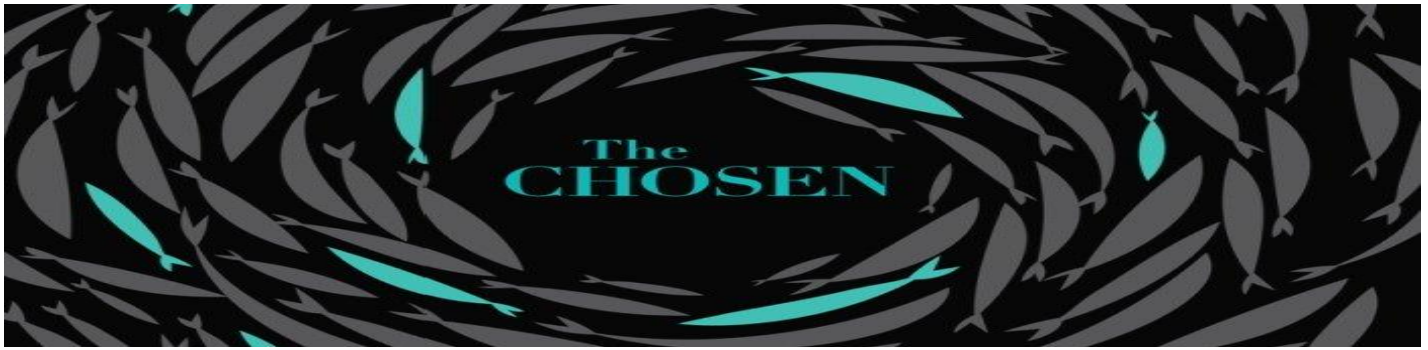


BEING CHOSEN FOR



Article by Claudia Cangilla McAdam www.ClaudiaMcAdam.com

Wouldn't it have been incredible to have witnessed Jesus' ministry in person—to hear his radical teachings and see his marvelous miracles? Many of us would have liked to have been there. I can't time-travel, but I was able to do the next best thing: be a part of *The Chosen*.

The Chosen is the first-ever multi-season television drama about the life of Jesus and his apostles. Produced outside the Hollywood system, independently funded, and absolutely free to watch, the series is created, directed, and co-written by filmmaker Dallas Jenkins. The series has proven to be wildly popular and highly rated during its first two seasons of an expected seven-season run.

The Chosen is the highest crowd-funded Christian media project of all time, and supporters who “pay it forward” ensure the series is free to viewers around the world. In the fall of 2021, any supporter who paid it forward at a particular amount during a set period of time qualified to be extras in Season 3's filming of the Feeding of the 5,000. That is how it came to be that my husband and I, along with our two oldest grandchildren, were able to be in this episode.

Apart from the Resurrection, the multiplication of the loaves and fish is the only miracle told in all four Gospels. The importance of that miracle convinced Jenkins to strive for the authenticity of filming a huge crowd of extras for the Feeding of the 5,000.

several days of filming outdoors in a record-setting June 2022 heatwave.

The journey from our home began months before our filming date as I arranged for transportation and accommodations and began extensive work on assembling the costumes and accessories for myself, husband Gary, and grandchildren Christopher, 14, and Eleanor, 11.



On the set of Feeding of the 5,000. Claudia McAdam (r) with family members (from left) grandson Christopher, husband Gary, granddaughter Eleanor.

Extras were required to put together first-century apparel free from buckles, zippers, buttons, modern-day fabrics and colors, and the like. Head coverings were a must for both men and women. Most of the men, including my husband, grew out their beards, a first for many of them. For the filming, extras couldn't have visible tattoos, piercings, unusual hair colorings, and the like.



Day one of filming: Overhead shot of crowd. Photo courtesy *The Chosen*

The enormous undertaking led to not 5,000 people, but an estimated 12,000 men, women, and children from 36 countries and all 50 states, who traveled at their own expense to Texas for



Overhead shot of crowd with family circled. Photo courtesy *The Chosen*

As part of the preparation for the trip to Texas, it was required that each of us get a COVID-19 test no more than three days prior to our filming date.

Once in Texas, our filming day began early and ran past sunset. First thing in the morning, a long line of cars snaked into the parking lot of a sports stadium for additional COVID testing. Each carload of folks pulled into socially-distanced parking spaces. Everyone, including our family, had to remain in their cars while volunteers did another COVID test on each of us. We had to stay put until we got back our results. A positive result for one of us in a car would have disqualified everyone in that vehicle from participating.

After getting our negative test results and parking the car in an adjacent lot, we got into a gigantic line for bus transportation to the 900-acre movie set ten minutes away.

The Chosen took excellent care of the extras on a day that saw temperatures climb into the high 90s with elevated humidity. At the outdoor staging area, they provided tents, lunch, water, restrooms, and entertainment by top names in contemporary Christian music.



Lunch: one of the many ways *The Chosen* folks cared for the extras.

Medics were on hand to treat those who suffered from heat exhaustion, and they tended speedily to those in need. It was amazing to see how many families were present. One example was the group sitting next to us consisting of parents and six children who had driven from Toronto, Canada to be part of a very special experience.

The filming location was a field about a ten-minute walk from the staging area. In order to avoid having all the extras out in the hot sun all day, the group was divided into three sections on each of two days. Our group's filming started at 2:30 p.m. and lasted until 8 that evening.

As with all television and movie production, there's always a hurry-up-and-wait procedure in place. That seemed to be fine with the crowd, who delighted in seeing their favorite actors close enough to chat with between takes. And when the cameras weren't rolling, the call came for "umbrellas up!" and we pulled out our UV umbrellas to shade where we sat on our (first-century authentic-looking) blanket. When the director, actors, and cameras were set to roll, water bottles, umbrellas, and snacks (unlike our Biblical counterparts, we had munchies in hand) were stuffed under the blanket.



Actors dressed as Roman soldiers sat on horseback along the edges of the multitude, causing granddaughter Eleanor to remark that it looked like their duty on this day of filming appeared to be very much like what it must have been for soldiers at the true feeding of the 5,000: contain the crowd. "I think this counts as a school day," she said with a smile, while holding a cool cloth around her neck, "covering so many subjects: religion, history, movie-making, and survival."



Eleanor in her homemade costume.

It was easy for each of us to place ourselves in what was as close as we could get to actually being one of the 5,000. A lot of that had to do with the charismatic nature of Jonathan Roumie, the devout Catholic actor who plays Jesus. He seemed as impressed with the crowd as we were with him. During a break in the action, he got his phone and took pictures of the crowd, telling us, "All of you are amazing because you are here with us recreating this moment in history that changed the world forever."

Acknowledging the impact that *The Chosen* had on everyone present that day as well as with viewers around the world, he opened up about his personal experience.

“Many of you know my own story and my need to surrender in my own life: four years ago, everything changed. I went from being completely broke, without any options, without any vision as to what was going to happen, how my career was going to go, how my life was going to move forward,” he said.



Click the image to hear his speech.

Three months later, Dallas Jenkins reached out to him. “Dallas called me up and said, ‘Hey, would you like to put the sandals back on?’ because we had done three short (Biblical) films together over the previous four years, never thinking for one minute that we would find ourselves here in a field with 5,000 people, recreating one of the greatest miracles in Jesus’ ministry.”

“So, no matter where you are in your walk, in your faith—whatever it is—or isn’t—, know that you are not alone, that miracles happen. We are all a big group here as filmmakers and creatives. Each of us has a different story just as each one of you has your own story,” he told us. “Know that we couldn’t be here without you. We love you. We’re grateful. God bless you. Thank you.”

The second day of shooting included filming in the dark with groups of extras huddled around campfires. When “Cut!” was called for the final time, Roumie asked if he could pray the Our Father for the crowd. In a moving witness to his Catholic faith, he made the sign of the cross and then recited the prayer in Aramaic, the language which Jesus spoke and would have prayed this prayer.



Click image to view the Our Father being prayed in Aramaic.

Our grandson Christopher noted that “being an extra let me experience what it must have been like for the 5,000. It helped me to better visualize the Gospel.” As grandparents, it was gratifying to be able to share with them an opportunity that brought all of us closer to Jesus.



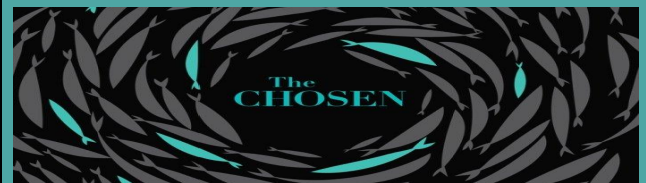
Christopher waiting for the bus to the filming site.

Participating in *The Chosen* spiritually fed our family, and the prayer of all the extras is that the series continues to nourish millions around the world, for *The Chosen* is more than just excellent entertainment. It’s an opportunity to evangelize. Some do it on a grander scale than others, but as Jenkins told us that day: “It’s not your job to feed the 5,000, it’s only your job to provide the loaves and fish.”



Dallas Jenkins greets the crowd. Photo courtesy *The Chosen*

HOW TO WATCH *The Chosen* FOR FREE:



The Chosen has been translated into 56 languages and is free to watch online or on the mobile or smart TV apps with no fee or subscription required. If you’ve yet to watch the series, you can catch up on Seasons 1 and 2 and look for the “Feeding of the 5,000” to be in episodes 7 and 8 of Season 3. Season 3 is scheduled to begin airing near the end of 2022. More information about the series and how to watch it can be found at thechosen.tv.