

The Good Catholic Moments

A LETTER FROM THE IMPRISONED

Vol. 1 SPRING 2017

Wow! We did it!

Dear brothers and sisters of the free-world. This is the first issue of "The Good Catholic Moments." Please take time to read about some people who made bad choices and came to prison, but, by the grace of God, are now striving to live as good Catholics. We, the Catholic community at the Neal Unit in Amarillo, would like to share with you the good Catholic moments that happen in a place which many will never experience. A place with many lost souls, but a place where God can transform a man at any given moment. Herein are moments in the life we live as imprisoned Catholics. Join us in spirit, in prayer, and (maybe one day as a volunteer) in person, as we strive together to become the best-version-of-ourselves.

About Us

We are a group of Catholic men in prison living a changed life with the help of the Catholic Church. Approximately 35 of us gather on Friday mornings for faith formation (RCIA) and about 50 gather on Saturday mornings for Holy Mass. Leading us in our transformation is Deacon Jesse, who has been with us for over ten years. Father Bhaskar, who joined us four years ago, and Deacon Andy, who joined us last year. An occasional volunteer helps out every so often, but more laborers are always needed.

Out of approximately 1,700 inmates, roughly 300 have

Catholic as their designated religion, but less than 60% are engaged in their Catholic faith. Jesus identified the problem for this disparity when he said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few", then He asked us to "Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Lk. 10:2). You are our prayers.

Our Mission

To reach Catholics before coming to prison, whether as volunteers or prisoners, and enliven in them the genius of Catholicism that frees us all to live good Catholic moments.

About Our Mission

Pope Francis visits a prison wherever he travels. He has even washed the feet of prisoners. As prisoners, our mission statement keeps us focused on holding the proverbial door open for volunteers who hear Jesus' words spoken to them: "...I was in prison and you came to me" (Mt. 25:36). Our mission statement also keeps us focused on closing prison doors so that Catholics live out their faith rather than live in their imprisonment. Good Catholic moments happen everywhere. Becoming a volunteer, you'll witness these moments in a place where Jesus still dwells. You need not be an expert, only to want to serve Jesus in others.

Our Goals

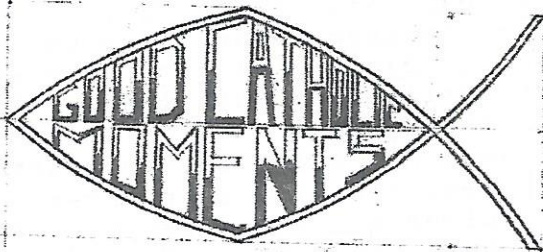
1. To share The Good Catholic Moments with every Texas diocese.
2. To inspire Catholics to volunteer in prisons, especially at the Neal Unit, and help foster good Catholic programs such as:
 - * Bible Study
 - * Prayer Group
 - * Circle of Mentors
 - * Choir Practice
3. To promote the work that volunteers and resources are supporting in the transformation of inspired lives.

Vision

Catholics helping Catholics, from prison to repentance to freedom.

Motto

"... to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2Cor.1:4).



Prisoner Testimony

by
Gerard Cheney

My name is Gerard (Gerry) Cheney. I'm 54 years old. I have served almost seven years of a 40 year sentence. When I was arrested, I had been a husband for 18 years, and a father of two teenagers. It was the first time I was ever in trouble. I had a lucrative career at a fortune 500 company, a beautiful home in Austin, and lived a life I had always dreamed. I had money, drove expensive cars, and traveled. — everything I believed I needed to be happy. But, it wasn't enough. I was never satisfied. Sin had become my way of life. I was already in prison and didn't even know it. I thank God for my arrest in 2009. I came back to Christ and my Catholic faith in 2010. Prison saved my soul and I am a free man. Free of my old sinful life. Free from the the childhood abuse that blinded my way, and free of being a slave to worldly things. Through Christ, the Catholic Church, and the Neal Unit Catholic Community, I've been rescued.

I am now an active participant in the Neal Unit Catholic Community. I have turned around and helped free other men. The joy of helping free a brother, is a joy that never leaves you, — a joy that God grants you for your Corporal Works of Mercy, a joy that's free for anyone and stays with you forever, — like a Good Catholic Moment.

"Be compassionate to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; and to the others show compassion with fear, shunning even the clothes defiled by their bodies" (St. Jude 22,23).

A Journey Home

by
Richard Reyes

My journey to the Catholic Church has been one of tribulation and reward, but Jesus has brought me home. Submitting to the authority of the Church has led me into a deeper relationship with God and His people. All my questions about what I should believe, and how I should practice my beliefs have been answered by God through His Church. The more I study, meditate, submit, apply, and share the teachings of the Church, the closer I grow in my relationship with God. All my gifts and talents meet their full potential with God, and I am able to serve Him and my neighbor best in His One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I'm home.

What's a Hug Worth?

by
Gerard Cheney

I didn't know the value of a hug until I met Jonas, a prison volunteer that led a bible study. He greeted each prisoner with a beaming smile and a mighty hug. For a moment, the bad things of my life vanished and I felt like a loved child. I realized what I missed growing up, and what my children missed from me. A hug can heal, bring joy, and free a man from the loneliness of prison. Jonas died two years ago. He always smelled of cigarette smoke, but that was okay, because a hug from Jonas was priceless.

Please help us distribute The Good Catholic Moments by making copies and mailing them to your local parishes. Thank you.

Our Dearly Departed

by
Kēno

Prison, for some, is a place of perpetual injustice. Through the personal guilt of committing a major crime is heavy, some avoid the weight by believing the justice system is to blame for their imprisoned status.

Thomas Gonzalez was not of this sort. He was always very much engaged in his Catholic Christian faith, and never timid about sharing it with others. Thomas was an avid participant and aid in the Neal Unit's RGIA program. He also served as an usher and altar server for the unit's weekly Mass.

Thomas' encounter with Jesus and return to the Catholic faith is due above all to the works of the Blessed Trinity. Let us not forget, however, the tireless efforts of God's co-laborers, men like Deacon Jesse Guerrero and Father Bhaskar. They offer up their valuable time to help bring back the lost sheep.

Thomas came home by the grace of God, home because of the Catholic presence on the Neal Unit. Now he's gone. He was granted parole April, 2016, and is now living his Catholic faith in the free world, working hard, and making up for lost time with his loving family.

VISIT THE



IMPRISONED

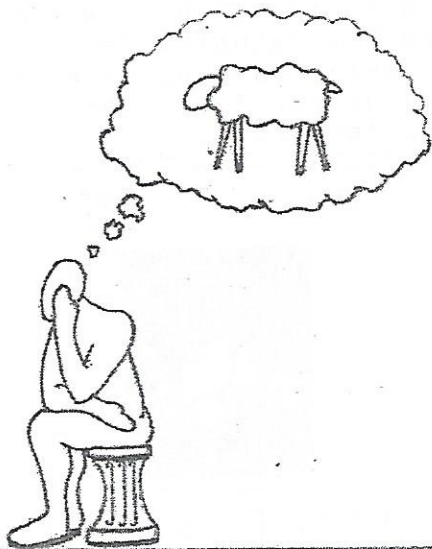
It's Time for: Ricky & Lucy!

My name is Ricky. I've been doing time for 10 years, but I haven't been alone. Lucy has always been at my side. She's done more than just kept me company, she's helped me see things in a new light. Sure I've fed and taken care of her, but to this day, guided by the hand of God, she has served me.

Lucy is a lamb and she lives in my imagination. She is my imagination. She adds color to my life and allows for freedom in this imprisoned world of mine. Like all lambs, however, Lucy gets out there once in a while. When she does, there's always a story about what she saw or who she met. Unlike other lambs though, Lucy likes to learn about people's lives and is all too eager to share her Catholic faith with ~~whomever she meets...~~

Recently, Lucy strayed into the life of a well known king and, well, here's what she storied:

Lucy: I love George Straight! aaand Jesus Christ... but not the same. Still, if you spell George in Spanish it has a "J" just like—



Ricky: No Lucy. Not the same.

L: That's what he said too. I asked him, since he is the King of Country Music and Jesus is the King of Kings, if there was any connection and he said, no, not like that.

R: But he is related to Jesus in the spirit, as a sibling-in-Christ, like you and me.

L: Yeah! He's also like God.

R: LUCY.

L: I mean, he know's what it's like to lose a child. His 13 year old daughter, Jennifer, died in a car crash in 1986, just after Father's Day.

R: That must have been especially hard for him as a father. Being seperated from the ones you love is tough for anyone. God, our Father, knows this and helps us through the pain of loving others because He is love—

L: A love without end, Amen... and that's very Catholic.

R: You mean universal.

L: And I mean that the Catholic Church is a sign of God's love for all His children.

R: That, I think George would agree with.

L: He has to if he's Catholic.

R: George Straight is Catholic?

L: Not yet!

Ricky and Lucy

cont'd.

Lucy's encounter with the King of Country Music was a good Catholic moment. A reminder of God's love for every man, woman, and child—famous or imprisoned—and a challenge for everyone to live out that love in the Catholic Church. That's music to the ears of the King of Kings everywhere and always, especially in Amarillo ... by morning.

* Ricky & Lucy is a work of fiction.

Created by:

Euevas

Be Merciful ... Visit the Imprisoned

by
Ricardo Cisneros

What must it have been like to visit prisoners in the times of Jesus? Was there a lot of hassle involved or did one just show up? Who were the imprisoned? Rebels, thieves, and murderers, I'm sure, but also sons, siblings, family, and friends. After 2,000 years, not much has changed when it comes to visiting the imprisoned. There is still some hassle involved, but more important, one ultimately has to show up. Once there, the worst of society become someone's family or friend, and the visit, much like in the times of Jesus, becomes an act of great mercy.

I experienced that mercy this weekend as my family endured the arduous six hour drive for a four hour visit that felt like five minutes. It was a sea storm of emotions that began with great anxiety and ended with being

marooned on a sunsetting island of gratitude. No regrets, only mercy that lasts a lifetime.

Not everyone gets to experience this biblical phenomenon, but if you're reading this, you can. Don't know a prisoner you can visit? Become a prison volunteer for the Catholic Church, and invest in helping prisoners be good people today for a better society tomorrow. If you love your Catholic faith and want to share that love with others, you have something to offer. For some prisoners, you may be the only visit they ever receive.

I think about this whenever we are blessed with one or two volunteers for the weekend. But they can't do it alone. They need your help. We, your imprisoned brethren, need your visit. Come see why Jesus said, "[A]s you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40), and be a part of God's mercy.



TO:

STAMP
HERE

FROM:

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Hope

"But if any one has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to you all. For such a one this punishment by the majority is enough; so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him" (2 Cor. 2:5-8).