

I live my life now as a prisoner of love not because I chose it but because Christ permitted it. Let me explain. Some years ago I received the greatest gift awarded to man in this life, a vocation, a calling to the priesthood. After completing my Seminary studies I was ordained a priest. My life became full and extremely happy. I was a servant of the servants of God-His people. I had the awesome ability as another Christ of bringing the Creator of all things down to earth to dwell physically with His creatures. This miracle of miracles took place daily while the sacrifice of Mass was being offered. Then as His other self I was able to forgive sins through the Sacrament of reconciliation, the humbling ministry of the confessional. It was exciting to pour the water of Baptism on the sometimes hairless heads of the newborn, to make them children of God and heirs to His eternal kingdom. It was a privilege to witness the marriage vows of couples lovingly giving up their individuality to live as one through the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. The countless hours spent listening to the never ending problems of His people were a joy and sometimes there was even a solution. Teaching religion classes and working with parish organizations was always a challenge but more often than not the results were gratifying. And so it went, busy days and busier nights but always love-filled and happy.

Then came the bombshell, "You have been accused of sexual misconduct with a minor. No longer can you serve as a priest in a parish." This was Diocesan policy, strict but necessary. My dreams were shattered. It seemed that life had passed me by. I was trapped, a prisoner of love in a cell of allegation. Anger flared up and bitterness was at my doorstep, but only briefly. Such reaction would serve no purpose, for those who live with bitterness will die in bitterness. So forgive and be happy and pick up the pieces. Did not the Lord forgive and pray for His accusers and besides He allowed this to happen. Why? I do not know. You can be sure that He had a reason which will some day be revealed to me. With this in mind a gentle peace settled over my soul and I began to realize that my ministry was not over. I could still say Mass privately each morning, becoming one with my loving Christ. I could still tell Him over and over again that I loved Him and since I knew that He was with me always my ministry could reach to the ends of the earth. "I am the vine, you are the branches." United to Him every act of love, every sacrifice, every heartache could secretly touch souls that I will never know on earth. Now each moment of each day is offered to Him to be used wherever He may see fit. And so in perfect peace and happiness, I live a prisoner of love, patiently waiting for eternity where hidden things will be revealed and the truth shall set me free.

PRISONER OF LOVE

MEFFAN-2 350