

THERES THE RUB (Chapter Three)

This chapter may very well be the easiest of them all. The majority of this chapter is written by others; men and women who volunteer for prison ministry. These selfless volunteers come into the prison, sometimes driving over an hour each way, in order to facilitate their program(s). Each of them have their own personal reasons for why they do it, but each one of them share a common thread. After reading through the following excerpts, see if you can find out what it is.

Brother Marwan (now Father Ephrem)-

During a recent RCIA class Brother Marwan (now Father Ephrem) confided to us that in a thesis submitted to his ministry supervisor Father Michael, he expressed how coming into MCI Shirley Med. Has validated his calling to the priesthood. The following is an excerpt of that thesis:

‘The strong and deep faith of those whom I met at MCI Shirley prison has been a source of inspiration and affirmation for my priestly vocation. Many times I have felt that the inmates were ministering to me as much as I was ministering to them. Living the faith vividly and faithfully and trusting in God’s love and mercy have been the root of their strength and hope. Being the center of their lives, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has made an essential change in their hearts and minds. Seeing the work of the Holy Spirit in the men’s lives has influenced me to respond with a thankful heart to their pastoral needs with compassion and care. It has been edifying to see and sense such a great and powerful faith....’

‘...I have had the privilege and honor to communicate the Holy Eucharist to the faithful in the prison. . I have seen and sensed their hunger and thirst for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His presence in their lives.

Mary Jean-

Our Christian Faith is the most beautiful gift God has given us after life itself. So why do I come into this prison to spend time with you? Because I find the presence of God here as much as I find the presence of Jesus in the Church. We find Jesus in three main ways – in Sacred Scripture, in Holy Eucharist, and in each other. Jesus spent most of His time with people who were hurting and suffering, physically and/or spiritually. We, the “Church”, always need to be where Jesus was and is. Family is not limited to blood relatives. Jesus, when He was preaching one day, was told that His Mother was waiting to see Him, and He replied, “who is my mother, brother, and sister? – Those who do the will of our Father in Heaven”. Jesus wasn’t putting His Mother down or making Her seem unimportant, because Jesus loved Her more than any other human being. She was the Immaculate Virgin who gave birth to God’s Son, and loved her so much because she was purity itself, and He desires each of us to be like Her, and so become His brothers and sisters. That’s what you are to me; brothers, sons, grandsons. We are all striving together to do God’s will.

Laura-

Community is defined as a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists. This definition seemed all the more poignant considering where our parish actually exists.

Our Tuesday night community perceives itself as "family". Our parish family has grown, changed, sometimes dwindled, and grown again in the almost three years I have been a member of it. Although constantly changing it is always there for us, as with families; it is always available to each of us for support, For personal growth, for friendship, for...well, community. I have learned to love this community so much. Love is meant to be shared. Love is alive; it is dynamic. For a community to remain alive it must grow and stretch and provide life-giving spirit to its members, it must abide in love. Some of you tell me on occasion that I don't understand how it is when we all leave the Chapel. I assure you I understand. I also assure you that it is not so different for us out there than it is in here. We face the same opposition, the same social and personal failures to be ever kind and patient and understanding, and I empathize again that Love is the answer for each of us, no matter where we are on earth.

Were you able to see the common thread? It may not have screamed out at you but it's there. It's the love of God and love of His children. We may be prisoners, but at the end of the day, the totality of who we are, is not the worst or best thing we have ever done.