

# ADEODATUS

A Program of ADROP

Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor



## VOICES FROM PRISON AND THE EDGE

Spring 2015  
No. 20

### "Can a Person Be a Waste?"



### Where do we meet?

### Why not join us?

We are Adeodatus, a support group for ex-inmates and anyone who cares about their reintegration into society. We also attempt to give spiritual support to the addicted and people whose struggle has brought them to the edge. We meet on Thursday nights (7:30 to 9:00 P.M.). On the first Thursday of the month, we meet at the Bevilacqua Center at Kensington and Lehigh Aves, Philadelphia. On all other Thursdays we meet at St. Rita of Cascia rectory, 1166 S. Broad Street (at Ellsworth), Philadelphia. Through prayer, the Gospel and Christian fellowship we offer strength to meet the challenges of life in this world. A donation of \$5 or \$10 dollars would greatly help this mission. Make checks payable to: ADROP / ADEODATUS and mail to: Adeodatus Prison Ministry, 2130 S 21 St. Phila. Pa., 19145

**LETTER FROM TOBIAS**—This is a letter to you and God as an attempt to express and reveal my pain. I yearn for my father’s pride and my mother’ smile. I’ve never hurt inside so deeply. I hurt/ I ache with pain because I know that with my sins, I have disappointed my father and made my mother cry. I’ve made some terrible choices and mistakes and now I am facing a lot of time in prison. Even though I am only twenty years old, I feel like I’ve already wasted my life. I hurt because I know what my “wasted” life will do to my parents. I know how much pain it will cause them. I do not hurt because I am selfish, I hurt because inside I am selfless. I need to care more about myself. But I will always care more about my mother and father than I will care about my own well-being. Inside I am always fighting a battle, a constant war with myself. I will only ever be at peace when I have made my father proud and my mother smile, perpetually. The only thing that keeps me sane now is the knowledge I have that God has a plan for me, a plan where I finally do succeed. I know that because I would have long been dead, if there was no God or no plan.



**A REFLECTION** by Fr. Paul Morrissey O.S.A  
Founder of Adeodatus



*made my father proud and my mother smile, perpetually.*

Hearing the plaintive cry of this young man can break your heart. It is especially a stab to the guts when you know him. “Tobias” is the eldest son of one of the Adeodatus families who come to our weekly support group meetings. You can hear his intelligence, his pain, his disarming vulnerability. But he is in prison, addicted to drugs. He feels like he has wasted his life so far, but he believes God has a plan for him. And a key to help him perhaps? His words: *I will only ever be at peace when I have*

His parents are at their wit’s end. His mother, in particular, plays into his desperate need to make her smile. She cannot say no to him, even when her yes harms him. And with this manipulation going on both ways, neither of them grow. A co-dependent relationship keeps him empty and alone because he tries to live for her and his father’s love, and keeps her guilty for his failure. At twenty years of age, Tobias hasn’t developed a “self” of his own. No wonder he is in pain. The whole Christian world is celebrating the wonderful season of Easter. How can Tobias and his family’s painful story connect with the Resurrection event? We can wonder what Jesus would do to help Tobias? In one of the Resurrection passages (John 20:11-18), Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene. She has been empty and alone since his crucifixion and death. We read that she is “outside the tomb weeping.” Jesus appears to her in the midst of these tears and calls her by name, “Mary!” She turns and calls him “Rabbonni!” (which means Teacher, we are told).

Then Jesus says something strange to her, “Stop holding on to me.” Artists’ renditions of this scene show Mary kneeling in front of Jesus and clasping his feet. It makes me want to ask Tobias a question: “Are you holding onto your mother and father?” And ask them: “Are you holding onto your son?” And one for all of us: “Is Jesus telling all of us, ‘Let me go?’” Why would he say this? And what might it have to do with Tobias? In another place in Scripture, Jesus tells his disciples, “If I do not go, the Spirit cannot come” (John 16:7). They are sad when he is telling them about when he will be gone. It may be too simplistic a spiritual solution to Toby’s anguished cry, but the next time I see him I will ask him, “What

if you lived in a way--not to make your parents proud of you--but to make God proud of you?" And this as well, "What if you started growing a 'self' inside by trying to be proud of yourself?" As Scott Peck tells us in his classic, *The Road less Travelled*, "You've got to have a self before you give it away." Tobias is the kind of kid you want to wrap your arms around—almost like a child--and help. But every time his parents says no to holding him, they help him grow this self inside. It is the tough love way that addicts need so badly. If Tobias can sit with his emptiness and pray to God to hold him, he may begin to feel his "selflessness" (lack of ego) turn into a seed that begins to grow, even if it is late in coming. Of course, as his chaplain, I can model this with him as we pray together for this gift of awareness of God's Parental care for him.

The resurrected Jesus knows this and tells Mary, "Go to my brothers and tell them, "I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." In other words, "Don't cling to me! It is OUR Father and OUR God you must relate to as I have. If you hold your emptiness and lost-ness up to God this way, and don't cop out by taking a short cut with drugs, the Holy Spirit will come and fill you. You can even put your arms around yourself and hold yourself this way. No more pleasing—and failing—Mom and Dad. Onward and upward this Easter with all the young men and women God loves as his adult children. Alleluia! Toby, I believe God has a plan for you, but I don't believe it is to be a waste.

**"I WAS IN PRISON AND YOU VISITED ME." MATHEW 25:36**

## **WORKS OF MERCY** by Mary McKenna

Adeodatus Volunteer

Anything that one can do to reach out to those who are incarcerated is acceptable, especially realizing that forgiveness and mercy are something we all need at some part in our lives. We can try to understand the pain of separation from loved ones, the guilt of the harm brought to victims, and the hardships of family members who are without the emotional and financial support of the person who is away. We can participate in the letter-writing program of Mary, Mother of Captives, and try to support the families and children of those imprisoned. We can volunteer to offer educational and other forms of help to prisoners, or be part of a team that brings spiritual comfort and religious services to those who cannot go themselves to their places of worship. We can pray for those confined in prison and for those who guard them, that they have what they need to bring about the rehabilitation that will allow those incarcerated to become "returning citizens" who can contribute to family, neighborhood, and meaningful work.



### **A Daily Prayer for Justice and Mercy**

Jesus united with the Father and Holy Spirit, Give us your compassion for those in prison. Mend in mercy the broken in mind and memory. Soften the hard of heart, the captives of anger. Free the innocent; parole the trustworthy. Awaken the repentance that restores hope. May prisoners' families persevere in their love. Jesus, heal the victims of crime. They live with the scars. Lift to eternal peace those who die. Grant victims' families the forgiveness that heals. Give wisdom to lawmakers and to those who judge. Instill prudence and patience in those who guard. Make those in prison ministry bearers of your light, for all of us in need of your mercy. Amen

On the street you can be free  
as a lark,  
But chained in the prison of  
your heart.

You can be chained in a  
dungeon dark,  
But free as a bird in your  
heart.

*Fr. Paul Morrissey O.S.A.*

## ADEODATUS THOUGHTS by George Munyan

Editor of *Voices From Prison and the Edge*

What's worse, to be in a prison and know it, or to be in a prison and not know it? Sure, each limit freedom, and both provide food and occasional visitors. However to be in prison, and know it, is to be at the gate of a new beginning, indeed, a new life if you so choose. To be in prison and to realize it is to come face to face with the reality of who you are, where you've been and where you are going. The distractions of the world with all of its clouded realities and blaring noises are suspended. The mirror is clean and the lights are on. Maybe what you see is not very attractive, but neither is the muddy foundation of a new skyscraper at the moment of its conception.

There is only one way to go and it is up. To those who hope, a new start begins with many looking beyond the clouds and heavens to the loving God who made them, the One waiting for them to restart their journey home. Some call this a "prison conversion." The test will come as it always does for all believers. Their test will be a return to the world that helped send them to prison. Many will fail but some will triumph, but isn't that true about all of us? Returning prisoners are documented and often publicized. The rest of us fail in comfortable anonymity. And what about those us in prisons who do not know it? Who are they? What are their prisons? I suggest it is all of us who are addicted to anything that prevents us, like our imprisoned brothers and sisters, from being all that God planned for us until we provided those awful detours in life. You can't always see these prisons and that is their deadly advantage. They include greed, lust, anger, materialism and violence found in destructive parenting, traitorous friendships, failed marriages and corrupted vocations. The prisoners outside of the walls of physical prisons suffer and delay their journey home until they too realize they are prisoners. So let us be a little kinder to the prisoners on both sides of the world. Let's be a little more honest with ourselves. Let's see each other as brother and sisters made by the same God. He loves us equally and waits for our return.



## MARY MOTHER OF CAPTIVES by Sue and John Killeen

Adeodatus Volunteers and Administrators of the Pen Pal Program

Are you trying to cope with a loved one in prison, on trial, or about to be sentenced to prison? Do you know anyone who has loved ones in prison? Join us any of these nights and locations. Join us at 7:00 PM.



First Thursday  
St. Cyprian  
Parish Hall  
501 Cobbs Creek Pkwy  
Phila, PA 19143  
484-432-5695 (Sue)

[Susan\\_MMOC@comcast.net](mailto:Susan_MMOC@comcast.net) [Maryann4582@yahoo.com](mailto:Maryann4582@yahoo.com)

Second Thursday  
St. Charles Borromeo  
Parish Meeting Room  
3407 Dennison Ave.  
Drexel Hill, PA 19026  
610-626-2304 / 484-620-1586

Third Wednesday  
St. Francis de Sales  
Bishop Shea Room  
4625 Springfield Ave  
Phila. PA 19143  
484-432-5695 (Sue)

[Susan\\_MMOC@comcast.net](mailto:Susan_MMOC@comcast.net)