



Una Fides

An Apostolate
for Today's Catholic

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Newsletter

Since 2003

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for May:

That administrators of justice may act always
with integrity and right conscience.

Eric Genuis Comes to Bring Hope to the Incarcerated



By: Deacon David Gray
Diocese of Orlando Diaconate, Ministry Head

When you hear statistics about those who are incarcerated or about crime itself, the discussion almost always returns to the idea that if we could just be tough enough on those who commit crime we will make the world safer. The result has been campaigns called "tough on crime," "war on drugs," "you did the crime, you pay the time," mandatory sentencing, "three strikes and you're out," and trying minors as adults.

We all agree that being safe and reducing crime are very important but focusing all our attention after a crime is committed and not on the factors that lead to crime (poverty, lack of education, deterioration of the family, etc.) has led to the **United States having the highest incarceration rates of any civilized country. In fact, the United States has seen an almost 100% increase in the incarceration rate over the last 15 years.**

What has resulted is a penal system that has very little care for the individual or for the dignity of the person; its primary purpose is safety, protection and punishment! When Jesus asked us to visit the imprisoned and to take care of the sick (including victims of crime), the homeless, and the hungry (Mt. 25), His message was one of hope and transformation - New Life! As I began to visit those who were incarcerated, I could see the hunger for God's word

and the desire for transformation. But I could also see how **difficult it is to maintain hope** in an environment that is focused on punishment and control.

The mission of the **Diocese of Orlando's Ministry to the Incarcerated** exists to proclaim the Kingdom of God by being the Body of Christ to all of God's children affected by incarceration. We strive to do this by:

- * Maintaining and creating regular and ongoing Catholic presence within the institutions.
- * Bringing spiritual and emotional support to the prison staff.
- * Supporting chaplains in developmental programs and administrative responsibilities.
- * Networking with ministries within the diocese, including community organizations, faith-based organizations and diocesan entities.
- * Assisting in re-entry into community.
- * Advocating for all affected by incarceration.
- * Providing on-going spiritual development and training in support of ministers.
- * Reaching out to families and victims of the incarcerated.

A daunting task when you realize that we minister in 9 different counties with more than 34 different prisons and jails! The more than 200 ministers who reach out to the incarcerated and their families bring the message of hope also through scripture studies, communion services, retreats - Kairos (Cursillo retreat within the walls), ministering to families of those incarcerated, and faith/character formation programs.

Starting May 12th, Una Fides will be bringing internationally acclaimed composer and virtuoso pianist Eric Genuis along with a world-class soloist, cellist, and violinist to perform at six prisons. Eric Genuis has a heart for reaching out to those in need and his presence will provide the connection to the free world that brings hope and encouragement to inmates and staff alike.

By: Eric Genuis

Internationally acclaimed composer and virtuoso pianist

Over the last few years, I have had the opportunity to perform concerts in several prisons in various states. They have been particularly unique and rewarding occasions, and the feedback from the inmates consistently confirms that they are most grateful for the musical events and find the presentation to be very moving.

As musicians it is very gratifying as the prison population is always abundant and expressive with their enthusiasm. They routinely comment, that in their prison life, they never get to experience live performances and that the concerts bring them great joy. I endeavor to remind them that there is hope, and that they can live with dignity, even in prison.

By: Enrique, an inmate at T.D.C.J. Estelle Unit/Regional Medical Facility in Huntsville, TX (sent to Eric Genuis)

I wanted to personally thank you for the most wonderful concert you gave...and want you to truly understand what your concert meant to me. I am but just one man in a large packed crowd and I want you to know that the residual effect of those special moments will last a lifetime. Up until your visit, I had never experienced another person's love for the least of society.

Family visits in prison are rare for the majority. I know that on any given weekend only 3 out of 50 men get a visit. I have met inmates who outlive every relative and other men such as myself whose wives found other husbands. I had lost everything and everyone that made up my life. I think the most intense pain was the mail call on weekdays.

I am not sure what was most memorable on the day of the concert - the love for humanity in the eyes of all those beautifully talented professionals or the music that none of us has ever heard before. Your music ministered to the heart and soul and its healing brought hope in a world of concrete, steel, and razor wires. I actually kept two programs from your concert for two reasons. I never want to forget that moment. One thing is for sure is that I never want to forget what it feels like to love the undesirables. There's no way any of us prisoners could repay you for your service. I can only thank you for all my fellow inmates -- all of us who stood clapping and whistling even minutes after you and the other members had left.

Can you help?

Eric Genuis' occupation is composing and playing, but his vocation and passion are reaching out to those who would never have an opportunity to "hear" God through music intended to bring hope and healing to the human soul. Eric's greatest gift is performing in prisons and schools, attempting **to turn our culture back to music that honors and portrays God's goodness, mercy and beauty.**

While touring in Orlando for 5 days, Eric's group will be performing in 6 prisons, 4 schools and at Bishop Grady Villas. Passionate commitment brings the tightest budget to \$2,000/day (all inclusive travel, lodging, equipment and 3 concerts/day) for himself and three world-class accompanists (violinist, cellist & soloist). Una Fides has committed organizational and monetary support but we need help bringing Eric's musical message to those who may never otherwise have this opportunity.

You can support Eric's Orlando concerts by going to his website www.ericgenius.com and purchasing CDs now through May 17th. The total proceeds from sales support Eric's ministry. If you would want to make a tax-exempt donation, checks can be made to "Una Fides" noted for "Genius Concert" and mailed to:

Una Fides, P.O. Box 1928, Orlando, FL 32802.

You may also use the donate button below.

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The Mission of Una Fides is to build the Body of Christ by encouraging Catholic men and women to enrich, fortify, and embrace their faith through prayer, study, and fellowship

www.unafides.com