

Help the team:
Mass and Communion today,
5:00 P.M. in V-12 halls

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
September 24, 1943

The week end belongs
to God. Get to Mass
on time. Confessions

Letter From A Convict

A Notre Dame priest and a convict struck up a friendship many months ago. There followed an exchange of correspondence. The following letter received by the priest early in September tells a remarkable story:

"Dear Father: I am now in complete charge of the Catholic Chaplain's department of this prison. I do appreciate the responsibilities and trust Father has placed in me. My work has been increased. Fourteen hours per day is a short one for me; my average totals sixteen working hours, and that isn't just for one week. It is rather a definite set up.

"The Legion of Mary is making remarkable progress here. The population of the prison before Father O'Toole came here was 3,000. The weekly Mass attendance, and I am again wrong for Mass was said but twice per month before his arrival...anyway, the average bi-monthly Mass attendance was 20. Today, the population of the prison has been cut to less than one half. Our WEEKLY MASS ATTENDANCE hits an average of 80..... There has been an increase of 300% in the Catechism class, and a 200% increase in the number of boys who receive Communion. At no time in the entire history of the institution has any Chaplain made such amazing progress. I say, 'amazing,' for the type of inmate we have left here are classified as the so-called 'hardened criminal.' I find them fairly good men.

"I have a wonderful friend in this kindly Catholic Priest....and he has been responsible for helping, not only me, but countless other men to strive for happiness and success. He has fourteen years left before he reaches the age of seventy. I have less than ten years to serve to do all my time without parole. I would like to stay with Father...and I probably will...if not in the prison, I'll probably be at his house downtown. He will take me.

"I am, at this time, trying to obtain four cassocks and that many surplices. I wonder if there would not be some old ones around school. We can patch them up and give them to our new Altar Boys. We formed a society for such a thing here, and I recently completed training eight men. Christmas we intend to put eight on the Altar if possible. Our greatest set back are cassocks, etc.

"As matters stand, I have brought into our Church fifteen non Catholics, and have brought back to the Church men who have been away for as high as 25 years. Of course, I could not do such things without the help of the Blessed Mother...I am very certain she is as happy as I am over such progress. It is a wonderful thing to bring a man...in fact several men...who have been away from the Church and Sacraments for 25 years, and watch them receive Holy Communion. Of course, we do not allow such men to receive the Blessed Sacrament the first Mass they attend... they must prepare and prove worthy...that is, as worthy as we human beings can be under such circumstances.

"It is difficult to understand...and some people are yet amazed...but I have seemed to fit into this work. It seems natural. However, I am only beginning to realize the real meanings of the words, HUMILITY AND CHARITY. It could not have been thought a few years ago that I would acquire such an outlook...but I did, and I did so because a pious, old Irish-Catholic Priest had faith in me when others had long given up. No doubt I shall make mistakes...we all do...but one mistake I will never make is this: I shall not break the confidence Father William O'Toole placed in me. He's a wonderful Priest. I believe he is a Saint; he must be."

PRAYERS: (deceased) wife of Sgt. Howard Miller '32; Martin J. Gillen, honorary doct. of laws 1935; Sister M. Michael, O.P. '30; mother of Joe Gall (OC). 2 Spec. Int.