

THE SAGA TO RESTORE JESUS CHRIST  
AT MCI SHIRLEY

(by Shawn Fisher & Timothy Muise)

I  
Shawn

I was raised in an extremely abusive household, and it manifested itself outside the home. I became detached toward everything and everyone around me. I lacked empathy and became the very thing I despised..., the abuser. I have been in and out of trouble my whole life. I have even been told that I will end up in prison one day. So, it was no surprise to anyone, least of all to me to find myself serving a life sentence for murder.

As a senior in high school I found out that an acquaintance of mine had committed a sexual assault on a female friend of my co-defendant. In retaliation, we lured him to a secluded area and physically beat him; to the point where I thought he would die as a result of his injuries. In an attempt to cover up the crime, I murdered him. It was a heinous, despicable act that I will live with for the rest of my life. An act that defines why I am in prison but not who I am. I have come to realize that the totality of who a person is, is not the worst or best thing they have ever done.

II  
Timothy

Gloucester, Massachusetts was a very Catholic city in the 1960's of my youth. My grandparents, from Portugal and the Azores respectively, were devout Catholics who attended Mass regularly and were the most reverent people I ever knew. They instilled in me the moral values and knowledge of Christ, that would eventually save my life and my soul.

Gloucester also had something else that was prevalent: drugs. Specifically, heroin. It was not too long of a road, from marijuana to pills, to heroin. This misguided quest to fill a void, only God could fill, brought me to great depths. The abyss ceased its spiral in prison, as I found God's love. Drugs led me to crime. Crime led me to violence. Violence depleted my soul. My depleted soul led me to a role in tragedy. Tragedy led me to prison. Prison led me back to God. A true paradox. From Gloucester to the razor wire confines of prison, God has shined His love upon me.

III  
God in thy calling, Serve, it is  
better than praying. (1659; Howell)

Men who come to Shirley medium prison, visit the Church

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of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish and find out that there is a community that exists among the men that cannot be found in any other part of the prison. These men are thirsty for faith and hungry for the Word. What they find is that there are others who were once like them and now want to help.

The community here has grown over the years to the point where members from the outside now call this their Parish. It is a testament to the love, compassion and faith that these men have for each other. Some are doing a few years, while others are doing life. You will even find that there are men, who in spite of their crimes, find a safe haven by coming to the Church community. The only place in the facility where they are accepted and not judged. This in itself is truly remarkable to see in a prison setting.

All of this is what brings them into the Church. After awhile they're thirsting for more, to be more active in the community and have more responsibilities, more challenges and a desire to teach and spread their faith. One of the solutions to this was to install Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers. With the help of our Deacon he started a class that consisted of 12 men whom he chose. Men who he felt best represented the leadership of such a task and were active in their faith. Needless to say, the class was a success and during the Sunday Service Deacon Artie, installed the 12 men as Ministers.

It was a momentous occasion. For the next six months a schedule was posted and Ministers were rotated every month. Between 2-3 Ministers were used every week and not once did the community ever go without having Communion. More importantly, is the fact that our service on Tuesday nights now had the Eucharist. Before, our Chapel was constantly closed and we were forced to celebrate our Service in a classroom. This prevented us from obtaining the Eucharist, since it was locked, in the Chapel, inside another building!

The installation of Eucharistic Ministers alleviated this problem. By storing the Eucharist inside a pyx, the Hosts could be stored and transported safely and securely to the classroom. All was going well until one day an overzealous sergeant, while doing rounds, observed a gold colored object on top of Timothy's T.V. He then confiscated the pyx and the process of inquiry began. First, the administration wanted to know who's cell the pyx was found in. Once they heard that it was Tim, they wanted a list of all Eucharistic Ministers. Once provided with the list, the Deputy was amazed at who was on it. The list comprised of 13 men, all lifers, and most were men whom the DOC considers, "non-conformist errants".

## THE STORY OF THE BANNING OF "JESUS CHRIST" AT MCI SHIRLEY PRISON

The following article was authored by myself and my dear Catholic Brother, Shawn Fisher. My hopes are that it offers the reader a very clear view of the persecution our community is being subjected to here at "ShirleyWorld".

The public should be outraged at this treatment as the Church in prison is one of the only things that truly rehabilitates men. We have been targeted by the prison administration, betrayed by our own prison Deacon, and left to fend for ourselves in the Trial Court of the Commonwealth as well as in the Court of public opinion.

If you are outraged at how men of faith, real prison conversions, are treated by prison officials please contact the office of the commissioner of correction at; 508-422-3300. You can also call this prison directly and express your ire directly to our Warden, Kelly Ryan: (978) 425-4341. If you are further compelled call our Deacon, Officer Art Rogers, and inquire as to how he could abandon his community??? (978) 425-4341, Ext. 4818. These folks are "public" officials and should be held accountable by that public they are supposed to serve.

Letters of support for the Catholic Community at MCI Shirley Medium can be directed to the following address;

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MCI Shirley  
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Shirley, MA  
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#### IV

...the exercise of Religion consists...in  
those internal, voluntary and free acts...  
No merely human power can either command or  
prohibit acts of this kind.  
(The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council)

Redemption is tailor made for the wretched. When one sees the history of Tim and I, and the conversion to who we are now, what better example of faith in action does one need? To have a LIST OF Ministers that is comprised of men who are all doing life in prison, is the kind of list I am proud to be on. It is a shining example of the reconciliation and rehabilitation of the person society believes belongs in jail. To change from who we were, to who we are today should be applauded not discouraged.

The decision of Deputy DiNardo, to give the order to "cease and decist" all Eucharistic Ministers, was outside her purview, but followed nonetheless. Equally as despairing was the decision by the Deacon to abide to this "request". As a community everyone felt he should have stood up and defended us. After all, he is our Parish leader.

Letters were sent to the Vatican, ACLU, Commissioner of the DOC, and Superintendent of Shirley medium. Grievances were submitted and summarily denied. Numerous news and media outlets, the Regional and District Supervising Priest, several Bishops from around the country and surrounding area, Cardinal O'Malley, Massachusetts Senators and Representatives, as well as Catholic organizations and Federal Government agencies... the list goes on!

A lot of time, effort and resources were put into this struggle. Most importantly, the reputation of Timothy Muise. His work as an activist has allowed him to acquire numerous contacts in the outside community, all of whom trust and believe in him. So, when the replies began to come in from all our efforts, it was no wonder why our community; especially Tim, began to feel betrayed.

#### V

...the heart of a man cannot be  
deceived perpetually.  
(St. Thomas Aquinas)

After the Deacon here had spoken with Deacon James Greer, from the Archdiocese, the story of our blessed Eucharistic

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Ministers takes on a very tragic and unexpected twist. It is a difficult twist to report with "kindness and forgiveness", but that is how it must be reported. Our Chaplain is a DOC employee and his superiors; Ms. Kelly Ryan and Ms. Karen DiNardo, made it clear to him in no uncertain terms that they did not want any prisoners acting as Eucharistic Ministers, especially not the prisoners who were on the "list". The two Administrators put the Chaplain in such a position that he was forced to tell the Archdiocesan representative that he did not need Ministers. This is difficult to report as this is not what the Chaplain reported to the community from the pulpit. The community found out about this only after receiving a letter from the Archdiocese which detailed what the Chaplain had told them. The community was heartbroken, and many were angry as they viewed the Chaplain's actions as dishonest and out of line with his duties. When the smoke cleared most realized that it was the prison Administrators who were the villains here.

This strong and powerful community banded together, in the spirit of the Apostles, as disciple of Christ we began to contact anyone we could think of. More letters were sent out. After much prayer and reflection, men were once again inspired to reach out to Cardinal Sean, Bishop Reuger, numerous Priests and lay persons, as well as one Consecrated Virgin; who is proving very special to our community. The hand of God is being displayed in this effort and full revelation is in the not to distant future. The community prays for our Chaplain, the prison Administrators, and they pray that the Eucharistic Ministers will be allowed to again serve their brothers and sisters, here, in our blessed community. Some choose to serve anyway, in defiance of the "government" order, in the spirit of so many persecuted Catholics of the past, and just like them they serve at a great personal risk to themselves. They serve Christ, not man.

There are already miracles that have arose from this struggle. An entity that has also done much to persecute our Church: the ACLU, has taken an interest in this matter. The fine men of the Catholic community here will display to this entity the fiber of our convictions in detailing Christ's love, as shown "in" our work. We will do much to move the secular toward the Divine. Our rights; rights to worship as Catholics, are from a divine place and that yield will mold young lawyers at the ACLU. It is hard to persecute something you know is good and Holy. We mend relationships with our foes. We are Catholics!



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## VI

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.  
(St. Francis of Assisi)

Some are called to quiet prayer and reflection. Others are called to mend the wounds of the shaken faithful. Still, others are called to fight, to right the injustice being perpetrated upon our Church here. We will fight with dignity and honor. We will wear the breastplate of faith and carry the sword of righteousness. Upon our brow will be the sweat of service, service to the Lord. St. Dismas was granted immediate entry to heaven when he honored Christ on the Cross. The prison conversions in our blessed community must surely be viewed by Christ as worthy. Our workers may have arrived at the fields late, but Christ has assured them the same reward: eternal life! In order for us to properly and reverently honor that greatest of gifts, we must serve Him. Here at MCI Shirley, we do our best to serve Him with fervor. His Body and Blood mean salvation to us as believers. Our Ministry means little to government officials, just as Christ's real divinity meant little to the Sadducees and Pharisees, but ultimately all will bow before the King of Kings.

The final chapter of this story has yet to be written. Our service will continue, in one form or another, and men's lives will be changed on the battlefield of prison life. Christ lives inside the razor wire of MCI Shirley because He lives in our hearts and souls. Powers and principalities cannot diminish our Lord's love for us - his children. May the children of God, who reside within the Shirley razor wire, shine that love like the brightest beacon; hope to all those who are adrift on the sea of prison regret. Thanks be to God!

### About the authors

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