

Blessed Are The Merciful

Matthew 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy".

I've been writing about my experiences for years from USP Tucson. I have well over 200 essays floating out there, in colleges, ministries and online. Most of what I write falls in two categories: Prisoner abuse, or Christian-themed essays.

Take the current issue: February 4th, 2021. USP Tucson, as the rest of the world, is severely challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our country is being severely challenged by social and racial injustice. And in federal and state prisons, abuse by staff is very common. I have written hundreds of pages on that.

But not today.

I'd like to take a moment to highlight a few good people that work here at USP Tucson. This is very rare, because I'll be the first to tell you, there's some rotten people that work here. I can go off on what these people do to inmates — but that's for another essay. I'm writing this to show that some people are compassionate to human beings. Here's an example:

Officer Hildreth works the afternoons in my dorm. During the pandemic, he knows that my dorm, A1, is called the "Quarantine Dorm", but the 103 inmates in here has passed at least 10 straight COVID-19 tests. Yet the prison won't let us out to call our loved ones, get canteen or anything. Of the last 100 days, which is 2400 hours, we've only been outside the cell about 11 hours total.

Hildreth understands the extreme conditions we're going through, especially when the rest of the prison is allowed phonecalls, canteen and movement. Our dorm represents the last 8% of the prison to still test COVID-19 negative, but we've been treated, by far, the worst.

So, during dinner trays, if there are extra trays, he does a "raffle" to give the extra trays to inmates. Most officers throw the food away, not wanting to give it to anyone, but Hildreth shows mercy, knowing we're going through an extremely difficult time, with no aid from prison staff.

A second officer worth mentioning is Officer Sheriff. She works at night, and has been very kind to the inmates who need paper, or envelopes. Very few officers care to see if the inmates are ok; the purpose of their rounds is to ensure FIRST that every inmate in the dorm is alive. But to go further, it is their responsibility to ensure the inmates are doing as well as possible. Most

officers don't care about that, even as we've gone 100+ days in a cell, spending 99.5 % inside a small room, with no communication with loved ones, nor having any hygiene, coffee or medicine. The psychological effects must be critical, but most officers don't care.

Officer Sheriff however, seems to care. She comes to work, and after the 10pm count, goes around to see who needs paper or envelopes. Sometimes she'll stop and talk to an inmate or two, when guys have no one to talk to, or simply to vent. It is comforting to know some officers do care.

Ms. Smith, the Secretary here in A1, is also very helpful. My original unit, B2, had a Unit Team (Unit Manager, Case Manager and Counselor) that was extremely lazy; it was nearly impossible to get anything done; they were very unhelpful. But Ms. Smith has been very helpful, with a positive attitude. She has been dependable when most others simply will not lift a finger to help. In very depressing times, such people like that are like lights in a dark place.

And then there's Officer Perolleten, or as we call him, "Mr. P". I've known Mr. P almost as long as I've been here at USP Tucson. A fair officer, he's never been disrespectful to inmates, and if you have a fair argument, he will side with you. Most staff side with one another, even if they're completely wrong.

One incident; an inmate came out of the SHU (Special Housing Unit) and needed his property. He was put in B2, but his property was in B1. All the inmate wanted was his property, but the COs in B2 were making excuses as to why they couldn't get it, and lying to him that they'd get it for him. The inmate, frustrated, refused to go in his cell until they got his property from next door. The B2 COs made excuses, but were not able (or willing) to get his property. Officer Perolleten came over, and inside of 10 minutes, got the property.

That's all the other officers had to do.

I take note of these circumstances, because in the midst of what we as inmates go through, with the hidden abuse and incompetence of prison staff, there are some men and women who come to work in prisons with a good heart. Thank God for people like that, who still see us as human beings.

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Until next time -