

*I was in prison and you visited me. Matthew 25:36*

# Voices From Prison

**A newsletter from Adeodatus prison ministry**

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It is continually mind-bending to see You, Lord, working to find those lost sheep by getting them into prison! That is what it seems like—and they even use these words sometimes themselves!—“I have been bad all of my life and God has gotten me into prison so I can listen to Him, read the Bible and begin to pray”—“I want to be that lost sheep He puts on His shoulders”—“Will you teach me to pray?” Wow!



Our Springtime issue of *Voices From Prison* presents a story of how God is acting in the lives of people in prison. It is often a case of despair to realize that so many of our citizens are in jail (1 in 100), especially our Black people. How can it be that we settle on building more and more jails instead of schools? How can it be that so many of our young people are caught up in a world of drugs and guns? How can it be that there is so little rehabilitation that goes on in prison? Yet, in all our questioning, it is equally obvious that *God is alive in prison*, moving people to amazing transformations. Like St. Augustine's [Confessions](#), this story of God's action needs to be told so we can hope.

“Michael,” a 27 year old Russian inmate was recently explaining the prison world to me in his rough way. This six foot well-built bruiser told me casually, “If you in any way appear weak to the other inmates, they think you are a bitch—and you know what that means, Father.” When I asked him to write about this, he wrote me an astounding letter that describes how God is working in him to help him grow. We also need Michael's witness when our young people are inundated by examples of manhood (and womanhood) measured by their readiness to use fists and guns. Some of his letter appears below:

*Father Paul, how are you?!!!*

*It's Tuesday morning. I just woke up and I'm sitting here in my cell, looking out the window and drinking coffee. Thank God for waking me up this morning! So what's up? I'm the same-- still here and still alive-- except one single thing that I would like to share with you. It's not a thing but experience that I went through. It happened yesterday over the Skill Center (the place that I told you they take me to every day, to teach me a trade). I and one of my “case workers” had started to argue, and it got to the point that we were screaming right in each other's faces. Then he had tried to grip me by my throat and he did lightly, And before I punched him in his mouth the guard came up and broke that up.*

*Everybody knows that's not the end (don't forget we're in jail), so after couple of minutes, we know we're gonna fight. Then something happened that I went back to*

[Christ of Maryknoll](#) icon by Robert Lentz who states, “This icon of Christ does not make clear which side of the fence Christ is on. Is He imprisoned or are we?”

*what I was doing. I started thinking that he was right. But anyway, prison life doesn't take any losers (you know what I mean). So soon as the guard got lost for a second, instead of jumping on that dude and break his jaw, I had stepped up to the plate and apologized. To my surprise, he did too. So I got out of that in one piece with NO FIGHT!*

*Can you believe, Father? Me-- I never had stepped out of fight before. Then afterwards, somebody came to me and told me that he's proud of me, and the fact that I had humbled myself makes me a real man! Unbelievable! At first I was afraid of losing my respect in other inmates' eyes, but I didn't. Even if I did, I know deep inside my heart that I did a right thing. God blessed me with understanding and peace. Thanks be to God!*

*So that was my "spiritual awakening." It happened yesterday and I'm already looking at a lot of things differently. I think that the transformation from a little boy into a grown man just begun. I'm sick of being a follower, 'cause if I take a close look at myself I always had based my decisions on what other people will say. Enough is enough! So simply, that's what's going on with me right now...*

That's Michael, Lord. It is great what You are doing in him. Keep it up, will You? And keep using the prison chaplains to be your hands and eyes and heart in that place with all the bars and stone walls and barbed wire... And with the human beings from broken childhoods whom You haven't given up on because they are Your flesh and blood...So why should we?

## Reflection Questions

1. How do you see God working in Michael's life? How could you use this story to start a discussion with your sons and daughters, your students, your parishioners?
2. Do you notice God "moving" you in any way? How can you foster this awareness?
3. Would you consider hiring Michael for a job? In your company? Around your home? How difficult do you imagine it to be for an ex-inmate to get a job?



## How to Get Involved

**Adeodatus Prison Ministry**  
P.O. Box 40815, Phila., Pa 19107  
[Spiritualhealth@yahoo.com](mailto:Spiritualhealth@yahoo.com)  
[www.spirhealth.com](http://www.spirhealth.com)

**Spiritual Support Group**  
St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School  
1719 Morris St., Phila., Pa. 19145  
Wednesday evenings, 7:30 - 9 P.M.

### VOICES FROM PRISON

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