



January-March 2020  
NEWSLETTER

# SO HELP ME GOD

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## YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

by CH (LTC) Steven Hokana  
USA (Ret.)



“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” GAL. 5:24

Scripture gives us a clear and concise dividing line in Gal. 5:16-24: “walk by the Spirit” or “gratify the desires of the flesh.” The two are always in conflict with each other, incompatible for the child of God in Christ. Our actions

fall into one of the lists: “acts of the flesh” or “fruits of the Spirit.”

It begs the question of identity. Who are you? This is a question of the time. A question no longer relegated to philosophers of the distant past or those in ivory towers. If not carefully answered, it can take a person or even a nation into a dark place, into a dark abyss of chaos, anarchy and dystopia.

Loss of identity leads many to join dangerous political and social movements, terrorist organizations. It causes some to question their sexual identity, man or woman.

This is a sophomoric challenge to God who “made both male and female” (GEN. 1:27). As identity is lost, belonging is forfeited! The result is death. Loss of identity brings about suicide.

Who are you? God has the answer! Your identity is found in the cross of the Lord Jesus. Under Christ we find contentment, peace and hope as we navigate through a fallen world.

Identity is tied to belonging. Values are an integral part of thinking and acting. If I had five minutes to describe the entire military, in totality, I would call the armed forces of the United States a “values-based culture



“ He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.” (LUKE 1:51-53)



PHOTO: JOHN WAYNE LISTON, ARMY



# Even Jesus' Mom

## *has something to say about leadership*

by CH (LTC) Steven Hokana  
USA (Ret.)

As we move into the season of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, I have a tradition of reading Luther's Commentary on the Magnificat. It may surprise you that Martin Luther recommended from "Mary's Song" (LUKE 1:51-53) a road map to excellence in Christian leadership. Say what? That's right! The mother of Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, gives us direction on how to thrive as a Christian leader. The Reformer calls them the "Six Works of God." Mary, the chosen vessel of the eternal God Incarnate, sang her song in exultant joy! Her song teaches us how to show our faith in the military.

**Here are the "Six Works of God," as Luther identified them in "Mary's Song":**

**Mercy.** "He is merciful to all who are ready to do without their opinion, right, wisdom, and all spiritual goods, and willing to be poor in spirit. These are the ones who truly fear God, who count themselves not worthy of anything." Luther went on to describe mercy as God's "noblest work." As we encounter those in our workplace, we are called to demonstrate mercy to everyone. Luther tells his prince, and us, to subordinate who we are and listen to the voice of God and those He places around us.

**Breaking Spiritual Pride.** In the earlier section on Mercy, Luther describes those with spiritual pride as "the most venomous and pernicious men on

earth, their hearts abysses of satanic pride." As leaders, we are blessed with achieving goals. But this is not by our own power. As Mary sings, and Luther writes, we need always acknowledge our gracious and loving Savior.

**Putting Down the Mighty.** Luther warns the strong, powerful and educated about their cunning. He describes the difficulty of entering the kingdom of heaven. Luther tells us to be people of "character" who are bound intimately to the Word of God and the promises of Christ. "We reside," Luther writes, "for truth and right."

**Exalting the Lowly.** The lowly are "those who are willing to be in such a state, especially if they have been forced into it for the sake of God's



Word.” The lowly are those who desire and work at intentionally being humble. Dare we seek to be “lowly”? Mary sings of her estate as being lowly. This is in unity with Scripture. A lowly person is humbled and broken by the Law. They are tied to the Word of God and speak God’s truth to power. When we move away from humility before God, we place ourselves closer to Satan’s camp than the kingdom of heaven.

The last two “Works,” **Filling the Hungry and Sending the Rich Away Empty**, are understood as our absolute trust in God for all good things. “We lay up provisions against future hunger and need, so that we no longer have need of God and His works.” The “sending of the rich away empty” is a call to turn aside from earthly riches that stand in the way of our relationship to God. We must avoid idolatry, placing the “created” ahead of the Creator. The fifth and sixth works help us make sure our priorities are aligned with God. We are called to sanctified living through Baptism, and made holy by the justification of Christ’s death on the cross.

Luther points us to the Bible, to “Mary’s Song,” and there we find God’s promise and fulfillment. We integrate the promises of God in every aspect of our life. This includes our relationship with God described in the First Table of the Law, and our relationships to one another as laid out in the Second Table.

These “Six Works of God” establish a beautiful framework for life in the military.

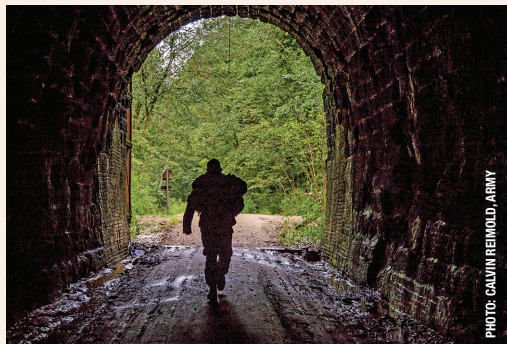


PHOTO: CALVIN REIMOLD, ARMY



PHOTO: MARINE CORPS LANCE CPL. ZACHARY BEATTY

## Ratcheting Down the Crazyiness of Life

**H**ERE IS A PHILIPPIANS 4:4 THOUGHT. (Look it up ... you’ll understand.) Life — it’s crazy. There is a lot you can’t control — deployments, working with a toxic person, noise, dirt, dust, worry about self and others ... this can all “spin us up.” Life loses its joy, and service to God and country becomes very difficult. There are unhealthy ways to cope: alcohol, drugs, pornography ... these only accelerate you on a trajectory towards disaster, like a fueled-up, heat-seeking missile about to plow into its target. Instead, here are some alternate ideas. Read them over and pass them along to your friends and fellow warriors.

1

Be the best at what you are called to be (Infantry, Doc, Crew Chief, EOD).

2

Know your job better than anybody.

3

Demonstrate how you can be a team player every day.

4

Be the kind of person people want to be around: civil, a hard worker, someone who can laugh at yourself.

5

Spend time in God’s word and seek out Christian friends. It can be lonely being in the military.

6

Never give up your faith.

7

Stay in touch with your family. They love you and miss you.

8

Demonstrate that you are a team player. There is no “I” in team.

9

Remember that you are not alone — there are Christian brothers and sisters serving with you.

10

Take time, and make time, to read Scripture and have a private devotion.



PHOTO: AIR FORCE AIRMAN 1ST CLASS MONICA ROYBAL

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intended to protect and defend the United States of America.” Each branch has its values — a code to guide its members’ behavior, to direct how they live.

The Christian’s identity is a contrast. We call this the “the sinner/saint dichotomy.” Humanity is fallen. A sinner is not just what you do, but who you are. We are children of fallen humanity, ugly in the sight of God. Flawed. In need of help. Not knowing which direction to turn. Destined for death and hell.

And yet Christians are saints. A person is a saint exclusively by the work of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus. A saint is redeemed. Fundamentally changed, from ugly to beautiful! From flawed to wonderful! A saint belongs to the Lord Jesus through the waters of Holy Baptism. So, no matter who a Christian thinks he is, his identity is firmly fixed in the cross of Christ. Questions of belonging are answered in the water of Holy Baptism.

We now live a life of redemption and forgiveness: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (ROM. 12:2).

Who are you? What is your identity?

“  
**YOU ARE  
A PERSON  
WHO IS BOTH  
SINNER AND  
SAINT AT THE  
SAME TIME.**  
”

“For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (GAL. 2:19–20).

You are a person who is both sinner and saint at the same time. A child redeemed and loved by the

Lord Jesus. You are so precious that God created you, knowing you are special. Your life has meaning and direction. You belong to a mighty unstoppable force, locked arm in arm with tens of thousands of millions of saints and angels ... with Christ beside you, Christ in front of you and Christ at your back. You belong!

Your identity is dipped in the water of forgiveness and now in Christ. Your identity, which is still placed in struggles daily, will conquer against the best Satan throws at you.

We are a people who live in hope of a promise already fulfilled. Every day we take one step after another by the Holy Spirit towards that great and glorious day of our resurrection, when we will meet Jesus face to face in eternal life.

## CHECK IT OUT!

**WORSHIP AND DEVOTIONS**  
[worshipanew.org](http://worshipanew.org)

**MILITARY ONE SOURCE**  
[militaryonesource.mil](http://militaryonesource.mil)

**VETERANS CRISIS LINE**  
[veteranscrisisline.net](http://veteranscrisisline.net)



**WARRIORS OF FAITH**  
<https://www.lhm.org/studies/studydetail.asp?id=21041>

**FORGIVENESS IS A CHOICE**  
<https://www.lhmgift.org/storefront/product.asp?style=&id=Project%20Connect&code=6BE140>

**PTSD THE WAR AT HOME**  
<https://www.lhmgift.org/storefront/product.asp?by=&style=&code=6BE139>

**VICTIM, VALIDATED, VICTORIOUS**  
<https://www.lhmgift.org/storefront/product.asp?by=&style=&code=6BE141>

**STRENGTH AND HONOR**  
<https://www.lhmgift.org/storefront/product.asp?by=&style=&code=6BE149>

### STAFF

Rev. Craig Muehler, CAPT, CHC, USN (Ret.)  
Director, LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces  
[craig.muehler@lcms.org](mailto:craig.muehler@lcms.org)

Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana, CH, LTC, USA (Ret.)  
Assistant Director, LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces  
[steven.hokana@lcms.org](mailto:steven.hokana@lcms.org)

Alicia Hinton  
Assistant to the Director  
[alicia.hinton@lcms.org](mailto:alicia.hinton@lcms.org)



 **THE LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
Missouri Synod  
**Ministry to the Armed Forces**

1333 S. Kirkwood Road  
St. Louis, MO 63122

888-THE LCMS (843-5267)

[lcms.org/armedforces](http://lcms.org/armedforces)

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*So Help Me God* may be reprinted with acknowledgment given to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.