

BLESSED & BROKEN

Kolbe House Jail Ministry

SUMMER 2021

Life

by James B.

Life has not been gentle.
Love has not been alluring.
Loneliness has been the only traveling
companion I have ever known...

Diseased is my soul,
Desperate and deprived,
Left wanting... to be released from dismal.
Hope has enslaved my struggle within me
And, at the same time, above me lies the goal,
Just close enough to stir within--

My fundamental incompleteness longing
Yet too far for the hands to reach...

Somewhere between nowhere and everywhere
I stand rejoicing in what I do not have...

Love Never Fades, Family is Forever

by Tacharleston W.



Blessed & Broken

2434 S. California Ave.
Chicago, IL 60608

Publisher

Kolbe House Catholic Jail Ministry

Editorial Team

MaryClare Birmingham
(Executive Director)

Sr. Annie Killian

Chi Nhan (Ignatius) Nguyen, SJ



Blessed & Broken

is a quarterly anthology of creative art by persons currently/formerly incarcerated in Cook County Jail and Illinois Department of Corrections institutions. It seeks to lift up the voices of our sisters and brothers impacted by incarceration. It is a project of Kolbe House, the Jail Ministry of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago.

Blessed & Broken

by Shana C.

I'm blessed to be alive and take a breath each day.

I'm broken because I'm here, I just don't know what to say.

Locked up behind these walls for something I did not do,

Praying to the man above to help me see this through.

Being away from my family is the hardest part of all,

But with their support, they pick me up when I fall.

Each day is a struggle and you never know what it may bring,

But I won't let it get me down because I'm the winner of this ring.

Blessed to be here and to just be me,

Broken, not so much, because I'll soon be free.

Everyone is Home in Heaven

by Lithia H.

Everyone is home in Heaven,

Sitting, sitting,

Sitting at God's feet.

Tomorrow is gone, today is here,

Say to us,

Say to us,

Say to you

That life is beautiful in my Father's kingdom.

The pain is over,

The stress is lessen,

The anger has demonstrated evil,

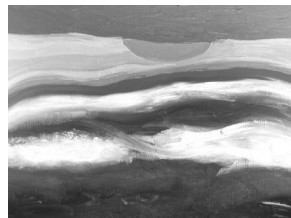
The joy is around the corner,

And the love is never ending.

I'm more than enough, I am chosen, and

I am royalty

In God's saving grace.



Ab-sense

by Chaka R.

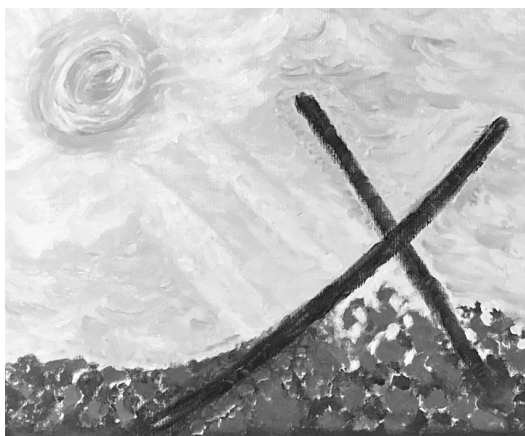
Where have I been?
Absent, all these years,
Silent witness to a boy's
Fallen tears.
Wells
To quench fires
Run dry.
Crackled and bruised soul,
Still I...
Grow ever so slow
In the moon's light.
I reflect on...
My purpose before my death.
Umm...
How can I rise?
When gravity is overtaken,
Laws, I contemplate
Break in
The realm of faith.

Yet, Newtons on
Black boys
Overwhelm,
Holding them
Down,
Like Floyd lay
On the ground.

Can you feel the asphyxion?
Struggling to break...
Resisting.

When Jesus Rose

by Carol M.



Brokenless

by Chaka R.

My Process:
Broken then Blessed.

In scriptures of old,
Fire purifying gold.

This peace of brokenness,
My smile, while beneath
Rain clouds,
Oddly thunderous sounds
Become so familiar.
Soon silence,
Focus,
And clarity of thought,
A blessing bought
By affliction
While persistin' to be better,
Developed within fetters
Caged, locked, and chained
And flying inside.
Now, feel the wind
Beneath my mind,
Falling slow
To be broken
Less.

Eagle Guarding

by Carol M.



2020

by Juan G.

2020 Hell of a year, 2020 I can hear
Hell emerging from the core of earth, it's here
Trembles beneath my feet, shockwaves of
terror,
Hades knows no boundaries, no mercies.

Fentanyl takes all, heart stops,
My world does too, depletion of life
Mental illness, voices be still, misery conversing
with strife.

One last visit, COVID-19 restricted,
Smiles in the sun,
Day before my birthday, our last good-byes,
Your last alive.

Judge grants order, \$485 fee,
Must pay if I want to see, wake awaits me.
ERT escort, blue box shackle and chains
Little brother laid to rest in Big Brother's pain.
Grateful to touch you, hateful towards the grave
So I pray, I remember... I miss Nick.
One last viewing, one last good-bye
One last cry, 20 minutes fly by.
Time is up, must return to my cage,
Not with rage.
Paid my respects, I'm at peace with your death
Loss of life gains eternal life,
Resurrection reunion.

2020 Hell of a year, 2020 I can hear
Hell emerging from the core of earth, it's here
Trembles beneath my feet, shockwaves of
terror,
Hades knows no boundaries, no mercies.

Pandemic puts people in pandemonium.
President please protect,
Trump just writes a check, neglect.
Was it released to increase the decease?
Population control, out of control.
Then profit billions from a vaccine of relief,
Such disbelief.
Was it a bat escaped from hell with a womb
fathered by Satan?
Evil Coronavirus spread to the corners of earth,
Destroyed life's worth.
God at work, we will prevail, hail heaven.

Peace paints a paradise.

2020 Hell of a year, 2020 I can hear
Hell emerging from the core of earth, it's here
Trembles beneath my feet, shock waves of
terror,
Hades knows no boundaries, no mercies.

House raids take place in the dark,
Protests spark.
Riots reap rewards, stores board.
Wrong house, but CPD is always right,
Nothing wrong on this night.
Young and old get exposed,
Body cam captured Jim Crow.
Frightened as she stands in the nude, can't let
this one go,
Lil blanket doesn't cover the shame,
Handcuffs always remain.
Blanket big enough to cover the city,
State-issued one from the jails will suffice.
Remnants of slavery still ring true, disguised
slave master.
Mass incarceration mastered the trick,
Black and Brown magic.
CPD serve and protect,
Serve injustice to the public.

2020 Bring me hope,
2020 Vision amplified the scope,
I see peace on the horizon, rise joy... rise.

When

by Janice N.

When will I stop hurting
And learn to live life again?
When will I stop hurting others
And learn to be somebody's friend?

When will I make a difference
In the lives of those I know?
When will I use my talents
And help others to grow?

When will I stop using
And live the life God meant me to live?
When will I stop using people
And start being the one to give?

When it is my turn to prosper
And live a beautiful life?
When will I stop being alone
And finally be somebody's wife?

I can answer my own questions
And stop living life in a nod:
It's when I stop giving my life to the devil,
And I finally give it to God.

A Fragile Heart

by Terrell J.

A fragile heart constantly bleeding,
You left a hole in it when your heart stop
beating.
Deeply wounded, suffocating by your silence,
Emergency surgery with a medical kit
Of strength to stop the bleeding.
Asking the man upstairs to seal
This heart with closure.
Grant me peace of mind,
The strength to keep our dreams alive and
Keep his name alive.
No matter the road we take or how dark it gets,
Life comes with obstacles (some life-changing).
You will quit,
You will get knocked down,
You will feel broken,
You will feel alone and empty.
But you must remember,
You're still here and have things to accomplish
In remembrance of your loved one.
Embrace your struggles to find solace.
We must find that inner strength within us
To get back up 'n fight.
We will make it through the storm,
We will make it through the cold,
We will make it through the heat,
And we will make it through the haze of fog
Because we are strong.
We are strong.
We are strong. TYRONE STRONG.



Word to the Wise

by Arnold J.

If you can't figure out what's happening by now,
You're way behind of the people in charge of the
pandemic that's allowing "we the people" to
keep on dying.

The head of it all has a daily line,
Some would say he's constantly lying,
But every day he keep trying
To change the narrative from the coronavirus
To Democrats, media, markets and defying.
Over 164,000 families are crying
Over a loved one killed by coronavirus as it
keeps on skyng.

We've now had some seven months of our
federal government noncomplying.
We now know how mandatory masks would
have prevented some from dying;
Instead, it was called a hoax
As if this virus was Casper the friendly ghost.
Some have even gone around the country to
boast,

Lying that this virus would disappear for the
most,

But as I've told you before, the most
Who are dying are poor and minorities from
coast to coast.

This is why I believe they don't care, because
this helps them win the vote.

Dominant power and control over the poor folks
by pretending the virus is a joke!

They have their media personnel spread
Misinformation about the "truth" that's spoke.

In some papers and on sites you can read what
they wrote.

I promise you're the most, and you're being
okee-doked,

We need God, help and hope.



Father, Can You Hear Me?

by Melinda G.

Father, can you hear me?
I'm calling out your name.
I'm in trouble right now,
And I chose to run to you.
I'm all out of options,
My heart has been broken in two.
In your word you said that you're married to the
backsliders.
Well, here I am ready to be your bride.
I put away my childish ways,
Let people go their different ways.
I let go of my worldly possessions,
I've even let family go too.
They can no longer use me as a weapon,
For I am your child and your child alone.
No weapon formed against me shall prosper,
Those are your words that you promised me.
I look up to you for strength
Because this earthly body of mine is weak.

Father can you hear me?
My tears are overflowing in your cup.
You promised me you wouldn't leave or forsake
me,
So Father keep all that you have promised
As you did with my ancestors.
Teach me how to talk for your name's sake.
Father, order my steps as your word says that
you will.
Lead and guide me in the direction of your will.
Have your way over my life and never abandon
me.
Teach me to be on bended knees
As your Holy Spirit runs through me.

Father, can you hear me?
As my heart began to cry out to you.
After praying and talking with my father,
He finally replied to his child:
I'm astonished on what you have asked of me,
I see that your faith has lost its strength.
Yes, I see everything that you have done,
And I've heard every cry that you have wept.
I was the one who wiped your tears,
I was the one who gave you strength to let go,
I was the one who took your burdens away,

And I am the same one who brought you this far.
I've done all these things for you
Because you are my child.
And to answer your question, Daughter,
Yes, I hear you.

Lady Prayer Warriors

by Clarence P.

Lady Prayer Warriors, hear me out,
This is for you, and I'm going to shout.
That you ladies are special to me,
For the love and inspiration you give
So generously.
You inspired my life in so many ways,
And encourage all my efforts with
Your generous praise.
In some way I pray that I may touch your heart.
Because in my life you are a big part.
You give of your time in sacrifice and love,
Which builds up treasures in God's Kingdom
above.
So with all of your prayers I will do my best,
Because I know God has taken over and will
finish the rest.
Now my burdens that seemed too heavy to bear,
I know are lifted up in all of your prayers.
I thank God for all the warriors and friends,
And for all the prayers that you may send.
I trust in God, I know He's with me,
Because He gave me the Lady Prayer Warriors,
"Angels" I can't see.

This Issue's Featured Artwork:

On Page 2, from left to right:
"My Personal Sunrise" by Michelle J.
"The Importance of Life" by Tyshonna B.

On Page 5, from left to right:
"The Beauty and the Pain of Family"
by Marshalla K.
"Discharged" by Brittany R.
"Enchanting Love" by Shrese S.
"My Beautiful Puzzle... Incomplete"
by Mercedez M.

Greetings! We see that you have been a subscriber to the publication formerly known as ***Making Choices***. Kolbe House is reviving the publication under a new name, ***Blessed & Broken***, which is the theme of this issue. We hope you are moved and inspired by the art work and poetry included here.

This is the last chance to confirm your subscription if you would like to continue receiving this publication from Kolbe House!
Please fill out this page and mail it back to us.

Tell your friends to subscribe as well! They can write to us at 2434 S. California Ave., Chicago, IL 60608.

For the Fall 2021 issue, the theme will be **"True Liberation."** We invite you to draw or describe in your own words: What does *true liberation* look like? Create your own poem or drawing on this theme and submit it to us for publication.

Interactive Feature: "I AM" Poem

*Write your own poem using the guide below.
Start each line with the two words provided, then fill in the rest of the line however you desire.
Send yours back to us for publication in the next issue!*

I am (two characteristics about yourself)
I wonder (something you are actually curious about)
I hear (an imaginary sound)
I see (an imaginary sight)
I want (an actual desire)
I am (the first line repeated)

I pretend (something that you actually pretend to do)
I feel (a feeling about something)
I touch (an imaginary touch)
I worry (something you actually worry about)
I cry (something that makes you sad)
I am (the first line repeated)

We want to hear from you! Tell us what you would like to read in ***Blessed & Broken*** and suggest a theme for future issues.

Know that you are in our prayers. God bless,
The Staff and Volunteers at Kolbe House

[] Yes, I would like to subscribe to ***Blessed & Broken***.
I would like to read future issues on the theme:

I understand (something you know is true)
I say (something you believe in)
I dream (something you actually dream about)
I try (something you make an effort toward)
I hope (something you actually hope for)
I am (the first line repeated)

Editorial Statement

Blessed & Broken is a creative arts ministry of Kolbe House, the Jail Ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago. It provides a platform for those who are impacted by incarceration to share stories of brokenness and blessing.

Blessed & Broken seeks to amplify the voices of people on the inside to reach their peers, as well as audiences on the outside. We encourage you to submit original poetry, short stories, and visual art for publication. By submitting your work to Kolbe House, you give permission for publication.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



Kolbe House
2434 South California Avenue
Chicago, IL 60608

[Mailing Label]