

INSIDE VIEW

CIC Ministries

*"...when in
prison, you
visited me..."*

Matthew 25:36

Fall 2007

Correctional Institutions Chaplaincy of Santa Clara County, Inc

Christian witness to the incarcerated

BY THE REV. ALISON HARRINGTON

It wasn't until I began to work with CIC a year ago that I learned just how speechless we can fall in the face of suffering so raw and exposed that it steals words from your mouth and makes theology irrelevant.

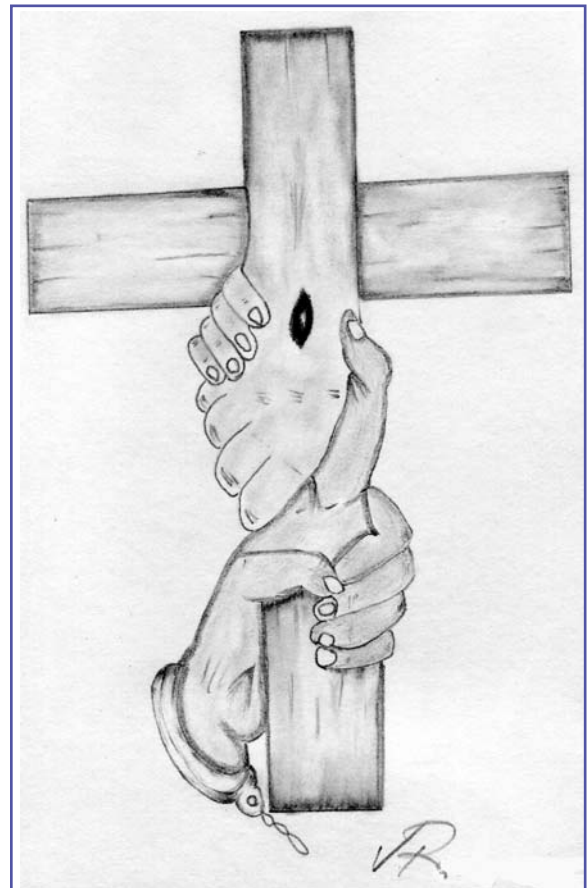
All of our facilities in Santa Clara County are difficult places to live but the sheer magnitude of the suffering faced by those in custody hit me on a new level when I stepped onto the 8th floor of the Main Jail and into the units of Juvenile Hall.

On the 8th floor, the acute psychiatric unit of the Main Jail, I met individuals who had scarred their faces with their own fingernails; I met those who could not differentiate between my voice and the voices in their head; and I met those who were deeply delusional.

I met a man who broke down sobbing and asked me to pray that he would not die naked so God would not see him exposed. Because he was severely mentally ill there was no telling him that we are always before God naked and that it doesn't matter, because God loves us. A word of Scripture never would have broken through his delusions and paranoia so I just listened to him and held his pain and fear as something sacred, and we prayed that he would not die naked.

In Juvenile Hall I met kids who society is deathly afraid of but who cry at night for their mother. The Hall is filled with kids whose neighborhoods are on the nightly news, whose parents work two or three jobs to make ends meet, and whose schools suffer for lack of money and resources. In a recent Heart and Soul class for the girls, they made family trees and each branch told of incarceration, drug abuse, and gang affiliation. They shared how all their lives they had been called worthless, stupid and other names too vulgar to repeat. From a tree like this, what do we expect will grow? As I sit and see the scars a young girl carved into her arms with a razor blade, I can't help but fall silent in the face of the profound suffering of our children.

And so I have spent this past year silent, often not knowing what to say - knowing that quoting Romans 8:28



Relying on God's help is graphically portrayed

"we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God" does not comfort the 13-year-old girl sexually abused by her father. And Romans 12:2 "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds" doesn't make sense to the man whose mind is a jumble of misfiring neurons.

I learned to hold the pain in sacred silence and to honor it by refusing to jump to easy answers. Instead, I sit and struggle with our brothers and sisters to find how God is present to them in their sufferings. There are no easy answers when someone in pain is struggling to find God.

Please see WITNESS ... Page 2

Moving from 'broken' to beautiful'

If I could tell you how many stars were in the sky or grains of sand were strung along the world's beaches, I could tell you everything. But I can't. The Good News is God can! It says so in Hebrews 11:12.

See, I may not have seen the light at the end of my tunnel in my last few days out there homeless in the Tenderloin of San Francisco totally dependent on methamphetamine to give me that SIN "thetic" Spirit. But God did see the light.

I believe the Lord Jesus has always seen the beauty in men. It is I thank that have turned from Him. More Good News is that we have a loving, patient, and forgiving God who waits patiently by for us to go through the experiences we go through, and His mysterious timing pulls us back out of the lifestyle of hurt and suffering just in perfect time to be saved.

As I reached the gate of Elmwood, emerging from the paddy wagon three months ago, I was broken. My wings were clipped and torn. I felt hopeless. And it was all I could do to get down on my knees and pray. I was at the point of Psalm 77:1, "I pray to you, Lord God, and I beg you to listen."

I had nothing. I believe the Lord

Jesus brought me to that place of true humility only to call upon Him.

Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask and you will receive, Search and you will find, Knock and the door will be opened for you."

I believe sometimes we need a little nudge, like I did.

Matthew 18:12 talks about the Good Shepherd leaving his flock of 99 on the hillside to rescue his one lost sheep. The Good Shepherd in my case is the Santa Clara Police Department. Romans 13:1, "God appoints all authority..."

When I finally was housed and all was settled and done, I picked up the Bible and read. Everything began to make sense. God began to reveal to me His secrets and began to bless and strengthen me with spiritual gifts and so I began to go to church on Sunday. And that is where I met Chaplain Louann. She and a trio of church visitors were jamming with Spirit-filled energy on electric guitars, keyboards and a few mics, singing these words I'll never forget, "Lord, I have found a refuge in you, a hiding place that I can call my own."

I knew I was home. I began to cry and clap and sing along. Louann then preached about Lost Sheep and the

I may be in jail

Lord, even though I may be in jail
 Through your love and strength
 I know I'll prevail.
 Some will try my patience, and
 as they do, Lord,
 I'll swallow my pride, asking you
 to be my guide,
 And through all this, Lord,
 you're always at my side.
 This could be my darkest hour,
 still I won't cower.
 For I might stay a month or
 maybe a year,
 Still I won't shed a single tear,
 For someday, Lord, you will set
 me free from here.

By Rick

love of Jesus and I felt mercy come upon me.

Although the room was filled with other starving souls, I felt as if Jesus was speaking directly to me. I had been saved.

Today I am a grateful Christian. The Lord has revealed to me not only the light at the end of my tunnel, but also promises me a future of hope and prosperity through His love. Today I know my beautify and value.

Thank you, Jesus.

Love, MM

WITNESS...from the cover

There is only the remembrance that we are the body of Christ and we are not alone in this suffering - we can see this in Jesus' cry to his disciples "could you not keep watch for one hour?" Can we not just sit with the pain knowing that our presence, our solidarity, eases the isolation that is the constant companion of suffering?

Easy answers and quoting Scripture as a quick fix brush over the pain by attempting to move too quickly to a place of healing and joy. Instead, we must find a way to be more like the women at the feet of the cross who didn't run from Jesus' suffering; they stayed and cried out to God with him.

In our jails I find myself again and again in the Garden of Gethsemane watching the beads of agony collect on the foreheads of the incarcerated and I find myself

again and again at the foot of the cross watching the writhing in pain of those who are executed in small ways each day.

In my year with CIC have learned the beauty of silence that listens, deeply listens to the hurt of a human heart, and I have learned the necessity of breaking that silence with a cry to God. Above all, out of that deep silence, I have heard God's own cry on our behalf - God's own tears for the suffering of God's children. And sometimes, sometimes the awareness, the knowledge that it is God who sits with us in silence and holds our pain and the knowledge that it is God who breaks the silence with a cry, sometimes the awareness that God weeps with us is enough to get us through the dark night of our soul.

'Heart and Soul' proves its worth

BY THE REV. LOUANN ROBERTS

With each Heart and Soul class we offer in the women's jail and at Juvenile Hall, the more convinced I become of their necessity. Other classes offered in the facilities -- such as a computer classes, parenting, and substance abuse -- are undoubtedly helpful classes, but they not tailored to women 25 years old and younger. That is what is unique about the Heart and Soul course. The discussions, the course content, the speakers, the individualized exit planning, everything is tailored for young women.

What makes these young women different than their older sisters? Their needs are a different. Girls need positive female role models and arenas for developing feelings of competency, worthiness and belonging. They need love, respect and validation from caring adults.

Here are a few reasons young women have these needs:

1. According to current studies, a great amount of structural and functional brain development takes place during the teen years and on through till about age 25.
2. Many of the young people in our jails and juvenile facilities come from poor families. Poor children face a greater risk of impaired brain development due to risk factors associated with poverty such as poor diet, poor health habits and worry.
3. Many researchers believe that during adolescence and young adulthood there is more vulnerability to negative and positive experiences that carry long-term consequences. Young people experience increased pressures regarding academic achievement; they are faced with major choices such as whether to have sex, to leave home, to drink or take drugs. Many of the kids in Juvenile Hall and the young women at jail have had unstable and many times abusive childhoods. They tell stories of neglect, drug and alcohol abuse all around them, further complicating the unstable and often destructive relationships in their families. These negative experiences affect them for life.

Heart-and-Soul classes work to provide positive experiences for these girls to develop feelings of competency, worthiness and belonging. In Heart and Soul they have the opportunity to look at their negative experiences in a different light.

One of our classes is called, "My family story." The girls make a sort of family tree (called a genogram). We



A young prisoner writes of her confidence and gratefulness for the help she's received from CIC during her incarceration.

discuss intergenerational themes, rules, myths and the like.

I've seen God's grace and love change a young woman before my eyes when she identifies the strengths and positive aspects of her family for the first time and when she sees that she is not doomed to repeat the same mistakes as her family members.

One young woman when discussing how her parents' faith affected her present attitudes said, "My parents have been through so much and they still have hope and faith for what the future brings. I believe in the Lord and I know he understands me." Another girl said, "I forgot how loving and strong my family is." One girl observed how her family lost closeness because of her father's mental illness, drugs and absence, "I went from having a lot of faith in God to having very little. I don't trust many people but that's changing now."

Heart and Soul offers girls at Juvenile Hall and young adult women at the Elmwood Complex opportunities to explore their relationships with family and significant others. We offer tools to help them evaluate and reshape their self-image, communication, and healthy living. We offer opportunities to discuss positive relationships and values that will shape her family and community. Each girl meets with Chaplain Peggy Bingham or myself to prepare an exit plan and to consider what resources are needed to achieve their goals. We pray this gives these young women a better chance at a healthy, productive, and faith-filled life - heart and soul.

CIC Ministries would like to thank S&S Book Keeping and Priority Payroll for their generosity in keeping our books.

Hardest thing to face is jail

Being in jail is the hardest thing anyone could face. The loss of your freedom is just something really hard and something we must accept whether we like it or not. You find yourself lost and with so much time and not much to do.

But like everyone, we all have difficult days when we just feel sad and lonely. And there are these wonderful ladies we call chaplains. They are like our angels sent from heaven. They brighten our days with a nice book, a nice conversation and a prayer. They dedicate so much of their time doing little things just to help us through those hard days. Their smiles and words of encouragement always give us the comfort we need.

It's a wonderful feeling to know that we can always request a prayer, a little visit or some kind of help. They are always willing to do the best they can. And as an inmate I would like to take this opportunity to give them my respect, my admiration, and my biggest thank-yous for that great work they do for us and for God.

They inspire and motivate us to do and achieve good things in life and make us realize that God always has a purpose for each one of the things we face in life and that we must never give up. Because no matter how hard life is for us in a place like this, God has given us these wonderful ladies we call our chaplains.

May God bless them always and fill their lives with joy, love and blessing.

Claudia...



Inmate artists designed a new sign for the chapel at Elmwood.

Rescued by the police

If my alley could talk it would talk about the time I was rescued by the Gilroy police. The story goes like this.

One hot summer night, I went to a bar. I drank one too many drinks. Then, I guess, I went home and punched a window. In the process of punching the window, a main artery was cut in my wrist.

All I remember is that I was real scared. One of my girlfriends showed up. She called the police. She told them I was bleeding bad.

I remember hearing sirens. I took off running. I was taught as a young child to avoid police at any cost.

Next thing I remember, there was a police officer standing over me, telling me to hang on because help was on its way. The Gilroy police officers had followed my trail of blood over fences and through back yards. They found

me bleeding to death in an alley.

I thank God with all my heart for the Gilroy police for being my rescue angels. Without them I wouldn't be alive today. I realize without police, I and many other people wouldn't be alive today.

I now thank God every day for peace officers. Thank you once again for being angels.

By Gilbert

Inmates have contributed to this newsletter. They wish to tell us what incarceration is like for them. Only their first names appear for their protection.

Without fail...

I am in jail
Without bail!
I am in jail
God's love doesn't fail
Even though I am in jail.

By Rick

CIC seeks to help the elderly in jail

Growing old can be a challenge, but for older men and women, jail can be a nightmare. That's why CIC Ministries will start a new program this fall to provide compassionate care for vulnerable and disabled older adults who are incarcerated.

Many community programs for seniors have seen funding cuts and there is less tolerance for acts of violence. Combine these two issues with the effects of drug and alcohol abuse and it's no wonder that more senior adults have been incarcerated.

A senior adult in jail parlance means someone 50 years or older, and many of them look much older because of their years on the streets or their physical and mental illnesses that have been aggravated by homelessness and substance abuse.

Through the generosity of a grant from the Darby Betts Fund of the Episcopal Church, facility chaplains and volunteers for CIC Ministries will reach out to this vulnerable and often-hidden population by providing special worship services, individual pastoral counseling, consultation with medical and psychiatric services, advocacy with jail administration, referrals upon release to the community and treatment programs, and communication with family members.

Some of the older men and women who come to

jail are so severely disabled that they must be conserved and cared for at special facilities. Others have become too disruptive for their families and have no place to go when they are released.

While in custody, older prisoners are subject to predatory behavior by other inmates because they are less able to defend themselves. And the rate of dementia is high enough in this population to make it difficult for these men and women to find a place to live when they leave.

Besides the physical troubles so many of them face, they also must grapple with remorse, regret, and, too often, the loss of family members who die or just grow tired of waiting for change. Some also must face the possibility of their own death, as they await a compassionate release or hospice care.

They call for our attention because it is easy to think that their age and experience will give them an edge in maneuvering through the system of care in this county. In fact, their experience rarely helps because they have lost any sense of hope for change.

Helping them find hope through the knowledge of God's love and care for them is a key component of this new program. Please keep us in prayer as we set out to meet the needs of this population.

You, too, can be part of CIC's mission to the lost and lonely behind bars

Jesus tells us that when we visit those in prison, we visit him.

The Lord makes His presence known when two or more are gathered in His name.

CIC Ministries, through its training programs and volunteer recruitment, ensures that those encounters take place every day in our county's correctional system.

Specially trained volunteers meet one-on-one with inmates to pray, to offer guidance in mending broken families, to lift their voices in praise.

Other volunteers lead worship

services or Bible studies to help the men, women and children behind bars remember that they are created in the image of God and, as God's children, are worthy of God's love.

All of this takes preparation, prayer and training. You, too, can be part of this dynamic ministry.

Pray for us and the men, women and children behind bars in our county.

Invite us to speak to your Outreach Board or Mission Board. We would love to be part of the outreach from your church.

Introduce us to your pastor and we will be glad to tell the Good News of the gospel behind bars.

Please consider also giving a monetary donation to this ministry. The funding is used to provide the best care possible to the inmates in the many facilities in our county.

Please send your donations to:

**Correctional Institutions
Chaplaincy of Santa Clara
County
P.O. Box 360068
Milpitas, CA 95036-0068**

Thank you.

CIC MINISTRIES

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Tell them now ...

He remembers all the parties, fighting and drug dealing. He starts to think about the younger brother he hasn't seen in about seven years.

His brother is doing 25-to-life in prison due to a murder that happened in a turf war. The gangster knows in his heart that he will get caught and end up in the same place his broth-

er's at. It's just a matter of time.

All of a sudden, he starts to feel warm all over. He remembers his mom. Oh, how he loved his mom. He swore when his mom died, he would die also. And he did, in a way.

He gave up trying to be a good guy. He cries, *"If I only did what my mom told me to do, I wouldn't be heading to prison. If I only would have gone to school.... If I only would have gotten a job... If I only would have gone to church and served God, I wouldn't be headed to prison."*

You see, this gangster has tattoos of his gang's name, his nickname and the city where he's from. He has faith, but it's in the wrong place. If he would have had that faith in Jesus, these things wouldn't be happening. So if this sounds like you, or somebody you know, tell them about God's love before it's too late.

By Gilbert

Special thanks

CIC Ministries would like to thank the **Saratoga Rotary Club** for their funding of Heart and Soul classes and the **San Jose Rotary Club** for their donation to help fund the purchase of wonderful new computers for our agency. Their generosity will result in the well-earned retirement of four workhorses we have used for the past several years.

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