

Revival and Reformation

As brothers and sisters in Christ, I ask all of you for a personal favor and a favor from God: to open your hearts to all brothers and sisters incarcerated. Those incarcerated need both encouragement and assistance from the Catholic community.

As Catholics, we are at a time of spiritual warfare. Many of the religious foundations we stand upon have been attacked and ridiculed by multiple world views. These world views, many if not all, go against our religious foundation. We are at a time when Christian ethics have no basis for decision-making. We as Catholics must rediscover Catholicism in order to bring our community back to where Biblical Christianity was first formulated. Many of the situations that occur today regarding the multiple controversies involving abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia, capital punishment, birth control, and Christians' involvement in politics, have confused our religious community. By bringing genuine Biblical Christianity back into our community, we as Christians allow ourselves to revive religious foundations, belief systems, fundamentals and principles that we as a whole stand upon. Many of the world views that live around us such as humanism, naturalism, unitarianism, Christian scientists, New Age movement, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormonism, and atheism have all put a halt on Christianity being able to re-form and revive itself. Matthew Kelly's famous book "Rediscover Catholicism" lays out a phenomenal blueprint on how we as Christians should rediscover the true meaning of Christianity. One of the main points that Matthew Kelly expresses in his book is the need for individual Christians to come in terms with purifying ourselves. The expected outcome to reviving ourselves would assist in reviving the Church's purpose. During the time of Emperor Constantine in the 4th Century, our religious community had one of the greatest controversies dealing with one of our main beliefs: the Trinity. The Council of Nicaea was called in order to settle this simple doctrine that was twisted and turned by modern interpretation from others outside of our religious community. Because of Arius's individual viewpoint, this caused confusion between doctrine and theology. Arius's individual interpretation of the Trinity created so much confusion in our religious community at that time that in this day and age we still suffer the effects from one man's attack on our religious beliefs.

If we as Christians take a look at the ways our community views prisoners, we should be able to recognize that the methods in which the prison system handles and treats human beings goes totally against Christian ethics and our sound system of beliefs. It should be noted that the majority of modern society views prisoners as useless, having no rights and having no place inside or out of their community. Our voices go unheard, even at a time when we need help the most. We as Christians must walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, making sound decisions aimed at satisfying Christ's purpose in "Love thy neighbor as thyself." During the time of Jesus, he spent many days before his death healing and ministering to those in need. His words were of love for all humanity. When he was arrested by the Romans, Peter, one of his disciples, cut off the ear of one of the guards who arrested Jesus Christ. Jesus could have simply punished and condemned Peter's actions. However, his decision to forgive Peter and heal the guard's ear was a great example of loving and forgiving both criminals and "the law", for acts that disobey Jesus' purpose. We as Christians should understand that those behind bars were all created in God's image. Healing and ministering to those individuals incarcerated would assist each individual in the Christian community who offers a helping hand rediscover Catholicism, bringing back Biblical Christianity that in today's world has faded away. Prisoners are still God's children. The Lord, our Father, loves them in the same ways he does any one.

Another fine example in history was when Jonah attempted to run away from God. No matter how far Jonah ran or where Jonah ran to, God was chasing after him. Jonah simply had no place to escape. We as Christians should recognize the story of Jonah as a story of encouragement showing God's willingness to reach out for those who attempt to reject God's loving grace. A class of people who have for the most part rejected God's loving grace, just as Jonah decided to do, live in institutions that we call prisons. Even as prisoners, God will never stop attempting to touch their hearts. Our Lord's goal in reviving His essential purposes for creation, that have been destroyed by modern thought and other world viewpoints that have diluted His purpose for creation have never stopped God from reaching out to those who reject this purpose. It saddens me that

prisoners decide to reject and never reach out to the Christian community. So, as our religious system stipulates, I think the Christian community should reach out to those in prison in order to rediscover, revive and reform both the Christian purpose and the sole goals of the Church. Prisoners are definitely a group of people who need to be re-formed. The only way for this re-formation would be for us as Christians to act in the way of Jesus Christ. As a Christian, I believe that when helping others, we help ourselves. Love, care, support and encouragement assist in defining who we really are and support God's purpose in creating each of us in His own image. If prisoners refuse to reach out, to the Church, then let us as Christians bring the Church to the prisoners.

The message that has been voiced here today is intended for all readers to decide as Christians if the act of reaching out to those incarcerated would be beneficial to reviving, re-forming and rediscovering Catholicism. I, as a prisoner, am here to personally relay to you that even for myself there is a need for us as Christians to reach out to all of those incarcerated. Please, with an open heart and sound mind, make the right decisions based on Christian ethics, our religious belief system and the life of Christ to lend a loving hand to all God's incarcerated children with rediscovering their essential purpose. Rediscovering our essential purpose should be our ultimate goal when serving God.

God bless all those who are reading this message. Please help those in need of spiritual guidance and a direction towards living a life of Christ.

Sincerely,

Christopher A. Balmer

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Mr. Balmer is presently incarcerated in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. He is 24 years old and has been institutionalized for the most part for the last 16 years. He is a prisoner rights advocate, against abortion, supportive of prison abolishment, and speaks words of truth concerning the sad reality of this world.