

A Religious Seminarian's First Time Behind Bars

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I met a man who killed his girlfriend. I do not know his name, but I do know that the confirmation name that he chose was Ignatius, one of my favorite saints. Ignatius was a marine and struggled with post-traumatic stress after service. One day, he killed his girlfriend, probably with a punch to the head, though he does not remember it. He turned himself in when he became conscious of what he had done.

Ignatius was one of the 34 prisoners that received baptism and confirmation after preparation with the chaplain for almost a year.

Men with no plans for the next 40 years never complain about one year of preparation. In that mass, Christ forgave them of their previous sins and all of the punishment for those sins. Really, they were new men, reborn.

Rebirth sounds very nice and good, but that was the limit of my understanding – that is, until I heard the homily. Fr. Robert preached the homily in which he said that their baptism marked their souls as God's, made them sons of God, and made them part of the Church. That last part surprised me a bit. When I thought of the Church, I thought of my parish back home, the Pope in the Vatican, and my religious community; but I never pictured a white-plastered auditorium of prisoners. What a shame that I excluded them! If the Church is able to span national boundaries, seas, and languages, why would a few layers of barbed wire be able to keep it out? These men are indeed part of the Church, and I am thankful to Ignatius that he opened my eyes a little wider. May God bless him and shower his grace upon him.