

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



"I was in prison and you visited me."
Matthew 25, 16

VOICES FROM PRISON AND THE EDGE

Summer 2016
No. 24



REMBRANDT'S *RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON*

"...your brother was dead
and has come to life again; he
was lost and has been found."

Luke 15:32

A TALE OF FOUR BROTHERS

TOM AND MIKE

THE QUOTE ON THE FRONT PAGE IS FROM THE FATHER OF THE LOST SON IN THE FAMOUS PARABLE IN ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL. JESUS IS TELLING THE PHARISEES AND US HOW GOD, OUR FATHER, IS BROKEN-HEARTED UNTIL HE CAN HAVE HIS CHILDREN RECONCILED. THE TWO BROTHERS IN REMBRANDT'S PAINTING REPRESENT THIS BROTHER (AND SISTER) BOND AND RIVALRY. WHICH "BROTHER" ARE YOU?

IN THIS ISSUE OF *VOICES FROM PRISON AND THE EDGE*, YOU WILL HEAR TALES OF TWO PAIRS OF BROTHERS. THEY ARE THE MODERN DAY EQUIVALENT OF THE LUKE'S GOSPEL STORY, WITH THE "PIGSTY" BEING THE HELLISH WORLD OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ADDICTION. WHERE DO YOU SEE GOD, THE FATHER'S LOVE IN THESE TALES?



PRISONER ART

Dear Fr. Paul,

Just a Quick Note...

Tom's here. My Godfather. I didn't even recognize him at first. Pretty boy image is gone. Buzz cut. Tattoos. A few days ago I was in the chow hall and he came up to me and asked, "Is your name Mike?" I said, "Yeah, Why? What's up?" He said, "I was in the county jail with you years ago, the same time you were baptized." I told him he didn't look familiar...but as he was walking away, I remembered his eyes...once so full of life and now haunted and empty. I screamed his name across the chow hall and told him I am sorry. His appearance was different. I told him to meet me on the yard and he said okay, but the past eight years he hasn't been outside. My friend told me Tom has been using drugs. Pray for him. And give me a chance to talk to him before you write him. HE approached ME, so he's not so lost that he's let go of his memories or our relationship. I will see him again, we're on the same side of the jail, share the same three chow halls, yard, etc. I want to extend my hand in friendship to him and let him know that my love didn't change even if our circumstances in life did. From there I will mention communication with you and tell him how dear he is to your heart. He's jittery though and I don't want to scare him off. He's been alone in the darkness for eight years now and I want him to know he doesn't have to be alone anymore. I will write again soon, but I felt this was important information to get to you now. Pray for us as we pray for you... All my love, Mike

JASON AND MARK



OUR SECOND STORY COMES FROM A BROTHER OF A YOUNG MAN WHO RECENTLY DIED OF AN OVERDOSE. YOU WILL HEAR IN IT THE CRY THAT REPRESENTS ALL THE SURVIVORS OF THOSE LOST TO ADDICTIONS. GOD, THE FATHER'S, LONGING FOR HIS LOST SONS/DAUGHTERS CAN BE HEARD IN THIS STORY.

PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE AN ADDICT JUST CAN'T STOP. IT JUST CAN'T GO AWAY. WHEN SOMEONE HAS CANCER THE DOCTOR WILL TELL YOU HOW TO CARE FOR IT, BUT NO ONE TELLS FAMILIES OF THE ADDICTED HOW TO CARE FOR THEM. THERE'S A SHAME ISSUE. —JASON

SHAME! THAT POWERFUL EMOTION THAT KEEPS US FROM GETTING HELP. WE ALL KNOW IT. WE HAVE ALL BEEN PARALYZED BY IT. JASON CRIES OUT FROM GRIEF OVER HIS BROTHER'S RECENT DEATH FROM AN OVERDOSE OF HEROIN. —FR. PAUL

I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW BAD IT WAS WITH MY BROTHER, SO EVEN FAMILIES HIDE THE ISSUE FROM OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS. NO ONE'S EDUCATED ON WHAT TO DO. PEOPLE STILL SAY IT'S A WILL POWER ISSUE. THE CITY DOES NOTHING TO EDUCATE PEOPLE ON HOW TO GET HELP. IN MY HOME TOWN ALONE, THREE PEOPLE ARE DYING EVERY DAY OF HEROIN ABUSE. IF IT WAS THE FLU, WE WOULD HAVE GREAT NEWS COVERAGE ON THE SUBJECT. MY BROTHER TOLD ME, "IT'S EVERYWHERE. I CAN'T GET AWAY FROM IT." LOCKING PEOPLE UP IN JAIL IS NOT GOING TO HELP ANYBODY. —JASON

WITH THIS CRY FROM THE HEART, WE DEDICATE THIS ISSUE TO THE FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THOSE WHO ARE ADDICTED. HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE DYNAMICS OF ADDICTION AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE EPIDEMIC THAT IS ENGULFING US BEFORE WE ALL DROWN? JASON CONTINUES WITH THE STORY OF HIS BROTHER, "MARK," AND HIS FAMILY'S ATTEMPT TO HELP HIM. —FR. PAUL

WE BELIEVE MY LITTLE BROTHER, MARK, STARTED WITH DRUGS ABOUT SIX YEARS AGO WHEN HE WAS 18, ALTHOUGH IT'S REALLY HARD TO TELL WHEN BECAUSE HE WAS ABLE TO DISGUISE IT. BUT I DON'T THINK WE REALLY KNEW UNTIL HE HAD HIS FIRST OVERDOSE ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO. MARK STARTED WITH TOBACCO, THEN ALCOHOL, THEN POT, AND FINALLY HEROIN. BOTH OF MY PARENTS WERE ALCOHOLICS AS WE WERE GROWING UP SO THERE WAS A TENDENCY TOWARD ADDICTION.

A FAMILY PROBLEM IS THAT THERE IS NOT A LOT OF LITERATURE ABOUT WHAT TO LOOK FOR. YOU KNOW, WHAT ARE THE SIGNS TO SEE IF YOUR CHILD IS ADDICTED TO DRUGS? AFTER MY BROTHER WAS ADDICTED I DID NOT KNOW WHAT HE WAS ADDICTED TO, HOW TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT IT. SO I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW THE SERIOUSNESS OF WHAT I WAS FACING. I THOUGHT HEROIN WAS THE SAME AS WEED. I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD OVERDOSE ON IT SO EASILY. SO I THINK THAT IS ONE OF THE BIG THINGS. MY BROTHER'S ADDICTION GOT WORSE, HE WAS UNABLE TO WORK. HIS



LIFE WAS CENTERED ON ADDICTION AND WAS NOT CENTERED ON GETTING A JOB EVEN THOUGH HE WANTED TO. AND SO THAT MEANT HE HAD NO INSURANCE WHICH MEANT THERE'S WAS NOTHING OUT THERE HE COULD GO TO. HE COULDN'T SEEK HELP.

MY PARENTS COULDN'T AFFORD IT. I PAID ONCE FOR HIM TO GO TO A DETOX CENTER AND IT COST OVER \$2,500 FOR THREE DAYS. THERE ARE SO MANY OTHER FACTORS. RIGHT ABOUT THE TIME MY BROTHER FIRST STARTED WITH THIS, HE HAD HIS FIRST CHILD OUT OF WEDLOCK. BEING AN IRRESPONSIBLE TEENAGER, HE GOT HIS GIRLFRIEND PREGNANT. AND SO THEN THEY HAD A SECOND CHILD. SHORTLY AFTER THAT THEY BROKE UP AND MY BROTHER LAUNCHED INTO DEPRESSION. WE THINK THIS LED TO DRUG USE. YOU KNOW YOU CAN PROFILE THESE PEOPLE BASED ON THESE KINDS OF FACTORS. THEN THE OTHER THING WAS, AND IF ANYTHING GOT HIM INTO HARD DRUG USE IT MAY BE THIS. HE WAS A ROOFER. THAT WAS THE JOB HE COULD GET THAT COULD EARN HIM AN INCOME WHAT WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO TAKE CARE OF TWO KIDS, TWO BABIES. HE HAD A BACK INJURY AND HE STARTED WITH PAIN-KILLERS. I AM HEARING THERE IS A VERY TIGHT LINK BETWEEN PAIN-KILLERS AND HEROIN ADDICTION. BECAUSE WHEN YOU'RE USING PRESCRIPTION PAIN-KILLERS YOU PROBABLY CAN'T DO THE WORK YOU WERE DOING, AND GET BORED. YOU'RE NOT WORKING. YOU CANNOT AFFORD THE PAIN-KILLERS. YOU TURN TO SOMETHING CHEAP. YOU TURN TO HEROIN. YOU CAN GET A HIT OF HEROIN CHEAPER THAN A SIX-PACK OF BEER. IT'S ACTUALLY LESS THAN \$6. I THINK. FROM WHAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO DISCOVER, THE DOSE THAT KILLED MY BROTHER WAS LESS THAN \$10.



HE WASN'T WORKING BECAUSE HE WAS ADDICTED. HIS CHILDREN WERE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM. HE HADN'T SEEN HIS KIDS FOR THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF BEFORE HE DIED. HE WAS VERY DEPRESSED ABOUT THAT. HE STARTED FALLING BEHIND ON CHILD SUPPORT, AND SO HE WAS IN AND OUT OF PRISON FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS.

PRISONER ART

NOW HOW IS SOMEBODY SUPPOSED TO PAY OFF CHILD SUPPORT WHEN THEY'RE SITTING IN JAIL? AND BECAUSE THEY'RE SO FAR BEHIND IN CHILD SUPPORT, THEY HAVE NO MONEY TO PAY FOR A TREATMENT PROGRAM TO GET OFF DRUGS IN ORDER TO WORK FOR CHILD SUPPORT. WHEN YOU'RE IN JAIL THERE'S NO TREATMENT FOR DRUGS UNLESS YOU'RE IN THERE FOR A DRUG RELATED CHARGE. SO EVEN THOUGH MY BROTHER WAS ASKING FOR HELP WHILE HE WAS SITTING IN PRISON DOING NOTHING FOR HIS DRUG ADDICTION, HE HAD NO ACCESS TO ANY KIND OF COUNSELING OR ANY KIND OF TREATMENT RELATED TO DRUGS BECAUSE HE WASN'T IN THERE FOR A DRUG RELATED CHARGE. SO IT'S UNFORTUNATE THAT HE WAS IN JAIL UNTIL JANUARY AFTER WHICH HE WAS RELEASED. HE GOT A JOB, STARTED WORKING AGAIN. THEN SOMETHING WITHIN THE LAST THREE WEEKS HAPPENED THAT TRIGGERED A DRUG OVERDOSE. THE THING THAT BREAKS MY HEART IS THAT AFTER HE MOVED IN WITH MY MOM, SHE HAD A PICTURE OF HIS KIDS. HE LOOKED AT IT FOR THE FIRST MONTH AND TALKED ABOUT HIS KIDS. AND THEN THE SECOND MONTH—WHICH WOULD BE THE MONTH BEFORE HE DIED—HE PLACED THE PICTURE FACE DOWN SO YOU COULD NOT SEE THE KIDS. SOMETHING PSYCHOLOGICALLY HAPPENED.



HE EITHER GOT SO ASHAMED, OR WAS IN SUCH A DEEP HOLE, HE HAD A DESPAIR I THINK. ALL OF THESE FACTORS LED TO THE ADDICTION. THE PRISON SENTENCE AND THE UNREALISTIC BURDEN THAT THE JUSTICE SYSTEM PUT ON HIM THAT PLACED HIM IN PRISON INSTEAD OF ALLOWING HIM TO WORK AND PAYOFF HIS DEBT, REALLY CONTRIBUTED TO A SPIRAL DOWNWARD. SO DURING HIS LAST DAYS ON EARTH, HE FELT DESPAIR. HE WAS SO ASHAMED OF HIS DRUG ADDICTION HE DIDN'T WANT TO TALK DETAILS ABOUT IT.

WHEN HE WAS IN JAIL WE WERE ALL AT PEACE. I FELT SAFE WHEN HE WAS IN THERE. THE THING THAT I THINK PEOPLE HAVE TO REALIZE IS THIS: IF IT WAS JUST HEROIN THAT WAS USED, THAT WOULD BE A MUCH SMALLER PROBLEM THAN WHAT I THINK WE'RE INTO. WHAT DEALERS ARE STARTING TO DO NOW IS THEY'RE WATERING DOWN THE HEROIN WITH ANOTHER DRUG, WHICH MAKES IT CHEAPER FOR THE DEALER BUT STILL DOESN'T WEAKEN THE EFFECT OF THE HEROIN. FENTANYL IS THE DRUG, AND THAT WAS WHAT KILLED MY BROTHER.

HE DID NOT HAVE A LETHAL DOSE OF HEROIN. USERS DON'T KNOW THEY'RE USING FENTANYL WHEN THEY BUY HEROIN. MY BROTHER DIDN'T KNOW HE HAD THIS LETHAL DOSE OF FENTANYL, SO WHEN HE WAS EXPECTING THE USUAL HEROIN EFFECT HE REALIZED SOMETHING WAS WRONG. IT'S PROBABLY WHY HE DIED WITH HIS PHONE IN HIS HAND. HE WAS TRYING TO GET HELP. MIXING HEROIN WITH FENTANYL IS A RECENT PHENOMENON WHICH USERS ARE UNAWARE OF. IN THE PAST THEY USED TO CUT IT WITH LESS TOXIC MATERIALS. SO MORE PEOPLE ARE GOING TO DIE FROM WHAT THEY THINK IS JUST A ROUTINE HIT OF HEROIN.

THIS IS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT IS VERY PAINFUL TO ME: JUST AFTER I BECAME A CHRISTIAN AT AGE SEVENTEEN, MARK WAS SEVEN AND VERY CLOSE TO ME. HE AND I WOULD GO TO THE BAPTIST CHURCH ON SUNDAY, AND ALWAYS GO TO LUNCH AFTERWARDS. HE HAD A VERY STRONG FAITH AND WAS BAPTIZED. AFTER THE DRUGS STARTED AND THE BABIES WERE BORN HE JUST KIND OF JUMPED OUT OF CHURCH. HE NEVER STOPPED BELIEVING. HE REALLY HAD HOPE THAT HIS FAITH WOULD HELP HIM. HE WAS A VERY SPIRITUAL GUY. BUT ONCE IN JAIL HE HAD FEW OPPORTUNITIES TO GO TO SERVICES FOR SUPPORT. WHEN HE WAS FOUND IT WAS IN AN UNUSUAL POSITION FOR AN OVERDOSE VICTIM. MOST PEOPLE ARE FOUND AGAINST THE WALL FOR SUPPORT OR LYING ON THE FLOOR. MY BROTHER WAS FOUND IN THE PRAYING POSITION. I'D LIKE TO THINK HE WAS PRAYING.

ANOTHER TRAGEDY OF THE CRIMINAL SYSTEM IS THE LACK OF SPIRITUAL SUPPORT. MY BROTHER WOULD LIGHT UP WHEN THE PASTOR CAME. HE WAS SOMEONE WITH GOOD NEWS TO TALK TO HIM. WE JUST COULDN'T SPEAK TO HIM ENOUGH. THE SYSTEM HINDERS RECOVERY. YOU JUST DON'T FIX PEOPLE BY LOCKING THEM UP. I THINK WHEN I WAS GETTING INTO PRISON MINISTRY I READ THAT NINE OUT OF TEN PRISONS DON'T HAVE ANY VISITING PRIESTS BECAUSE THERE'S JUST NOT ENOUGH. I AM SEEING CONSISTENT PATTERNS TODAY. WHY IS MORE NOT BEING DONE? I THINK IT'S BECAUSE SOCIETY IS NOT READY TO TAKE IT ON. . . . JASON

ARE WE STILL NOT READY? HOW ABOUT YOU? ARE YOU WAITING UNTIL SOMEONE YOU LOVE IS BEYOND HELP? WILL THE CHURCH MAKE THIS A REGULAR MINISTRY? THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF LOST SHEEP IN THE PRISONS, WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO PRAY WITH THEM. AND THERE ARE EVEN MORE OF THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS READY TO ASSIST. REMEMBER WHAT JESUS WILL SAY AT JUDGMENT DAY, "I WAS IN PRISON AND YOU VISITED ME...OR DIDN'T." (MT. 25:36). PLEASE JOIN US AT ONE OF OUR MEETINGS... FATHER PAUL



**700 PEOPLE DIED
IN PHILADELPHIA IN 2015 OF A HEROIN / OPIAD OVERDOSE.**

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). Through prayer, the Gospel and Christian fellowship we offer strength to meet the challenges of life in this world. Pray for us.

OUR NEWSLETTER

Voices From Prison and the Edge is published quarterly to 36 Parishes, 26 Prisons from Pennsylvania to California, 8 Half Way Houses, 3 Colleges, and 16 Helping Organizations. Any donation is most appreciated.

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FR. PAUL AND HIS HELPERS



THE HEALING GARDEN

St. Augustine Parish,
4th St., next to the Ben Franklin Bridge



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IT IS A PLACE IN THE CITY WHERE VICTIMS AND
OFFENDERS CAN BEGIN THEIR RECONCILIATION.**

