



Order of Malta Federal Association

Poverty, chastity, and obedience- these are not just the vows of those who are called to religious vocations. They are the way of life for the, “men in white.” The *men in white* are the cloistered residents of the Terrell Unit. They are called the *men in white*, not because of the aura of halos, but because of their prison uniforms. Visitors of the prison unit are “encouraged,” to wear colored shirts by the reminder, “dress in white- spend the night.”

Most of us do not get the opportunity to go into that portion of a prison unit where the men actually live. I recently had such an opportunity; not the visiting area; not the chapel; but the actual cellblocks where the men live. Each cellblock is shared by perhaps 60 men. Each man has his own U-shaped cubical with partial walls about four feet high. They call this space their “house.”

When you look into a prisoner’s “house,” you are reminded of how few things one is allowed to possess in prison. Some have a few books (often a Bible), some a few photos, and some a few letters. Most have none of those items. They can lose these items if they lose privileges. If they get relocated to another unit- their belongings may, or may not, make it with them.

“Mail is better than money.” These words of gratitude were sent by a prisoner to a man who writes to him. They will spend their money, but save their mail. Having one’s name called out at mail call is a badge of honor. It sends a powerful message that they have not been forgotten. The letters they keep in their house are a sign that they will not be forgotten.

“What you do for the least of these...”

Let us not forget them.