

## The story of the transformation of a self-reliant boy to a God-reliant man

### *A letter from a prisoner*

2018-06-07

This letter was read to me to me this week, two weeks before this now God-reliant man is to be baptized. I transcribed it from his handwritten copy. I have known him for a year. Prison ministry<sup>1</sup> can be quite exhausting and even very frustrating (the devil is truly in the details), but the rewards are incalculable. It is always amazing and even surprising to see somebody “gets it”. I think God gives these kinds of consolations to pastors, and strugglers in general, to keep us going. I have a friend that I tease because she sees metaphor in everything; well, it takes one to know one. I met Pete literally five days before my son +Daniel<sup>2</sup> died last year. Only a few days after the anniversary of his death, will have the privilege of bringing Pete into new life. I have been given permission to propagate this letter. Priest Seraphim Holland

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A teenage boy embarked upon a self-reliant journey at the age of 13. He carried with him only a selfish desire of foolishness. He wanted to do things his own way. What led him on this journey was his first narcotic experience. The first time he stimulated his mind, he wanted more. As he traveled along on his journey, his experimentation with narcotics covered a wide range of stimulants. For this boy, stimulating the mind was the apex of his free time, namely weekends. Stimulating his mind became his focal point. If he needed to lie to acquire that rush, he'd lie. If he needed to steal, he'd steal. He'd beg and borrow if need be. His desire for stimulation was growing out of control, but he didn't know that, and even if he did, he denied it because he was a liar.

By the time he was 15, he had experienced another type of stimulation, the one of the body with the female counterpart. He would soon master the art of manipulation and got girls to please his desires. Now his mind craved the narcotic stimulation and his body lusted for the sexual. But he couldn't see it that way; he thought he was only having fun.

His mother would often tell him that he was traveling on the wrong road. But the stimulations he was experiencing far outweighed those words.

This self-destructive journey landed him in prison at the age of 22. But all that he could and would think about were those stimulants. And so, upon release from prison, it was time to fulfill that craving and lust. And in the attempt to appease those cravings and that lust, he found himself back in prison nine months later. What was on his mind? - stimulants.

This vicious cycle would repeat itself again. And still he thought that he was only having fun. At the age of 37 he realized that he was not having fun. There is nothing fun about hurting people, using people. There is nothing fun about having a daughter you don't know and who doesn't know you, he would say.

He needed change but didn't know how to change and was too weak to change even if he knew how. He did the only thing that he knew he could do. He turned to God and begged His help.

From that day, that one-time self-reliant boy who embarked on a selfish journey, embarked as a man on a God-reliant journey. A journey of change. Renewal.

One day this man was meditating about a farmer, the farmer's seed and the farmer's water. And it dawned on him. From the smallest insect to the largest mammal, water is essential. From the most delicate flower to the strongest tree, water is essential. No matter how many long hot hours the farmer worked and no matter how many countless seeds he planted, if he doesn't water those seeds they will not bring forth life. And where there is no life there is death.

In the past year of this man's life he has learned that even the spirit of man requires water to bring forth life. And this water is to be found in holy baptism.

The farmer is the church of God, which is the body of Christ our Savior, which is given life by the Spirit of Truth. The farmer's seed is the Word of God. The farmer's water is Holy Baptism.

The boy who foolishly embarked on a selfish journey has been graciously led to the farmer, who has graciously given him seed, which he has joyfully sowed in his heart and is patiently and prayerfully awaiting the farmer to bestow upon him the water that will bring forth life. And by the grace of God he will strive to stand tall and strong and find comfort in the Spirit of God which, like the wind, blows wheresoever it is naturally disposed, and "thou hearest its sound that thou knowest not from what place it comes from and where it goes"<sup>3</sup>; this is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.

Oh Lord have mercy on me, the foolish boy who embarked on a foolish journey 30 years ago. Oh Lord thank you for guiding me to the field of the farmer and thank you for the abundance of the seed which you have given Him that He can give to me. Oh Lord, my soul thirsts for the farmer's water.

Oh Lord have mercy on me. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.orthodox.net/prison-ministry> St Joseph the All-Comely Orthodox Texas Prison Ministry. A description of our prison ministry, many letters to prisoners, talks, and prison visit reports.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.orthodox.net/daniel> - Lots of stuff about my son +Daniel, and also +Daniel's list. Go take a look, and if you pray for Daniel, I will pray for you.

<sup>3</sup> John 3:5-8 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (8) **The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.**