

The Church of the Damascus Road

Volume 14
Issue No. 2
March 2011
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Flash!



Ash Wednesday

On the first day of Lent, pastors in many churches dip a finger in ashes (often made by burning palm branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday) and make a cross on parishioners' foreheads.

God's people have used ashes as a sign of mourning, humiliation and penitence. In the Old Testament, ashes were used as a purification offering. The New Testament speaks of repenting in "sackcloth and ashes" (Luke 10:13, NRSV).

On Ash Wednesday, Christians are pained because our sins — private and public — led to Jesus' death. With repentant hearts, we begin the season of Lent, knowing it leads to resurrection on Easter Sunday.

We Should

We should hate sin, but not the sinner. We should focus upon the person inside and not on their outward appearance. We should not limit another's ability to effect change in our minds. We should not limit God's power to work through us for that person's benefit. No one is too far gone to be saved by God. We should not allow ourselves to form an attitude that would cause us to refuse to be used by God in that person's life.

—Chad Kollasch, NCCF 9-Nov-'10

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The Prison Story

This story takes place in Palma, Majorca in 1949.

A group of young men were attempting to launch what they believed would be a wonderful apostolic work to counter the un-Christian world they were living in. They had worked long and hard, but all their efforts had been futile. Each day seemed worse than the last. They had become desperate, and were on the point of giving the whole idea up when one of the laymen received an unexpected call. It was the Chaplain of the local prison, asking for a couple of volunteers to come to the prison and help him with a difficult problem.

Two young men in the condemned cell would have nothing to do with him, and his only hope was to try and approach them through laymen. The young man hastily called a friend and after prayer to overcome their fear of entering the prison, the two men went inside to join the Chaplain. He took them to the condemned cellblock where the prisoners sat playing cards with their guards, who, as prison rules laid down, must stay in cell with the condemned men on the last night before execution.

Their cell was littered with pornographic magazines, and the wall plastered with salacious pin-ups. The condemned men seemed bent only on swapping dirty stories and gambling the night away. One of the two laymen, named Eduardo, told how they first asked the Governor's permission to take the place of the guards, and when this had been granted, they started talking to the two prisoners, gradually winning them around until eventually Eduardo said to them, "we came here to ask a favor of you." At this the two laughed loud and long. "A favor"? Don't you realize later this morning..."

And he made a gesture of garroting the other.

"But this is something you can do" said Eduardo, "We only want you to recommend something to the Lord for us. You are the only people we have met who know when they will be going to meet the Lord face to face. We want you to say something to Him. We feel it is urgent. Neither the Pope, or Kings, nor rich or poor men, know when they will be appearing before the Throne of God. We have this wonderful apostolic project, from which we expect great fruits - but we have failed miserably, so far, to get

Prison Story, continued on page 2



Abusing Grace

It is a sad fact that many Christians question just how much sin is acceptable since God's grace has entered into our lives. This kind of thinking seems to stem from the fact that since the price for our sins has been paid for through Jesus Christ; we should be free to indulge every once in a while.

Many people tend to classify sins as being big or small. However we need to realize that sin is not something to be classified that. Rather it is something to be gotten rid off. "How shall we who died to sin, (through Jesus) live any longer in it?" Paul asks in Rom 6:2.

Grace is something that gives freedom from sin, not the freedom to sin. Sin is inherently harmful to us, we are in effect punished by our sin, rather than for it. It's presence in our lives is a punishment in itself; therefore we should want to get rid of it, rather than add to it.

Grace does not give us a license to sin, we must remember that God has great anger against sin. It was Christ's death upon the cross which satisfied that anger on our behalf. So when we view grace as a license to sin, we are effectively spitting on Christ's cross!

Grace is God's favor despite our sin, it is not something that can be earned. So we should not ask 'Lord what can I get away with?' but, rather, "Who am I that you would give me such a gift?!"

—Chad Kollasch, NCCF 9-Nov-10'

Just before I was deployed to Iraq, I sat my eight-year-old son down and broke the news to him. 'I'm going to be away for a long time,' I told him. 'I'm going to Iraq.' 'Why?' he asked. 'Don't you know there's a war going on over there?'

Prison Story continued from page 1

it going. We want you to ask the Lord to help us.” - and Eduardo and his companion proceeded to explain their apostolic hopes and anxieties. As the night wore on they spoke of Christ, of His love and mercy. They spoke of how the Good Thief had “stolen heaven” and of forgiveness.

In the early hours of the morning, the Chaplain heard their confessions, and held a private mass for the two inmates, plus Eduardo and his associate, all receiving Eucharist. When invited to have breakfast with the condemned men, Eduardo could not eat. He was too nervous. A short while later they were led to the garroting post. One of them cried out for Eduardo and in the coming years, Eduardo told of how that man died, holding Eduardo’s crucifix in one hand, and clasping Eduardo’s hand with the other, as he knelt beside him, praying for him. The executioners placed the hood over the man’s head and affixed the chain which would break his neck with a sudden jerk.

The two lads were executed on the morning of January 28, 1949. One of those men had written to his family that night, and this is a translation from the Spanish - preserving, as far as possible, the grammar and simplicity of the original:

*Palma, Majorca
1:00 a.m. Jan. 28th 1949*

Dearest Parents and Brothers, so close to my heart.

These lines I am writing, are the last you will receive from your son and brother. I am writing them more with my heart than my pen. They are dictated by filial love, and in the hope you will keep them all the days of your life. I am in the condemned cell, and only a few hours remain before I leave this life of misery and tears. But God has given me the great mercy of letting me put my soul in order, and to prepare myself for a happiness that has no end.

After my life of ill-luck, and having been a victim of my surroundings, God has granted me the extra-ordinary grace of enabling me to recognize my past faults, and of making my peace with him—for he has given me this opportunity to put a full-stop at the end of my sins with a sincere confession, which has opened, little by little, the Gates of Heaven.

It only remains for me to ask your pardon, for all the heartaches I gave you during my life, with my straying — and to recommend to my brothers, whom I love with all my heart, never to stray from the path of duty which you, my parents, taught us to follow with your good advice.

I never remembered you with such affection as at this moment, and I hope that these lines, written at the culminating moment of my life to ask your pardon for all the displeasure I have given you during

my life, and also to serve as advice for my brothers, which I hope they will keep before them all their lives - that they may serve God as He expects His most faithful servants to do.

The end of my career has arrived. Praise be to God, who gave me these moments to ransom my life, and to die as do those men who have faith. Only faith gives strength and energy to triumph over so great a difficulty as this.

If you want news of my last moments, write to our Chaplain, who is called Father Jose Maria Fabian-Rubio. He will tell you about the last hours spent by me in this world. Be sure I am going to Heaven to pray for you, my dearest parents and brothers. I await you in Heaven - there we will live happily for all eternity. Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in you.

*Signed with my own hand
Your Son and Brother
who awaits you in heaven*

As the late Paul Harvey might have said: “And now for the rest of the story”:

Eduardo’s last name was Bonnin and the Spanish Action Movement, which he and others had been attempting to launch, was later to be referred to as Cursillo. This in turn, led to establishment of the Walk to Emmaus, Via de Cristo and Kairos and other similar three-day movements world-wide.

In the summer of 1992, the National Cursillo Encounter took place in Detroit, Michigan. Eduardo Bonnin was scheduled to attend as a featured speaker and participant. Joe Guitis, one of the Roman Catholic founders of Kairos, notified the Kairos national office that he planned to attend and wanted to ask Eduardo about the “Prison Story”. He also wanted to present Bonnin with a Kairos Manual and thank him for his contributions to what has become a powerful ministry in prisons.

Joe was received by Bonnin and read him our version of the story, using the two accompanying priests as interpreters. Bonnin verified every part of the story, making only minor changes. During his commentary on the story, Bonnin mentioned that he still wore the cross the young condemned man held at his execution. Joe asked permission to kiss that cross and the permission was very knowingly granted.

*<Thanks to Jim Ryan for sharing this story>
Reprinted from the
Indiana-Kentucky VdC Newsletter*

Editor’s note: What goes around comes around. Cursillo got “planted” because of the prison experience above. It grew in the “outside” world, and then was applied to the “inside” world of prisons in every USA state and many places in the world. Here in Iowa, we call it Brothers in Blue, and over 130 weekends have occurred in our Iowa state prisons.



Join Outside Council

You are invited to consider being a member of The Church of the Damascus Road’s Outside Church Council. The OCC is responsible for the financial support of the congregation, and the management of the church office, while the Inside Church Councils, made up of inmates, are responsible for the life, worship and ministry of CoDR in the prison.

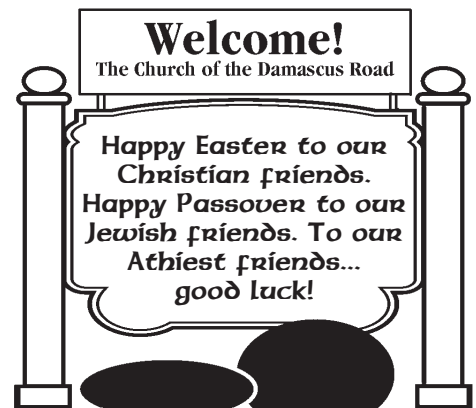
The OCC meets every third Wednesday of the month at 11:45am for a catered lunch followed by the business at hand.

Terms of office are 3 years in rotation. If you feel called to this special ministry, please call 515-955-3579 or email DamascusCh@aol.com.

FDCF Brothers-in-Blue

The next weekend at FDCF is scheduled for June 9-12, 2011. See Pastor Stone in the Chapel for applications. Please note that visits are not allowed, so be sure to notify those on your visiting list not to visit on that weekend. The application deadline is June 1.

Prayer in support of the weekend is one way persons on the ‘outside’ can support this renewal activity.



The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!
Issue 14.2 March 2011

The official publication of The Church of the Damascus Road, a Christian Community of Reconciliation, serving the inmate population of the correctional facilities at Rockwell City and Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Rev. Paul Stone, Pastor
Carroll Lang, Editor

Anyone wishing to be on our mailing list may send name, address, and phone numbers to the address below, or by e-mail at: DamascusCh@aol.com. The Flash will be sent directly to your home. Our office is at St. Olaf Lutheran Church.

The Church of the Damascus Road
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RE-entry integration

"It's a Ministry, Not a Program"

Renewed Hope

A phone call has renewed hope that we will have teams to train in the near future. A pastor in Wall Lake has parishioners interested in joining forces with people in Carroll to form a team, the Pocahontas Baptist Church is forming a team in anticipation of helping a soon-to-be-released inmate, and a new Reformed Church in America prison congregation is being developed in the Newton Correctional Facility and hopefully, that will inspire several teams in and around the Pella area.



Our Reentry Reintegration ministry will train and prepare you to welcome an ex offender back into society and help her or him make a successful transition. Now, we're not saying it will be easy, but we know from experience that it is a rewarding ministry and, like any ministry, it is filled with sorrows and joys, hard work and feelings of success. Size need not limit you. Lytton, a town of 255 population, has already covenanted with three ex offenders. In Sioux City, where there are more resources, the team is working with five or six ex offenders. In Humboldt there are often three, and in Fort Dodge the team is working with three to five.

There can be a vital ministry of aftercare in your area as well. We need your help in locating existing teams in parts of Iowa other than NW Iowa, developing more teams around the state. Please give me a call at 515-571-6566 or email me at CDLNg@aol.com.
 —Rev. Carroll Lang, NW IA Director



Thoughts to Remember

Thoughts for those about to be released and returning to society:

- ★ The greatest joy — giving.
- ★ The most satisfying work — helping others.
- ★ The most effective sleeping pill — peace of mind.
- ★ The most powerful force in life — love.
- ★ The worst thing to be without — hope.
- ★ The greatest asset — faith.
- ★ The most contagious spirit — enthusiasm.
- ★ The most prized possession — integrity.
- ★ The world's most incredible computer — the brain.
- ★ The most worthless emotion — self-pity.
- ★ The most beautiful attire — a smile.
- ★ The most powerful channel of communication — prayer.

—from Redeemer Ev. Lutheran, Des Moines, IA

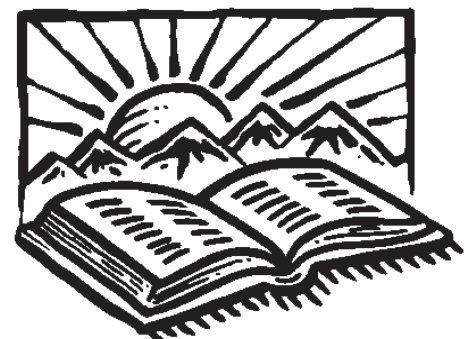
The Bible

Some say the Bible is all a myth
 I would answer with something like this
 Were the worlds formed by some big bang?
 Or something similar from which we came?

Science first denied that there is a God
 Now they're not sure and study on
 Darwin's theory with a single cell
 "It's only a theory" Darwin would tell

With all the evidence so clearly seen
 And DNA proving from one source we came
 So why is it so hard for us to believe?
 Is there a God? Have we been deceived?

The Man in question, from Galilee
 Did signs and wonders for all to see
 Claimed a Kingdom from above
 He didn't want taxes, only our love.
 — William Bell FDCF



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March 2011

Invite the (New) Pastor

The worship services at The Church of the Damascus Road are scheduled on week-nights for two reasons. One is to enable people on the outside to worship with the inmates and not miss worship in their own congregations. The second is to enable the pastor of Damascus Road to visit area congregations on Sunday mornings. The pastor can give a brief update on the ministry, a sermon, a children's sermon, an adult forum, a children's Sunday school opening, a cross-generational class session, or any or all of the above, and is open to suggestions. All that is asked is that there be time to prepare.

Call 515-955-3579 or write to: The Church of the Damascus Road, 239 N 11th St, Fort Dodge, IA 50501, or by e-mail at <DamascusCh@aol.com> to arrange for a visit to your congregation. Pastor Paul speaks Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, United Church of Christ, Covenant, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, Evangelical, Reformed, Assembly of God, Mennonite, Nazarene, and a host of other denominations, independent, and non-denominational, too.

Artists' Corner

Noah's Ark by Joel Seguara Meza 2003



www.codrcare.org

All Readers: Send Contributions

The editor of this newsletter is inviting ALL READERS, inside and outside to send in articles, poetry, art work, and opinions for the newsletter. So don't be bashful.

NCCF Church Council

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- Chad Bechtel Secretary & Pastor Ass't
- Larry Barton Keith Coddington
- Ron Cole Scott Fetters
- Spencer Fitzpatrick Chad Kollasch
- Jason Scott Tyrone Sutherland
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- Cody Anderson Secretary
- Michael Brown Russel Klein
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- Raymond Reynolds Kirby Sanders
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A note to secretaries and pastors—

Copy Me, Please!

We send our newsletter primarily to congregations. It's printed on white paper so it can be copied to include all or portions of it in your newsletter or bulletin, or simply made available to members of your congregation.

-- Pastor Paul Stone

Worship & Bible Study

FDCF Fort Dodge

- 6:30pm Wednesdays Holy Communion
- 6:00pm Fridays Prayer Team
- 6:30pm Fridays Bible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

- 6:30pm Tuesdays Bible Study
- 6:30pm Thursdays Holy Communion