



KNIGHTLINES

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July 2021

Alumni Spotlight - Tom Ostrosky '91 Making an impact, one step at a time.

Just as Mary of Bethany's brother Lazarus rose to new life with the help of Jesus, so in a different way, did Tom Ostrosky '91. And in return, through The Lazarus Experience, other men can rise to a new life.



Tom Ostrosky is a hard worker and an ambitious man. The value of hard work goes back to when he found his first job at 11 years old as a caddy at Inverness Country Club. This job provided him the money to pay his tuition at St. Francis and also earned him the Chick Evans Scholarship to attend Miami University. Upon graduation from Miami, Tom married his high school sweetheart, eventually had two children, and pursued a career in banking.

In 2007, Tom was convicted and found guilty of embezzlement. He was sentenced to four and a half years at federal and state prisons. While serving his time, Tom realized there are very limited rehabilitation programs in the prison system. This may account for the 31.5% recidivism rate in Ohio alone. The lack of rehabilitation services greatly troubled Tom, and he vowed to try to do something about it upon his release.

After Tom's release, he experienced some difficult personal and professional struggles until he met Mike O'Shea, the pastor at Waterville Christian Church. The Lazarus Experience blossomed from this fortunate meeting and friendship. Tom initially took this idea to Goodwill and tried to partner with them but ended up an employee. He then went to Cherry Street Mission and tried to team up with Dan Rogers. Instead, he became a worker at the Mission. In 2017, on a shoestring budget, Tom officially began The Lazarus Experience.

The Lazarus Experience was started at the Allen Oakwood Correctional Institution. Tom was compelled to begin The Lazarus Experience at this correctional facility because there was a large population of men who were scheduled for release soon and would plan to return to Tom's community. There are three phases to the 40-week curriculum included in the Lazarus Experience.

Participants of the Lazarus Experience begin their journey nine months before they are released from prison. In each phase, the men work on the whole person; the spiritual, the physical, and the psychological side, in both groups and one-on-one settings. They learn about themselves, their relationship with God, and learn to build trust and confidence in themselves and others. Tom credits this growth experience and the multi-step curriculum as the reason for the continual success of the Lazarus Experience.

Two Knights, Fr. Ron Olszewski, '62 and Dan LaValley '78 have been very involved in The Lazarus Experience. When Tom came to Fr. Olszewski, he spoke with him and asked him to be involved in this project, Fr. Olszewski became very interested. Fr. Olszewski said, "When I first heard Tom speak of Lazarus, I thought it made sense. I have long known that post-prison release efforts do not work; the recidivism rate is very high. Lazarus begins nine months prior to prison release to prepare the men; it does not depend only on helping the men cope after release. It is also faith-based, obviously important to me, and it is holistic. So, at one time it made sense to me; now I know it is successful. The re-entry of Lazarus men into society has proven to be successful; the recidivism rate is extremely low."

Dan LaValley became involved in the Lazarus Experience after receiving a phone call one day from Fr. Olszewski. Fr. Olszewski called Dan to ask if he could meet with Tom and give him some business insights and guidance in running his operations. The three of them met and then met again a month later. Father Olszewski pushed Dan to be more involved in helping Tom. Dan said, "I prayed about it for a few days, and the next thing I know I am Chairman of the Lazarus Experience." Dan also believes there is a huge need for providing assistance to men being released from prison. He says, "Jesus always reminded us to visit and give aid to the sick, the poor, the imprisoned. Focusing on those imprisoned, but especially those who will be released soon is what Tom and the Lazarus Experience is all about. I am fortunate and blessed enough to be able to provide financial assistance through our families' Foundation to assist Tom. Pre-Covid, Father Ron, and I were allowed to attend a Christmas performance at a prison in Lima. It was a wonderful Christ-filled program that we both hope to re-visit and attend post-Covid."

The Lazarus Experience's recidivism rate is much lower than the general population. In 2020, the recidivism rate for Ohio was 31.5% and cost Ohio taxpayers \$207.4 million. The Lazarus Experience's recidivism rate is reported at 4.0% meaning only 859 men would return to prison and the cost to Ohio taxpayers would be \$26.3 million. To have this program grow not only saves taxpayers' money, more importantly, experiences like Lazarus, bring new life and hope of a second chance to so many men.

When asking Tom where he would like to see the Lazarus Experience 10 years from now, he replied, "I would like for it to be a state-approved re-entry program with the Lazarus Experience men having their own housing unit in the prison. I would love to have a campus for guys when they are released with housing, a church, business offices, a transition step. A place where they can be surrounded by Christian men." To find out more about The Lazarus Experience, go to thelazarusexperience.org.

Tom Ostrosky, Fr. Olszewski, and Dan LaValley are Knights making an impact on men, bringing them new life and opportunities, while also making an impact on the community where they live.



SFS Connect...
Take a few seconds to connect with fellow
alumni. Register Today!



IT'S A GREAT TIME TO BE **A KNIGHT**

AND THE PERFECT TIME TO RECONNECT
WITH YOUR KNIGHT BROTHERS AS WELL AS
St. Francis de Sales School

When was the last time you welcomed anyone to The Pit, chanted "BC," walked up the Senior Steps, or tried to convince a teacher not to give you a JUG because you forgot your tie, again? While it's been quite a while for most of us, the spirit and the experience of St. Francis de Sales School has continued to live in our hearts and souls.

Now you can reconnect with classmates and St. Francis de Sales School through **SFS Connect**. It's a comprehensive online platform where you can:

- Engage with your SFS Brothers to share what's new and re-experience with each other the times you had as a student
- Network with Knight Alumni and Mentor current Knight students
- Stay up to date on the ways St. Francis de Sales School continues to provide an unequalled academic, spiritual, social, and physical foundation for young men

Visit sfsconnect.org to find out more and register to be part of this exciting program. If you have any questions or comments, please contact sfsconnect@sfsknights.org.



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📅 Saturday, August 21st ⌚ 6:00 PM

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#GoKnights



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October 1-2, 2021

Friday, Oct. 1st

Knight Open

Ottawa Park Golf Course

Saturday, Oct. 2nd

Bancroft Bash

St. Francis de Sales Parking Lot

Look for more
details soon!

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All Alums, Knight
Parents, & Friends are
Welcome!