



JESUIT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE INITIATIVE

NEWSLETTER | FALL 2021

Much has happened over the last few months affecting the work of JRJI. The most important part of this update is to relate and confirm that our weekly retreat visits to the different prisons up and down California have continued uninterrupted. In that regard, things in many ways are "back to normal" for JRJI. It has been so very gratifying to re-establish our relationships with JRJI participants by seeing them in person after almost two years of not being able to do so. Although the men are grateful that JRJI was able to continue to correspond with them through letters and an occasional phone call during the Pandemic, including sending "video Masses" into the prisons, nevertheless there is nothing like person-to-person contact with each other.

RETREATS

In that regard, the visiting schedule for these Fall months has been very busy and looked like this:

- September 7th: California State Prison-Los Angeles County in Lancaster, CA
- September 14th: California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA
- September 20th: Ironwood State Prison in Blythe, CA
- September 28th: Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA
- October 4th: California State Prison-Los Angeles County in Lancaster, CA
- October 12th: California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA
- October 18th: Centinela State Prison in Imperial, CA
- October 26th: Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA
- November 1st: California State Prison in Lancaster, CA
- November 8th: California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA
- November 15th: Ironwood State Prison in Blythe, CA
- November 23rd: Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA



The team with JRJI participants during a retreat this year

JRJI Assistant Executive Director, Bobby Garcia, wrote a beautiful reflection on the team's recent visit to Centinela State Prison:

It was October 18th, 2021, at approximately 2:30 in the afternoon, when we headed to the hotel near Centinela State Prison. I got to see the Salton Sea, which is so large that it extends from Palm Springs to the Gulf of California. I remember thinking to myself, "What happened here? It seems so lonely." I remembered that all of JRJI's trips to the different prisons seemed to end up in some desert or dry area. To keep my excitement at bay from the upcoming retreat, where many men had participated in the Footprints Program, I looked up information on the Salton Sea.

The Salton Sea had filled up with water and later dried up over the years. I read that in 1905, the Colorado River had overflowed, and the water flushed into the Salton area where the Salton Sea is located. Then, two years later, the Colorado river went back to its normal flow, and no more water filled this vast place. "What does this all mean?" I wondered to myself. As I gazed into this vast sea, I wondered, "How was God speaking to me?"

It all became clear after our retreat at Centinela the next day. When we were driving into the prison, I wondered what the reception in this yard was going to be. Like the flood that created the Salton Sea, good mentors like Ignacio Medina, Erick Fuentes, and Jesse Nava started the cascade of JRJI participants at this prison. However, the sea of participants at Centinela is much different from the Salton Sea. Whereas the Salton Sea had become stagnant and spoiled, the "Sea" of JRJI participants at Centinela was vast and alive. This can be explained because of the "inflow of water currents" from the different prisons and the "outflow of water currents" going into the outside communities through parole. There is also another flow into lower-level prisons where a "new basin" is being created.

Just as fresh water from rivers is essential for humans and our environment to survive, we continue in our healing process to provide the new life that our spirituality and newfound freedoms bring us.

*Fr. Mike and the JRJI team taught us about the healing process through JRJI programs, and I witnessed how many lives were empowered that day. From tears of pain, to smiles of happiness, we all shared, learned, and supported each other. There is nothing better than to see the healing process alive and to see it move into Centinela and then out of Centinela. We cannot wait until our next retreat.
Blessings to all.*

FOOTPRINTS PROGRAM

As many of you know, JRJI's work not only consists of visiting and working with men and women in prison, but we also do important outreach to the families of those incarcerated. Once again, on October 24, 2021, Fr. Mike Kennedy, SJ led a retreat focusing on the theme of healing for the parents of those incarcerated at St. Albert the Great Catholic Parish in Rancho Dominguez, CA.

The following are photos of the Parents Retreat:



NEW OFFICE SPACE

Another piece of information that we are elated to share is that JRJI has moved offices! We are grateful to the generosity of Mr. Carlos Herrera, who has provided space for our ministry for the last three years. The JRJI Team is also appreciative to Mr. Herrera for the incredible hospitality he and his wonderful family have shown us over the years, not only through the use of an office space but also for all of the moral and spiritual support he has shown and continues to show to us. *(continued)*



JRJI has new office space at 9723 Otis Street in South Gate, CA! Mr. Oscar Gonzalez, a JRJI board member, and the Gonzalez Reynoso Family provide this new office. Although packing our books and materials took a few weeks to get ready, the move itself happened over two days, from October 13th to October 15th. JRJI is so very grateful to the Gonzalez Reynoso family for this wonderful gift which will continue to make our work possible. JRJI is also grateful to Mr. Adolfo Real, a former JRJI intern, who was instrumental in making the move happen and in also helping to organize all of the materials that had to be moved.

Although the address of our new office is listed above,
the mailing address will be our post office box number:

Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative

P.O. Box 1945

South Gate, CA 90280

Once again, a deep thank you to the Gonzalez Reynoso family for this wonderful gift.



UPCOMING EVENTS


The institutions that we will be visiting during the month of December are:


- December 6th: California State Prison-Los Angeles County in Lancaster, CA
- December 13th: California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA
- December 20th: Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA


LITURGICAL GUIDES

Every week, we send liturgical guides that are used on the JRJI retreats. The liturgical guides are sent via email. If you are interested in receiving the weekly liturgical guides for the upcoming Sundays, you can sign up on our website (www.jrji.org) or by emailing us at info@jrji.org.

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