

REFLECTION: I remember a time when I received hope about something that seemed so dark in my life... I remember... I remember...

Begin in a Small Way

3rd Sunday of Advent
Cycle C | December 15, 2024



WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

When I was sentenced to 50 years to life, I didn't want to accept reality and face the fact that I would die in prison. In my mind, I believed that the minute I accepted my reality that I would be dead in life. So I would lie to myself and tell myself that one day I would get out. I wasn't doing anything to help myself. For more than a decade after my arrest, I continued my criminal behavior and gang lifestyle, yet I believed I would get out. Little by little I continued to walk down a dark tunnel, and the longer I walked through it the darker it got. There was no light in sight.

It wasn't till one day, I learned about SB 261. Then I was able to finally see a light in the dark tunnel that my life had become. Hope was brought into my life.

That day, I did a deep soul search and was finally able to pinpoint what it was that had driven me into a life of crime. Even though it was an event that marked my life, by no means does it justify my life of crime or actions, but it helps me attack that problem from the root.

I want to go home to be a real father to my daughter, a good son to my mother and good citizen to society. I am going to work so hard into my rehabilitation to make it impossible for the board panel to deny my parole. Whether you're active, inactive, or a dropout, we all need hope and love.

- Erik, who is in a California State Prison.

PENITENTIAL RITE

**Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.**
May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.
R. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray:
Jesus,
As we grow and change, help us to not be afraid. Help us to receive your grace and let go of the evils that might hold us back from accepting you into our lives.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
R. Amen.

LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: **have mercy on us.**
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: **have mercy on us.**
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: **grant us peace.**

This is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are we who are called to his supper.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

COMMUNION

CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray:
Jesus,
We thank you for the gift of your spirit that brings healing to our lives. We thank you for the gift of your fire that brings light into a world with so much darkness.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **R. Amen.**

OUR FATHER

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us:
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
R. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

SIGN OF PEACE

Jesus, you said to your apostles: "I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom where you live forever and ever. **Amen.**"

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
R. And with your spirit.



LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has removed the judgment against you he has turned away your enemies; the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear. On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior; he will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, he will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals.

The Word of the Lord.
R. Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

God indeed is my savior;
I am confident and unafraid.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
With joy you will draw water
at the fountain of salvation.

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;
among the nations make known his deeds,
proclaim how exalted is his name.

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious
achievement;
let this be known throughout all the earth.
Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel!

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

The Word of the Lord.
R. Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise. Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages." Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

The Gospel of the Lord.
R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION: CLOSER TO GOD

the day was clear
there was not
a single cloud

all day
people were leaving
to bring their wares
to nearby villages
there was so
much commotion
jesus was also
heading out to
another village

veronica stopped jesus
asking him where
was the best place
to sell her chickens
and if he could
help with this

before he could answer
samuel interrupted
and asked jesus
if he could help
rescue his son
who is imprisoned
by the romans

as jesus walked
for the next hour
so many
approached him
asking for so
many things
he was feeling
overwhelmed by
so many requests

he asked jeremiah
how can you grow
closer to god?

jeremiah stopped
for a moment
asking out loud
how can i get
closer to god?

jeremiah
saying to jesus
i have never
asked myself
that question before
i don't know what
to say

but something
happened
within jeremiah
with jesus' question
he had been so busy
trying to stay alive
to work his farm
to provide for
his family

going to the synagogue
does he feel
close to god?
what does this mean?
this question created
a deep desire
within him

suddenly jeremiah felt
his heart being moved
to be closer to god

saying:
jesus
i have always tried
to lead a good life
i have worked hard
how do i get
closer to god?
sometimes
i feel i would like
to be able to pray
with my whole heart
to speak with more
familiarity with god

then jeremiah
said jesus
how could you
grow closer to god?

everything seemed
different as
they began to speak
from the heart

jesus shared
with jeremiah
what he experienced
when he would
be with his abba

then jesus
began to speak
spontaneously
about his abba
suddenly
it became clear
to jeremiah
how simple it is
to speak from

the heart
to one greater
jeremiah
walked away
from this encounter
with jesus
with an answer
to a question
he never knew
he had on his mind
he even forgot
what he was going
to ask jesus

jesus smiling
and reflecting on
how such
a simple question
could open up
such deep feelings

the rest of the day
when jesus
met with people
he would ask
this simple question
how can you get
closer to god?
people began
to reflect on
their own deep
desires to step
into the arms
of one greater
deep yearning

