

FORTY WEEKS

*An Ignatian Path to Christ with
Sacred Story Prayer*

LETTERS FROM PRISON

WITH
RICHARD R. ROMAN
FOREWORD
GREGORY J. BOYLE, SJ

WILLIAM M. WATSON, SJ

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE INCARCERATED

Experiencing the love that bases the existence of every human being is the purpose of St Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. I found a strong confirmation in the story told in Ritchie's letters from prison. Reading them is an invitation to travel that path open to every human being. It is an invitation to open the doors to the spiritual path that leads to the encounter with Jesus Christ.

Fr. Arturo Sosa Abascal, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus

"I, Paul, a prisoner of the Lord, Jesus Christ..." reveals the point of origin for these important letters to you who are incarcerated in body and in spirit. The pilgrimage of prayer, begun in Paul, continuing through Ignatius Loyola, and now revealed in FORTY WEEKS... testifies to God's personal outreach towards you with Healing, Hope, and Help. Prisoners welcome letters. Always have. Now you have an abundance of mail.

Fr. Stephen Barber, S.J., Chaplain Emeritus, San Quentin State Prison

Find your own voice and story through the journey of this book. When you do, your story will be aligned to the affection of God for you and everything belongs in this glorious mosaic and nothing is a waste. For your story is magnificent and indeed sacred.

Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J., Founder: Homeboy Industries; author of Tattoos on the Heart

The knowledge of God through direct experience is available to anyone who seeks it sincerely, regardless of past actions or present circumstances. Those who choose to make such a journey always succeed and the fruits are eternal. May FORTY WEEKS - Letters from Prison, be this for you.

Michael Brown - Author of The Presence Process

Join Ritchie and Fr. Bill on a path to encounter unconditional love. Take the time to discover how you are loved beyond our understanding by a God who created you in his image and likeness. You were created with so many unique gifts and talents. As our attachments fall and we gain freedoms, we must gently recognize our brokenness and areas where we need healing. Take a chance like Ritchie did on a lifelong relationship with God: a God who will give you peace and will always have your back. This book is a gift that will keep on giving. Stick with it.

Karen Clifton, Director Catholic Mobilizing Network

"Nothing is more personal, valuable and heartfelt to an incarcerated person than their "inner landscape," esp. when the outer landscape of their cell and unit is so noisy, restrictive and

depersonalizing. But it often takes quite a while for an imprisoned person's heart and soul to become a quiet and safe place that has clarity and is peaceful and hope-filled, as it is also at the same time a place of confusion, painful memories and frustrated longings.

God is the only One who can help an imprisoned person enter into the depths of their heart and soul, in order to begin a journey together in which he or she discovers their deepest and truest self and God's chosen purpose for their life's journey. It's never too late to begin that journey with God and experience what God has always had in store for those God loves—and God loves prisoners in a special and unique way. FORTY WEEKS and its exercises provide a sure and steady path while imprisoned to authentic self-knowledge and a transforming experience of God's unconditional love."

Rick Deshaies, S.J. Chair: American Catholic Correctional Chaplains

"To you who are holding this book, please know that your journey of prayer and writing can change your mind and open your heart....and stimulate spiritual transformation like it did for Ritchie. I know this too from 25 years of correspondence with inmates around the country-- mostly boys and men who have committed murder, and are seeking a way back into the light of the human community from the darkness that engulfed them in years gone by.

Allow yourself to meet Christ in written and spoken dialogue through FORTY WEEKS. It will offer a path to your soul to make that journey. I will rejoice every day in the opportunity to prayerfully accompany you who take the journey."

James Garbarino, PhD, Author of Why Giving Teenage Killers a Second Chance Matters for All of Us

Do you want your stony heart replaced by a tender, responsive one (Ezek 36:29)? Enter the sacred Ignatian space offered to us by Bill Watson's SJ, new work, Forty Weeks: Letters from Prison. You'll have Bill and an incarcerated saint named Richard Roman, guide you out of your darkness and shadow of death into a land of peace. As a person who has worked with the incarcerated for many years, I say: Read this book. It will touch the secrets of your heart!

Michael E. Kennedy, SJ, Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative

This beautiful book, which puts into action Jesus's call for us to minister to the imprisoned, is a series of open and honest letters between a Catholic priest and an inmate in a federal prison. By turns painful, heartfelt and inspiring, the communications between these two men, who are both seeking God in their lives, helps us understand how God's mercy never abandons anyone."

James Martin, SJ, Author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage and The Jesuit Guide*.

“I was in prison and you came to visit Me,” Jesus told his followers. In this inspiring volume Christ’s love visits your prison cell through Fr. Bill Watson’s Ignatian Examen and compassion-filled letters, and speaks back through the voice of Ritchie, a convicted man. The result is salvation for one human being, and a deep teaching not only for his fellow inmates but for all of us incarcerated in the self-constructed prisons of our minds.

Dr. Gabor Maté, author of *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*

I am no expert on how to live a life, but, my life has been changed from hearing the stories of the many men and women who are behind the walls. Use FORTY WEEKS ~ Letters from Prison to share your story, own your story, live your story. At the core of every story is a desire to love and be loved. I’m a grateful recipient and so will you. You who walk this journey are in my prayers.

Zachariah F. Presutti SJ, LMSW, Thrive for Life Prison Project

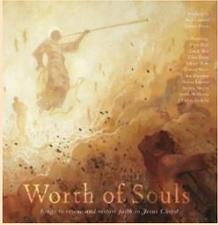
Congratulations on your decision to explore the nature of your unfolding story! Use FORTY WEEKS ~ Letters from Prison to learn to know yourself through self-examination. Let the Holy Spirit guide you on this exciting journey as your friendship with Jesus deepens. Be filled with peace and grace as you draw closer to God.

Douglas A. Sandvig, KM, Order of Malta- Federal Association, U.S.A., Prison Ministry

Real freedom begins in our hearts and minds. The Spiritual Exercises are a powerful way to connect with the One who came to set us free from all kinds of prisons. May your journey with FORTY WEEKS bring you to true freedom in Christ!

Fr. George Williams, S.J., Catholic Chaplain, San Quentin State Prison; President, Dismas Ministry

LETTERS FROM PRISON ~ WORTH OF SOULS



FORTY WEEKS ~ Letters from Prison is collaborating with our award winning songwriters and singers on an album titled, **Worth of Souls**. Our record label, **Stone Angel Music Inc.** and **Sacred Story Institute** are still working to find a way to get this music to the incarcerated in prisons as *Letters from Prison* goes to press. In the meantime, we will provide a link for free downloads to

interested prison chaplains and those who work with the incarcerated. Contact us at: <https://sacredstory.net/forty-weeks/> and fill out the interest form under Prison Ministry.

Millions of you who are incarcerated have suffered life-long depression. Thousands have given up. The underlying cause of suicide is an unbearable pain derived from a pervasive sense of hopelessness, a loss or lack of connection to others and a life-long pattern of self-destruction.

Worth of Souls is a team of award winning recording artists who've produced an altruistic album of original and award winning contemporary Christian songs that promote the Savior's unconditional love and mercy. Music has been clinically proven to calm anxiety and ease pain and we hope it has that effect on you.

Because many of you who are incarcerated have been called unworthy and don't know your value, all of us who worked on this project pray that it can plant seeds of faith and restore confidence in yourself and your ability to let go and let the Savior manage your life. May **FORTY WEEKS ~ Letters From Prison** and the songs on **Worth of Souls** be effective tools for you whether you are the prodigal, the pilgrim, the doubter, the saint. Each of you is in our prayers.

Sincerely,

Paul Cardall, President of Stone Angel Music Inc.