

# ADEODATUS

**A Ministry to the Urban Forgotten**

**Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova**

**Office of Justice and Peace**

**Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor**



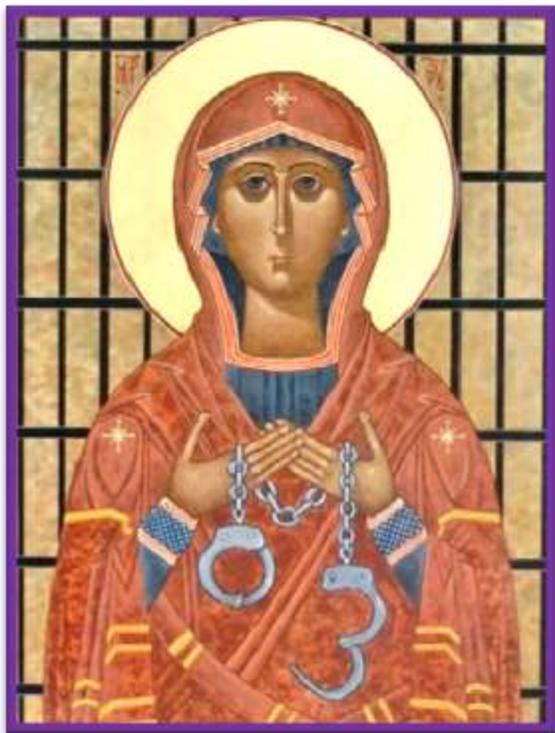
*I was in prison and you visited me.  
Matthew 25:36*



## VOICES FROM PRISON AND THE EDGE

Winter 2016

No. 22



*“Mary, Mother of Captives Icon”  
Jack Pachuta Icons 2015 ©*

**“Hurt  
People,  
Hurt  
People.”**

# **“WHAT IS IT LIKE TO HAVE YOUR SON MURDERED IN OUR CITY?”**

Fr. Paul Morrissey, O.S.A. interviews Victoria Greene, founder and CEO of EMIR, Every Murder is Real, whose son was murdered on the streets of Philadelphia. [www.emirphilly.org](http://www.emirphilly.org)

Every day, buried in the Local section of the Inquirer, appear notices of those shot and often killed the night before in the streets of Philadelphia.

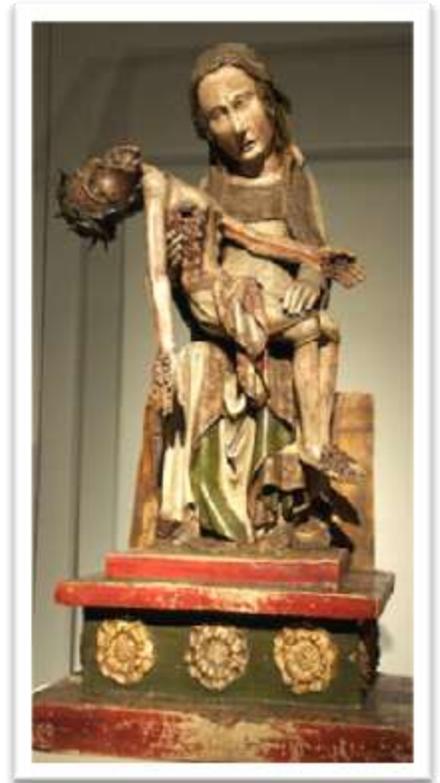
Much of the time, they are young black men from North or Southwest Philadelphia. Often at the end of the paragraph, usually not mentioning the victims' names, is a sentence: “Police reported no arrests.” These continual murders of human beings is horrific. What happens to the families of the victims and the killers? Is there no hope for young black men other than to pack a gun and kill or be killed? God, what is going on? What can we do?

The latest issue of our newsletter focuses on this problem from the vantage point of one of these families, in this case the mother of one of these murder victims. She is Victoria Greene, the founder of EMIR, Every Murder Is Real, named after her 20 year old son, Emir. Please allow her voice to speak out for all of those affected by these crimes, and to offer us the beginning of a way out.

## **VICTORIA GREENE'S STORY**

*For me it was devastating. I did not want to live anymore. I was suicidal. My family would have to hide any kitchen knives, and remove any kind of medications that would harm me. It was very frustrating waiting for the police to catch the perpetrator. I was trying to hold off my son's friends from taking any action of their own. I told them I didn't want anyone else murdered. I didn't want anyone going to prison. I said, "Let the police handle it." It was hard, as the days went on, to keep calm. The police knew who it was. (I'll call him "Randy") and they told me. "Randy" even came to my house to offer help with the funeral. He was someone my son was close to. At that time my son's girlfriend was pregnant, and "Randy" was supposed to be the Godfather of my grandson. My son never saw his son, and my grandson never saw his father. Emir was murdered on March 26 1997, and my grandson was born July 24 1997. So they never saw each other. But he did know he was having a boy. My son was 20.*

*The neighborhood was very tense. People were upset. I had a neighbor on the street, Miss Lucy. She came to me to visit me, and cried so much I had to calm and hold her. She said, "Your son helped me with my grocery bags. I don't understand; if "Randy" was a friend why would they kill him?" I was feeling like an alien in another land because I didn't know who to trust. I started thinking: is this person going to come after me? I really didn't know "Randy." He was not from our immediate neighborhood. He wasn't part of*





that group my son grew up with. I was in close contact with the homicide detectives. "People talk," they told me. I would write down all the information I heard for the detectives. Young people would tell me stuff and I would go home and write it in my composition book. And then I would call the homicide detectives. I have four daughters. One is a policewoman. She apologized for my calling them. They said, "Leave her alone. We have so many cases. Nobody calls nobody even cares. Let her call us. That's fine." They were really good.

*The way it happened: my son was in a car with "Randy" who was driving. It was at night and they ran across one of my son's friends "Bam-Bam," and gave him a ride in the back seat. He ended up being the witness to my son's murder. He said it didn't seem like they were arguing. They were talking in the car with the music on. "Randy" pulled up to the curb. Emir got out and "Randy" pulled a gun out from under his seat,*

*and started shooting through the rolled down passenger window. Emir started running. He was hit, and he fell down face forward. And "Bam-Bam" said that "Randy" turned around to him with the gun and said, "I know where you be at. If you talk I will kill you." "Randy" started to drive off, and "Bam-Bam" heard more shots. He turned around and he saw a burgundy car, with a guy standing over my son's body, shooting down into his body. So that's how my son was shot in the back seven times. And "Bam-Bam" said he did not recognize this other person.*

*The police knew about "Randy" but not who the other people were. Who were they? The detectives told me, "I know you're impatient, but we need to get enough evidence. If not the judge will dismiss it, and that's it. You don't get a second chance." I lived in Germantown, and these guys all lived in my community. After my son was murdered, they got out of the community. One guy was up here on Henry Ave., living with a girl who had an apartment. They took him down to homicide. He wouldn't talk. He wouldn't talk. They never got the second shooter. It was all a plan. They planned it together with "Randy." All of this was going around me. I switched from sorrow to anger. I thought: I know where "Randy" hangs out at. He was walking around the community like "la di da," and that was upsetting to me. He's walking around, and he's killed my son. So I can get a gun too. Just go where he hangs out and kill him. I didn't care. I didn't care about my life. I didn't even care about going to prison. But it came to me that I had four daughters, and my mother was still alive. My daughters had already lost their brother. My mother had lost her grandson. She was grieving. This was a turning point for me. They would really be done if I did that. That's when I decided to live. I said how dare I take my own life when my son didn't even have a choice. He was murdered. How dare you take a life and cause more pain and suffering and misery. At that point I said I am going to try to live the best life I can live. Life is so fragile.*

*The homicide of young black men is the direct result of racism. The racism has worked well. It has truly worked well. Young Black men live in a society where they are looked upon as a danger. They learn: "You're dangerous, you're hopeless, you won't be successful. You're a loser. You're life doesn't really matter, whatever problems you have are your fault." If you live in that kind of a society, your self-esteem is crushed. So they think: "My life doesn't really matter. And if you're Black, your life don't matter either. So that's why I can kill ya. Your life doesn't matter, my life doesn't matter, and nobody cares about us." So it's really internalized racism. They internalize what the larger society says about them, and they believe it. And that's why they will kill because, "Oh he disrespected me." I believe they have taken in this racism, this lack of self-esteem, not feeling loved or nurtured. I am 66 years old. When I went to Germantown HS, a counselor, a white woman, told me, "Oh you don't need to take the academic course of studies. Take commercial so you can be a secretary or clerk because you're not going to go to college." That's what she told me. Another white teacher heard about it and stopped it. "No! She is going to take the academic course. She's smart, and she's going to take it. That's it." I hear the same thing from other black students today. I am so upset that this is still going on.*



*I have a friend who is a Quaker. One time she told me her son was late from work, and she almost went crazy. She told me she's scared when he goes to walk his dog. And this is what we have to live under. I went to speak at a prison with my daughter. Some of the prisoners were lifers. Some who were there for murder were interested in their victims' mothers, but were not allowed to contact them. I said, "I just don't understand how someone could kill someone, unless its self-defense. I just don't understand killing someone over money or drugs I just don't understand it." So one of the guys said, "Miss Greene when you're out on the streets selling drugs, all you think of is stuff, material things, what you want to have. When become like that you cease to be human. And when you cease to be human you can murder." And I've never forgotten that. Materialism....stuff...to fill in the emptiness.*

*I am on a journey. I was raised Baptist. I spent some time with the Jehovah's Witnesses. I've gone to Buddhism for a while. Now, I am a Quaker. I've been through a search. When my son*

*was murdered I was angry with God. In fact I screamed outside of the emergency room at Einstein, "Jehovah, where were you that night? Why didn't you protect him?" And so I stopped praying. I didn't go to any church. I didn't believe in God anymore. I also said if this is what human beings do to other human beings, there is no hope for humanity. None! And that's how I felt for a long time, but over time the love and concern from people is what brought me around and it was amazing. Some of the people that I was close to backed away from me. Because they felt homicide is like a disease. If I am with her I might catch it. They wanted me to be how I used to be and I couldn't. It was interesting how some people who I might just had known in passing, who weren't that close, they stepped up. They became closer to me. I don't know why it happened like that, but it did. And that brought me around. Kindness and love brought me around, and I thought there is hope. Some of my son's friends told me how Emir faced death a number of times, but he still made it home. So for me that was how God was watching out for him, warning him, and then I realized that*

*my son didn't listen. God did warn him, God was there. He did look out for him. God was there. God did warn him. Yep. But unfortunately we have free will.*

*Well, I also started to go to a program called the grief assistance program held at the medical examiner's office where they had the support groups. These people were good. They were great. I went there for counseling. They saved my life. Those people saved my life. One time they had us working with clay. We made a little chapel and we put our loved one in there. Every time I went there I noticed some new parents, new members, and that's when I realized: Oh my God! In this city, every day someone is being murdered. I wanted to reach out and help other people. I wanted people to know that my son was not a monster. He had hopes and dreams. He was talented. So that's when I decided to have a conference on drug related homicide. I had it at Rosemont College which is my alma mater. Everybody who was involved in my son's case was at the conference. I wanted people to know that this is what a family goes through when a loved one is murdered. I had a drama group from Temple to re-enact on stage an argument between two guys on the street. They would stop—freeze--and ask the audience what they think is happening here. I didn't want a conference where people just talked, talked, talked. I wanted interaction. And then I had the same conference at Temple University. It was also very well attended. Now my four daughters and I go around telling our story. We went to youth facilities trying to make an impact. We established The EMIR Healing Center where we serve and support families and communities who have been affected by homicide and violence.*



**Dear Victoria, thank you for offering us your heart, your still-fresh feelings of loss and anger, with a vision of a way to go on. At the very least, there should be a city-wide discussion of this black on black crime. We hope that your view, that much of it comes from internalized racism, could help all of us examine our consciences: whether I am white or black or brown, how do I foster a belief that young black lives don't matter? And how might I take concrete steps to heal this? The next time I see a young black man, how can I show him a respect that Jesus Christ would show him, even if he can hardly believe this himself? Please pass this newsletter along to foster this discussion.**

**Thank you, Fr. Paul**

## **SOME THOUGHTS FROM PHYLLIS TAYLOR, VICTIM ADVOCATE...**

*I am acutely aware of the need to hear the voices of those impacted by crimes, as well as those who commit crimes. In my role I have often asked those incarcerated and those returning from prison or jail, about the impact of the crime on the victim. I have explored their remorse and how they want to atone for their actions that have caused so much grief. In my role as an advocate for victims I have heard how their lives have been permanently altered by the crime that changed their lives and the lives of those who love them. I have talked to people afraid to go out for fear of another robbery or attack. I have sat in court with victims or their families, and have wept with them as they coped with the ways their lives have been changed.*

*As a crime victim myself, I learned about the Inmate Apology Bank. It was created for victims of crime who have an interest in receiving an apology letter from the offender. Any person in a state prison or on state parole can submit an apology letter to be stored in the Inmate Apology Bank. Victims shall determine if and when they view the letter, and if the offender has been informed that the letter has been read. This is a wonderful way to help both the victim and the offender. I believe that this information is posted in all State Correctional Institutions.*

## **MARY MOTHER OF CAPTIVES HEALING**

### **MISSION**

By Sue and John Killeen

Our goal is to heal the pain between victims and offenders, and lighten the burden of the shadow of crime and prison on our society. In this spirit, we have built a Healing Garden at St. Augustine's Church in Philadelphia. The icon of Mary Mother of Captives will be enshrined in our garden, and we invite you to visit this holy place at 4th and Vine Streets. Whether you wish to be part of the healing victim offender conversation, or part of the Pen Pal writing to prisoners program, or, perhaps, have a loved one in prison, why not join Mary Mother of Captives (7:00 PM) at any of these nights and location-

First Thursday St. Cyprian Parish Hall 501 Cobbs Creek Pkwy Phila, PA 19143	Second Thursday St. Charles Borromeo Parish Meeting Room 3407 Dennison Ave. Drexel Hill, PA 19026	Third Wednesday St. Francis de Sales Bishop Shea Room 4625 Springfield Ave. Phila. PA 19143
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## **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 Catholic Worker Free Clinic at 1813 Hagert St., Phila. All other Thursdays we meet at St.

Rita of Cascia rectory, 1166 S. Broad Street (at Ellsworth), and Philadelphia. Through prayer, the Gospel and Christian fellowship we offer strength to meet the challenges of life in this world. Join us. Adeodatus Prison Ministry, 2130 S 21 St. Phila. Pa., 19145. Our phone is 215 925 3566.

## **OUR NEWSLETTER**

*Voices From Prison and the Edge* is published quarterly to 31 Philadelphia Parishes, 26 Prisons from Pennsylvania to California, 8 Half Way Houses, 3 Colleges, and 16 Helping Organizations. One of our parishes is St. Francis de Sales in West Philadelphia (right).

