

September 1, 2016 written by Jose Ferreira

I wanted to provide you another update from my experience in visiting the offenders yesterday.....it was just amazing! let me explain.

As we were walking up to the prison, there was a guard that was walking out. I recognized him as the guard that was in the gym with us during the whole retreat but especially during foot washing. He also escorted us out of the prison and I recall when we were leaving the Kolbe retreat that he opened the gate to let us out and he stated with an unbelieving expression of what he just witnessed....said "that the prisons will never forget this".

This was the same guard that was talking to us yesterday outside of the prison before we were about to go in again....and you should have heard his testimony. Again, it was just amazing. He expressed that he himself has seen how the prisoners that were at the retreat have changed, the dark hearts that all knew were too far gone and everyone thought would never change....., he has actually seen in disbelief of what he himself has seen with his own eyes and is feeling from the prisoners themselves. The guard stated he has been there for 11 years and he has never seen anything like this. The whole time he is explaining this to us, he himself is speaking to us as if he also is feeling something and seeing something through their change that he knows is impossible and in the process he knows he is being transformed as well.

The guard went on to say that there is a conversion happening in the prison, that other offenders that did not get a chance to participate in the retreat and that saw and heard from those offenders that did, that they also are realizing that something happened there that cannot be explained. The guard stated that those other offenders are being transformed through the testimonies of the offenders that attended the Kolbe retreat. He went on to say that he himself is also feeling a change in himself because of what he has seen and the guards have realized that life for them has become easier because the offenders are different. The guard knows that this is something that is real and knows this because in each of their hearts. He explained that in the prison, everything is mental and people manipulate everything and these prisoners are good at doing this because that is what they do. But, in this case it is from the heart and no one can lie when it is from the heart because you see it in a person and they also feel it in themselves in knowing that they have received something that they cannot explain but that they know is real. The guard even admitted that this has changed him and he is also wanting to be a better person. He said himself has been changed and desires to become a better person.

Once, we entered the prison, and went through our visit, there were a couple of offenders that opened up to me and they gave me their testimonies of their lives and what they felt during the Kolbe retreat and afterwards.....and in the process unknown to them confirmed what the guard had stated to us outside.

They are still in awe that we humbled ourselves (the humility) and cannot understand and comprehend how it was possible for us to perform foot washing. They each know that they

experienced a feeling that they have never felt before in their lives and they also know that it was Jesus in that room; that it was not us manipulating something, they know that the only way we would have been able to do this, was because Jesus was working through us. They know that it was Jesus working through us and they are so shocked that anyone would love them like that. I explained to them based on what I know, that.....this is the Agape Love that can only come from Christ. Christ is the the only one that can give us this Agape Love.

They know it themselves. As they were sharing with me, they pointed to other offenders, educating me, that this one was a fighter and solved all his problem by fighting and that one over therethe same, for many years a tough guy, and that one over there, the worst....and today they all have changed; they have given it all up since the retreat. He himself even said it, that he has already been taunted by other prisoners, telling him, he is a wimp, etc. He has told them they can say what they want as knows he is ok with it. All this because he knows what he felt and what he experienced at the retreat.

The offenders that attended the retreat, have all witnessed to each other what they felt and they don't have a desire anymore to fight and do the things they were doing. They look forward to coming to the chapel and being in Christ's presence and being together with each other and learning from each other. The Brotherly love is active and alive.

Even these two offenders cannot believe what they themselves are experiencing and seeing through others but they know what it is without words because they also feel it in their hearts and they also confirmed that they feel an awaking in them.

They also, said that it has been amazing of what is happening in the prison and they are in disbelief but at the same time want to experience more of it. They stated that they have always had mass on Saturdays but that usually only about 20 people would show up and this was like this for years. But, just two weeks ago, there were 85 people and last week there were 100; standing room only. Offenders that have been transformed by the testimonies of those who attended the Kolbe retreat and now they thirst as well.

The experience that been amazing to see Jesus work in the lives of people whom thought love could never happen for them. The way one of the offenders explained it was that they could not understand how we would have done this for them and expect nothing in return. That there was nothing in it for us. That we gave / shared love and knew that there was nothing they could do to repay us.

The whole experience was amazing yesterday and I could not hold back with this and wanted to share it with all because Jesus is with us and they know they have experienced something that they can not explain. And, even though they will tell you that they don't know what love is because they have never experienced it. They know that they experienced something they can't explain but is real and is in their hearts and can only be concluded that it was Jesus.

Jose