

Fall 2017

Pacific Youth

Correctional Ministries



Chaplain Rick Johnson

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A Six-Month Journey

On the cold night of Saturday, November 20th, the Santa Ana Police Department dispatched officers to the scene of a robbery. A few minutes later a couple patrol units approached me and the person I was with. Out of fear, I resisted arrest and during the struggle was rendered unconscious and then taken into custody. At that point the officers noticed how young I looked and asked my name and age. "My name is Juan and I am seventeen," I said.

It was now 4:45 a.m. and I was transported to the police headquarters. Little did I know how difficult my life would become from this point forward. Upon arrival, I was stripped down to my boxers and given a paper jumpsuit to wear. After being fingerprinted, I was photographed and handcuffed to the wall in one of the small interrogation rooms. A detective came in and read my Miranda Rights and spent thirty minutes questioning me.

Around 5:40 a.m. I was transported to Orange County Juvenile Hall and offered a warm shower and clothing along with a sack lunch containing two sandwiches, a cookie, carrots, potato chips, and some orange juice. At 6:30 a.m. I was placed into a room in the intake unit where I fell into a deep, eight-hour sleep. My sleep was interrupted by the staff telling him that my mom was there for an initial ten-minute visit. She cried for most of the visit as I tried to reassure her that everything was going to be fine.

Because of the severity of my crime, I was being tried as an adult and housed with other youth classified as XSR (extra security risk). A few days later I was awakened at 5:15 a.m. and transported for my first appearance in the Superior Court in downtown Santa Ana. My bail was set at a million dollars. A woman approached me inside the court building and introduced herself as an alternate defender for the County of Orange who would be handling my case.

For the next few months I attended the church service held inside my unit and worked on making amends to God. The forgiveness of God is something I have experienced, as do all who turn to God in repentance.

At my request, Chaplain Rick began meeting with me for discipleship. Eventually, the day came for me to be sentenced and my attorney had assured me that she may be able to get me released or at worst, an extended sentence in one of the probation facilities. As the hearing began, the judge began saying why I needed to be housed in a state youth facility in Ventura. "God, I beg you, please don't let that happen!" I prayed. My attorney did all that she could to argue for a different outcome. On May 29th, at 3:52 p.m. I was sentenced to two years and allowed to stay locally!

I am committed to the Protestant Chaplaincy Ministry and depending on my faith more than ever. I would like to thank the volunteers, therapists, teachers, etc who have given me the support I needed.

Juan will be at the Youth Guidance Center for the next full year. Pray that he will continue to benefit from this experience.

First Time Testifying

11/8

Prop 57 passed that no longer allows the district attorney to determine which minors will be tried as an adult. Minors with serious charges will have court proceedings (707 hearing) where a juvenile court judge will make that determination.

3/23

Adan was taken into custody as the prime suspect in an assault that had occurred near his apartment a week prior.

4/27

I began meeting with Adan weekly for counseling and told me that he would have a 707 hearing after a probation officer wrote a report. I found out from one of the probation officers who writes the reports that Prop 57 impacted 120 former juveniles in Orange County.

7/12

The investigator that works for Adan's attorney scheduled to interview me at Adan's request and was encouraged that I had so much information about his past.

7/18

After seeing me look at notes in my phone during my interview, Adan's investigator emailed me to say that Adan would be signing a waiver and she would be requesting a copy of everything I had documented.

7/24

After discussing the request with Chaplain Steve, I sent an email back to the investigator saying the information is protected by clergy confidentiality. Instead of my personal notes, I sent her all the ministry summary sheets that logged the sixty plus contacts I had with Adan since January of 2016.

8/9

Attended Adan's preliminary court hearing but was then told by the judge to leave the courtroom. Since I would be testifying at the 707 hearing, the DA felt I should not be allowed to view the court proceedings.

8/16

Adan's attorney contacted me about how to get a friend of mine who invited Adan into her and her husband's home to come and testify at his 707 hearing. Someone told me that Adan's attorney is the best public defender in Orange County.

9/7

Attended Adan's 707 hearing along with my friend and a probation staff member who came to testify how well behaved Adan had been in the unit and how he had no gang affiliation. I was on the stand for 30 minutes and answered the questions from Adan's public defender and the district attorney. The DA tried to get me to look like I was just meeting with Adan to fulfill the probation department's legal mandates and to make sure I had enough contacts each week in order to justify being a chaplain. After a two and a half hour hearing, the judge dismissed himself for a 15-minute recess and said he would be back with the decision. I had to leave for my YLA church service but got a text message from Adan's attorney thirty minutes later saying, "We won!"

9/28

Attended Adan's sentencing hearing. Because the victim of the crime showed up, the district attorney was arguing to give Adan his third strike. After an hour of negotiation in the DA's office, Adan's attorney came back in with the deal. Adan had to plead guilty to prevent the strike and will get out on November 3rd with five months of house arrest.

All Things Possible

One day I went to the bookshelf in my unit and saw the book, "All Things Possible" by Victor Marx. Something was telling me to pick it up and read it. Before I read the book I didn't believe in God because I never saw him work. But as I read the book, I began to relate to the story and the verses in each chapter began to apply to my life. I was feeling pretty hopeless at that time but then I came across Jeremiah 29:11 and it gave me hope again. Reading the book gave me warm chills and I felt that God was speaking to me. Many questions I had about life and God were answered. The book also opened my eyes to see how wrong my lifestyle had been. When I finished the book I began to tell others in my unit what God did. I never thought in a million years that I would believe in God but today I know God is with me.

Dawson (Juvenile Hall)

The Timothy House

I had an all right childhood in Turlock, California but my mom was never around. Meeting and interacting with others was a struggle because I came from a different ethnic background. Around age thirteen I wanted to fit in with a certain group and began using drugs. Three years later I was addicted to meth and started thinking about getting help. My dad looked into Teen Challenge and since the adolescence home in Southern California was right next to where my mom lived, I agreed to go there. In October of 2016 I entered the Timothy House and began the one year program.

On Friday mornings, Chaplain Rick visits us and one of the things we went through was a biblical version of the Twelve Steps. I had been weighed down with guilt for a long time and needed to receive God's forgiveness and love. The Friday talks also taught me the importance of forgiving my mom. I had one visit from her and did what I could to make amends. I plan to reunite with my dad's family when I complete the program and go on to college. I thank God for the relationships he has restored and for getting me through my various hardships.

Sean (Timothy House)



This newsletter contains three testimonies submitted by the youth we serve (with some editing). Thank you for reading it and for your part in keeping me on the mission field full time.

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