Reflection On Dead Man Walking Essay, Research Paper

Reflection on Dead Man Walking

I have taken a most hesitated step from my world of serene tranquility to one of complete judgment and sin. I transgressed away from the petty feelings of unwarranted hate and suspended myself within the realms of cold-hearted, revengeful disgust. I left behind my familiar world and suspiciously entered the broken life of Matthew Poncelat. I evolved from stereotypical feelings of judgment to understandable feelings of hate and disgrace. From the sidelines, I have witnessed Matthew Poncelat’s faith unfold through the arms of the American government. I saw with my own two eyes, a ‘dead man walking,’ and from here on in my life with never be the same again.

In all honesty, my friends and I lounged about a large auditorium merrily fixated on a large-screen, tube TV. We took advantage of the ‘movie hour,’ which replaced Social Justice for approximately three class periods, and innocently relaxed on the cold tiled floor. What I did not know was that my life would be altered forever and that my outlook on the world would seemingly change. My eyes fixated on the movie screen, while my heart, soul, and mind slowly began to wander into the life of a murderer, but more importantly, a human-being.

Dead Man Walking truly captivated my conscience and made me think about the controversial standing of Capital Punishment. The movie appropriately portrayed two sides of the coin. Not only were we enlightened by Sr. Helen’s compassion for Matthew, but we were also witnesses to the overwhelming feelings of grief and despair experienced by the parents of the innocent victims of Poncelat’s crime.

Sr. Helen, unfamiliar with the life of death-row inmate, Matthew Poncelat, willingly decides to serve as his counselor of faith. She almost acts as a spiritual guide, enlightening Matthew to the grace and mercy of God. Matthew who originally rejects God’s grace, is slowly touched by Sr. Helen’s love. He develops a special relationship with this sister of faith and subdues to his hidden, formally unrecognized feelings of guilt. Matthew admits that he is guilty of the crime charged against him and seeks God’s forgiveness. Through these major interactions I developed a strong concern for Matthew and a feeling of hope for his life there on in. Unfortunately, he is put to death and forbidden the chance to resurrect himself through God’s faith and guidance. It is an emotional ordeal, the conversations between the two very different persons. I feel that through it all you sincerely get a deep understanding of Matthew’s rights as a human being, a mere creation of God. He admits to murdering and raping two very innocent people and nothing will ever make that right, yet, is it in the hands of the government to execute God’s creation out of punishment and sometimes even revenge?

On the other hand, it is also deeply touching to hear the stories of the victims parents. Witnessing their grief and excessive pain makes you wonder whether or not Matthew deserves to live? He not only took the life of two very innocent young people; he also stole the pride and joy of four proud parents. Matthew committed the most devastating act of sin possible; the parents of his victims do not even want to consider his life for the future. They want him executed as quickly as possible. Now, to put oneself in that position, that of mother and father, is practically impossible. They suffer an unbelievable amount of pain each and every waking moment of their lives.

Now again, we have to think about Matthew Poncelat’s family, his mother, his brothers, his daughter. Matthew was once an innocent, newborn baby. He is a creation of God, who made a serious mistake and he is truly sorry for his sins. As the Catholic Church teaches, every act of sin is forgiven through contrition and penance. God is ever-loving and grace-giving which means even the most evil person who becomes truly sorry for their sins may be forgiven.

The movie gave me a special impression of Sr. Helen. She seems like a truly compassionate person; but at the same time, she is evidently very human. Sometimes church leaders, priests, and nuns appear untouchable… or heavenly, superior. Sr. Helen preaches God’s love, she is a true disciple of God. She also is very human, experiencing feelings most prevalent in an ordinary life. She is torn between a love for Matthew and a love for the families of the innocent victims. As she exhibits, she takes advantage of the good she can do here on earth; being the couple is in heaven with God, she does what she can by instilling love in Matthew and therefore helping him recognize his guilt. He eventually realizes that all of creation is sacred, even his own.

Matthew at first seems stoic and incapable of experiencing God’s love. Through his interactions with Sr. Helen, he overcomes those superficial feelings expected from him by society. He breaks down and his true guilt and sorrow shine through. You can evidently see God’s love travel through his soul.

The movie Dead Man Walking has truly affected my view on Capital Punishment. I entered the world of a man on death row, and I now feel that society as a whole should come up with a more humane act of contrition. I don’t believe someone sorry for their sins should be revengefully put to death. We do not have the power to intentionally kill God’s creation in turn for a severe crime. Although it may be difficult to see through God’s eyes when someone you love is victim of a severe crime, it is important to consider all consequences. Sometimes it may be even more hurtful to live life knowing you took a major part of God’s creation. Instead of killing someone on the spot, why not have them suffer each and every waking moment. Being human, every criminal must have a bit of regret and sorrow deep within them, even if it is not easily noticeable. The death penalty is inhumane and against God’s will for creation. I believe it is important to continuously seek other methods of punishment. We as human beings do not have the right to take a life.