



a.larry.ross
com.mu.ni.ca.tions

news release

4300 Marsh Ridge Road • Suite 114 • Carrollton, TX 75010
972.267.1111 • 972.267.3535 (fax) • www.alarryross.com

FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT:

[A. Larry Ross Communications](#)

On-Site Contact: 416.947.4980

Kristin Cole 615.289.6701

Kristin@alarryross.com

Melany Ethridge 214.912.8934

Melany@alarryross.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Prison Ministry Celebrates Forgiveness, Art:

**Quadrennial Prison Fellowship International Convocation continues with
Thursday focus on forgiveness; honors prisoner art exhibit winners**

TORONTO, July 1, 2011 – The Prison Fellowship International (PFI) World Convocation continued here this week with an emphasis Thursday on the theme of forgiveness as a key component in the reconciliation and restoration process on which much of its ministry is based.

Prison Fellowship staff and partners from around the world voiced issues facing them and shared their own stories and experiences with forgiveness. Human rights activist, author and lawyer Theary Seng spoke in the morning plenary about growing up in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. Her parents were killed and she was imprisoned for five months in Bung Rei Prison.

Finally able to forgive her captors after many years, Seng wrote about her experience in “Memoir: Daughter of the Killing Fields” in 2005, and has founded the Cambodian Centre for Justice and Reconciliation. She explained the nature and importance of forgiveness.

“Forgiveness surrenders the right to get even,” Seng said. “It is a process we do alone, silently, invisibly and freely; no one can trick us into forgiving another. But forgiveness breaks the power and the cycle of vengeance and revenge.”

Best-selling author and journalist Philip Yancey continued on the theme of forgiveness during the evening plenary session, delineating a three-stage process: recognize the worth of the person, surrender the right to get even and put yourself on the same side of the person who wronged you. He pointed out that God Himself went through these same three steps in forgiving humanity, which was also difficult for Him.

Segueing to the subject of grace, Yancey admitted to traveling the world and observing great injustice in the prisons. “I can’t shock you with injustice. I hope, though, that you never get over the shock of grace,” he said. “The world may remember you for the worst thing you ever did. God remembers us for the best thing we ever did – trusting

-more-

Prison Fellowship International Convocation Continues, page 2

not in our own goodness, but in God's son Jesus. May you never get over that shock and never tire of bringing the good news to liberate the captives around the world."

Art from Inside

The International Prisoner Art Exhibit, featuring more than 130 pieces created by prisoners, is on display all week at the Campbell House in Toronto. The presentation of winners was introduced Thursday afternoon by PFI board member Jonathan Aitken, who spoke about the impact of the creative outlet on prisoners. "The transformational power of expressing art is a really important part of a prisoner's rehabilitation," he said.

Winners of the competition were announced by artist **James Tughan**, who teaches art courses at several Ontario colleges and whose work is represented in major corporate and private collections throughout North America. He was joined by fellow judges **Brooke Anderson**, a full-time artist residing in Vancouver who works with inmates at Fraser Valley Institute to bring healing and empowerment through artistic expression; award-winning artist **Celeste Friesen-Nikkel** who is a member of several artist organizations in both Nova Scotia, Canada, and Virginia, USA; and sculpture artist **Carlos Valasquez**, an ex-prisoner who learned woodcarving while incarcerated.



The winning painting, "Humble Hands" by Michael Connelly from Australia, was a detailed work of aboriginal theme which illustrates the story from captivity to freedom – many pictures within one – employing an intricate and time-consuming technique using the end of the paintbrush to create a 3-D effect.

Segey Bulbakov from Belarus won in the applied arts category with his wooden sculpture "Carrying the Cross," and Dmitry Verenchikov, also of Belarus, had the winning entry in the drawing category, with "Pascha," which means



Easter. Tughan explained the judging process, that the art was considered for both its technical mastery as well as its ability to communicate an idea. He appreciated the Prison Fellowship International art exhibit as it is rare that so many forms of art from all around the world are gathered in one place.



The Fringe People Award for Freedom Awards was presented on Thursday to Reny and Teena George for their ministry to children of prisoners and transitional assistance to released prisoners in India.

-more-

The PFI World Convocation runs through July 2. PFI is the world's largest prison ministry with 124 member countries, working to improve the moral, social, physical and spiritual well-being of prisoners, ex-prisoners, their families and victims of crime. The most extensive international criminal justice ministry with more than 50,000 volunteers, Prison Fellowship International is active in every region of the world. More information is available at <http://www.pfi.org>.

- 30 -

Note to Editors: Images of the winning art are available for download at <http://www.alrcnewskitchen.com/pfi/photos.html>. Media are invited to attend the PFI Convocation at the Sheraton Centre, Toronto, through July 2. For more information, to acquire on-site media credentials or to arrange an interview with PFI representatives, please visit <http://www.alrcnewskitchen.com/pfi> or contact Kristin Cole via Kristin@alarrayross.com or 416.947.4980.