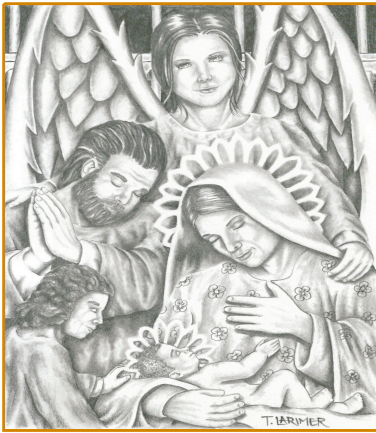


REFLECTION: I remember when I was going through a difficult situation and found comfort in my family... I remember... I remember...

The Holy Family

The Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph
Cycle C | December 29, 2024



Drawing by T. Larimer

WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

I remember a time I have felt I let someone close to me down... I remember, personally, when I let my mother and father down in so many ways. I have been in prison since the age of 18, I've been involved with gangs since the age of 12, and I never finished school. So there are so many occasions where I've let both of my parents down.

It would be nice to be able to go back in time and change all of that. But at that point in time, I was a young kid thinking that I knew everything, living day by day and not caring about my future. I was strong at my personal belief that I was Mr. Know-it-all superman.

Now knowing this, I now realize it's not too late to finish school and get out of gangs, and best of all "out of prison." God is good and I know with Him leading my life I will accomplish all of this. And in doing so, I can reverse all of my wrongdoings and try to make it up to my mother and father. I've apologized to them for putting them through all of this and for all the bad things that I've done.

It took a while to realize this but God works in mysterious ways and thanks to Him, I'm making a change for the best.

- Ismael, who is in 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:
God,
You blessed us with people who love us. We thank you for those you put into our lives. Help us learn and accept one another as members of one family.

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.

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:
Lord God,
As we celebrate the Holy Family, we ask you to bless our families. Through the prayers and example of Mary and Joseph, may we too learn to make room for Jesus in our life, that he may grow up in us day after day and make us more like him.

We ask this through Jesus, our Savior. **R. Amen.**



LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading: Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14

God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons. Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and preserves himself from them. When he prays, he is heard; he stores up riches who reveres his mother. Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children, and, when he prays, is heard. Whoever reveres his father will live a long life; he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother. My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him; revile him not all the days of his life; kindness to a father will not be forgotten, firmly planted against the debt of your sins—a house raised in justice to you.

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

Brothers and sisters: Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,
who walks in his ways!

For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork;
blessed shall you be, and favored.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
in the recesses of your home;
your children like olive plants
around your table.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Behold, thus is the man blessed
who fears the LORD.

The LORD bless you from Zion:
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION: JESUS AS A YOUNGSTER

from the eyes of benjamin

we were twelve years old
i watched jesus
on this pilgrimage and
there was something
moving him at twelve
so many of his friends
had set the direction
of their lives
they had chosen a path
that was leading them
to their destiny
they were too young
to understand
where the path
would lead them
but old enough
to choose a path

when jesus asked me
if i wanted to stay
behind in the temple
i could not refuse

i asked jesus
where are your parents?
what are they going to think?
would they be worried?

twelve years old

and yet
something important
was happening within us

in the silence
of the temple
i sat next to jesus

twelve years old

i could hear the word abba
flow into this space
the deep relationship
jesus had prayed
with his abba
we stayed there
till the sun appeared
behind the pillars

then we walked back
to the courtyard
and began to speak
about our friends
everyone thinks that
to be twelve years old

is so young
we spoke about
our friends who
were now working
for the zealots
we spoke about
our friends who had
already been killed
in the armed resistance
we spoke about our friends
who had already moved
to a bigger city
we spoke about
our dreams

it was good to
be with jesus

we had studied together
we had played games
in the village
there was a wisdom
a quality about him
i didn't find in
other youngsters

in the afternoon
there was a
general discussion
with the rabbis
there were many youth
our age that
would comment
on the scripture
they would ask questions
but with jesus
it was different
he was not afraid

i remember the time
he asked the rabbis
why there was so much
violence in our country

jesus spoke about
the despair that
so many youth have
how difficult
the environment is
living like slaves
under the romans
being taxed to death
by the religious leaders
which leads them
to a crazy life

how do we grow

closer to god
when it seems that
our lives are being pulled
in a certain direction?

the masters were amazed
at the wisdom of jesus

the next morning
jesus spoke about
what he felt
during his prayer

sitting there with his abba
he could see the direction
that twelve year olds
would take in the future

jesus turned to me
and said
benjamin
i am so glad
we stayed here
i would never have felt
the presence of
so many others
during the future centuries
who will have to battle
all kinds of struggles

i started to speak
about what he saw
during each time period
in the future
he stopped when
he came to los angeles

jesus spoke with josé
about the names of
many other youth
how they were twelve
and what happened
to them

to be twelve
just like we are benjamin
and take a direction in life
that will determine
your whole life

i saw them in prayer today
in this temple and
i felt the same anger
i feel with the romans
when i hear what
they are doing to our youth
i wanted those locked up

to know that i once
was twelve
i once saw what it is like
to have to make choices
without knowing
what is going to happen

jesus stopped
the warm tears
falling down his face
spoke of what he saw
of what he felt
what i saw was so cruel
i saw so much blood
so much suffering
for so many
i prayed for each person
that would pass through
that barbed wire
the roman compound
i prayed for them by name
i told them as a youngster
i know what it means
to be young

i asked my abba
to be with them
not to give up hope
that one day
they would be free

i can see that some
have committed crimes
that have caused much
suffering to others

i can see
the consequences
of following
that path of darkness

i want youngsters
to know
that i too was young
i saw so many
of my friends
make choices
that cost them their lives
they let the hate
of the romans
enter into their hearts
take over and
destroy them

