

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS - 3. "TRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE"

"When we discover ourselves helpless and alone, our humanity spurs us to come together. If we meet someone who better feels and understand our experience, suffering, needs, and expectations, we naturally are led to follow that person and become his or her disciple." (Traces of the Christian Experience—Worksheet 3)

For Washington, a prisoner whose story you can read below, Valdeci Antônio Ferreira (general director of FBAC¹) became an authority: a person not to flee, but to follow, from whom he could learn to love himself, his own humanity. And we—in a school that is often lived like a prison—we have met people whom we want to follow, because "no one has every believed so much in us"?

"A NEW FATHERHOOD THAT GIVES HOPE"

Valdeci Ferreira, volunteer for more than 30 years, received the Social Entrepreneur of the Year award last 6 November, a very prestigious award in Brasil. He is the director of the federation that unites the APAC (Associations for the Protection and Assistance of Prisoners). Today in Brasil, there are about fifty such Associations. To be admitted, the prisoner [someone "in recovery"] must be sentenced definitively, must have spent time in a traditional jail, and must request to enter.

One day he told us the story of Washington, someone "in recovery". "He was very aggressive; we had had so many difficulties with him: he did not want to do anything and his attitude was contagious for the group. We were ready to transfer him, when there was one of our 'Days of Freedom with Christ,' which is one of the twelve pillars of our method. Washington was the first in the front row, only because he was forced to go. We were in a room where there are eight doors that open and close one after the other. When I asked: 'Why don't you escape?,' he jumped up: 'Because the doors are closed.' Then I gave the order to open them. One by one. 'Why don't you go now?' 'And who can guarantee that outside there will not be anyone to catch me?' 'You don't trust us? Go out and bring back something to tell me that you went outside.' He got up, and left. Absolute silence. Those were the longest five minutes of my life. Washington came back, with a branch in his hand. I asked him: 'Why did you come back? You've spent so many years in jail...,' but he started to cry: 'No one ever trusted me.'" And Valdeci concluded: "Love can recuperate everything. Starting from a name and an encounter."

¹ *Fraternidade brasileira de assistência aos condenados.*

* [M. Montrasi, "Una nuova paternità per sperare", from Aleteia.org.](#)