

Jesus Sculpture Draws Hundreds in Tulsa

✖ **April 9, 2009** – A 16-foot statue of Jesus credited with leading some passers-by to Christ and provoking one woman's healing is drawing crowds in Tulsa, Okla., this week as ministries display it in the run-up to Easter.

"It's a beautiful, artistic expression of the gospel," said Ralph Fagin, interim president of Oral Roberts University, which will display the Lamb of God sculpture in the parking lot of the Mabee Center all day Sunday. "We think it's going to be one of those serendipitous occasions. I think it will draw a lot of folks."

Hundreds stopped by Cascia Hall Preparatory School in Tulsa Wednesday to view the sculpture, which depicts Jesus in His final moments on the cross. One woman even brought a busload of residents from a local retirement center.

Dozens more stopped by King of Kings Lutheran Church in suburban Tulsa, where the sculpture is on display today and tomorrow. "The reality of [Christ's suffering], it really makes it personal," pastor Rick Tabisz said of the sculpture. "As repulsive as sin is to us, can you imagine this holy one not just confronting sin itself, but taking on the sin of all of us for all time? That's what you're seeing there."

Artist Brenda Copeland, 43, said the idea for the sculpture came in 1992 when she dreamed of Jesus on the cross every night for more than a week. "I could see Him being crucified, and when He would yell, I would wake up," said Copeland, who founded Sculpt America with her husband, Greg.

Gripped by the image, she believed God wanted her to create a sculpture, even though she had never sculpted anything before and didn't know where to buy the clay. After years of trial and error, she completed a small version of Lamb of God, then began working on the 16-foot version, which she unveiled in June.

"I just knew I had to do the sculpture," she said. "It was worth [the sacrifices] because I can see that God is ministering to people. God is using it to reach people."

Last fall, she lay the sculpture flat in a trailer and hauled it to Florida to show her grandfather. What began as a four-day vacation turned into a three-week trip through nine states as passers-by formed lines at gas stations and restaurants to view the figure. "It was overwhelming but in such a good way," Copeland said.

She said one woman who stopped by had recently undergone surgery to remove a growth from her face. "She was patting her face saying, 'Look, I can smile. Look, I can smile,'" Copeland recalled. The woman later sent Copeland and her husband a video of her testimony, saying doctors told her she would never move that side of her face.

At a late-night stop at a Taco Bell in Shreveport, La., a young man came up to them and said, "When you pray, will you tell God that I'm thanking Him for letting me see this?"

"It went from that to him accepting the Lord and then him getting on the phone at midnight and calling people to have them come to this parking lot to see the sculpture," Copeland said. "Two-and-a-half-hour stops just to get gas-there are so many of those stories."

Copeland wants to take the sculpture across the U.S. as part of an American Heritage tour that would gather Christians at their state lines to pray for their communities.

“Our motto is going to be ‘Meet us at the state line by the sign,’ and we’re going to raise it up hydraulically,” Greg Copeland said. “I don’t know how big the movement will grow, but we really expect that God’s going to move, and people are going to show up and want to pray. Because when they see the sculpture, we’ve seen it in people, it just invokes a desire to worship God.”

Brenda Copeland doesn’t know how that vision will come to pass-she stills need a hydraulic system to lift the sculpture upright-but she believes God will make a way. “I just know God wants it to be seen,” she said, “because it’s a complete miracle that I did it.”

