

Arthur Blessitt Carries His Cross to Loveland Easter Service

As a 16-year-old **worship** leader at a rural Louisiana church almost 20 years ago, Jonathan Wiggins could barely contain the excitement he felt upon hearing that Lake Providence was expecting a very special visitor.

Known as the man who carries the cross around the world, **Arthur Blessitt** came and led the entire congregation of Providence Church—where Wiggins played piano and sang worship songs at his future father-in-law Don Boyett's church—around the farming town's namesake lake.

Blessitt carried the cross, with Wiggins and church members in tow, to a burned-out spot in downtown Lake Providence. A crowd gathered to hear the Southern native son talk about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the love of God.

"I was blown away," said Wiggins, who today leads a northern Colorado church as its senior pastor. "It left a lasting mark."

Indeed, it was so memorable that Wiggins invited the 72-year-old evangelist—a Guinness World Record holder for the longest walk—and his wooden cross to Easter services, March 30-31, at Resurrection Fellowship in Loveland, Colo.

"I love the name Resurrection Fellowship," Blessitt said, "because you're always testifying to the fact that Jesus died for your sins and rose again."

Before Blessitt spoke at the first of four weekend sermons, titled "Easter: More Than History," the world-renowned preacher carried the cross through Loveland, adding the city to a long list that includes every nation on earth—321 countries, islands and territories.

As in other world cities, some motorists honked in appreciation of the cross, others in disdain. Nevertheless, Blessitt prayed as he carried the cross—his fourth since 1968—through Loveland.

Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, and North and South Korea are among the countries into which Blessitt has carried the cross for 40-plus years, racking up 40,200 miles, a record 80 million steps, and 18 billion pounds of weight on his shoulder, according to Guinness figures.

In the late 1960s, a British Broadcasting Corp. reporter asked Blessitt when he was going to carry the cross in Northern Ireland, which became Blessitt's first overseas trip.

"I majored in ancient history in university," said Blessitt, who has shared the message of the cross with most world leaders. "Very little of world history is relevant to your personal lives or happiness.

"What happened with the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ did take place, but those facts are more than history.

"They are relevant to our lives today because we can experience the resurrected Christ," said Blessitt, whose book and Hollywood movie, *The Cross*, are replete with stories of peasants and presidents changed by the historical facts of Christ's death and resurrection.

Blessitt's wife, Denise, who with their seven children has

visited 294 nations, told how she experienced the living Christ in 1983 when—on the verge of suicide and desperately searching for God—an African woman came to her aid in a London park.

“I later learned that she resisted God’s instruction to come talk to me about Jesus because she thought I was a glue sniffer, heaving as I sat cross-legged in the park,” said Denise Blessitt, who was in reality sobbing uncontrollably.

After hearing the message of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Denise Blessitt left behind her occult and New Age practices and later joined Arthur as he carried the cross and God’s love to Pope John Paul II, former President George Bush, world leaders Muammar Gaddafi, Yasser Arafat and Menachem Begin, as well as leaders of Hezbollah, the Taliban and Hamas.

Through 24 arrests and imprisonments, 54 wars and numerous threats at the end of a gun barrel or knife, Arthur Blessitt claims he’s been comforted by Jesus Christ and his wife, Denise, while carrying the cross. “Jesus has been there every step of the way, providing provision and strength,” he said.

“After the world’s longest walk, my feet are still as soft as a baby’s,” Blessitt said, removing his socks and shoes as proof.

“I’ve never felt better in all my life,” said Blessitt, who knows that some people expect to see a decrepit, hunched-over man after all the years, miles and weight of the cross he’s carried.

In New Zealand some years back, Blessitt was carrying the cross when a woman grabbed hold of the evangelist, screaming, “I was going to kill myself until I saw you!”

In Loveland, after hearing Denise Blessitt's narrow escape from suicide in London 30 years ago, a Wyoming woman who drove to Resurrection Fellowship for the Easter service was so touched that she returned to the church, telling the Blessitts she wanted to be saved.

"I've just got to go back. I just have to," the woman identified as Lynn said publicly, with Blessitt at her side.

Another woman, Sherri Hogue, said she had never heard of Resurrection Fellowship or the Blessitts before and that she missed a connection with friends who had invited her to Easter services. "I came by myself, and I'm so glad I did because I know have a greater appreciation for the cross," Hogue said.

Of the thousands who witnessed the cross and heard Blessitt's message of love, young and old responded to the evangelist's invitation to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Shortly after they did, they were lining up to have Blessitt autograph copies of his book, *The Cross*.

Wiggins' wife, Amy, grew up 10 miles from Blessitt's family in northeast Louisiana, and they call the cross-carrying preacher a "good friend, a family friend."