

“Today You Will be with Me in Paradise”

The Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
Cycle C | November 23, 2025

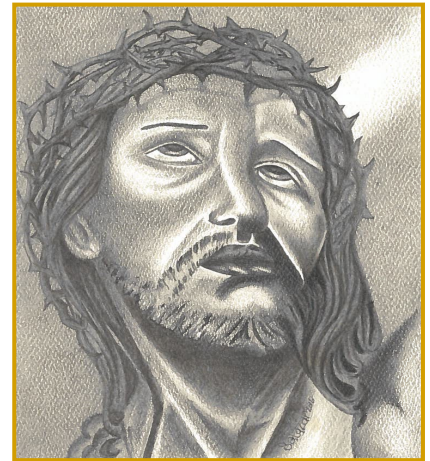
WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

I remember the last time standing before a judge on the day I was sentenced. I remember standing there shackled in my orange jump suit taking a peek behind as I took a good look at my family, friends, and loved ones. I remember my victim's father talking and crying, but forgiving us. I remember that touching my heart. He made me feel something I never felt before: Forgiveness. I remember standing before everyone, telling my victim's family I was sorry for the pain I have caused them.

I remember enjoying all the sights on the ride back feeling like I would never see them again. I remember thinking, “Yeah, that's right, it's all about my neighborhood and I'll do it all again.” That's how I use to feel on the ride back to the halls. I remember that night thinking... “No, I wouldn't do it again.” What was I thinking? I gave up my life for a couple of blocks. For some guys and girls who will barely write me and barely remember me. I wouldn't do it again. I gave up everything; my family, friends, my daughter, and my freedom. I'm going to spend the rest of my life in prison for my neighborhood, for my friends.

I remember thinking to myself, “I messed up.” I remember thinking, “I really have to change.” I remember that night for the first time, I prayed. I remember praying for forgiveness not only from my victim's family again, but from my own family.

– Fernando, who is in a California State Prison.



Portrait by J. Salazar

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 our Father,
You make us recognize our King in Jesus crowned with thorns and enthroned on a cross, as our leader without army or might. With him make us choose love as our only power and humble service as our only greatness.

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



LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading: 2 Samuel 5: 1-3

In those days, all the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron and said: "Here we are, your bone and your flesh. In days past, when Saul was our king, it was you who led the Israelites out and brought them back. And the LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd my people Israel and shall be commander of Israel.'" When all the elders of Israel came to David in Hebron, King David made an agreement with them there before the LORD, and they anointed him king of Israel.

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: Colossians 1: 12-20

Brothers and sisters: Let us give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 122: 1-2, 3-4, 4-5

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

I rejoiced because they said to me,
"We will go up to the house of the LORD."
And now we have set foot
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Jerusalem, built as a city
with compact unity.
To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

According to the decree for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.
In it are set up judgment seats,
seats for the house of David.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord

Gospel: Luke 23: 35-43

The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews." Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



MEDITATION: HOPE AND REPENTANCE

*(through the eyes
of dimas)*

looking out from the cross
after speaking with
this condemned messiah
somehow
this crucified one
next to me
gave me hope
in the midst of
hopelessness

i was ready to slide down
into the hole of darkness
but he let me see even
when everything seemed
like it was over
there was this one
who promised to be
with us to the end

as i struggled
with even more difficulty
to breathe
as i felt the darkness
trying to rob our dignity
our humanity
i looked out and saw
the mother
of one of the youth
i had killed
his name was benjamin

the two of us
studied together
played together
in our childhood
but as youth
we were drawn
into two different groups
we were rivals
he was the leader
of the other group

i remember that night
when i was sent to kill him
i looked on him
as my enemy
i blocked out
all the memories
of our shared childhood
when we found him alone
in the cover of darkness
when i looked down
on his dead body
i knew something had
changed in my life

i did not know
who i had become
i was just like these
roman soldiers
who could so easily
without thinking about
it treat humans like animals

i had seen
benjamin's mother
a few times in the distance
after her son was killed
she knew who did it

benjamin's death
caused more deaths
in our groups
more and more killings
this was what my life
had become
that was why the romans
punished me
with this cruelest
death instrument

benjamin's mother knew
i was to be crucified
for all my killing
robbing
subversion
against their empire

i watched as she drew
near to the cross
darkness wanted to
take hold of me
but i was not going
to give up to
what i was before
i have found something
in this one next to me
i have felt his light
forgiveness pierce
my hardened heart

she came and
she looked up at me
i was waiting for her
to unleash violent words
just like i had
violently ended
the life of her only child

instead she had
a sponge with vinegar
to relieve my thirst
she bent down
took the pole and

reached up offering me
this gift

i thought maybe i had died
i was in too much pain
but the love and
forgiveness of this mother
was greater than
my suffering

looking at her
i managed to whisper
mother susana
i am sorry for taking away
the one you loved most
in this world
i never knew 'til today
the deep pain of mothers
who see their sons
suffer and die
benjamin and i were
so close so many
years ago
susana
please forgive me

even in such
a tortured state
tears of deep remorse
started to slowly fall
down my cheeks
tears of sorrow
of how such darkness
my violence had
inflicted on others
even on my
once-close-friend
turned enemy
tears combining with blood
falling onto the earth
wetting dry parched dirt
soon soaked through
combining with
so many other tears
through the centuries
of all those who will feel
the harm in all its strength
that they have caused
others but from
this soaked earth
there was something new

susana reached up
put her hand against
my bloody feet
looking up
at my teary eyes
she said

dimas
i forgive you
every day
since the death of my son
i have had a hole in my heart
no matter what happened
no one was going
to fill this hole

i have also thought
of you every day
at the beginning
i was filled with hate
with revenge but
with the passing of time
i began to pray for you
that you might see
what killing another
can do to their families
i came here
not to strike out
against you but to tell you
i really have forgiven you
thank you for what
you whispered to me
i accept it

i do not ever wish
anyone to have to suffer
what you are enduring
on that cross
this violence is evil
i pray for you son
may you find peace
before you pass
from this life

susana then went
to where my own mother
was listening
she embraced her
and two grieving mothers
comforted each other

if only there was a way
others could learn
from my mistakes
their tears combined
with mine
wetting the earth more

i looked over at jesus
he had been listening
right in the midst
of such darkness
forgiving
forgiven
reconciled



REFLECTION: I remember a time I asked someone for forgiveness... I remember... I remember...

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:

God our Father,

You invite all of us to be with you in your kingdom.

Help us to understand that your kingdom begins
here on earth. We pray that we could experience
today the paradise of your forgiveness and love.

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

