



JESUIT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE INITIATIVE

NEWSLETTER | JANUARY 2021

As we move into this New Year, we continue to pray that all of you continue to remain in good health and good spirits as we continue to move through these difficult times. The CDCR COVID lockdown situation in all prisons continues, and it thus cancels rehabilitative programs related to education, self-help, chapel services, visits, and family visits. There are no volunteer clearances to enter any state prison, and therefore this prohibition for JRJI to enter the prisons continues.

PUBLICATIONS

Over these last few months, we have gathered, organized, and published more of Fr. Mike's many beautiful meditations for use in the prisons. Since our last newsletter, new books published (or soon to be published) include:

- *Forgiveness* (2020)
 - Meditations on Gospel stories that deal with the concept of forgiveness, and how we need to emulate the forgiveness of Jesus.
- *Discipleship* (2020)
 - Meditations on Gospel stories about what it means to follow Jesus and what that entails.
- *Gratitude* (2020)
 - Meditations on Gospel stories about being grateful for what we have been given.
- *Trust* (2021)
 - A smaller book of meditations + artwork on the topic of trust within the Gospels.
- *Ponderings from 2020* (2021)
 - In this book, Fr. Mike shares some of his journal reflections from 2020 that include dealing with the COVID crisis while trying to maintain the work of JRJI.

JRJI MASS

We continue to tape our video Masses since we still cannot go inside. Our most recent Mass was taped on March 16 and will be shown inside the prisons on the CDCR TV channels during the first week of April. Since April 4 is Easter Sunday, the theme of the Mass was "Bringing Life Out of Death". The Mass was taped in both English and Spanish, and Bobby and Arturo shared their personal reflections in English and Spanish of how this theme has played out in their own lives. Our next video Mass will be taped on April 20 and the theme will be related to Mother's Day since the Mass will be shown during the first week of May. Once again, we thank Fr. Eddie Sibert, SJ of Loyola Productions for his expertise in helping us record and edit the Mass for viewing on the CDCR TV channels. His help has been tremendous. All Masses are available on our website.

WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

Finally, each month we try to include some "Wisdom From the Cells" by the men and women who respond to the meditations and letters we send to them. This month we would like to offer a lovely poem from Anthony, one of our JRJI participants, as he remembers his mom:

*Within these walls, this prison,
My mind and thoughts run free.
I think of mom and days gone by,
And of what she meant to me.
I wonder how life would have been
Had she not gone away
And would I be behind these bars
If she were here today?
How would my life be different?
I've asked a million times,
If I could only talk to her,
She might have stopped my crimes.
I'm thankful for the time we had
But she could not have known
Of the dark void left within my life
In the years since she's been gone.
I need her and miss her,
I love her – for a fact.
But I know my life is different
Because of mom's final act.*

ONLINE RETREAT

As we continue during this time of COVID, where we are all spending a lot of time at home, we would like to remind you that JRJI still sponsors an online retreat for you and your family. The Gospel passages were read by our friend and JRJI Board Member Janne Shirley, and the meditations were read by our friend, the actor Martin Sheen. These meditations are taken from Fr. Mike's published book *The Jesus Meditations*.

There is no set schedule for listening to the six meditations. You can listen to one each day, for example, if you would like to set aside a week for a mini-retreat. Or you could listen to one each week if you would like to spread out the experience. The written texts of the meditations are also on the website if you would like to follow along as you listen. You can find the online retreat on our website: <https://www.jrji.org/online-retreat.html>. We pray as the JRJI team that by spending some time in meditation on these themes, we will be better ministers to bring God's word to the world when we return to our work.

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