

ADEODATUS

A Spiritual Field Hospital in Philadelphia

Office of Justice and Peace

Province of St. Thomas of Villanova

Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor



VOICES FROM PRISON AND THE EDGE

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“I was attracted to trouble.”

“TAKE ME IN YOUR ARMS”

So now, little man, you've grown tired of grass, LSD, goofballs, cocaine and hash; and someone, pretending to be a true friend, said, "I'll introduce you to Miss Heroin."

Well honey, before you start fooling with me, just let me inform you of how it will be. For I will seduce you and make you my slave, I've sent men much stronger than you to their graves.

In the current issue, we have the privilege of hearing from “Ray,” one of the men who has attended our weekly spiritual support group. He has been drug free for seven months. Ray speaks in italics, and Fr. Paul reflects in blue.



A Suburban Salvation Tale

I grew up in the suburbs and became a heroin addict. My parents had alcohol addiction problems. They were divorced when I was two. I was with my mom and brother. We all ended up with my grandparents. My mother was evicted, we stayed with the grandparents. They were good wholesome people. We had a good childhood. We would see my dad every other weekend and my mom whenever she would come around. That wasn't very often. There were a lot of incidents. She would show up at soccer games. She'd be drunk and fighting with my father.

At puberty I started smoking cigarettes and drinking with the wrong crowd. It was the cool thing. It was the route I took. I was attracted to trouble. When I was fourteen, I ended up getting caught drinking in school. I left my grandparents and went to live with my mom



who was sober at the time. She had sober times over the years. Smoking weed was a big thing. Mom relapsed when I moved in. She was more of a party-friend than a mother. I could do anything I wanted. She would buy my friend and I alcohol. Then I started to bring weed home. Mom would smoke with us. There was a lot of craziness.

When my mom drank she turned into a monster. My father had his own business and stayed pretty much sober. He was there but it was my decision to stay away from him.

Fr. Paul: As you can see, the family's addiction atmosphere is a red-flag for vulnerability, AND this is happening not in the city but the suburbs. The greatest rate of increase of opioids is in the suburbs. Another indicator: “I was attracted to trouble,” says Ray; and “I could do anything I wanted.” No one—except the grandparents—was providing any structure and discipline for Ray.

In 8th and 9th grade all of this started. My mom got a boyfriend who introduced her to crack. I smoked crack with my mom at the age of 14. We'd be driven to Philly to get weed in Kensington. “Nightmare”... was what we called heroin. Someone gave us 2 bags when I was 16. Within a few months we were hooked on heroin. First time we got high we threw up, but it made us calm and feel good. It was a powder we snorted. We mixed it with alcohol and weed. Within a couple of months

**You think you could
never become a disgrace,
And end up addicted to
poppy seed waste.
So you'll start inhaling
me one afternoon,
You'll take me into your
arms very soon.**

**And once I've entered
deep down in your veins,
the craving will nearly
drive you insane.
You'll need lots of
money as you have been
told, for darling I'm
much more expensive
than gold.**

**You'll swindle your
mother and just for a
buck,
You'll turn into
something vile and
corrupt,
You'll mug and you'll
steal for my narcotic
charm,
And feel contentment
when I'm in your arms.**



we were using daily and sick when we didn't have it. I went to Cherry Hill West High School. Mom was living high and had won a lawsuit for \$300,000. We were kicked out of the apartment. I transferred to Pennsauken High School. We moved into a bad neighborhood near Camden. I dropped out of high school in my senior year.

The biggest issue: Ray's mom was an enabler, not a parent. Note the creeping escalation of drug use—cigarettes,

marijuana, alcohol, crack, heroin. And the movement from drugs providing pleasure to needing them simply in order not to feel sick. Finally, school dropout in senior year.

I knew I was an addict and didn't really care. I felt I was super strong, capable of anything, sure I could stop before it got too bad. It was insidious. You become stunted and remain at the emotional level of when you got hooked. It destroys your normal pleasure center. You can't get pleasure from normal things like the birth of a child, or a new job. I was able to be around girls comfortably because of heroin. There were plenty of parties. Heroin made it easier being able to be around girls, to talk to them. Girls were attracted to the bad guys, but I cared more about drugs and drinking than about the girls. Drugs became the significant other. You're married to the dope. My mom would give me money. She never knew I was on heroin. Finally her money ran out. She moved into my apartment. I couldn't handle it. She was thirty-eight. There were times I had to pick her up naked from the ground, pull her off the highway, trying to stop cars. Real out there stuff. We were in Cherry Hill again. She had bought a condo. I ended up leaving there. Later, ended up just moving from friend to friend. I was stealing from everyone, friends and family. I panhandled in the subway. Then my mom passed away. I had ended up convincing her to do a bag of heroin. She ended up dying from that. She was thirty-nine.

Key point: Ray becomes grandiose and irresponsible together: "I knew I was an addict and I didn't really care. I felt I was super-strong, capable of anything." Yet at the same time he stops growing emotionally: "You become stunted and remain at the emotional level of when you get hooked. Drugs became my significant other. You're married to the dope." And most significantly, he gives his mother heroin and she O'D's from it. Remember, he is saying these thing NOW when he has awakened from the DEAD.

**The day, when you realize
the monster you've
grown,
You'll solemnly swear to
leave me alone.
If you think you've got
that mystical knack,
Then sweetie, just try
getting me off your back.**

**The vomit, the cramps,
your gut tied in knots.
The jangling nerves
screaming for one more
shot.
The hot chills and cold
sweats, withdrawal pains,
Can only be saved by my
little white grains.**

**There's no other way,
and there's no need to
look,
For deep down inside you
know you are hooked.
You'll desperately run to
the pushers and then,
You'll welcome me back
to your arms once again.**

I ended up going to my dad. My step-mother saw things missing, and found empty bags of dope. I was eighteen. At nineteen my dad and my stepmom confronted me and told me I had to go to rehab. That started twelve rehabs. The first one I stayed four days. I overdosed a few times. I still didn't care. I pulled over to a gas station and woke up hours later with the needle still in my arm. Once I shot up in the Gallery mall bathroom. I woke up and four cops were standing over me. They had cut my pants down to administer Narcan. I was nineteen or twenty. I just didn't care about anything but feeling good and my friends. I grew up Catholic. I was an altar boy, attended CCD, and had Confirmation. So I had knowledge, but no relationship with God. I did believe in God. I did all that growing up with my grandparents. I think I prayed at some point. I took the blame because I had convinced my mother to use the heroin that killed her. She had never used it before.

**And you will return just as I foretold!
I know that you'll give me your body and soul.
You'll give up your morals, your conscience, your heart.
And you will be mine
"Until Death Do Us Part."**

-Author Anonymous

Someone confronts him! (his father and stepmom). He starts on the rehab circuit at nineteen. He overdosed a few times. He still "doesn't care." At a key point in his spiral downward, he recalls his upbringing as a Catholic, including a striking revelation: "I had knowledge (of God), but no relationship with him." Most critically, he is sunk in self-blame for his mother's death. Only drugs seem to help him numb that pain.



I had a friend whose father had been to a Christian rehabilitation center. I got in. It was in Savannah, Georgia. It was an eight to ten month Christian discipleship program. I had never seen the power of God. I had only been to the Catholic thing. You know, like stand up, sit down, and get your communion and go. But this was different. This was the first rehab I stayed at. People were praying for me while I was in heroin withdrawal. They were laying their hands on me. I stayed there eighteen months. It was like a growing up and returning to the moral foundation my grandparents had laid down for me. It was really like a Bible boot camp, five and a half hours of Bible study every day. It was really pounded into me. I developed a relationship with God at that time. I got a new start at life

Something breaks through his self-destruction to make him reach out for help at a Christian Rehabilitation Center. While there he experiences "the power of God." People were praying for him and over him, "laying their hands on me." He feels like he grows up spiritually: "I developed a relationship with God. I got a start at a new life." A question emerges here for anyone reading this: Do you have a relationship with God? Do you pray to and listen to God? This is the most important point of Ray's waking up and rising up out of his path to ruin. It can be yours too if any addictions are seducing you.

When I left there my aunt in Boston let me live with her in order to avoid the Philadelphia drug scene. I moved in with a girl, went to school and fell in love. We were together five years. I wasn't on heroin. I just drank. Alcohol was a big thing and progressed and got worse. Then she left me. I ended up marrying a childhood sweetheart, had a child, and alcohol got worse. I quit alcohol for a year after I passed out while watching my infant son. I was miserable. I left God a bit after Savannah. After ten years of being clean of heroin I lost my grandfather. There's a lot of loss in my story. I started taking pills... Percocet (180 pills).



When the bottle ran out in two weeks I went straight to Camden and got hooked again (after ten years). I had a house, a good job, I was a machinist at the time. I was twenty-nine. My wife miscarried and turned into a different person. I was doing heroin again. I got sick on vacation, got drunk, and my wife left me in Pittsburgh. That was it for her. She was done with me. I was devastated.

Ray even yet relapses: “I left God...there’s a lot of loss in my story...I don’t like losses,” he says. You might say that LOSSES are the overwhelming catalyst for Ray’s see-saw dance with drugs. He seeks relief from the pain of his many losses in drugs. When he leaves God and seeks to fill his pain and emptiness in drugs, he crashes. He actually loses everything, his wife, relatives, job, son, and home, not to mention his health. It is as though he had to be on the doorstep of Hell and Death to come to his senses and really make a commitment to stop the insanity.

I went onto rehab and got my life back together somehow. I went back to drinking and moved to Philadelphia. I was a functional addict. I got arrested for heroin possession. I went to a methadone clinic and kept drinking. I lost my job. I lost my apartment, and I ended up on the street. Panhandling. Sleeping outside. I was on the street for two winters. A girl got me locked up because I left her, in jail forty days. I went through seven days of hallucinations. Placed on probation I pleaded guilty just to get out of jail. Probation put a lot of rules on me. I don’t like losses. My grandmother and father died. I was thirty-seven when I got off the street. The woman who lied and got me locked up the first time, lied again and got me locked up again. She had seen me with my girlfriend, but this time the cops didn’t believe her. I prayed to God and my dad, avoided one year in jail and went back to rehab. I decided to stay clean.

I always walked by the place called “The Open Door.” I had a card with this place’s number. I called and they let me in after forty days of rehab. I’ve been here six months, and I am seven months clean and sober. One drop of alcohol and I’ll get two years in prison by my PO. I got back into the Word of God, getting back my relationship with the Lord. This is the first time I ever stayed sober with personal freedom. This place is a lifesaver. I am sober and free. I listen to the teaching of Jimmy, (Director of the Open Door). I get a lot out of it. I am legally employed. I have a sober girlfriend. I am not at war with myself or with anyone else now.

The Twelve Steps have helped, including his living relationship with God and his nurturance of this with the community he lives with...one day at a time. With the mental and emotional scars and “synapses” he has as a result of so much drug abuse, Ray is very vulnerable to relapse. At the same time, he is one of God’s miracles to be even alive and so aware at this moment in time. Let us pray for him and all who have been lost in the Hell of drug abuse. And perhaps Ray can be a witness to young people who are at such risk in our addiction-nurturing society. CBS reports that from 2009 to 2014, heroin overdose jumped 72% (with 105 deaths in Montgomery County, PA, alone).



By late summer, the beautiful original icon of Mary, Mother of Captives will be enshrined in the Healing Garden at St. Augustine Catholic Church in Philadelphia. We hope your parish will join us in praying with this icon of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. As the face of Mary shows, she is deeply concerned with the plight of anyone in captivity—from being in jail, from addictions of any kind, from the ‘handcuffs’ around our hearts due to harm done by us or to us by anyone, including the Church. In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, we pray with Mary that we can be freed from such captivity, and experience ourselves as God’s beloved sons and daughters.



Mary Mother of Captives

RETREAT 2016



WHERE DO WE MEET?

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 every Thursday night (7:30 to 9:00 P.M.) at St. Rita of Cascia rectory, 1166 S. Broad Street (at Ellsworth). On the last Thursday of the month, we also meet at the Catholic Worker Free Health Clinic at 1813 Hagert St., Phila. (3:00 to 4:15 PM). Through prayer, the Gospel and Christian fellowship we offer strength to meet the challenges of life in this world. Why not join us?

OUR NEWSLETTER

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Any donation is most appreciated . For Contact:

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