

MANY BLESSING  
ARE COMING  
YOUR WAY  
HOPE & LOVE

Season's greeting  
Thinking of you  
-Aunt

God Bless  
merry Xmas  
Jane

God Bless YOU AT  
CHRISTMAS & ALWAYS.  
Happy New Year!

Sue

Sue

Many Good Wishes  
Marian



Happy  
Jesus  
Birthday!  
Chris + Joan

May God  
Mercy  
and  
Blessing  
Come Upon  
You now  
and  
Forever  
John

Tracy

Merry Christmas  
Alicia

Peace + Joy  
Sean + Jo

We love you!  
I love you  
Nancy

Sept

Blessings this  
Christmas Season  
Maryann

Cammy  
Cob

Merry Christmas  
+ God Bless



## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

LACIE ANN MICHAELSON FISCHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Last week was one of our most special and exciting events that we have every single year: the Adeodatus Christmas Party. Our very own George Munyan does an excellent job decorating, preparing and hosting this wonderful event where the main focus is folks formerly incarcerated, those working through addictions, and people experiencing homelessness. As always, the party was full of laughter, prayer, and wonderful community.

After the party, I was speaking with the Unity Clinic Manager, Patty Hewson, about the event as it was her first time

there. I was thrilled when she said, “It was a wonderful time, and I know that you said that there would be people there from different walks of life, but you really couldn’t tell who was who. Everyone just seemed like they were having a great time.”

That is precisely what is so special about this event. Not one person there is weighed down by the baggage of how they have been treated or what society says that they are. Each person has the space to be the delightful, unique individual that he or she is, perhaps a step closer to being seen as God sees them.



JOYOUS PARTY GOERS POSE AT THE ADEODATUS CHRISTMAS PARTY.



LONG TIME FRIEND AND SUPPORTER OF A.D.R.O.P., DIANE PIROLLO WAS RECENTLY HONORED BY THE METHODIST HOSPITAL FOUNDATION WITH THE SCOTT STEWART FOUNDER’S AWARD. CONGRATULATIONS, DIANE!



## SILENT NIGHT

FR. JACK DEEGAN, O.S.A., FOUNDER, A.D.R.O.P

In the business of the time before Christmas, we often pray for a few moments of quiet where we can be alone with our thoughts and feelings. What is this time all about? Is it about family and friendships, the seeking of peace in a world of chaos and uncertainty, the longing for order in the midst of competing demands? As we go about our daily routine, do we yearn for a truly Silent Night- Holy Night wherein we can find the Babe of Bethlehem and come to appreciate the gift of salvation that He is?

Silence can be threatening as it forces us to look at ourselves and our world and not be afraid to confront our weaknesses. Silence, also, gives us an opportunity to count God’s blessings to us, underserved as they might be.

We must not be afraid of silence but rather, embrace it seizing the opportunity to be alone with God in a time of honesty with oneself, with God and with our neighbor.

This Christmas, as you hear the refrain of the hymn Silent Night, Give thanks to God that He has silently agreed to come into your life as a child of peace, a man of courage and strength and a God of mercy and love. What a Christmas present we have been given! Peace and all blessings!

## MAIL CALL

Hello MMOC,

Just when I think that everyone out in society is starting to forget to forget about me an unexpected blessing comes from out of nowhere, and I receive a much needed letter from my Brothers in Christ, David and Jim.

I want to thank you wonderful brothers for taking the time out of your daily routine in order to write to a fellow Brother in Christ who is being held in captivity.

I would have sent a letter to you Guys a lot sooner, but I just received your April 21, 2023, so sorry about the delay.

I really would like to correspond more frequently with you Brothers and Sisters at MMOC, because you Guys really make me feel good every time I receive one of your Beautiful letters. I am currently locked away in a Close Management segregated inmate housing unit here in Florida and \*I am surrounded by enemies\*, but you know what I am 'Blessed', because I have my Brothers and Sisters at MMOC, praying for me so I am protected in the spirit of Christ, Matthew 10:16, Psalms 35, 64, pray for me MMOC, IF you and/or when you come in the presence of: Executive Director, Lacie F., Friar Jack D., O.S.A., Director, Justice And Peace, and Friar Jeremy H., O.S.A., Director, CJAR, please tell them I said hello and much Love in the name of Christ The Lord Our Saviour. So long for now my Dear Friends, please continue to keep me in your much needed prayers and I will most definitely keep MMOC in my prayers. 😊

\*Peace & Love\* - your Brother in Christ -  
Always!  
TY

PS  
Thanks, David & Jim,

# MARY, MOTHER OF CAPTIVES ANTHEM

At MMOC, we believe: That all persons, including the incarcerated, their families and parolees, are first and foremost human beings deserving of the right to life as all others are. These folk are God's creation; therefore, good people. Essential is the dignity, empathy and compassion that society bestows on all others, be shared with them. We endeavor to provide the mercy that society strips from them and to provide the support and assistance to them on their individual journeys through the legal, penal and probation/parole periods that control those in prison and their loved ones left outside. We meet on the 1st (at St Cyprian's Parish Community Hall) and 2nd (at St Charles Borromeo Church Hall, Drexel Hill) Thursday evening of each month at 7 pm.

We maintain a phone hotline for families to inquire about their incarcerated loved ones and to help families adjust and overcome the stigma that others attach to them. **Contact us 610 259 3178.** To teach them the How's and Why's of the legal, penal and probation/parole systems and how to navi-

gate through the bureaucratic establishment to receive updates on family, to get help for their loved ones inside and to assist them in adjusting their lives on the outside. Our pen pal outreach serves the incarcerated community by one-on-one communications among our volunteers on the outside talking with and counseling people incarcerated about daily life, spirituality and planning for returning to their families and becoming a reliable member of the community again. In many instances, our folk are the only people that these abandoned men and women have as a "pal."

We are here to support our graduates to return safely and lovingly to their family and church, their community activities and to present themselves in a most positive light, working and sharing their lives with others who most recently denied them the dignity of human life, to assist them in being successful in their return and to guide them on their new life journey.

## SECRETS OF ACTIVE CORRESPONDENCE: SURVEY RESULTS

MMOC is privileged to have over 400 hundred writers corresponding with nearly 1000 people incarcerated, but every week brings only a few dozen letters to our office for distribution. how can we increase the number of letter responses from people on the inside? we decided to email a few key questions to the writers who receive the highest number of regular responses from their incarcerated pen pals and asked for their tips for success.

### DO YOU WRITE AT A REGULAR PACE?

"About once a month. When I receive a letter from him, I usually respond in a few days."

"I usually write I reply to a letter as soon as I receive one, it's on my to-do list to reply."

"Monthly, with an occasional time in between."

### DO YOU ANSWER IMMEDIATELY?

"Yes, usually within a few days following receipt of my prisoner's letter."

"I try to."

"I make it a point to answer within one or two days when my pen pals actually send something. I find it feels more like true conversation."

### WHAT DO YOU WRITE ABOUT?

"My initial letter always includes a brief background of myself and invites the prisoner to share his/her background and to suggest topics he/she would like to share and write about. Once I know topics of interest, I try to keep focused on them."

"I ... always write specifically that I am praying for my friend."

"I do explain I am Catholic but offer no further details at the outset... I do seek to introduce and initiate more discussion around God, the Bible, and provide scripture references if I learn that my prisoner is struggling with some problem, setback, or family matter."

# WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE IMPRISONED TODAY?

JOHN K., MMOC

This is a question not only for the politicians, sociologists, newspapers and the public at large; it has deeper meaning for those inside and for youth growing up in this time and culture.

I have spent several years visiting inside the walls addressing the traumas, woes, worries and just plain loneliness in those barren spaces. I met folks to discuss their medical and psych needs, their troubles with administrations and staff and gave assistance wherever and whenever I could, and how to find God in the wasteland. For several of those years, I surveyed the old timers, OGs, lifers and other long timers about the changes in the prison and younger inmates. The topic: "Why are so many coming into prison and what can be done to reduce recidivism?" The sarcastic response from one OG was, "Don't come in the first time." With that said, let us now look at their list of reasons.

Quyaat, a juvenile lifer, is from the inner city but got mixed up early in life in street operations. Now in his thirties, he is a model prisoner; student, teacher of reading and history, tutor to anyone, and working on his dissertation in public policy (**oh yes, these men are very intelligent**). His research is reflective of what the elders in the prison relate to me – albeit his data source is greater than mine as he lives inside with 24/7 access to all inmates. Here are his findings on why men go to prison:

1. **Cannot read, early school dropouts**
2. **Lack basic math - usually less than 6th grade levels**
3. **Broken families – teenage moms and no fathers**
4. **Mothers are too young to be mothers**
5. **Lack of parental oversight as a child**
6. **Most youths commit crimes of opportunity**
7. **Lack of self-discipline/Envy**
8. **Hubris/Narcissism: "I can beat the system"**
9. **Untreated psychiatric problems/medical needs**
10. **No core moral center—No God in their lives**

His research and mine are similar. So, if everyone sees

the same data sets, why can't we fix the problems?

At the core, there is no foundation to build their lives. Their foundations are all beds of sand, blowing and sliding along the shore – they follow the wind and the seas at a point of least resistance. To fix the system is to give them what they need most – **acknowledgement that they are people, they have brains and feelings and the same human wants and desires as others.**

Teachers, teach the youth – do not warehouse them for 6 to 7 hours a day. Expect results - they can do the work, want to read, write and do math – they don't want to stand in the cold as a lookout for a drug dealer. They may get mouthy, but that's all for show to their friends. Teach them to write their names – they get embarrassed marking their "X."

Moms, ask for help from elders. You must think for two. So, asking is not something for which you will be ridiculed. Asking for help is a good, safe strategy for you to learn from the wise. Don't expect someone else to do it for you and your children. Take control.

Most important is the core moral code. Talk with your priest, minister, imam or rabbi. Live by a core set of morals and make sure that you impute that to your children. Essentially, every inmate in prison is in for a "stealing offense;" they stole money, jewelry, a life, "Thy Neighbors' Goods." They thought they were too slick to get caught because that's what they were taught or not taught. Make it a regular cause to sit in your place of worship weekly. Your child might fidget for a few sessions, but soon will accept this "God Thing" and learn the rules. Better for your place of worship to teach them than a prison chaplain.

**These are the unadulterated opinions of those inside without any chance of release.** They have nothing to gain or lose. Please, reread them and ponder their raw honesty. Remember, these inmates have nothing to gain or lose in their responses. Pray for our families of inmates, for the inmates and for all those who are in prison ministry. God Bless.

## WELLNESS

THE A.D.R.O.P. UNITY CLINIC IS A FREE, PRIMARY CARE HEALTH CLINIC THAT OPERATES ON A WEEKLY BASIS. VILLANOVA NURSING STUDENTS SUPPORT THE CLINIC BY TAKING THE PATIENTS' VITAL SIGNS. HERE IS STUDENT MADELINE MURRAY'S REACTION TO VISITING THE CLINIC:



“The biggest take away from my experience, however, is how important the work they do there is. A lot of the patients I saw have recently moved from Asia or did not speak very good English. Understanding them was sometimes difficult and a lot of them explained that they did not have the resources to go somewhere else to pay out of pocket. The work they do at the Unity Clinic keeps people safe and healthy. I was honored to partake in the experience and look forward to maybe one day returning to help again.”

Thank you  
For the letter it made my day to have  
Some one think of me as a person not some  
one in Jail it help people in Jail do right  
when someone has your back in good or bad  
is was so nice to feel stress free after  
reading the letter. Thank You  
Richie

## EDUCATION

INTERVIEW WITH FELIX MENDEZ NOLASCO, ESOL LEARNER



FELIX (FAR RIGHT) AND THE OTHER ADVANCED LANGUAGE LEARNERS.

*Why do you come to English class?*

Because I'm interested in learning more—for me. For my own self. I want to advance my English skills.

*When you learn more English, what would you like to do?*

I would like to open a little cleaning business of my own - it's necessary to know English for that!

*What is your favorite thing about this class?*

I like that the teachers speak to us in mostly English. Sometimes I don't understand a word, but they work with me to help me understand. It's the practice that really helps.

*What would you like people to know about you?*

Hmm, I'm very friendly. I like to dance—I love to dance! I can't really dance salsa, but I like it. I also like to play basketball—I'm a very good player! These days, I'm playing with a group of women who are all moms, and I'm one of the best players. I could teach you some tricks! My kids like to dance and play basketball too—I taught them how to play myself.

Prefer to go green? Sign up for an electronic version of our newsletter at <https://www.rightsofthepoor.org/contact>

# SEEMINGLY INSIGNIFICANT IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD

JEREMY HIERS, O.S.A., JUSTICE & PEACE DIRECTOR FOR THE AUGUSTINIAN PROVINCE OF SAINT THOMAS OF VILLANOVA



A couple of weeks ago I was giving a talk during an Advent retreat for a local Philadelphia parish. Just above the altar of the church was a sign that read "God saw her beauty and came to her in her lowliness." As I read that sentence, my appreciation for the gift of Christmas was further deepened. It caused me to reflect on how Mary was seemingly insignificant in the eyes of the world, yet God saw her beauty and her potential to be the Mother of our Savior. Through her hope was born as she gave birth to the Messiah in a way nobody had predicted or could fully understand.

It is perhaps no coincidence the careful observer of our image for Mary, Mother of Captives will notice we cannot tell whether she is inside or outside the prison bars as she holds the unlocked handcuffs. When we think of prison ministry, many are tempted to only think of those who are in prison or jail. However, the total population of people who suffer spans

a much greater range of people and life circumstances: the families of those who are incarcerated, those struggling to get back on their feet after they are released, people who are at-risk of committing a crime, and we certainly cannot forget the victims of crime.

The Mary, Mother of Captives ministry is essential to providing this important witness. I am so proud to be an Augustinian and to stand with so many Friars and laypersons who work tirelessly each day to walk with the many people who suffer from the effects of mass incarceration and discover that God sees them and their potential. As the new Justice & Peace Director for the Augustinian Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova, I follow a long line of former Justice & Peace directors dedicated to this work. I have no doubt God will continue to use our commitment to extend hope to those inside and outside the prison walls who feel held captive in some way by their circumstances.



# Thank you

from MMOC

## PARISH HOSTS

WHO HAVE GRANTED US MEETING SPACES  
HELD CHRISTMAS AND EASTER CARD  
SIGNINGS HAD US SPEAK AT MASSES AND  
EVENTS

## VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY AND THE AUGUSTINIANS FRIARS

WHO HAVE MADE SO MUCH AVAILABLE TO  
US IN SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION

## THE DONNAS

DONNA S TEACHES US ABOUT SERVING THE  
ADDICTION COMMUNITIES DONNA R FOR ALL  
HER TIRELESS WORK PROCESSING THE  
WEEKLY MAIL NOTE IN OCTOBER WE  
SURPASSED 12500 LETTERS PROCESSED

## THOSE INCARCERATED

FOR BEING OPEN SHARING AND GRATEFUL  
WERE GLAD YOU HAVE A VOICE TO THE  
OUTSIDE WORLD AND TO BECOME CO-  
PARTICIPANTS IN SHARING THE WORLD ON  
BOTH SIDES OF THE WALLS

## JACK & SOPHIE WEBBER

FOR INITIATING MMOC AND ENTRUSTING SUE  
AND JOHN AS CARETAKERS THESE LAST 14  
YEARS TO CONTINUE THEIR LEGACY OF  
DEDICATION TO THOSE FAMILIES ENCUMBERED  
BY THE TRAUMA PRISON DISSEMINATES



## THE SISTERS

SIRST RUTH OFS. MOTHER ANGELICA. SR MARY.  
SR THERESA CARMICHAEL. SR JEANNE OFS.

## WRITERS

OVER 400 FROM ACROSS THE NATION WHO  
HAVE VOLUNTEERED NUMEROUS HOURS TO  
BRING FRIENDSHIP. MERCY. COMPASSION  
EDUCATION AND INSIGHTS TO THEIR PEN PALS

## FR. PAUL. FR. JACK. FR. TONY

FOR PROVIDING A HOME. SHELTER AND AID TO  
AN ORPHANED MISSION

## FAMILY MEMBERS

WHO HAVE SHARED THEIR SUFFERINGS AND  
TRAUMAS OF LIVING WITH SOMEONE LOCKED  
AWAY ON A DISTANT MOUNTAIN NEVER  
KNOWING NEVER REALIZING THE HOLES IN  
THEIR HEARTS GETTING LITTLE HELP OR  
INFORMATION ON THEIR LOVED ONES  
CONDITION YET MOST WILLING TO SHARE  
THEIR HISTORIES TO HELP ANOTHER FAMILY IN  
THEIR DIRE NEED.

## MCCARTHY

OH HE OF THE BATHROBE AND SANDALS  
WITHOUT WHOM NONE OF THIS COULD EVER  
HAVE HAPPENED. RIP

## GRADUATES

YOU HAVE PROVEN YOURSELVES BEYOND THE PALE TO BE A  
BETTER PERSON THAN WHEN YOU ENTERED PRISON HAVING  
BECOME REMARKABLE HUMAN BEINGS CARING FOR YOUR  
FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES FULLY PARTICIPATING IN A  
WORLD THAT JUST A FEW YEARS AGO WOULD HAVE LIKED TO  
KEEP YOU IN PRISON FOREVER.

