



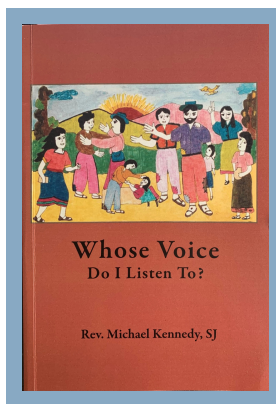
JESUIT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE INITIATIVE

NEWSLETTER | JULY 2021

IN GRATITUDE TO MR. MIKE ROIDE

In this Newsletter, the JRJI Team wants to acknowledge the work of our publisher, Mr. Mike Roide, for all of the support and help he has given us over the years, and especially during the past year and a half during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not being able to travel to the prisons during these months enabled us to spend more time preparing materials and organizing Fr. Mike's meditations into various themes, which resulted in a number of books. But books do not come about by magic. Mr. Mike Roide has formatted and beautifully printed each one. These books will be used for guided meditations during our retreats in the prisons, and as well as for personal reflections for the JRJI participants inside. Mike has graciously published these books without cost to JRJI and we are incredibly grateful to him and his company RGS Inc. Next month, JRJI will be honoring Mr. Roide in a more formal way, but we wanted to share some of the work that Mike has published over the past year and a half of the pandemic, and following the title is a short excerpt from the introduction to each book.

BOOKS PUBLISHED BY MIKE ROIDE DURING THE PANDEMIC



Whose Voice Do I Listen To? (2020)

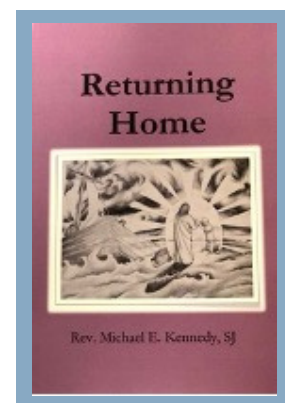
"In each of these meditations you will find a character named David...So who is David? David is a young man who was at the bank of the Jordan River when Jesus was baptized...David is you; David is me. David is anyone who is struggling to find happiness, to find love..So I invite you to read these reflections and find yourself in the figure of David."

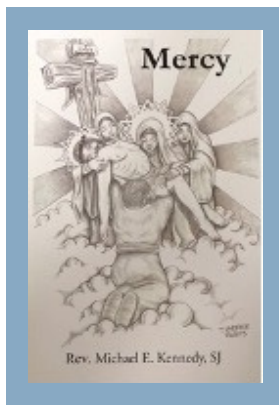
- Fr. Mike Kennedy, SJ

Returning Home (2020)

"Each play in this book is directed to the person who struggles with the daily life of prison, but who also has an enormous desire to change, to do good, and ultimately to go home. This is a challenge that cannot be met alone, but rather requires the help and support found within a community. These plays speak about this challenge. Our hope for those who will read these plays, and thus enter into the roles found in them, is that they will listen carefully to the messages of healing and forgiveness which are essential for their own inner work. Transformation, inner healing, is possible, and it will show up clearly when they finally do appear before the board. We know this because we have seen it. They are nothing less than miracles of grace."

- Fr. Mike Kennedy, SJ





Mercy (2020)

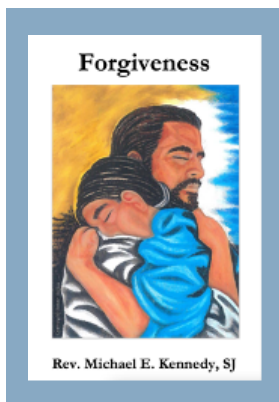
“Perhaps a simple definition of ‘mercy’ might be to simply taste the unconditional love of God, not in spite of our failings, but with them. The mercy of God is the felt love of God. When I really can own that I am a good person. Yes, I have done things that have hurt others, but I am a good person.... I welcome you to these meditations on Mercy. Each one will attempt to deepen the message of God’s mercy. May we all constantly grow deeper within God’s mercy, and help others do the same.”

– Fr. Mike Kennedy, SJ

Footprints (2020)

‘Footprints is a program that strives to provide spiritual healing by fostering supportive relationships. Footprints equips the participants with the tools needed to recognize the impact of their actions, and it hopes to successfully reintegrate the participants back into the community. Using real-life situations, group sharing, and journaling exercises, Footprints assists participants in understanding the manipulation and destructive influences of their criminal activity. Participants are held responsible and accountable for their past behavior.’

- Robert Rae Garcia



Forgiveness (2020)

“Time after time during these past 35 years, I have reflected upon this deep experience that people find in Confession. I realize that there is a profound mystery contained in the Sacrament of Confession, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Sacrament of Penance, or whatever you want to call it. There is something that happens with reference to forgiveness, healing, and tasting God’s unconditional love.”

- Fr. Mike Kennedy, SJ

Gratitude (2020)

“In this book, Gratitude, I learned through the meditations and the Gospel readings that Jesus wants me to go to the causes of my pain. Jesus can see the source of my pain and what is underneath the scars. The testimonies and meditations in this book have helped me see that I am ready to continue to allow Jesus to enter the wounds in my life, and heal me from the inside. For this realization I am grateful.”

– Robert Rae Garcia



Discipleship



Rev. Michael E. Kennedy, SJ

Discipleship (2020)

"In 2009 after a time of discernment, I felt I wanted to do something different and give myself time away from everything that involved me in a parish ministry. A few months later, in 2010, JRJ invited me into a new experience: visiting the communities within prisons. This experience has summed up much of what I had already experienced in the past in other ministries: the importance of healing our wounds. If we do not heal our wounds, if we do not forgive, or if we lose our faith and trust in God, we can fall into very complicated situations. Visiting these communities in prison has given me another vision of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus."

- Arturo Lopez

Pondering from 2020 (2021)

"This book is somewhat different from Mike's other books, which usually have been collections of meditations centered on Gospel stories, and which have been written 'from the eyes' of one of the characters in the scene itself. While there is a meditation or two like that in this book, there are also many of Mike's own personal reflections during his early morning meditations while walking or riding his bike in a park or near Marina Del Rey. These more personal reflections give us a direct window into Mike's own soul and spirituality, and I think they reveal the spirit and character which has driven his work with the poor and marginalized over these many years."

- Dick Howard

PONDERINGS FROM 2020



Rev. Michael E. Kennedy, SJ

Trust (2021)

Fr. Mike reflected on being captured by soldiers in El Salvador: "I am grateful that a few days later we were all released. I was soon deported, but I remember getting on the plane, taking off, and looking down at the countryside below. I was grateful that God gave me the sense, and the strength, to trust that small voice that I was hearing. That voice said to me, "Don't be stupid, confront these people." I never got into that car, and I will always remember it as a moment of trust in that small, still voice of God that leads us to life not death. I am grateful for that voice, and grateful that our God whispers to us how to trust Him, when to trust Him, and to trust that He is always with us."

- Fr. Mike Kennedy, SJ

Trust



Rev. Michael E. Kennedy, SJ

Prayers During Time of COVID (2021)

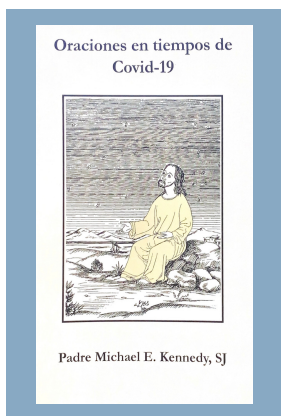
"When you cannot sleep; when you feel so down; when you feel fear; flow through your veins when you realize; the court determined your fate; and sentenced you to prison; and you felt a knife went through your heart; we invite you to pray from these pages and invite God to give you strength through these difficult moments in your life and the life of your family."

-Fr. Mike Kennedy, SJ

Prayers During Time of Covid-19



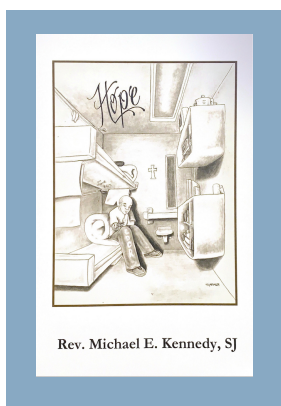
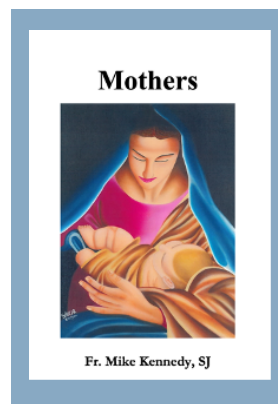
Rev. Michael E. Kennedy, SJ



Oraciones en Tiempos de COVID-19 (2020)
 The Oraciones en Tiempos de COVID-19 book is the Spanish version of the book Prayers During Time of COVID-19.

Mothers (2020)

“Maybe it is because I am a mother myself that I learned to value much more the presence of mothers, mother figures, and of family and friends in the transformation and healing of those incarcerated. No one can solve all their problems alone. We all need the help of those who love us to move forward in our lives. Fr. Mike’s beautiful meditations in this book clearly show why this is the case.”
 - Petrona Arguello

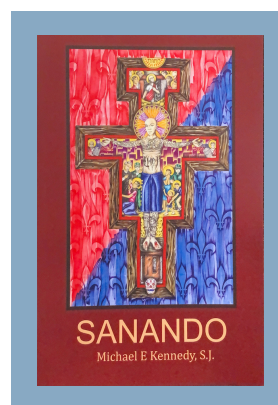


Hope (2021)

“Hope is that virtue that sustains us in times of difficulty, that lifts us up in times of despair, and that soothes us in times of trouble. In choosing Hope as the title of this book, and as the theme which runs through these meditations, Fr. Mike Kennedy wants to assure all of us who read and reflect on these writings that Hope is something powerful, real and within the grasp of all of us...The work of JRJI is precisely this: to nurture that virtue of Hope to those in prison who may feel that Hope is just a fantasy and does not apply to them given their difficult circumstances.”
 - Dick Howard

Sanando (2021)

Sanando is a collection of Gospel contemplations that use active imagination and prayer to take the reader on a journey towards healing. This book is a Spanish version of the book Healing, which was published in 2017.



JRJI VISITS

This month, the JRJI Team visited Valley State Prison at Chowchilla and the California Correctional Institution at Tehachapi while following all health and safety protocols. The team was happy to be back with both communities and are looking forward to future visits.



(left to right) Bobby, Fr. Mike, and Arturo after their visit with the community in Tehachapi

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

We are very moved by the reflections we continue to receive from our sisters and brothers in many institutions in the state of California. All this wisdom is in response to the correspondence that we send out monthly. Many have shared with us that they have obtained a greater approach to God during the pandemic. Through the material we send them, they can heal and forgive all the wounds that have led them to these places. Today, they realize that God was always with them, even though they have made bad decisions. This experience is bringing them closer to God and their families. We are sharing some of their reflections that we have received this month.

WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

Most people, or at least a good majority, would think God had abandoned them. I myself see things from a different perspective now. I know he loves me. I also know he has a plan for me and this “incarceration” is part of that plan! When I can accept that, it makes the lesson I’m being taught more meaningful. After all, life is our teacher and we are being taught constantly. Failure to observe and poor circumspection leads to additional pain, which compounds the problem and one that also adds layers of suffering on top of already existing pain.”

-Craig

“In 2020, the COVID crisis had hit us here. I remember when the first positive came up. I remember the anxiety, the fear I felt. Watching the news didn’t help. It would increase the anxiety. As weeks would pass more and more cases were popping up. Hearing that phone ring and seeing the C.O.s walking with a roll of bags mean you were positive. My heart would pump so fast each time that happened. During this time, I was able to get closer to God. As the building got emptier and emptier, I prayed more and more. At one point I was asked to come out and help. I said yeah, but man the anxiety I had was at an all-time high. Luckily nothing happened! Through the grace of God, I was one of the few that didn’t test positive in the building. Thank you, Jesus, for being with me.”

-Eric

“When I got to jail, I felt completely lost and alone. I didn’t know what to expect. I thought about my mom and dad a lot. They pain they felt was really burning a hole in my heart. Till this day the pain is still there. But with everything God has given me and my family gives me this calmness to my heart. Those days I felt I was going to break, that I was going to be able to handle jail, or whatever comes my way. The message I got from God was that he would never give me a pain or challenge that I can’t handle. My mom always had told me the same so those words always help me out.”


-Victor


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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