

# ADEODATUS

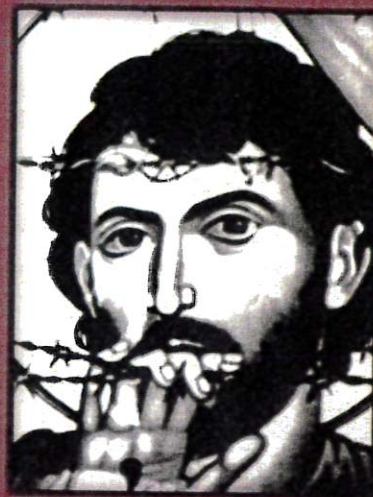
**"Gift From God"**

**A Spiritual Field Hospital in Philadelphia**



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

Augustinian Province of St. Thomas of Villanova



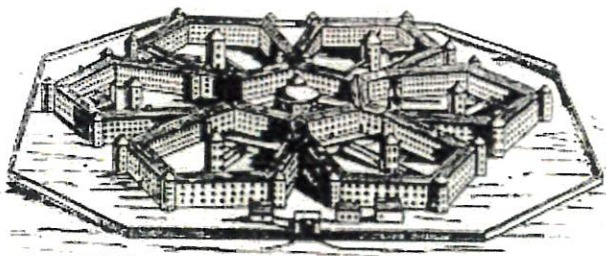
*"I was in prison and you visited me."*

Matthew 25: 31

## VOICES FROM PRISON AND THE EDGE

Spring 2019

No. 32



**"I sought to hear the voice of God and climbed the topmost steeple, but God declared: 'Go down again, I dwell among the people.'"**

**Blessed John Henry Newman**

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*"Be shepherds living with the smell of the sheep."*

Pope Francis



## Listening to Prisoners Voices Helping to Carry the Cross of Christ

"He never spoke a word to me, and yet He called my name; He never gave a sign to me, And yet I knew and came."

*Simon the Cyrenian Speaks*, by Countee Cullen



On the day He died, Jesus continued to teach us so much despite the screams of the crowds and the wave of hate drenching the streets of Jerusalem. He taught us there are times in life when we need someone to help us carry our cross. Simon the Cyrenian did not hesitate in helping Jesus carry His cross. He did not ponder who Jesus was, what He did or why He was being killed. He just saw suffering and helped to ease the pain. By sharing the letters of prisoners, and those in need of our compassion, we imitate the mercy Christ taught us to help the sufferer. This issue of *Voices From Prison and the Edge* presents the voices of the imprisoned. Christ calls us to be another Simon the Cyrenian, to encounter Him through prayers, writing and prison reform. Fr. Paul Morrissey, O.S.A., founder of Adeodatus, received the following letters from men in prison, weary with the crosses they carry.

*George Munyan, O.S.A. Affiliate*

### Thomas

*"I am facing 50-100 years if I go to trial and lose. This for a serious crime, yet the first of such that I have ever been accused of. Why such extreme sentencing guidelines? I have a criminal record, offenses far less grave than my current case and this will be used against me. I chose to do the wrong thing. Circumstance has led me to die an old man in prison. At this point I would rather have 'Murder One' facing the death penalty than receive 50-100 years. Has my history of minor offenses led the justice system to throw me away like a piece of trash, discarded from society for a mistake that I accept responsibility for? I've apparently ruined two lives: my victim's life as well as my own. Can this be God's will? I've lost everything that ever mattered when I was part of society...and now I am losing myself or has God lost me? I do not ask to go home now...I ask to go home someday. Someday before I am too old to reintegrate into society. It can be argued that I brought this upon myself. My history of lesser offenses should have led me to change people, places, and things. If this be the case, at the age of 31 years old, can I never change? If God can forgive us our sins, provide salvation, and lift us above our former ways of life, why and how does man place himself above God and discard another human being, another life, for a mistake? No sentence will restore what has been taken from my victim, but would a reasonable sentence be enough to teach one a lesson, help him change, and atone to some degree what he has done by giving back to the world somehow, some way? Again, is this indeed God's will that mere man decides God is wrong? Apparently, there is no redemption for a criminal like me."*



## Paul

*"Solitary confinement is twenty-three hours locked in a 7x10 foot cell. one hour out to shower and call family. Sometimes it is less than an hour. I am in a private prison designed to hold inmates 3 to 6 months. The Department of Corrections inspects once or twice a year by a prearranged appointment. So far I've been here for 365 days. 147 of them were in solitary. During that time my food was always cold, my showers were cold lasting only 30 to 45 seconds. Breakfast and lunch were often withheld. Often the food was unfit to eat anyway. In 365 days I have never seen a single night. Lights are always on bright or dim. I've been put on two suicide watches where I was made to strip naked with air conditioners on full blast. My steel bed lacked a mat. During my 24 hour watch period I never spoke to anyone from the mental health department. This is my first time in jail ever. Given the chance to escape, I would. I've prayed to God, though I've lost all hope and faith. Actually I've given serious consideration to the idea that God is either absent, on vacation, or maybe just doesn't like me. My environment is poison. Most days I simply want to go to sleep and not wake up. I've all but given up, yet somehow, on autopilot I manage to get through another day. I hold on. My trial came and went. A possible 2 to 4 year sentence became a 15 year sentence from a judge who wanted to make 'an example of me in a country that has descended into lawlessness.' He wanted to 'send a message' I am going to appeal. Out of solitary I live under cameras so life is a little safer. I hold on. Please pray for me Father."*



## A Prayer for Protection by St. Augustine

Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give Your Angels and Saints charge over those who sleep. Tend Your sick ones, O Lord Christ. Rest Your weary ones. Bless Your dying ones. Soothe Your suffering ones. Pity Your afflicted ones. Shield Your joyous ones. And all for Your love's sake. Amen.

## Juan

*"I was taking a nap and I woke up. The first and only thing in my mind was Jesus Christ. Every bit of my attention was on Him. I mumbled, 'I believe in you Jesus Christ.' At that moment a crack formed in the air and the crack was pierced by a beam of bright light. The light beamed directly to my head. Everything else seemed to just fade away. I was completely paralyzed and speechless. I knew I was not in any danger but I was still terrified. I was more afraid than I have ever been in my life. Suddenly, I realized that this light energy picked up on my fear, and as quickly as it had appeared it disappeared. That whole day I was trying my best to make sense out of what had happened to me, and the only possible explanation I could come up with was that I had witnessed Christ in His glory. I share this that you may know that Christ Jesus is Lord and very real."*





The experiences of Thomas, Paul and Juan show us the turmoil of prison and the human response to that turmoil. We conclude these letters with words from Saint Thomas More hours before his death in prison.



## Saint Thomas More

Thomas was beheaded in 16th century England for refusing to renounce the Pope and acknowledge King Henry VIII as the head of the church in England. Thomas More was 57 years old when he died.

*"God's grace has strengthened me until now and made me content to lose goods, land, and life as well, rather than to swear against my conscience. Though I shall feel myself weakening and on the verge of being overcome with fear. I shall remember how Saint Peter, at a blast of wind, began to sink because of his lack of faith, and I shall do as he did: call upon Christ and pray to him for help. And then I trust he shall place his holy hand on me and in the stormy seas, hold me up from drowning."*

**THEN THERE'S THE NORWAY PRISON MODEL**  
**...where removing people's freedom is enough of a punishment.**



In general, prison should have five goals, as described by criminologist Bob Cameron: retribution, incapacitation, deterrence, restoration, and rehabilitation. In his words though, "Americans want their prisoners punished first and rehabilitated second." Norway adopts a less punitive approach than the US and focuses on making sure prisoners don't come back. The maximum life sentence in Norway shows just how serious the country is about its unique approach. With few exceptions, judges can only sentence criminals to a maximum of 21 years. At the end of the initial term, however, five-year increments can be added onto to the prisoner's sentence every five years, indefinitely, if the system determines he or she isn't rehabilitated.



## PRISON COSTS

- According to the Vera Institute of Justice, incarceration costs an average of more than \$34,000 per inmate, per year, nationwide. Corrections programs make up about 5 percent of state budgets, or \$56 billion.

## ADEODATUS MINISTRY



We are Adeodatus, a support group for ex-inmates, for those struggling with addictions, and supporters who care about their reintegration into society. We meet every Thursday night (7:30 to 9:00 P.M.) at St. Rita's rectory, Broad and Ellsworth street. Through prayer, the Gospel and Christian fellowship we offer strength to meet the challenges of life in this world. Join our Augustinians and small circle in the comfort of the rectory living room. For additional newsletters or to make a contribution contact us at:

Adeodatus Prison Ministry, 2130 S. 21st St. , Phila., Pa., 19145

Phone: 215 925 3566, Email: [adropinfo@augustinian.org](mailto:adropinfo@augustinian.org).

Follow us on [instagram@youth4prisonreform](https://www.instagram.com/youth4prisonreform).

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

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Student Thoughts  
Bishop Eustace Prep School  
Pennsauken, New Jersey



*"This presentation from Adeodatus touched me in multiple ways, especially because they discussed problems that affect everyone's daily lives. Their words touched me, because they said how it is my own responsibility to speak up for those in need. Furthermore, they recognize that society does not want to think about those in prison, yet it is essential in fixing prevalent problems. Although those people in prison committed crimes, they are still humans who deserve to be treated with dignity."*

Emersyn White

*"Many people have the wrong impression of those imprisoned and with addictions, thinking they are bad people that see no point in their life. Yet, many of them want to change their lives, all they need is a little advice. I was touched by the people who worked with those who needed help, and one day, hope to make the same impression on others by doing the same."*

Teresa Faust

*"The Adeodatus presentation made me more cognizant of the issues within the prison system and how it does not cultivate justice in many cases. In the future, I would like to be more open-minded about people who have had rough pasts and help them better their lives."*

Sami Wright

*"In America today, addiction is one of the leading causes of death. For those who do not die, addiction with drugs and alcohol can negatively impact one's life forever. It is important that ADEODATUS is present in our community. It makes a difference and the world a better place through God. I think Adeodatus made my faith stronger."*

Matt Kraft

Student Thoughts  
St. Joseph's Prep School  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



*"I think there is a connection to be made between the fact that many of the men in prison are not inherently bad people and how the Church teaches forgiveness. We need to learn how to forgive people, because, many times those who seem to be bad people on the outside, are actually good on the inside. We should be forgiving of former prisoners, because there is a chance that they were just dragged into jail because of the drugs to prison pipeline."*

Steven van Zelst

*"...the people in prison are the ones who are abandoned and forgotten, and this is why visiting the imprisoned is an important aspect of Christianity. We need to be there for everyone even if they are criminals, and we need to be merciful to them just as God is merciful to us."*

Joe Hayden

*"Everyone is afraid of people who commit crimes, they think they are all bad men, and in some cases they are, but not all of them, so our judicial system locks them all up in jail. Many people after being in jail see jail as a better alternative than to living in the real world, so they commit more crimes to be sent back to jail."*

Samuel Pie

*"Fr. Paul, founder of Adeodatus, visits prisons to perform Mass, and he also talks with inmates like a counselor would do. Fr. Paul makes it his duty to visit these inmates and show that he cares for them."*

Luke Montanez