

Arthur Blessitt Waves Cross 'Like a Welcome Banner' Around the World

The itinerant evangelist still plans to launch a cross and Bible into space that will orbit Earth every 90 minutes for 200 years

Started more than 33 years ago, evangelist Arthur Blessitt's unorthodox itinerant ministry walking around the world toting a cross has taken him to all seven continents, including Antarctica. In recent years he has set his sights on remote regions such as the San Blas Islands near Panama and the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador.

"Satan hates the cross, and to lift up the cross above the earth and wave it in the face of Satan is a glorious mission, and we are seeing the fruit of it even now," said Blessitt, who noted that many people come to Christ during his cross walks. "I have carried the cross in every nation, [which is] like a welcome banner when Jesus comes again."

Having logged more than 35,878 miles, Blessitt is recognized by Guinness World Records for taking the world's longest walk. A Fort Myers, Fla., resident, Blessitt has traveled to 296 nations, island groups and territories, including jaunts to war-torn Iraq in April and June 1998.

"We had no problems [in Iraq]," said Blessitt, who is accompanied by his wife, Denise, on his cross walks. "Everyone was welcoming of the cross. It was a glorious historic moment to stand the cross up in Babylon [Iraq]."

Despite not having a travel visa for his first trip to Iraq, Blessitt said God enabled him to receive "a VIP welcome" from many of the country's top security officials. Blessitt, who

did not meet Saddam Hussein during his visits to Iraq, added that he has no plans to visit Iraq for a third time, but he would go if the Lord prompts him.

"I have carried the cross in 50 nations at war in the past 33 years," Blessitt, 62, told Charisma. "I stay focused on Jesus and people and try not to let other things distract me. ... Circumstances don't alter the call. It's not if, but how."

He said God saved him from a firing squad while in civil war-torn Nicaragua in 1978. Blessitt said he also escaped unharmed during a bomb explosion in Belfast, Northern Ireland, that caused him to be blown into a car window, and was supernaturally protected while carrying a cross through a minefield to get into Beirut, Lebanon, in 1982.

Ron Bozarth, pastor of Christ Fellowship Community Church, a charismatic congregation in Lake Forest, Calif., calls Blessitt a faithful minister of the gospel. A former manager of five nightclubs on Los Angeles' famed Sunset Strip in the 1960s, Bozarth accepted Christ in 1967 after Blessitt witnessed to him for nine years.

"This is truly a man who trusts in the Lord with all his heart and never seems even acquainted with doubt or fear," Bozarth, 66, told Charisma.

Blessitt, who started his cross walks on Christmas Day 1969 from Hollywood, Calif., has plans for his most ambitious effort yet. The "Cross in Space" project seeks to launch a small cross and Bible into space—about 400 miles above the earth.

"It will orbit the Earth about every hour and a half for about 200 years," he said. "It will be in orbit, so it will in time pass over every nation on Earth!"

Blessitt said he already paid \$25,000 of the \$50,000 campaign, but the aerospace company delayed its launch because of the

9/11 terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, he said the cross in space is already making "a great impact."

"All over the world, people are hearing about the cross in space and are coming to our Web site to read about it," Blessitt noted. "Many do not want the cross flying over them or their nation. In one month, we had 32,000 hits from Saudi Arabia. ... Many are coming to Jesus because of this even though it is not even launched."

Gwin Turner, pastor of Marina Cathedral in Los Angeles, an independent charismatic Baptist congregation, said Blessitt is a trailblazer for the gospel. "There is no way of knowing the number of people he has won to Jesus as he walked along the roads, streets and trails of the world, besides having an impact in spiritual warfare in affording the Holy Spirit an opportunity to move on the area when he goes through there," Turner, 71, who has known Blessitt since 1968, told Charisma.

Blessitt added: "I have traveled the world, and the most dangerous place in the world is the church door. Why? Because inside we can praise the Lord and raise our hands and talk about the power of Satan being broken, and that Jesus can do all things. Then by the time we get to the parking lot, we are full of fear and afraid to witness or go to certain nations or places."

He urges Christians to be bold witnesses wherever their travels take them.

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