Grace sent us to that urban jungle  
Grace enough to share  
Grace to prod, provoke, and humble  
Grace enough to care

Grace that flickered in Smokey souls  
Needing to be nurtured  
Grace in the gift of warm Coca Cola  
A mother's smile, a baby's murmur

Grace in the face of Terry Baldrige  
Who danced the hokey pokey  
Who worked with industry and courage  
Under the sheltering sky of old Smokey

If those who live in constant danger  
Are yet on speaking terms with grace  
Shame on us for being strangers  
Who hesitate to run the race

The mountain's odd, unsettling hospitality  
Penetrated deeper than any stench  
The mountain is its own reality  
The mountain is bigger than any circumstance

So part of me behind remained  
As we departed Tondo  
All of me said "our God reigns"  
The whole wide world around, Oh!

Yes, our vision must be keenest  
Our faith must be truest  
Where streets are the meanest  
Where souls cry out for justice

No better words have we  
Than when he came unto his own  
Spoken by the Man of Galilee  
A prophet unwelcome in his home

Propelled under the Spirit's anointing  
Bringing good news to the poor  
Father, Son, and Spirit appointing  
You and me to proclaim God's cure

To a world oppressed  
To open blinded eyes  
To bring the weary rest  
Bathed in showers from God's skies

Jesus Christ was put to death  
Just this side of Smokey  
While the Spirit lends us breath  
The Spirit whispers: "Go Ye"  
While thrown away children wept  
The Spirit whispers: "Go Ye"  
While the happy and contented slept  
The Spirit whispers: "Go Ye"  
Sin, however perverse and foul and deep  
God's love is a deeper depth  
The Spirit whispers: "Go Ye"

## **Preparation for Revival**

by John M. Nielson

I have been asked to speak today about Preparing for Revival, giving special consideration to the issue of prayer and fasting as part of that preparation. I want us to come to understand what we mean by revival and what the Bible tells us about how to prepare for it. Obviously, we can't say all that can or should be said on these topics, but I hope we can discover enough that will help us prepare our own hearts for the moving of God's Spirit among us.

Revival is 1) The spiritual renewal and deepening of believers, 2) The return of those who have wandered from being close to God, 3) The evangelism of those who are not yet born again, 4) The equipping of believers for the work of evangelism. It may occur as 1) An individual, personal event, 2) A series of