

HELPING PRISONERS ON DEATH ROW
LIVE CONNECTED & FRUITFUL LIVES

COMPASSION

WRITTEN BY DEATH ROW PRISONERS & ASSISTED BY LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE PRISONERS

VOL. 28 | ISSUE 132 | BI-MONTHLY
MAY 2023



IN THIS ISSUE:

- EDITORIAL: STAY FOCUSED
- LETTER FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR
- LETTER TO THE EDITOR: JABEZ'S PRAYER
- HIS SON
- TO MY FRIEND, IN CHRIST
- VICTIMS VOICE: ACHIEVING MY POTENTIAL
- MY FREEDOM
- WELFARE
- SEEING THE REAL
- DRIVEN
- LORD WILLING
- HAPPINESS
- AND MORE...

Publishing compassionate and introspective articles written by death row and life without parole prisoners.

www.compassionondeathrow.org
P.O. Box 623 | Perrysburg, OH 43552

THE BRANCH OF FEAR

The story is told of a king who received a gift of two magnificent falcons. They were peregrine falcons, the most beautiful birds he had ever seen. He gave the precious birds to his head falconer to be trained. Months passed and one day the head falconer informed the king that though one of the falcons was flying majestically, soaring high in the sky, the other bird had not moved from its branch since the day it had arrived.

The king summoned other professionals from all over the land to tend to the falcon, but no one could make it fly. He presented the task to the members of his court, but in the days that followed, the king saw through the palace window that the bird still had not moved from its perch.

Having tried everything else, the king thought to himself, "Maybe I need someone more familiar with nature itself to get to the bottom of the problem." So he shouted to his aide, "Go and get me a farmer." In the morning, the king was thrilled to see the falcon soaring high above the palace gardens. "Bring me the doer of this miracle", he demanded.

Soon, the farmer came and stood before the king. The king asked him, "How did you make my falcon fly?" With his head bowed, the farmer spoke to the king, "It was an easy task, Your Highness. I simply cut the branch off the tree upon which the bird was sitting."

MORAL: We are all made to fly – to realize our incredible potential as human beings. But at times we sit on our branches, clinging to the things that are familiar to us. The possibilities are endless, but for most of us, they remain undiscovered. We conform to the familiar, the comfortable, and the mundane. So for the most part, our lives are mediocre instead of exciting, thrilling and fulfilling. Let us all learn to destroy the branch of fear we cling to and free ourselves to the glory of flight!



John Robinson
Kansas Death Row
El Dorado, Kansas

LWOP

WRITE TO STAY MENTALLY FREE

If I could say anything to those of you who are locked down as I am, I would say WRITE! Write to stay mentally free. Write in order to breathe. Write in order to cry. And most importantly, write until the day you die. In so doing, you leave a legacy to this 'world within a world' that we live in.

Personally, I write for today, so that I will have a voice speaking loud and clear for tomorrow. Please take my words as inspiration for your own pen.

May it remain positioned over a blank page, or even lined paper, in order to fill the void of whatever your soul emits on any given day of your life.



Darrell Sharpe
Norfolk Correctional Institution
Norfolk, MA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor are welcomed from all prisoners (this includes non-death row prisoners) and the outside community.

In submitting letters, we ask that compassionate and introspective guidelines apply to your communications.

Limit size to 400 words or less. Letters may be edited for clarity and space considerations.

SEND ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO:

COMPASSION OFFICE
P.O. Box 623
Perrysburg, OH 43552

COMPASSION OUTSIDE COORDINATOR

compassiondeathrow@msn.com
TEL: 419-350-6655
FAX: 419-874-3441

WEBSITE ADDRESS:

www.compassiondeathrow.org

PUBLISHER

Compassion

EDITOR

George Wilkerson

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Konstantinos Fotopoulos

Kevin Marinelli

Phillip Vance Smith II

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Justin Anderson, Ronald Clark Jr,

Al Cunningham, Jermaine McKinney,

Kurt Michaels, John Robinson,

Darrell Sharpe, and Melvin Speight

PLEASE NOTE: Any opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individuals writing them and not of Compassion or other staff members. Anything death row prisoners write may jeopardize their future appeals. This may limit the scope of their expressions.

All stories are subject to editing for grammar, sentence structure, and clarity.

EDITORIAL: STAY FOCUSED

I remember when the prison put another T.V. on each pod, mounted on the dayroom wall about two feet from the other one. So, we now had two big flatscreens side-by-side. While waiting to go to the cafeteria for lunch one day, I stood in the dayroom staring at our new T.V., which was set on an educational channel showing how a factory made some product. Our other T.V. was set on a show that featured really attractive women in tights or bathing suits doing yoga. Although I was trying to watch the educational program, my eyes kept drifting toward the other T.V.

After this happened 5 - 6 times, I had to laugh at my lack of self-control, but I also sensed God speaking to me. The side-by-side T.V.'s were a real-life parable and embodied the struggle we Christians often face between the Spirit and the Flesh. Prior to being "saved", all I had was one mental T.V., so to

speak, and it was set on one channel – gratifying my desires.

After accepting Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit, I now have a new T.V. in my head and it offers me something wholesome, productive, nutritive. Thing is, the old T.V. is still running strong, constantly vying for my attention.

And the world is watching. The T.V. I watch in my head is reflected in my attitudes and actions. Those side-by-side T.V.'s helped me to understand how important it is to stay inwardly focused on the things of God if I want to change the way I carry myself, if I want to show others what the love of God looks like...



George Wilkerson
Editor
North Carolina Death Row
Raleigh, NC

LWOP

LETTER FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

Throughout my life I have been poor. As a child, my mom sewed denim patches onto the worn knees of my generic blue jeans to make them last a few more months. As a young man, I ate only once a day in order to save rent money for my apartment. As a lifer, I have worked various jobs to buy hygiene and food. Sometimes I earned \$2.80 a week. Sometimes I earned \$15.00 a week. Regardless, prison salaries only carried me to the finish line, but never over it, and I always needed more.

Twenty-two years in prison taught me how to survive on less. But now that I am able to spend a decent amount each week, I recognize that some are still struggling.

One day I made fish patties out of crumbled crackers and mackerel. It's not a hard thing to make, mix it all up in a bowl with season salt, maybe chopped onions or bell peppers too (if you can get them). Form them into small patties, then microwave. If you like fish, the scent of fish patties cooking can be delightful.

While making a batch of four, I saw a guy sitting at a table watching me. He worked as a janitor. He made \$2.80 a week. He never received money from home and he never asked anyone for a handout. I gave him two patties, not because I felt pity for him or because it seemed like the right thing to do. I gave him the patties because I know what it feels like to struggle in prison and I wanted him to forget that feeling, if only while he ate.



Phillip Vance Smith II
Assistant Editor
Nash Correctional Institution
Nashville, NC

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

JABEZ'S PRAYER

“And Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. And his mother called his name ‘Jabez’ saying, “Because I bore him with sorrow.”

And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, “Oh that Thou wouldst bless me indeed and enlarge my territory and that Thy hand might be with me and that Thou wouldst keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain.” So God granted him what he requested.

— 1 Chronicles 4:9-10

I read this verse every morning when I wake up ‘faithfully.’ Sometimes I have to read it several times throughout my day. We are in hard times and our nation is very much divided. In Matthew 12:25 it says: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.” We can’t vote, we can’t protest, we can’t change our government, but one thing we can do is pray. “And when two or more gather in My name I will be in the midst.” says Jesus. There is power in numbers, especially in prayer. Prayer can change the minds of our government, our victims’ families, maybe even your own family who has not been in contact for a while, God can bring them back into your life.

God just wants to bless us; all we have to do is ask. He’s the father most of us never had, the father we can trust. Try Jabez’s prayer for 30 days and every day, pray it. And when the blessings come, (even if it is as small a Ramen soup) write it down and see the blessings add up.



Shari Eggum
Crain Unit
Gatesville, TX

HIS SON

Well, I have a story that I’d like to share

So gather round, and don’t despair.

For you see there is a God, a God above

And I just want to share, share His love

Now you may ask just how I KNOW

And that’s what I’m about to show.

For you see this was all God’s inspiration,

Genesis through Revelation

Yet Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

Is about His one and only Son,

Who came upon this old Earth

By a virgin mother who gave birth.

And at the tender age of thirty-three

He gave his life for both you and me.

He hung upon an old wooden cross

And the people surely felt the loss.

But in three days He would rise,

And be seen by many eyes.

Now if we take a look at the book of Acts,

We’ll see so many, many facts

About a man, a man named Saul,

Who would later become the Apostle Paul

And preach the words of Jesus Christ

That he paid the ultimate, ultimate price

For all of man, mankind’s sins,

And baby that’s where the love,
the love begins.



Ronald Clark Jr
Florida Death Row
Raiford, FL

TO MY FRIEND, IN CHRIST

Dear Friend,

May the Lord's blessings be upon and within you. I quietly listened to all you and others were discussing yesterday, regarding a person's worthiness of Salvation and admittance into Heaven. Taking into account all of a person's sins, both before and after coming to know the Gospel, it seemed to me there was very little in the way of love and forgiveness being expressed towards selves or others.

A person often perceives what they expect and fear, and even within the Bible, any portion of Scripture can thus support whatever they perceive it to mean. Everyone is a child of the Lord, whether they are walking within Darkness or in the Light, but Free Will means everyone is responsible for the paths they choose to travel.

It is not about man's judgement of man. It is about their choosing to be and live more Christ-like, and in this way, being an example of a loving life, which can be chosen by others at any time. It is about accepting the realities of today along with the possibilities of tomorrow. Loving and encouraging,

my friend, not fearing and hating. Setting our personal boundaries, maintaining today's realities for our and others' safety, but helping how and where we can for tomorrows' possibilities.

We decided how we once chose to be and live was no longer desired. This means we found fault within our chosen selves and lives. Otherwise, think about it, why would we wish any changes? The differences must come from within us and our change in choices. All of those changes and choices being made because they are righteous rather than seeking the reward of Salvation and admittance into Heaven.

Will we and our lives become perfect? No! Will we stumble and stray into Darkness? Yes! Not once will this mean we are failures or have to start completely over. We can remember where we had been and the steps it took for us to reach that point. The hard choices when those things happen, which are up to us to make or not, are to regain not only what we had achieved, but for us to also strive to reach even farther.

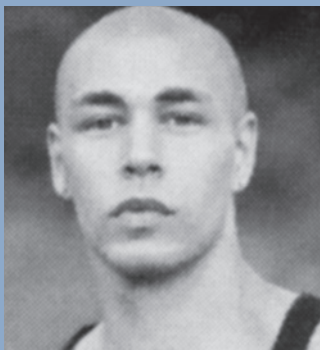


Our imperfect humanity and Free Will ensures we will make disappointing choices (i.e. – Sin). However, my friend, we can choose to return to traveling a path in the Light. Our striving to be and live more Christ-like, overcoming yet not erasing Sins, is what shows our Salvation and admittance into Heaven.



Kurt Michaels
California Death Row
San Quentin, CA

VICTIMS VOICE



Micaiah Nathaniel Pallu Kotthoff
Brother of Kirra Williams

ACHIEVING MY POTENTIAL

The murder of my brother, Micaiah Nathaniel Pallu Kotthoff, crippled me. He was the most important person in my life aside from my children. My childhood was terrible and traumatic and Micaiah always tried to help by motivating me to do well.

To cope with the pain, I was using and he encouraged me out of my lifestyle and into treatment to achieve my potential. With all the challenges I still face, for myself and my children, I now want to get my life on track, go to college, and make my brother proud.

– Kirra Williams

ORIGINAL ART WORK FOR SCHOLARSHIPS



Pueblo de Taos

By John Sexton
Florida Death Row
Raidford, FL

9" x 12" / Acrylic on
Watercolor Paper
\$100.00

To purchase make your check to Compassion
and send to the address on page 2.

COMPASSION READERS: To date over \$60,000.00 has been awarded in college scholarships to family members for murder victims. Make a purchase of their artwork. To view available selections, view Art for Scholarship in the past issues at www.compassionondeathrow.org.

Call 419-874-1333 and ask for Compassion office to verify availability.

WELFARE

I am my Bible: well-read, annotated,
mostly misinterpreted. I come from the broken
play-ground littered with dented
Coke cans,
crack pipes, bullet shells, condom husks,
and bottle shards that scarred my arches.
I inhabit
my siblings' cowlicks and creamy
Korean skin,
crispy, spicy, sour-smelling Kimchi,
and my mother's squeaky yellow
cleaning gloves. I own the
burnt-grease reek
of my dad's mushy fried chicken,
footlong bricks of blank-label
cheese that sweated orange;
dad's meaty fists, heavy leather belt,
and the
plates and ashtrays he flung like
discusses at us
which embedded in weak-ass drywall
when they missed. I belong to crowding
with other
families around a boxy aluminum
community
mailbox the first of every month,
from comparing
bruised butts and backs with my brothers
in the bathroom, my mom's sweet-scented
face cream that left lips oily
after kisses; her sing-songy broken English
as she mangled insults and criticisms,
and my
schizophrenic dad's "I'm so proud
of you, Son."
Though I am nothing to be proud of.
I am nothing
to be proud of.
But still I am proud.

George Wilkerson, Editor
North Carolina Death Row
Raleigh, NC

LWOP

MY FREEDOM

Closer to my dreams

I was warned:

if I want to reach my goal

it'll have to be torn

taken and ripped

from their grasp

since nothing this important

is ever given

when asked



Melvin Speight
Greene Correctional Institution
Waynesburg, PA

SEEING THE REAL

Who is this creeper – death –

Come to steal my waking breath

I'll stare in his face

And plead my case

A life of suffering I've had

Tho I wasn't born bad

An unequal hand was dealt

As all this misery is felt

My defiance is true

My fear not of you

As I came into this life

I found only strife

Always on the defense

From those I take offense

It's not as you may see

You haven't really seen me

I am what you created

Manifesting all you've hated

I am the reflection of you

Shining through and through

Punish me not for your mistake

I only reveal that you are fake

Now death haunts me no more

Part of society at the core

My will is stronger than steel

Seeing all that's truly real



Kevin Marinelli,
Assistant Editor
Pennsylvania Death Row
Waynesburg, PA

DRIVEN

If you think everyone will be celebrating you giving your life to God, think again. This is especially true if your conversion takes place in prison where believers are seen by some as fools who've been brainwashed. It's ironic because some of those same people are addicted to drugs that literally destroy braincells.

I would rather suffer the ignorance of others than to suffer from it. However, I'll address those who may be concerned about my mental health. Before you write me off as "just another sucker", consider this: If you were driving down a street and up ahead you saw a DEAD END sign, what would you do? Undoubtedly, anyone with the slightest amount of common sense would turn around. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, "dead end" is defined as a position, situation or course of action that leads to nothing more. Likewise, being in prison feels like you've come to the end of the road; like you've hit rock bottom; like you can't go any further down, so you look up. Then you realize that there's another way: devoting your life to God is how you turn it around.

Now, to the cons who think that God is a bail bondsman, think again. When I made up my mind to follow Him my situation didn't change. The choices I made long ago have long lasting consequences. This realization can make or break a believer. I'm sure I could do a lot of good if I were a free man. But help doesn't always come in the form we think it should. I had to accept that I'm no longer in the driver's seat. Although devotion to God is not a demotion, I must confess that I do miss the sense of freedom I felt being behind the wheel. That's why I was so reluctant to let go.

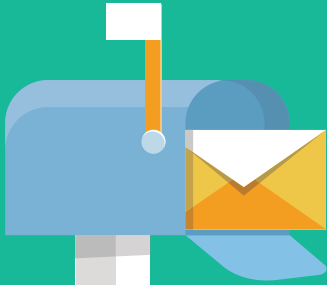
Some people call it prayer, but I just talk to God. I remind Him of where I started and how far I've come. I also told Him if He wants me to go any further, He'll have to drive.



Justin Anderson
Arkansas Death Row
Grady, AR



Please mail your writings to:
COMPASSION
 P.O. BOX 623 | PERRYSBURG, OH 43552



If you want to share someone else's work, please be sure you include the name of the author or its origin.

PRISONERS OF DEATH ROW YOUR ASSISTANCE WILL BE APPRECIATED

7 SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES

1. Write about an experience that impacted you.
2. It doesn't have to be religious. Here are some themes: anger, apathy, beauty, betrayal, boredom, change, complacency, courage, fear, friendship, growing older, jealousy, pride, purpose, vices, and wisdom.
3. Use sensory details – the smell, who said what, its color, how cold it felt. Sensory details connect your experience to your readers.
4. There's no need to use big words when a simpler one suffices: leave your ego at the door with your case: this isn't the place for either one.
5. Look for ways to unify; help; and solve problems.
6. Be authentic. Be yourself. No one's perfect.
7. Try to limit it to 400 words or less, and if possible enclose a photo of yourself.

As there are numerous submissions it may take up to eight months for selected articles to be published.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS WHO ARE MAKING THIS PUBLICATION POSSIBLE

LEAD DONOR (\$5000 OR MORE):

In Memory of Margaret Keller

SILVER DONORS (\$1000 OR MORE):

St. Rose Parish, Perrysburg, OH

Rev. Charles Ritter

In Memory of Deacon

Ken Cappelletty

Cynthia Bily

Fr. Edward Schleiter

Bishop Frank Dewane, Venice, FL

Sisters of the Precious Blood

BRONZE DONORS (\$500 OR MORE):

Ken & Elizabeth Green, Dallas, TX

Diocese of San Diego, CA

Rev. Neil Kookoothe,

St. Charence Church

St. Joseph Church, Sylvania, OH

Rev. James Bacik

Sisters of Mercy, Fremont, OH

Margaret Buckley

PATRONS (\$100 OR MORE):

An Anonymous Friend

St. Katharine Drexel, Frederick, MD

Sisters of St. Francis, Tiffin, OH

St. Mary's Church, Defiance, OH

Fr. Richard Notter

Ron Hitzler

Cathy Cappelletty

Norbert Wethington

St. Bartholomew Church, Columbus, IN

Father Doug Hennessey

Tom Perzynski

Catholic Charities, Youngstown, OH

St. Paul's, Norwalk, OH

Leo & Nancy Bistak

Rev Gerald Chmiel

Mary Jo Pfander

Eddie Kanarowski

Father Robert Reinhart

Mary J. Flores

Danny Puccetti

Bishop Mark Rivituso

Louise & Michael Sarra, Rossford, OH

Thea Barron, Annandale, VA

Sheila Otto, Toledo, OH

Frank Atkinson

Denise S. Szabo

Marianne Black

Father John Blaser

Sister Pat Schnapp, R.S.M.

Rev. David Tscherne

Carol Kraus

Hal & Melissa Munger

Jeff & Denise Yeager

Tom & Nancy Kabat

Bruce & Laura Brancheau

Jennifer Hamlin Church

Germaine Kirk

Jeff & Deborah Marczak

Mary-Beth Matthews

Carlton & Karen Fraker

Paul Belazis

Kathryn Nelson

Virginia Froehle

Imran Ali & Umer Ansari

Farhana Habib

Rehana & Naveed Ahmed

Howard & Paulette Stringfellow

Mark Cappelletty

Joe Clark & Mary Dwyer

Eileen Keller

Shelly Kotz

Sisters of Charity, Seaford, NY

Donald & Marsha Kurek

Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena

Rev. Cathleen Burnett

Patricia Bidwell

Bishop Myron Cotta, Stockton, CA

Also, Thank You to Our Subscribers & Other Donors

NO DONATION IS TOO SMALL Compassion is sent free to all 2500+ death-row prisoners and 2000 of the over 50,000 serving life without parole sentences. We are increasing that number as funds become available.

COMPASSION DONATION | PARTICIPATION FORM

A portion of your donation will be given in college scholarships to family members of murdered victims.

Lead Donor – \$5,000 or more

Gold Donor – \$2,500

Silver Donor – \$1,000

Bronze Donor – \$500

Patron – \$100.00 to \$499.00

Subscriber – \$50.00

Prisoners Not On Death Row
 No charge by individual request.

Other: \$ _____

Please send tax deductible contribution to:
 ST. ROSE PEACE & JUSTICE / COMPASSION
 P.O. BOX 623 | PERRYSBURG, OH 43552

Enclosed is \$ _____ for the donation/subscription checked on the left.

Please keep my gift anonymous.

NAME _____

ORGANIZATION _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

DAY PHONE _____

EVENING PHONE _____

LWOP

LORD WILLING

I wanted it all,
until it all wanted me dead.
When I got locked up,
all I could do was
think about what my mother said.
She said it enough,
yeah,
but I thought I knew too much.
I guess whatever it is I thought
I knew
just wasn't enough.
Life without parole
plus thirty-eight
and yet still
in all of this
I can see HIS GRACE.
And that GRACE
gives me FAITH.
And that FAITH is my STRENGTH.
Apart from HIM I can't.
So apart from HIM I ain't.
When I close my eyes,
I CAN LEAVE THIS PRISON
LORD WILLING.
One day I'll open my eyes
and I WON'T SEE THIS PRISON.



Jermaine McKinney
Ohio State Prison
Youngstown, OH



St. Rose Parish
215 E. Front Street
Perrysburg, Ohio 43551

Printing and Postage Paid for by: Compassion

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
TOLEDO OH
PERMIT NO. 179

HAPPINESS

There are those who are very unhappy. They have not accepted where they are and they choose unhappiness as their preference of how to express themselves regarding their state of being for the moment. For the moment that is true expression and a valid feeling. They could choose other forms of expression, but unhappiness was what they decided to use. So time went on, and not much appeared to change in their life. They looked around and the situation was more or less the same. Once again, they had a choice and once again, they chose unhappiness. Now there was a pattern set in their mind. Every time they looked around at their situation, they experienced unhappiness. It became an automatic response. As time went on the unhappiness grew deeper and was reinforced by all the past decisions and experiences and because any other choices were ignored. The pattern was reinforced and now more

difficult to change. Now it was an automatic response to feel unhappy. What has been forgotten is that it was set up by themselves as their choice right from the beginning. The choice is still yours. If you wish, you can continue to choose unhappiness for yourself. However, you also have the choice to replace that unhappiness with some other form of expression. This is where you have another choice for yourself. You can choose love of yourself; love of humanity; joy, feelings of comfort or even of happiness. The choice is made by you and it's a conscious choice. So what has been done can be redone. It's all a matter of choice, conscious choice and you can change it for yourself if you choose to.



Al Cunningham
California Death Row
San Quentin, CA