

FALL NEWSLETTER

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Expanded Ministry

"I owe the guys in Unit T an apology," is what I thought to myself after the staff meeting in July. I was sharing that the population has dropped and how the courts are releasing everyone they can to the care of their families.

Chaplain Steve then asked, "Are all the needs of the youth who do stay being met?" I was getting ready to say "yes" but something stopped me. It was my bad attitude about Unit T that came to my mind.

I tried to re-start the Monday bible study after the pandemic but the staff had placed another program at the same time that a certain number of youth were expected to attend. There was also a bible study on Sunday nights being led by a Christian staff. Having a youth practice Satan worship in the unit didn't help either.

Chaplain Steve said, "We lost ground in Unit T and now it is time to get it back." I took that as a word from the Lord and decided to commit to Unit T even if that means sitting outside the unit to pray when no one attends.

When I met with the unit supervisor, the PCM was given Friday evening at 5:30 pm but unfortunately the staff also take the youth outside at that time.



Board of Corrections

When the inspector from the Sacramento Board of Corrections came for her annual review, she found some things she wanted changed. One of them was the length of time incarcerated youth can stay in their rooms. Fifteen minutes during waking hours was the standard and anything exceeding that had to be documented. For the first time ever, no one can say they attend church or bible study just to get out of their rooms. Every person who attends is giving up free time and a chance to socialize with their peers.

Since the probation department was found "non compliant" after the first visit, the chief of probation (Daniel Hernandez) flew to Sacramento to attend a Board of Corrections meeting (see photo). During his twenty-minute speech, he gave the history of everything the department has done over the past twenty-five years to improve their services to incarcerated youth. His closing statement to the board was, "I want you to know that Orange County Probation will always be a premiere department invested in the success and well-being of the youth in our care."

Several youth were interviewed by the inspector and not one of them said anything negative about the staff. When asked how they are treated, the youth said "The staff love us and we feel cared for and safe."



I Love You, Son

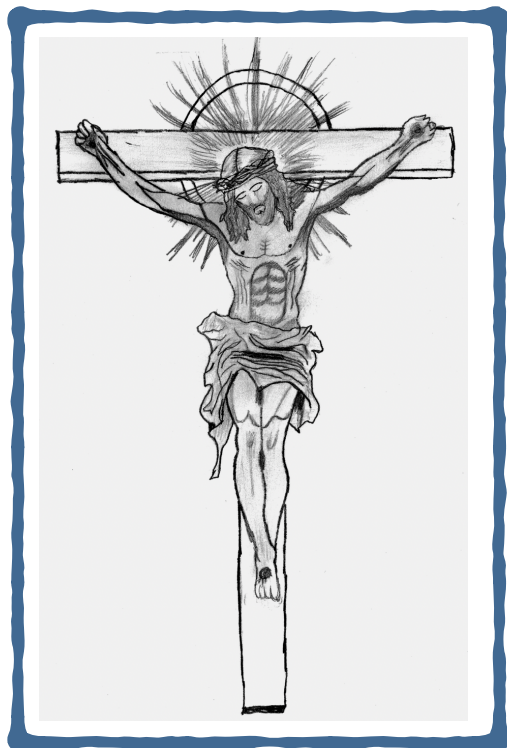
As a little boy I remember hearing my dad always tell me that he loves me. Around age five, those words were no longer heard because my dad was always working. I still needed my dad's attention but didn't get what I was seeking.

Without that attention and affection I gave up and went out to find love from the streets. On the streets people called me "family" but I ended up robbing others, getting high, and worse things that got me locked up in Juvenile Hall.

On August 12th, I went to court and had an after court visit with my dad. Right before he left, I heard those words again, "I love you, son and I want you to change."

The way I felt as I walked back to the unit was the best feeling I had in a really long time. Finally he said what I had been missing my whole life. With my dad's attention I am even more motivated to take the JRC Program serious.

Brandon - Youth Leadership Academy



Raymond - Youth Guidance Center



Besides the Christmas and Easter Outreaches, we are also able to partner with the Catholic Ministry for movie nights. That way all the youth who want to attend can do so. The Joseph Movie was one we agreed upon which had shown many years ago at the Youth Guidance Center and needed to return.

We were given permission to use the weekly bible study time (plus an extra hour) for the activity. Since this is a good opportunity to invite guests, I recruited two individuals to help hand out the snacks to save time at the beginning. Mike from St Andrews Presbyterian Church and Scott from Grace Church of Orange both responded to my invitation and were cleared. Chaplain Tim was also on hand to provide leadership.

When I arrived at the facility to set up, the supervisor told me that all of the youth had signed up to attend. But because the activity was cutting into an already crowded schedule, the youth were told they could only fit in ten minute phone calls. There were four youth who had earned twenty minute phone calls, so they choose to stay in the unit rather than miss out on their extra ten minutes of phone time.

One of the guys who attended and said he enjoyed the movie was Juan. Juan and I met for discipleship and counseling for over a year when he was in Unit Q at Juvenile Hall. Because he is undocumented, he acts defeated and talks negative about his future.

Two days after the movie night I was able to meet with Juan. Once again he told me that nothing matters because he is just going to be deported. But then I thought of comparing his life to the life of Joseph and said, "Joseph was deported when his brother rejected him but how did his life turn out?" Juan began to smile and realized that his future wasn't has hopeless as he thought.

