

CHANGE

Sometimes the door to change swings open and we do not realize it. Sometimes we walk through that door and we still do not realize it. And sometimes, the door gets opened and we get pushed through it by someone else and neither person realizes it. But the real question is...when you open your eyes and finally realize that you are in the midst of change for the better, will you embrace it or run out the door back to familiarity?

I will always remember Brian. I will always think of him as the closest of friends despite the relatively short time we knew each other. I will always be thankful to him for opening the door and pushing me into a change that will be the most important one I ever make. Unfortunately, Brian never knew it...and never will.

We met in January 2006 and quickly became friends for all the wrong reasons. We were both locked up in Dedham, MA. We became cellmates and realized how much we both enjoyed skirting around the institution rules, making homebrew, getting drunk weekly and generally acting like fools. Our run as cellmates eventually ended in a drunken stupor, getting pepper sprayed and forcibly removed from our cell. That is a whole other very entertaining story which I will save for another time. Over the next few months our paths crossed sparingly until we both left that institution. We maintained occasional correspondence from then on.

In 2008 I found myself back at Dedham still fighting my original lockup charges. Brian had finished his time and been released. Now he found himself back in Dedham for 90 days on a minor probation violation. By this time, Dedham officials figured out that it would be in their best interest to keep us separated. We were placed in different units on opposite sides of the prison. Eventually Brian sent word to me that the only way we could catch up is by attending the same religious programs. We both began signing up for two services and Legion of Mary meetings weekly. Brian left soon after, but I found myself continuing to sign

up for services. It was something to break the monotony. Never one to just sit back, I began to embrace the services. I found myself trying to learn as much as I could from mass even leading Legion of Mary events. Whether I believed what I was listening to or not I was not sure, but I knew I liked what I heard and it kept me busy.

In September of 2008 I was moved to a new institution with an excellent Catholic Community. I also lived with a very religious cellmate. I dove into religious debates and books, kept attending mass, and joined every church program that I could. I also wrote to Brian, who was free once again.

You can imagine my surprise when one month later I received mail from Brian's wife. Lisa was nice enough to send me a quick note along with the unfinished letter to me she had found among Brian's things. Just days after receiving my letter, Brian sat down to write back. He got about three pages in, but had more to write so he put it aside. Only days later, Brian died of a drug overdose.

Once again, my love for Brian sent me to the church. Maybe it was just before Brian's death, maybe it was that day, or maybe it was shortly after that my eyes opened and I realized the change that had become a part of me. More importantly, my heart opened. I embraced my love for God, for Jesus, for the Bible, for the Church, and for Catholicism as a whole.

I was anti-religion for a long time. Now I can barely sleep at night if I have not spent some time during that day studying God's Word. My life has so much more peace and so much less negativity. For the first time, I feel like my life has meaning. For the first time, I feel a reason to do right.

Brian opened the door to change in my life and pushed me through. A couple years later, Brian got me to open my eyes to that change and I have embraced it. I am a better man for it. I thank you so much Brian and I look forward to seeing you again...in heaven.

- Robert Chadronet