

## Rev. Timothy Brown, S.J.

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In addition to my responsibilities at Loyola, I am a volunteer instructor in the Jessup Prison Scholars Program, which offers non-credit college-level instruction at Jessup Correctional Institution in Maryland. There I teach courses in the area of law and business, law and society, law and spirituality, and sports law. Professor Drew Leder in the Philosophy department introduced me to the program, and I have been teaching there since 1995, with a sabbatical during the years I served as provincial of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus.

One afternoon I shared with my Loyola students a book of reflections that I wrote several years ago entitled *Great ideas, gentle as doves: Reflections on Catholic social teachings*. We discussed the rationale for the importance of university education in the prison setting. I pointed out the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which states that “Everyone has the right to education,” and that “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,” among other important tenets of the rights of

every individual to participate in community life. In our reflection, I asked the class: How can you make this document a living reality at Jessup? How does this Declaration call you to assume a role in protecting the dignity of human life? What in this document inspires you to action? One student wrote:

Education is even more valued in the prison system because it allows a man for maybe the first time to understand and appreciate himself and see the beauty and importance of having and possessing the qualities of dignity, integrity, and honor that are acquired through hard work and determination to succeed. It is a tool that can uplift a man's self-esteem and give him the opportunity to understand and appreciate the joy of being respected for his ability to do something worthwhile and beneficial for himself and his family. It also serves as a positive social tool, which allows a man or a woman to get away from the mental and emotional psychosis of the prison environment and develop the proper social etiquette that is needed in positive, constructive, and productive environments.

At Jessup, I often ask students to reflect on passages from the Bible. To illustrate the truth in the reflection by the Loyola student, following are some selected reflections on Psalm 62 by two of my students at Jessup. These reflections (shown *in italics*) remind us of the healing power of education and call us to recognize the dignity of all human beings.

- 2 My soul rests in God alone,  
from whom comes my salvation.
- 3 God alone is my rock and salvation,  
my fortress; I shall never fall.

*Father Brown obviously thinks that “Restorative Justice” is possible. Of course, he doesn’t say he can restore justice. Humility and pragmatism prevent him from making lofty or supercilious claims. He simply comes into this maximum security prison, each week, and teaches a course that begs for moral clarity.*

*When I think about Father Brown and our class, I am remind[ed] of a Zen story:*

*When Bankei held his seclusion weeks of meditation, pupils from many parts of Japan came to attend. During one of these gatherings a pupil was caught stealing. The matter was reported to Bankei with the request that the culprit be expelled. Bankei ignored the case.*

*Later the pupil was caught in a similar act, and again Bankei disregarded the matter. This angered the other pupils, who drew up a petition asking for the dismissal of the thief, stating that otherwise they would leave in a body.*

*When Bankei had read the petition he called everyone before him. “You are wise brothers,” he told them. “You know what is right and what is wrong. You may go somewhere else to study if you wish, but this poor brother does not even know right from wrong. Who will teach him if I do not? I am going to keep him here even if all the rest of you leave.”*

*A torrent of tears cleansed the face of the brother who had*

*stolen. All desire to steal had vanished.*

*We inmates taking the course offered by Father Brown generally approached the law as we did life, from an adversarial perspective. We stand guilty (convicted) of some very serious, heinous even, offenses (murder, rape, armed robbery, etc.). It would not, from a seemingly practically perspective, behoove any one of us to acknowledge that he has committed a wrong and must account for it. Our respective situations demand that we claim that we were wronged [legally, socially, and/or morally].*

— Arlando “Tray” Jones III

7 God alone is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress; I shall not fall.

8 My deliverance and honor are with God,  
my strong rock;  
my refuge is with God.

*Forgiveness is the largest spiritual and philosophical question that challenges me. It shamelessly reveals my tendency toward hypocrisy. On the one hand, I seek forgiveness for the many wrongs that I've committed. While on the other hand, I find it quite difficult to forgive the wrongs that have been committed against me. I often tell myself that there are some acts for which there can be no expiation – no forgiveness. Of course, if I accept that there are some acts for which forgiveness is not possible, then I condemn myself to a psychological hell.*

*Long ago, I learned about an ABC system: “A” stands for activating event, “B” stands for belief system, and “C” is for emotional consequence. “A” never causes “C”, the emotional*

*consequence. “B” causes or directly leads to “C.” In short, our belief about an activating event (“A”) is what causes our emotional consequence (“C”) – our feelings. For instance, if someone steals my watch, and I become angry about the thief, it’s not the stealing of my watch, per se, that has me angry. It’s my belief that I own the watch; it’s my personal property and no one is supposed to take it without my permission. That is what has made me angry.*

*I face a great number of small, petty, nuisance stuff. But no one or nothing is big enough or significant enough to make me hate. I stand on the principle of forgiveness not because I’m some grand magnanimous person. I stand on it because I’m small and insignificant. Forgiveness simply props me up and carries me along my arduous journey sans the burden of hatred, resentment, and bitterness.*

— Arlando “Tray” Jones III

10 Mortals are a mere breath,  
the sons of man but an illusion;  
On a balance they rise;  
together they weigh nothing.

*For close to twenty years, I have experienced your passion for teaching men who are incarcerated and your compassion towards them. The first time we met, you were observing a philosophy course taught by Drew Leder in the Maryland Penitentiary. At the time, the penitentiary was a maximum security prison. The class heard that you were an important person that would determine if the course would continue. Not long after, you started teaching business law there, and I became one of your students. In all the years I have taken your classes there are three things that you*

*have emphasized: precise language, clear and logical reasoning, and eloquent writing. I am still working on the precise language and eloquent writing, but the logical reasoning I believe I have grasped. I always look forward to seeing you and taking your course, because I know I will learn something that will help me become a better human being.*

— John Woodland