

ADEODATUS



Augustinian Defenders
of the Rights of the Poor

Augustinian Province of St. Thomas of Villanova



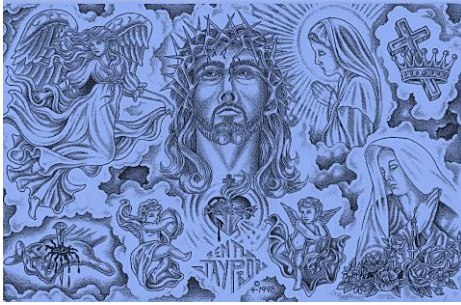
VOICES FROM PRISON AND THE EDGE

Summer 2023

No. 42



**"The nation doesn't simply need
what we have. It needs what we
are."-St. Teresia Benedicta
(Edith Stein)**



FR. JEREMY HIERS O.S.A.

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” These promising words from our Savior are words we can bet our life on. When Jesus came out of the tomb on Easter, the hope many had thought was lost was rather firmly established for all eternity.

Satan lost. Through Christ, we won.

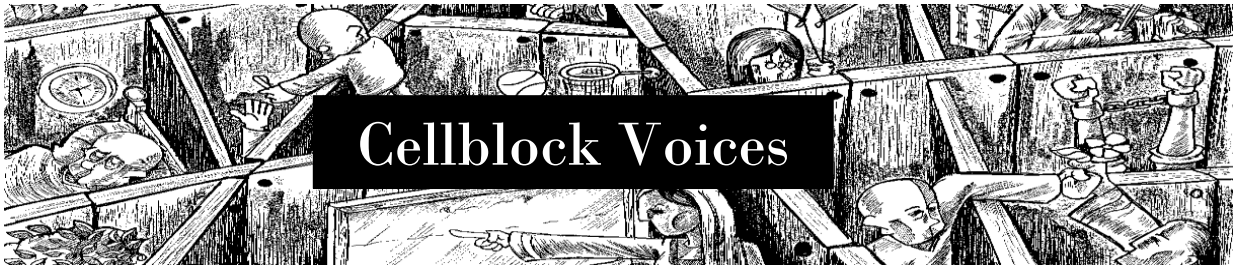
When other people let us down, we have a Savior who never will. When others reject or abandon us, our Savior accepts us and draws close. When others lie to us, the Savior offers us truth. When others step on us and beat us down, our Savior lifts us up. That is the hope of Easter.

In this issue you will hear the words of people who have been let down by others. Parents, significant others, siblings, the criminal justice system have all in one way or another let them down by lying to them, abusing them, rejecting them, and abandoning them. The Savior knows their story and offers these people something nobody else has, can or ever will. No prison wall or locked door can keep the Savior who loves, forgives, and embraces them when they accept Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life. Yet, it breaks my heart to know that as I write this article so many people are sitting within prison walls without anyone who visits or writes to them on a regular basis. Many of their family and friends have moved on since their arrest. Who will offer them Easter hope but us? If you are not presently incarcerated, will you consider becoming a pen pal to someone who is? Your voice may be the channel through which Jesus wants to reach them with words of truth, love, and hope.

If you are presently incarcerated, we need your story! How has God impacted your life? So many people need to hear about your experience and what you have to say. We would love to consider sharing your story in a future edition of this newsletter. Please consider sending your story to:

**Mr. George Munyan, O.S.A. Affiliate
Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor
2130 South 21st Street
Philadelphia, PA 19145**





Cellblock Voices

Anthony

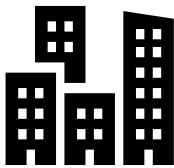
When I look back and take an honest assessment of myself in terms of standing on my own two feet—I'd have to say that I've been fully dependent on others. From my earliest memory—someone has housed and fed me. During my early childhood it was my mother who provided for me. Then, from the age of 10-13, a series of temporary foster group homes sheltered me. From early teens (14 years old) until I was 40—I've been sheltered, clothed, and fed by institutions, such as St. Michael's, St. Gabe's and Vision Quest, or prisons—state and county—or by the many women who've entered into dysfunctional relationships with me. As an adult, there have been a few periods when I was responsible for paying my own way, but lacking a foundation for being self-reliant and being an addict, I soon found myself overwhelmed and looking for someone to take care of me. Looking back, I realize this happened again and again without my even thinking about it. My being dependent upon others seemed as natural and acceptable to me as dependence on heroin. Now I am clean and sober for the first time in my life. My recovery started on the streets, before I was sentenced. It wasn't until I got clean and became willing to change that I was forced to face the full extent of my dependency. It's clear to me now that I have never been my own man—that for most of my life I have placed myself under the authority and control of prisons and the women who've paid my way. Not long ago, another inmate and I were recounting for one another the times we were thrown out by the women we were dependent on. One of the most infuriating things I've experienced (over and over) is hearing a woman talk down to me as I'm packing my things after she's told me "Get out of my house!" The other inmate shared with me something he had heard from his father long ago. His father had told him, "Always turn your own key." I want to try that.

Cliff

I remember when I was four, I was adored, but in the wrong way. As he shut the door...the fright...the life nobody knew how I had to fight. I used to cry inside, feeling so afraid of being alive. What happened to me put a void in my soul, making me hate everything and my heart was very cold! I remember my mother used to tell me God will take care of everything. I used to laugh and say that's a bunch of crap. I remember being sexually abused by my father and hating my life and hating God. I believed in nothing and nobody. Going through those years I was crazy. I ended up in a place nobody wanted to be – juvenile detention. They called it Gladiator School. I spent two years there and learned very quickly how to cheat, lie, steal, and especially, how to fight. I got out of that place and started doing drugs because before that it was just beer and pot. But now I was older and my friends did all kinds of drugs. We did everything but heroin because we always thought once you did that you were a junkie. I remember selling drugs at a young age, and got my first adult arrest for one ounce of cocaine when I was nineteen years old. I thought I was the man. I had it all at that age. I went to court and my bail was \$25,000. An hour later I was out. I was always trying to fill a void that was inside of me. If it wasn't women, it was drugs, clothes, cars or friends. I was always trying to be accepted in life. The truth is I had no idea who I was or where I belonged in life. When I tried heroin for the first time, it was everything I was looking for in life. It took that void and filled it. By the time I got out of prison this time I was off to the races. I found my true love, heroin. It loved me back by taking everything that I ever had in life including my soul. I was Satan's partner because I hurt a lot of people to get my drug, and nothing or nobody got in my way when it came to my love...



How to start? My parents never got along. My mother was mom to a point. My father was never there. All he did was drink. I can remember a day we were outside on the steps, just talking with our friends. My dad was coming home from the bar. All of us were like, "Here he comes!" The next thing I know he was fighting with my mom because she was outside with us. He was calling her every name in the book. That was my world. Well I have been in jail now because I asked God to help me save me from those streets I called home. I am having another child. My boyfriend did not want me to have another kid. Being pregnant in prison is no fun. I was going to kill my baby until I heard God's voices in my heart. I couldn't do that. I lied to my boyfriend and told him I did it. He said that if I hadn't he would never bring my first child to visit me in prison. I wanted to see my son so bad. I prayed, and finally told my boyfriend the truth. Before he hung up the phone he screamed, "I hate you!" I knew God would never want me to kill the child He placed inside me. I knew that. I cried. Then I found out I was having another boy! Despite all of this world I am in, I know that God is in my life. He wants me to be a better child of God. My advice to women in the streets is don't let your man kill your baby. God knows what He wants for all of these babies we carry. God's blessing to all of my sisters of the streets.
Tamara



Letters to the Editor

Dear Friends in Christ,

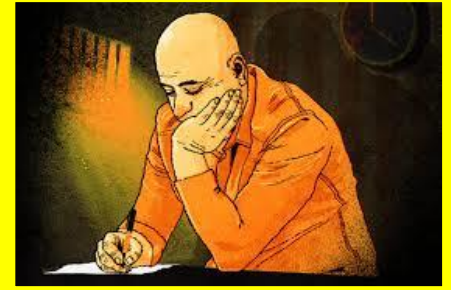
We've received the latest edition of the Adeodatus Newsletter which you sent. The Catholic community in our prison are truly blessed when they receive such uplifting and inspiring publications such as yours. Thank you for *Voices from Prison and the Edge*, and for enhancing the spiritual and transformational walk these women are on.

Thank You,

The Chaplin

Adeodatus

Our small group meets every Thursday night 7:30 PM, at the Cascia center (Broad and Ellsworth Streets). We create a safe zone of spiritual restoration in a world increasingly lonely and hostile to the closeness of God. We read scripture, silently meditate by candle light, and discuss God's spiritual nourishment for the week that awaits. We welcome those formerly incarcerated, their families, and all people suffering a problem or addiction which imprisons them. We welcome those fortunate to be free of these problems but want to work with their brothers and sisters. We welcome those wanting to be intimate with God, praying together in the spirit of St. Augustine.



WANT TO BE PUBLISHED IN OUR NEWSLETTER?

We welcome for possible publication: letters, poems, and drawings which illustrate our mission. Your anonymity will be honored if you so wish. Send

your project to:

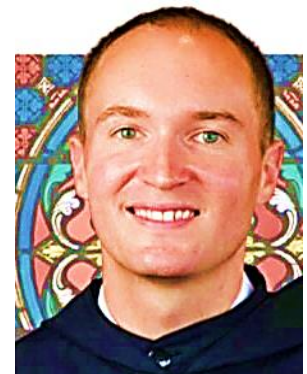
gtmunyan@aol.com

or

George Munyan O.S.A. Affiliate
Adeodatus Ministry,
2130 S. 21st Street,
Phila. PA, 19145



JOIN US 7:30 PM, ON THURSDAY NIGHTS AT THE CASCIA CENTER NEXT TO ST. RITA'S SHRINE



Fr. Jeremy Hiers. O.S.A.

George Munyan O.S.A., Associate
Editor of *Voices of Prison and the Edge*,
Adeodatus Administrator



Mary Mother of Captives is a local support group started back in 1996 to help assist those coping with a loved one in prison, and for those recently released trying to get back in society. MMOC provides emotional support to the families of the incarcerated, as they suffer not only materially while waiting for the return of their spouse or child, but they also suffer psychological pain and embarrassment, sometimes causing them to withdraw from social circles and retreat into themselves. Our group provides the needed support, empathy, and information they need to survive this stressful time. Our help also includes a transition program for their loved one to transfer back into society once they have been released.

Another mission of MMOC is to offer a Pen Pal Program to the incarcerated. Our Pen Pal Program continues to grow and includes close to 1000 state and federal inmates in over 247 prisons (43 states) across the US. The letter writer communicates one-on-one with their pal through a secure system. All of our writers are protected from being identified by name or locale. Our incarcerated writers are referred to us by counselors and chaplains within the prisons and are screened and subject to a list of enforced rules. Ours is a volunteer organization and there is no cost for any of these services. If you would like to know more, you can give us a call at 610-259-3178. Our email address is: Marymotherofcaptives@augustinian.org.



Meetings

We meet at 7PM on the second Thursday of each month at St Charles Borromeo Church Hall, 3422 Dennison Ave., Drexel Hill, PA 19026. All Attendees remain confidential.

Transition Program

This a program for those recently released, meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 7PM at St. Cyprian's Church Hall, 525 S 63RD St., Philadelphia, PA, 19143

Visit the Imprisoned

Become a *Pen Pal In Prison*, sometimes the only contact with the outside world is in the form of letters. Pen Pal writers are needed to write to the poorest of the poor. For more information, please call John or Sue @ 610-259-3178 or email: marymotherofcaptives@augustinian.org



A.D.R.O.P.

The organization of which Adeodatus and Mary Mother of Captives is a ministry, Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor, A.D.R.O.P. has three main ministries: wellness, education and justice. The Mission of A.D.R.O.P. is to build bridges between providers, recipients and community leaders across economic, political and religious spectra. A.D.R.O.P. accomplishes its mission by matching individuals with identified needs to known resources in order to build better communities. If you'd like to learn more or get involved, you can find us at: adropinfo@augustinian.org Instagram/Facebook: @adrophilly, Website: rightsofthepoor.org, Phone: (215) 925-3566 ext. 101, Fax: (215) 925-2990