

Letter to a Prisoner.

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FROM: Priest Seraphim Holland, PO 37, McKinney TX 75070 To: ... Date: Sep 13/25, 2 days before the Exaltation of the Precious Cross

Dear in Christ ...! Unfortunately, you are correct! I have not written a letter to you since I have written a newsletter which should be in your hands by the time you get this letter. It was mailed in the postal mail early Monday morning. I'm a little concerned about whether or not it'll get through, because I used mailing labels to do the addressing. Your buddy ... is going to help me with the next mailing. He will handwrite all of the addresses, which should not bother anybody in the prison. I plan to write a newsletter every two weeks. It won't be personal mail, but it will be a contact from me. Father David and I have combined our lists, and I will be mailing to 63 people.

Options for people when they get out of prison.

Do I have any news? ... We are trying to make a house in Marshall Texas for people to parole to. I am planning a trip there every month, and we plan to start a chapel there. There is a house there now that is a place for people to parole to, but the owner is getting out of this enterprise because it wore him out. I can dig it. It's really hard to do this stuff and not feel worn out sometimes. He will sell it to us for a good price, and unfortunately his permission to be a place for parole for multiple felons will not pass to us so we will need to reapply.

We are thinking of other options. I've always felt frustrated that I can see you guys in prison, some years on a regular schedule, some years in irregular schedule (such as this year from a place that aint heaven), but I can't help them much when they are out of prison. And I found that some people lose their minds when they get out of prison. It breaks my heart. So, we'll see where this enterprise takes us. The sticky bit is that it's very hard to have a place for sex offenders. I know this doesn't affect you, but it does affect a lot of people. We're trying to think of a creative way to help these people. Of course, I don't want help any of these people that I think are still dangerous or still messed up in the head, but I've met people for sex offenders because they had an affair with somebody who was just short of 18 years old. Not every sex offender is equal. I'm sure you know that from prison life.

I'm not sure what's going on with me to be honest with you. I'm working very hard but I don't seem to get as much done as I want to. I'm obsessed with writing letters and yet I don't get them all written. It just seems like every day is filled with things. I never forget about you, and pray for you every day, but I feel to be honest with you, a large amount of guilt that I don't keep in contact with you weekly. You picked the wrong guy to love you! You need a guy who's actually competent in all things, and I am not, but I do pray for you every day.

I responded to your letter dated, of all things It's pretty amazing that I'm getting to it this early. I should respond to a letter within a week, and a long time ago I did that, but it seemed to be a different person now, not as strong. I do not remember an ... letter, but my record-keeping is not so good, so I'm trying to make my way through the pile and if I see it, I will respond to it. I'm sorry if this is frustrating to you. For what it's worth it's also frustrating to me. I wish I could be as good to people in my actions as I feel about them in my heart, but unfortunately, I don't get things done as I want to.

The *Many* diseases caused by Coronavirus.

The diseases that the coronavirus has caused are much more than just Covid-19. That's just a physical disease, and the vast majority of people that are healthy recover from it. The diseases of despair are at least equal to the Covid deaths. I'm referring to people who have committed suicide, or increased or started drug abuse, or died alone because nobody came to their hospital bed or their nursing home. Those diseases also include people losing their faith, everywhere, and the despair that happens and the mental illness that may increase or start in prisons because of the inhumane treatment. By the way, don't be offended that I say that there are diseases in prison or anywhere else because of Covid other than the virus itself. I'm using "disease" in the biological definition, as anything which upsets "homeostasis". That is, it is anything that shouldn't be there, something that impairs the normal functioning of the mind and the body and the soul. Infection should not be in our body, nor should despair, nor should loneliness, or drug use or anything else. It breaks my heart the way this disease has been handled in the prison system. It is not right that a man should not see the sun for months on end. It's not even right that a man who is in solitary should not see the sun for months on end.

You ask in your letter if there is anything that offended me. You've never offended me. Please don't ever think that. It has never been true. I love you, and I'm sorry if I've ever offended you. Remember that I always tell the truth. You have never offended me. I agree with you about the food. When I walk by the kitchen, it makes my stomach turn.

Does suffering make us grow? Sometimes.

You said in your letter, and I quote: "from what I have gathered over time, we are supposed to suffer in order to grow, so I think I should've grown a lot with all the suffering done over the years. Know what I mean?" You said it, so I will respond to it. Suffering only makes us grow when we have the right attitude about it. When we have the right thoughts, and when we endure suffering with humility and with believing God, then suffering absolutely helps us grow. God is not just trying to make us suffer. That's not his first "go to" to train us. It is just that sometimes suffering happens, and for someone who loves God and has good thoughts, their personal suffering is not very important to them. I'm not claiming to you that I am that person, but I am telling you that this is the truth about suffering. Often, also suffering can humble us and can teach us to depend on God. If we don't have the right attitude about it, it can make us cynical and angry. I think because of the way our society is, there will be much more suffering. I hope we are ready for it.

I will tell you something that I've said many times, and I believe it with all my heart. Remember I'm the guy who has a dead son. I believe that all of our sorrow will be completely unimportant to us in the next life. If we

remember it, we will remember it without suffering. Can you remember the great sorrows of your life without feeling deep sadness and even terrible grief? No, of course you cannot. But in the next life we will have no grief whatsoever! I think that something worth fighting for. In the great scheme of things, the suffering that we endure on this world will be equivalent to stubbing our toe. Right now, it's hard, it is very hard, but in the next life, there will only be happiness. Do you believe this? If you really believe this, then gradually, your suffering will become unimportant to you. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine that we don't care whether we suffer not? St. Paul was like that.

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. (12) I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (13) I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Philippians 4:11-13

You ask in your letter about what to read besides what's on the calendar. I am planning on talking about the Psalter and the Gospel of Matthew and maybe something else in the newsletters. My great hope is that by your prayers, I will send one every two weeks. So read the Psalter and read the Gospel of Matthew. And don't give up! We've got a long way together, and eventually, God granting it, we will have eternity together. What's left is just a little bit.

May God bless you and help you in all things.