

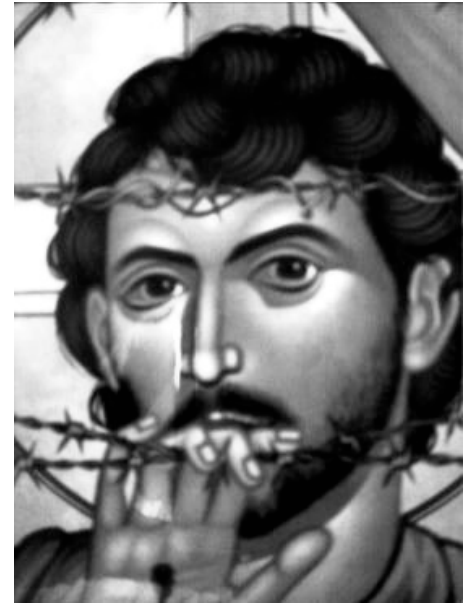
I was in prison and you visited me. Matthew 25:36

Voices From Prison

A newsletter from adeodatus prison ministry
Spring 2010, Vol. 3, No. 2

And if you smoke crack, your kids'll smoke crack tomorrow...Slick Rick

Spring greetings from all of us at Adeodatus! How terrific to feel the sun's warmth after this winter of snowstorms and rain. If you have a moment, grab a chair and read this letter from a Kensington guy named "Joey." His tale of growing up on the streets, without much parental presence or love, is the story of many young people today. Think of the recent "flash mobs." The number of high-risk children of the incarcerated is a national problem. 5,000 children in Philadelphia have at least one parent in jail today. Joey, whose four year old son's name is tattooed on his arm, calls out with a cry for all of these young people. *His father was missing as Joey is now for his son! Will you listen to him, maybe put yourself in his place? Then put yourself in his son's place: **Where is my daddy?***



The Street Way

For most of my young life, I lived my life the only way I know how to...the street way." Growing up on the perilous streets of Kensington was an experience on its own. Seeing people run for their lives while being chased by others who only wished them harm was something of the norm in Kensington. From street to street, all I'd seen growing up was hookers and drug dealers selling to someone's mom or dad a death sentence. The parents were no longer capable of taking care of themselves, let alone their kids. Growing up in this atmosphere taught me many things—how to be self-destructive and how to be hurtful to society is what it narrowed down to. I was always at war within myself, one side fighting to do right and one side fighting to do what the streets taught me. Did I mention that for the most part, the streets won a lot of the battles? The streets are like a massive current in the middle of a great ocean, and no matter how hard you try to stay afloat the current pulls you back under. My father passed away when I was a child, and my mother had better things to do than give me the love, attention, and knowledge a kid in a normal household would receive. I always felt different from everyone else I hung with Yeah, I hung around corners selling my soul to the devil himself for a very cheap price, but I had a will to want to help people also. I learned years after hanging on corners that I could take care of those around me by looking after them and providing in any way I could.

I'd like to tell you a story about this little gal who lived across the street on the block I sold poison on. Her name was Ella. Her son left her alone while he chased a better life in the suburbs. I elected myself her personal caretaker. I would go shopping for her, change light bulbs, and all the other things that became a little too overwhelming for little ol' Ella. One day I was in a daze while hanging on the corner, just looking around inspecting my

surroundings. I noticed a young black guy peeking out of Ella's living room window. I knew something wasn't right so I gathered my friends and our illegally obtained weapons.

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?"

We kicked Ella's front door off the hinges. To my surprise we found my friend Ella tied up on her sofa while three young men were ransacking her house. We chased these guys until we caught them and handed them the beating of their lives for their transgressions. That was the greatest feeling I ever experienced and by far the greatest deed I've done. I actually saved someone from hardship instead of being the cause of the hardship.

That victory was short-lived due to the fact that the streets sucked me right back in, which landed me in this awful place called "jail" where I have felt lonely, depressed and hopeless. It wasn't 'till a year here when I met a great friend who I truly believe changed my life some sort of way. We'll just call him "Mr. Mc." He taught me that while I thought I was acting like a man, I really wasn't. He showed me what my life was missing ---"God." Once a week, Mr. Mc would wake me up and drag me down to the Catholic Church service. Like me, he grew up in the perilous streets of Kensington and witnessed all that I have found and much more. Like me, he watched as the streets got worse. The one thing that Mr. Mc. had in his life, that helped him become a better man than me, was "God." We spent about a year together where we grew to become like family. When my family forgot about me here, Mr. Mc. didn't. Me and him are no longer in the same area of the jail. Maybe God needed him somewhere else, to touch someone else's life like he touched mine.

Today I can honestly say I am a new man. I pray and read the Bible on a daily basis. I have this new feeling inside—a sudden urge to help people. I catch myself overwhelmed with things to do because I can help so many. I now understand how I can help fix the neighborhood that I just sat back and watched slowly deteriorate. If I can at least pass on the knowledge that I have gained to one troubled soul, and help them find God, and they in turn do the same as I did, then I have started a great trend. I thank Father Paul for the opportunity to spread the word. So with this letter I leave to all who may read this: "I challenge you to make a difference, to touch someone's life in a positive way."

A Brief Reflection

- 1) What touched you the most about Joey's testimony?
- 2) Would you be willing to write to this man, or to others, if he/they are found guilty and sent away for 20-40 years?
- 3) What about his child, and the children of so many inmates? How can we help them when their parents are gone from their lives for so many years?
- 4) Is it ultimately unchristian to say that someone must be punished behind bars for many years as a way to save society, even if they do change like Joey shows?
- 5) What alternatives can you imagine?

How to Get Involved

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greatly

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VOICES FROM PRISON

Father Paul Morrissey O.S.A.

left).

George Munyan, co-editors

We distribute to 12 parishes, and more will join us soon. A donation of \$5 or \$10 would

help this mission. If possible please send a donation to our address (shown left). Your comments and credit card donations are also welcomed on our website (also shown

Thank you for your gifts sent and your prayers!

Join us any Wednesday evening (7:30 to 9:00 PM) at St. Rita of Cascia rectory at 1166 S. Broad St., Phila., Pa., for spiritual fellowship and support (215-922-2277)