



### Full Magnum PI

Thomas Aquinas noted that we encounter God through our senses. That is especially evident at a weekend Kairos prison retreat. Kairos seeks to build Christian communities inside the prison unit.

The retreat starts on a Thursday afternoon when the guards bring the Men in White to the gymnasium. The prisoners are marked by their white TDCJ outfits. The guards wear their gray TDCJ uniforms, and the volunteers are distinguished by their colored shirts. There is a certain joy in the unit when they see the arrival of the colored shirts. We started a new tradition- on Saturdays, the volunteers wear Hawaiian shirts. The Men in White love the colorful and noisy shirts.

Larry was all smiles as he said, *"You guys went full Magnum PI on us!"*

The unit allows us to bring in prepared meals for the Men in White. The scent of smoked brisket announces its arrival. When the lid to the container is peeled off, William says under his breath, *"These were made with love. Someone trimmed all the fat off."* Suffice it to say, catered meals in prison are rare.

Music is an important part of the retreat. It helps set the mood, generates energy, and lifts our prayers. When we sing, we stand. By Saturday afternoon, we are doing a Conga line. It is such a wonderful sight to see grown men being joyfully childlike- laughing, singing, and dancing.

The noise, the joy, and the merriment draw a Corrections Officer to the doorway into the gymnasium where we gather. Before long, the officer is tapping a toe and moving to the music.

Freshly baked cookies are distributed, not just to those at the retreat, but to every inmate at the unit, to the guards, and to the staff. More than 1200 dozen cookies are handed out.

I leave the gymnasium to use the restroom at the Education Center in a nearby area of the unit. The Correctional Officer at the Education Center says to me, *"I don't know what you are doing, but keep doing it. It is good for the unit."* The moment seems oddly parallel to the conversion of a centurion.

Colored shirts, the smell of brisket, cookies, the sound of music, dancing and hugs converge to remind us that we have encountered God through all our senses. He is present! Go full Magnum PI!