

I am an inmate at Walton Correctional Institution in DeFuniak Springs. I have been here for over two years, and I attend the Catholic service here at the prison every Sunday. I thank God for the volunteers from the Prison Ministry Program from your church who come every week and sacrifice their time and money to make it possible for us to receive the Word of the Lord and the Eucharist in Catholic fellowship, especially Will, Brian, and Angel, along with Mary and the other volunteers.

The Catholic service every Sunday is the only time during the week that I can look forward to for peace and tranquility in this hostile, and sometimes violent environment that I live in. The Catholic service every week helps me to stay focused on the Lord, and not on the things here that try to distract me from the Lord and pull me in another direction. There are also other inmates and staff here who are very anti-Catholic, and these people, especially the staff members, try to do everything and anything they can to attempt to discourage us from attending the Catholic Service, and are constantly trying to "convert" us over to other religions. Unfortunately, they have been pretty successful with a lot of my Catholic brothers.

I do not receive money from home very often, and when I do, it is not much so please accept this small donation I am sending, and I request that you please apply it to your Prison Ministries Program. I wish it could be more, but this is really more than I can afford to send. I am sending it in the hope that it will offset a small portion of the costs for the volunteers that come here every week, or for supplies or material handouts that they purchase for us themselves, out of their own personal funds.

I cannot tell you how much myself and the others here appreciate, and need, the Word, the Eucharist, and the love that the volunteers from your church bring us every week. I myself never thought about volunteering for, or donating my time or money to any type of prison ministry program, until I became incarcerated and saw how great the need for ministry for Catholics in the prisons and jails was. I used to feel that there were so many "more worthy" causes, and that if someone was in prison they must be bad people. Of course, I never thought then that I would cause a DUI accident and cripple a woman for the rest of her life, and be sent to prison for ten years.

I have hurt many people through my action, and even most of my family no longer writes me, or seems to care about me. And yet here are these people, Will, Brian, and the other volunteers, who were strangers to me, but they showed me that they cared about me from the very first day I met them, and they didn't judge me, or think I was a "bad person" because I am in prison. They not only bring us the Word of the Lord and the Eucharist every week, they also bring us brotherhood, caring, and love when they come. For some of us, it is the only time we receive any of these things.

I wanted to let you know that the Prison Ministry Program, although often overlooked by most, and purposefully ignored by some, is very important to us. It is the fiber that holds together our lives as Catholics in here, Keeps us focused on the Lord, and brings us Hope and Love.

I thank you, your church, and especially the volunteers who come every week for the Word of the Lord, the Eucharist, the caring and the love that myself and the others here receive every week from all of you. May the Peace and Love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with all of you, at all times.

Sincerely,

Paul M.

p.s. Please feel free to share this letter with our volunteers or anyone else you wish to.