

Community Newsletter

February 2021

Thrive For Life Prison Project, Inc

30 West 16th Street | New York, NY 10011

(212) 337-7544 | www.thriveforlife.org | info@thriveforlife.org

GOSPEL FOR SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2021

Mark 1:29-39

OTHER READINGS

Job 7:1-4, 6-7 | First Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

REFLECTION

Today, Jesus is in a position where he heals many. He begins with Simon's mother-in-law and continues with everyone they bring from town. Jesus, lovingly - as I like to imagine - takes the time to heal each one of them. What experience of healing do I keep in my story? Have I witnessed the healing of Jesus in a loved one or me? Have I ever found myself in the position of being able to "heal" (care, love, serve) many?

With the answer to these questions, let's move on to the next stage of this story: after he healed many, Jesus decided to retire in solitary to pray. How important it was for Jesus to stop after serving others! "How many times do we, families, communities, stop to pray after a long day?"



After resting and praying that Simon finds Jesus, who is now ready to continue his mission, Jesus, re-centered on his mission, says, "Let us go somewhere else — to the nearby villages — so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

Let us pray to God the Father so that he helps us to stop in this agile and fleeting world. To stop in the immensity of his love to be able to ask ourselves about our mission in life. Let us ask him that after each prayer, we leave with hope and the certainty that we walk alongside him in search of a more just and supportive world.

MONTHLY EXAMEN

We invite you to prayerfully reflect:

Presence

Become aware that God's presence is active at each moment of your life, looking at you with love, desirous of speaking directly to your heart. How do you feel at this moment?

Ask

Ask God for the grace to see the ways God is working in your life.

Gratitude

Be grateful. Thank God for the gifts, both big and small of the day. What are you most grateful for today?

Review

Trust that God is with you at each moment of day, during the good and challenging moments. God never abandons you. What were the good moments of today? What were the greatest challenges of today?

Respond

You are not stuck. Tomorrow is a new day. Ask God to give you the grace to be the loving and generous person you were created to be. What can you do tomorrow to be more generous and loving?

Conclude with the Sign of the Cross.

News & Highlights

INTERVIEW: GEORGE CHOCHOS

George Chochos holds a Master of Divinity and a Master of Theology from Yale Divinity School, a master's degree from the New York Theological Seminary, a bachelor's degree in Social Studies from Bard College, and he is currently pursuing a PhD in Theology and Religious Studies at Georgetown University. But it all started with a mistake.

At the turn of the millennium Mr. Chochos was incarcerated in Sing Sing Correctional Facility. A few days into being at Sing Sing, Mr. Chochos was looking for the room that housed the transitional services program. "But back in the early 2000s, the transitional services classroom was right next to the New York Theological Seminary's master's program classroom. And so I walked into that classroom by accident," says Mr. Chochos. It was the only master's program left in the state after the 1994 crime bill banned the federal government from awarding Pell Grants to incarcerated students.



Mr. Chochos was moved around the prison system until, in 2004, he landed in Eastern Correctional Facility where he earned admission into Bard College.

"I found the will to dream in a nightmare," Mr. Chochos reflects. "After that first semester, after that first year, I said I'm going to follow that educational journey as far as I can go."

Now Mr. Chochos is the Senior Federal Policy Associate for the Vera Institute of Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to driving change in the justice system by conducting research and partnering with government officials to advocate for reform. Chochos says that the U.S. government's recent decision to reinstate Pell Grants for incarcerated students is a tremendous step forward. Not only will Pell Grants

expand access to education for the incarcerated community, but it will also yield broader economic and societal benefits.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

The Resident Scholars at Ignacio House recently unveiled a new library! As one resident scholar, Mychal, writes, the new library and learning center "will provide us with the information [our community needs] to become stronger leaders, smarter students, and just more informed human beings." Besides the library, Ignacio House is also offering various enrichment activities this spring, including workshops on:

- † Time, Project, and Stress Management
- † Personal Narrative Writing
- † Resume Writing
- † Effective Written and Online Communication and Presentation
- † Brainstorming, Outlining, and Drafting
- † Personal Statements
- † Technology 101
- † Trauma, Well-being, and Self-care

BECOME A RESIDENT SCHOLAR AT IGNACIO HOUSE OF STUDIES!

If you are passionate about your education and wish to continue your academic journey post-release, we urge you to consider becoming a Resident Scholar at Thrive for Life's Ignacio House of Studies.

At Ignacio House, we offer formerly incarcerated students transitional supportive housing along with a holistic suite of services to help formerly incarcerated students find a sense of purpose and overcome barriers to employment, permanent housing, and education. If you are interested in joining us as a Resident Scholar, please send us the following:

- † Full Name
- † DIN number
- † Current college you are enrolled in and/or where you will study post-release
- † Contact information for college/university where you will study.

To reach us, please see the information below.



Thrive For Life Prison Project, Inc

30 West 16th Street | New York, NY 10011

(212) 337-7544 | www.thriveforlife.org | info@thriveforlife.org

EVENT RECAP: FIRESIDE CHAT

Thrive for Life, in collaboration with the Vera Institute of Justice and the Georgetown University Prisons & Justice Initiative and Pivot Program, hosted a Virtual Fireside Chat on Thursday, February 11. Thrive's founder, Rev. Mr. Zachariah Presutti S.J., and Mr. Jerrell Gantt, a formerly incarcerated resident scholar at Ignacio House of Studies, joined a panel of experts to discuss the restoration of Pell Grants and their impact on education for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. The panelists also engaged with broader issues affecting the incarcerated community, such as how to equitably allocate limited resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, paying special attention to distribution of vaccines.

COVID VACCINE & INCARCERATION

Thrive for Life, in collaboration with the Vera Institute of Justice and the Georgetown University Prisons & Justice Initiative and Pivot Program, is hosting a Virtual Fireside Chat on Thursday, February 11. Thrive's founder, Rev. Mr. Zachariah F. Presutti S.J., and Mr. Jerrell Gantt, a formerly incarcerated resident scholar at Ignacio House of Studies, will join a panel of experts in discussing the restoration of Pell Grants and their impact on education for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. The panelists will also engage with broader issues affecting the incarcerated community, such as how to equitably allocate limited resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, paying special attention to distribution of vaccines.

ADVOCACY: URGING BIDEN TO END FEDERAL DEATH PENALTY

Thrive for Life joins Catholic bishops and church leaders across the country in urging President Joe Biden to honor the sanctity of life by prioritizing an end to the federal death penalty. The resurgence of the death penalty under the Trump administration marked the end of a 17-year period during which Democratic and Republican presidents did not administer any executions. Beginning in July 2020, the DOJ executed 13 people. We encourage you to join us in petitioning President Joe Biden to declare a moratorium on federal executions, commute the sentences of those on death row, and end the death penalty in law in Congress with the states. <For more information, please click here.>***Included only in partner letter

ARTICLE HIGHLIGHT: Biden taps geneticist Eric Lander for science adviser position in new Cabinet

President Joe Biden has selected Eric Lander, a Brooklyn-born geneticist and mathematician, as his new science adviser. Lander rose to prominence in 1989 for proving the unreliability of DNA evidence used to tie a victim to a murder suspect. He later served on the board of directors for the Innocence Project, where he continued to challenge improper uses of genetic evidence. Numerous forensics experts have hailed Lander's appointment as an opportunity to establish firmer standards for scientific evidence in the courtroom. This article was published by the Marshall Project, a nonpartisan, nonprofit new organization covering the criminal justice system. <For more information, click here.>PARTNER ONLY

