

## Disaster and despair transformed



He arrived too late for the start of match and so a substitute took his place.

She had swum hundreds of lengths in preparation then two days before the competition twisted her ankle as she stepped off the bus.

They had built a craft that would withstand the pounding of any sea, but the vehicle towing the trailer crashed, leaving the boat shattered along with their dreams.

No, these instances, and so many more you and I could add from our own experience, are not merely a matter of "oh dear, what a shame, never mind" but are, for those directly involved, totally devastating. All the investment, both physical and emotional, that had gone into the endeavour, had become worth nothing. These are situations which are irretrievable, and they are nothing short of gut-wrenchingly awful.

And if that were not bad enough, then come the "if only" thoughts which fuel not only regret but also guilt. This is not about a superficial disappointment. It is about a depth of disappointment and despair from which, at that moment, there is no glimpse of a way to recover or restore what has, it would seem, been snatched away.

And yet we also have many examples of what we call the human spirit fighting against this, of trying to turn defeat into victory, trying to transform despair into hope, trying to redefine loss as gain. To our logical minds this way of thinking may seem at best baffling and at worst futile. But whatever it is, it is a remarkably close impression of the God's Holy Spirit which will not give in and which has turned apparent defeat into actual victory, has transformed utter despair into real hope and has even brought life from death.

For those followers of Jesus Christ who looked death in the face and felt no fear, it was the comfort and strength of this same Spirit that made it possible. For those who sacrificed everything for what they knew to be true, it was the Spirit which empowered them. And for us it is also the same Spirit who can lead us from the depths of despair to experience a contentment and fulfilment beyond our understanding.

I have yet to meet anyone who relishes disappointment but I know many who have come to face it with renewed confidence and hope by putting their faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. To do so requires at one and the same time a simple step and a bold step. Indeed, a step of faith. But, as I once heard someone say, "A little faith can go a long way."

*(See Rom 12; 2 and 2 Cor 3; 8)*