

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

story by Christine Scheller

Olga Robertson: Setting Prisoners Free Through Christ

The words on the elaborately decorated cake say it all: “To our loving one and only Mommy—Faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love—Calvary Boys, Medium.” For nearly 50 years, Olga Robertson has been known as “Mommy Olga” to countless prisoners in New Bilibid Prison in the Philippines, and the “boys” in medium security wanted to let her know just how much they appreciated her faithful, loving service.



Olga Robertson witnesses to an inmate's family.

Olga has not only been sharing the Gospel and training disciples and pastors these many years, she has also lived amidst prison employees and prisoners' families on the “reservation” just outside the national penitentiary in Manila, even adopting a prisoner's child when she was 60 years old. Shalom Nathan, who is now 22 years old, says his mother spoils the prisoners. When asked if this is a good thing, he smiles and gives the thumbs up.

Olga is truly loved by the men in her life. But men haven't always been so kind. Raised by a strict Lebanese father and then abandoned by her young American husband after their twin daughters, Kitty and Kay, were born, Olga turned to Jesus Christ. With early financial support from Dr. Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision, she became a full-time evangelist. Prison ministry never entered her mind until she was asked to follow up on 30 new converts who were shipped from the island of Davao and housed in the New Bilibid Prison. As Olga approached the sprawling city-within-a-city for the first time, she realized that her Bible school training had not prepared her for what lay ahead. She bravely ministered to those 30 men and promised to come back the following week. Over 100 prisoners were there to greet her. Olga's ministry grew and grew until, with the help of World Vision, Christ for the Nations, and CC Costa Mesa, among others, she

built multiple chapels and dormitories and became one of the most trusted members of the prison community.

Olga has countless stories to tell of hardened criminals being transformed by the love of Christ. She recently received a note from

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a released prisoner who had been saved under her ministry in 1957. He said he is still serving as a pastor. She has prayed with rapists and murderers as they passed from this life to the next in the electric chair and has even been effective in getting at least one prisoner's death sentence commuted.

Her ministry frequently spans generations. Many years ago, three young men from wealthy families were sentenced to death for multiple rapes. Because one of the victims was a movie actress, the story was front-page news. Olga visited the rapists, giving them New Testaments and requesting that they memorize John 14:6, in which Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Three months later, she visited the men

again but discovered that they were no longer interested in spiritual things. With faith and determination, Olga returned the day before their scheduled executions. One of the men, Aquino, quickly recited John 14:6. Another, Jaime Jose, was faint with grief and fear. On execution day, Olga brought some fellow inmates who sang and encouraged the condemned men. She believes all three men went straight from the executioner's chair into the arms of their Savior, but Aquino went triumphantly stating, “Lord Jesus, I give You my life, and no man can take it from me.” Indeed, Jesus promised eternal life to all who believe in Him.

Not long ago, a young woman, Anna Jose, was introduced to Olga's autobiography, *The Men in My Life*, in a Sunday school class. The book includes the story of the three rapists. Anna told the Sunday school teacher that she was the product of one of those rapes. When Olga was introduced to Anna, she comforted the young woman with the assurance that her father had repented of his sins and would one day be there to meet her in heaven—where their shared history of sorrow and shame would be forever turned to joy.

Today, Olga is in California with her children, planning her return to the Philippines with the goal of completing 50 years of service. She is less concerned with her own future than she is with the future of her “boys” and the ministry. Olga is praying for a graduate from Calvary Chapel Bible School to be swept up with Holy Spirit passion for the lost souls in the New Bilibid Prison. ☞



Olga Robertson

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