

# Keep Your Word

## WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

I remember I was 12 years old when I took my first hit of crystal meth. I didn't have a grip on my life until after my grandfather's death. He was the only father figure I had and at the age of 16 and my life turned upside down.

I ran away from home chasing the high that brought me happiness. My mom would come looking for me and every time she found me on the streets, I would tell her off because I was under the influence. I used to get high so I wouldn't think about the horrible things I told her. Things got really bad to the point where I didn't know what to do or where to go. My girlfriend and I would get into so many arguments because we were both under the influence of the devil's drug. When I would return home with my mom after a few days or weeks, she was always waiting for me welcomed me with open arms.

When I came off the drugs, I became frustrated and filled with hate that caused me to destroy my house, making holes on the walls, and breaking down doors. I remember one time my mom called the police because she didn't know what to do with me. She broke down in tears because she thought her child was gone. For a whole year, I was in and out of placement chasing the high that made me happy. Then I realized that I was only hurting the people I loved.

A few months ago, I stopped using crystal meth and when I came back to juvenile hall. I signed the Book of Life to promise myself and my family that I will not go back to my old ways. I turned to God for help because I know only He can help me and strengthen me to keep this promise.

- José, who was in a juvenile hall facility.

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Cycle A | February 15, 2026



Art by Jose Ramirez

## 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:

Heavenly Father,

In your Son Jesus you have shown us how we should seek and fulfill your loving will. May we respond to your love from the depth of our hearts and to be faithful to you in all we do.

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



# LITURGY OF THE WORD

## First Reading: Sirach 15:15-20

If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you; if you trust in God, you too shall live; he has set before you fire and water to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand. Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him. Immense is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power, and all-seeing. The eyes of God are on those who fear him; he understands man's every deed. No one does he command to act unjustly, to none does he give license to sin.

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

## Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Blessed are they whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD.

Blessed are they who observe his decrees, who seek him with all their heart.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

You have commanded that your precepts be diligently kept.

Oh, that I might be firm in the ways of keeping your statutes!

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Be good to your servant, that I may live and keep your words.

Open my eyes, that I may consider the wonders of your law.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

## Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Brothers and sisters: We speak a wisdom to those who are mature, not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away. Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory, and which none of the rulers of this age knew; for, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: *What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him*, this God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

The Word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

## Gospel: Matthew 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, *You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment*. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. "You have heard that it was said, *You shall not commit adultery*. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. "Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, *Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow*. But I say to you, do not swear at all. Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one."

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



# MEDITATION: LET YOUR "YES" MEAN "YES" AND "NO" MEAN "NO"

it's sunday afternoon  
in unit x at juvenile hall  
there is space  
above the unit's wall  
where you can see  
clouds pass  
passing clouds

today at the marina  
there is an assortment  
of clouds  
some are dark  
some are light  
in the distance  
the jets slip through  
the clouds traveling

brandon has almost  
been in the compound  
for three years

how many kinds  
of clouds have blown  
past that slit surrounding  
the unit's walls during  
these three long years?

the rain clouds  
clouds of summer  
showing the inferno heat  
outside the angry clouds  
that blow with  
such velocity blown by  
the ever present wind  
that whips through sylmar  
in this corridor of  
where mountains  
met the valley

i sat with brandon  
on sunday  
i just went up to the unit  
to say hello  
who do you become  
after spending  
your adolescent years  
in a juvenile hall?

there comes a time  
when everything  
becomes so boring  
so routine  
when to get up  
when to go to  
the bathroom

his other two brothers  
are also locked up  
like clouds  
blowing by the slits  
in the unit

clouds blowing  
through the lives of kids  
with zip codes  
that blow them into units  
where all they see of nature  
are clouds blowing  
through slits

brandon told me  
some days he just  
likes to sit and watch  
the clouds blow by  
that is his taste of nature  
never seeing  
the rocky mountains  
in colorado  
the sandy beaches  
in hawaii  
the blue lake in tahoe  
or what it is like  
to see clouds from a jet  
the storm clouds  
the angry  
threatening clouds  
the playful clouds  
that blow past your window  
when you are flying  
high up the earth

passing clouds

we can do better  
than give a kid  
so little of nature  
our cement jungles  
the hopelessness  
that seeps through  
the cracks into  
the lives of youngsters  
that learn to survive  
in jungles of violence

clouds blowing

*let your yes mean yes  
and your no mean no*

what would it be like  
to invite brandon  
for one day  
to go to yosemite  
after being locked up  
for three years in such  
a confined space?

to watch the waterfalls  
the mountains  
the trees  
the long stretching  
meadows  
landscapes filled

with flowers  
of every assortment  
how many times do  
we hear "no one forced  
me to join a gang  
i chose it and knew  
the consequences"

*let your yes mean yes  
and your no mean no*

this is because  
you have never gotten up  
early in the sierras  
after a snow storm  
everything is covered  
with white  
there is a silence so loud  
that it explodes inside you

the very depth of  
such newly fallen snow  
the light of the sun  
falling across the valley  
every part of your being  
feels the stillness  
you know you are  
inside of god  
there is no past  
nor tomorrow  
only the present and  
it feels good to be alive  
tasting eternity

a choice?  
only if you cannot dream  
or have never been given  
the chance to dream  
you have only seen  
parts of clouds  
blowing through a slit  
in a window  
inside juvenile hall

if you cannot see  
the future any different  
than the present  
than you go for  
what you know  
but if you give a kid  
a key and open a world  
of possibilities  
of beauty  
of travel of love  
of success  
of hope  
then the days  
of watching clouds  
pass through  
a small slit will be over

you might think  
you chose this lifestyle  
and of course  
in a sense you did  
and you did not  
your world is too small  
to make that choice

*let your yes mean yes  
and your no mean no*

let the clouds blow you  
first to new places with  
new possibilities of a taste  
of happiness that fills  
your very soul and  
if you still think  
you would choose  
posting  
chilling  
crystal strapped  
hurt  
killed  
life in prison  
traumatized for life  
then you really do choose  
this lifestyle fairly

so may brandon one day  
be free to let the clouds  
bring him into new places  
he has never been to

of seeing passing clouds  
from mountain peaks  
and river valleys  
of seeing passing clouds  
from sunsets  
from car windows  
traveling over  
endless territory  
of vacation's roads

*let your yes mean yes  
and your no mean no*

seeing passing  
clouds free  
seeing them outside  
not inside  
sitting on a metal beach  
peering into a small slit  
of freedom  
one day



**REFLECTION:** I remember a time I said “Yes” to do something good... 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,

Help us not only observe your law, but keep it in our hearts and love it. May we follow in the footsteps of your Son Jesus to be faithful, whatever the cost, to be free to say ‘Yes.’

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

