

I'm A Dancing Machine

Where has my masculinity gone? I came to jail 6 years ago and aside from a few metrosexual tendencies, I was basically a guy's guy. Now I am officially a prison model and a dancer. At least thus far I have managed to say no to being a singer in our choir, but who knows where 2012 will lead?

Now before you go getting all concerned about what prison has done to me, relax I'm only joking...well about the masculinity anyways...the model and dancer part are true but have some good reason to them. At least that is what I tell myself. Oh forget it, if you were someone who was going to judge me you would have done so long before reading this, so think what you will...here's the story:

The model part is actually a fairly easy explanation. Since coming to prison, I've mostly kept my head shaved or cut really close. It's just easier. I don't have one of those weirdly shaped heads so it doesn't look bad. And let's be honest, the opportunities where I might care about impressing someone with my appearance are so few and far between that it just isn't really worth the effort. But recently, a buddy of mine started training to become a barber and asked me to be his practice dummy...or model. The thought process being that I grow my hair, he practices and if he messes up too bad, we just shave it off and go back to what I am used to anyway. Simple enough right?

The dancing explanation is not so simple because to be completely honest with you, I'm still not 100% sure how it happened. The only part I am sure about is that it is Patti's fault. Patti is one of the many wonderful volunteers of our Catholic Community here at Norfolk. Last year, after the Confirmation Mass, there was a performance by the Spiritual Movement team. Patti turned to Alex and me and said that she wanted to see us up there next year. Never ones to back down from a challenge, we responded with, "Sure, all 3 of us!" The joke persisted over the next couple of weeks and got out to others until Alex and I eventually found ourselves in the chapel before mass being approached by Sister Ann. Sister Ann is a wonderful, friendly person with a heart of gold who runs the Spiritual Movement program. Now you tell me...you're in the chapel, awaiting mass with Jesus staring down on you from the cross behind the altar, and the world's nicest nun tells you that Jesus is calling you to join the Dance Troupe...how do you say no? We weren't able

to. Two weeks later, there we were, dancing our butts off.

The story doesn't end there. You see Alex and I were not about to go down alone. Our friend James reluctantly, but from the very beginning agreed to come with us. Our trio was soon followed by Eric and Brett. We made our debut with a short performance after the Thanksgiving Day Mass, then we were out there again on Christmas Eve. Never ones to half way anything, we have been all in since the beginning and now are undertaking a huge project. As we speak, we are practicing for a "Passion of the Christ" play, complete with 4 scenes and upwards of 8 dances including solos by me as Peter, and Alex as Jesus. It's a one time showing scheduled for Good Friday. After that I think my dancing days will be over. The lone exception being that apparently I will be doing a one time re-enactment at my cousin Justin's house sometime in 2015. That's a whole other story.

Just to clarify as to what spiritual movement actually is, it's basically ballet but without any of the skilled dancing or tiptoes. We use expressive movement and music to tell a story and to give praise and glory to God. Sister makes it clear that the dancing itself is a form of prayer. She's been doing it for 50 years and I've never met a more prayerful person, so there is definitely something to it.

Until next time...