

ADEODATUS

A Ministry to the Forgotten

A Division of ADROP

Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor

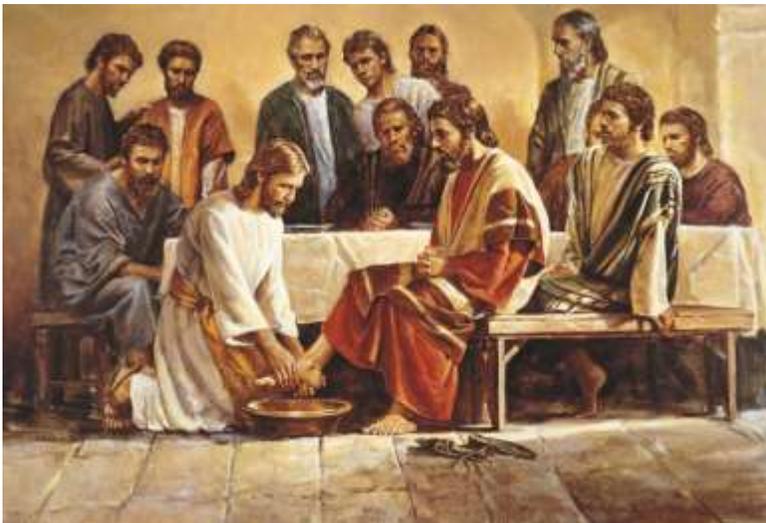


VOICES FROM PRISON AND THE EDGE

Autumn 2015

No. 21

"All of us need to be cleansed, to be washed."
Pope Francis



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. Our phone number is 215 925 3566.

Life Without Parole

An Excerpt from Prison Ministry Journal

Fr. Paul Morrissey, OSA

“Gary,” another son of mine in prison, was found guilty. He’ll get 15-30 years in prison. Gary is 24 years old with a 4 year old son, Giovanni, whom is inscribed in our book of Children of Inmates that we pray for on Thursday nights at the Adeodatus Support Group in Philadelphia. I found this out by a visit to Seamus, a Kensington friend of his in protective custody. It was like a kick in the ribs, I told Seamus, to hear this news about Gary. I had visited Gary often in the past, and more regularly as his trial came up on Holy Week and Easter. It breaks my heart to see him, whom I thought and he felt would be judged innocent, faced with his whole young adulthood ahead to be spent in prison. If he is given a short time, he will be 39 when he gets out! Gary had written the content for a recent issue of “Voices.” Now it takes on a whole new meaning. It makes a little sense why he seemed so limited in affect all these months. He was protecting himself. How do I protect myself?

Seamus also matter-of-factly informed me that many guys get sent up for life from the protective custody block where he is held. They live in what look like cages, and Seamus gets out of them to see me only when he is chained at the wrists and ankles. How is it that I sit next to him and feel no fear? Is it because he is chained? Really, I see an intelligent and even moral man in front of me. I cannot put it together that he/they have done horrible crimes worthy of life in prison without parole, or as in Gary’s case, 15-30 years. What does this accomplish? In any case, Seamus told me that in the ten months that he has been in protective custody, eighty guys have been sent up for life in prison. This blows my mind. I suppose it doesn’t blow their victims’ minds. Yet there must be a better way to gain justice. Reconciliation? Peace? Forgiveness?

As though to show how some inmates think about the chaplains, Seamus said, “I’d like to ask you something off to the side, Father.” “Sure, go ahead,” I responded. “Do you think that they’ll ever let priests get married?” He went on to explain his interest—it was over the sexual abuse crisis that surrounds the pope and the Vatican. Every day it is in the newspapers. Seamus wanted to know when celibacy started as a requirement for ordination. I gave him a quick history lesson on the topic, basically saying that by the time it became a canon law requirement in the 12th century it was mainly over financial concerns—celibacy would stop the practice of priests willing the rectory and the church holdings to their families when they died. John feels that if a priest got married and had children that he would better be able to understand the average people whom he serves...also, be less inclined to act out sexually in bad ways.

I thought of this as I drove home, remembering the concerned look in his eyes for me and other priests. I felt a bit of the parallels in



our lives—they in chains for some crime they have committed and often with no end in sight other than life behind walls, me and other priests with a life of freely chosen celibacy and all of its constraints, at least with the intent of being free to serve people like Gary and Seamus. Do we understand the needs of the people we serve? How does the Church serve the needs of those with life without parole sentences?



That's a sample of what happened on this glorious Spring day, the sun brilliant with a chill in the air, and the Canadian geese nesting on the banks of the "crick" next to DC when I left to meet Laura, my supervisor, for lunch. I hope to get home and go to the gym, even ride my bicycle there and back so I can feel that I truly lived today. Maybe the fact that I make it a point to get out and get exercise, to see the sky and the flowers and trees, to breathe the air in, even with the pollen, and smile at the people who pass me by as I swoosh by them on my bike—75 years old but energetic, thank God.

Blessed to be able to go in and out of prison, to give and receive mercy from these inmates, to write these thoughts and feelings down and by so doing let them go up to God and out to others who may feel their own blessedness. God is in charge of all of this, I believe, and His love will conquer all of our Lives Without Parole. *Show us, O God, how to work together to transform this broken world, these prisons, and the violence, drug use, poverty, dysfunctional families, mental illness and homelessness that keep making it so. Alleluia!*

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

Our Newsletter

Voices From Prison and the Edge is published quarterly to 27 Philadelphia Parishes, 25 Prisons from Pennsylvania to California, 8 Half Way Houses, 2 Colleges, and 16 Helping Organizations. One of our parishes is St. Cyprian in West Philadelphia (right).



Aeodatus Thoughts

by George Munyan, Editor of *Voices From Prison and the Edge*

Sometimes our ideas on a subject seem to be spoken with clarity and precision by someone else, and on rare occasions we find they are spoken by someone who never met us, yet communicates with an intense accuracy our very thoughts on a subject. There is an electricity of connection, a surge of affirmation. We realize there is someone out there who thinks like us. Those were my thoughts when I read the message of Pope Francis given at a local prison when he visited Philadelphia recently. So allow me to report his thoughts on prisoners.



"I have come so that we may pray together and offer our God everything that causes us pain, but also everything that causes us hope, so that we can receive from Him the power of the resurrection. That is why we see Jesus washing feet, our feet, the feet of his disciples, then and now. Life is a journey along different roads, different paths, which leave their mark on us. He doesn't ask us where we have been, He doesn't question us about what we have done Rather, He tells us 'Unless I wash your feet, you have no share with Me.' Unless I wash your feet, I will not be able to give you the life which the Father always dreamed of, the life for which He created you. All of us need to be cleansed, to be washed. All of us, and me in first place. All of us are being sought out by the Teacher, who wants us to resume our journey. The Lord tells us clearly with a sign, He washes our feet so we can come back to the table. The table from which he wishes no one to be excluded. The table which is spread for all and to which all of us are invited."

Words spoken fitting the Vicar of Christ. As Pope Francis said, *"All Christians and men of good faith are therefore called upon today to fight, not only for the abolition of the death penalty... This, for me, is linked to life sentences...A sentence of life (without parole) is a hidden death penalty."* Yes, because if someone is sentenced to Life Without Parole, it means there is no rehabilitation that is possible, no repentance, no forgiveness. If this is the case, then the Gospel of Jesus Christ is in vain.



Mary Mother of Captives Pen Pals

A Project of Adeodatus

by Sue and John Killeen

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 (7:00 PM) at any of these nights and locations.

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

Second Thursday
St. Charles Borromeo
Parish Meeting Room
3407 Dennison Ave.
Drexel Hill, PA 19026
610-626-2304 / 484-620-1586
Maryann4582@yahoo.com

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

