

A Testimonial

Then, staff in hand, David selected five smooth stones from the wadi and put them in the pocket of his shepherd's bag. With his sling in hand, he approached the Philistine. 1 Samuel 17:40

In August, 2015, a few of us humbly went into Delaware County Jail to minister to those who were incarcerated. We walked into the unknown, as none of us had tried to do this before. It was our faith that reminded us, like Jeremiah, God will put the words in our mouths to speak to these men and women.

It was not long before we realized the advice from the Chaplin; that these are some of the most vulnerable people we will ever meet. We were all to go on this journey with a deep breath and a leap of faith. We listened and we learned... jail was not what we had thought.

All of us are merely saved sinners. We all have been spared from bad things at one time or another... a second chance or a lucky break... maybe we had someone that was our guardian angel protecting us from our more rebellious self. The quotient is often in the *opportunities* that are presented in our lifetimes.

About two weeks into the jail ministry we realized that there were gaps in the system for where returning citizens could go live, get rehabilitation, or find a job in time to not have to return to jail. We formed relationships with the jail, with Community of Grace and started in earnest with the Columbus Diocese to combat these shortcomings.

Each week we discuss faith and community. How will they belong to a community as a returning citizen? And just as important to be Christian examples on the inside. These Reentry Ministries are bringing real hope. We have promised that Christ forgives, and as they continue to prove themselves, so will His Community!

Now we reach the time where we want to follow up our words with deeds.

In his meditation called, *Nostalgia for God*, Pope Francis asked once, '*how to go about finding one's proper identity*'. He went on to say, "*when you have lost what was yours, your home, you have this nostalgia*" for humanity. He says this identity is '**grace from God**'. We celebrate our reconciliation to an extent that this nostalgia can be lost to us. For the men and women that are incarcerated, they cleave for it.

The Pope concluded the Year of Mercy with the closing statement, "*It is the time of mercy because no sinner can ever tire of asking forgiveness and all can feel the welcoming embrace of the Father.*" Mercy is all that anyone is ever asking for. It is needed to help heal family wounds, keep the homeless off the streets, and most importantly to learn to trust in God in the same way that we did as children.

So, like David taking his battle to Goliath, these returning citizens face giants of their own. We can be the stones from the Wadi River that the returning citizens have for defeating the barriers and prejudices that stand in their way. Forgiveness is hard all around... hard to ask for, hard to give... but not as hard as living without it. If mercy is love's second name... let everyone have the chance to feel it...we can help with that.

'a brother helped by a brother is like a strong city...'