

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

REFRESH MY HEART IN CHRIST!

By Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Today's First Reading

Beloved: I have experienced much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the holy ones have been refreshed by you, brother. Therefore, although I have the full right in Christ to order you to do what is proper, I rather urge you out of love, being as I am, Paul, an old man, and now also a prisoner for Christ Jesus. I urge you on behalf of my child Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment, who was once useless to you but is now useful to both you and me.

I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. I should have liked to retain him for myself, so that he might serve me on your behalf in my imprisonment for the Gospel, but I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that the good you do might not be forced but voluntary. Perhaps this is why he was away from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a brother, beloved especially to me, but even more so to you, as a man and in the Lord.

So, if you regard me as a partner, welcome him as you would me. And if he has done you any injustice or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, write this in my own hand: I will pay. May I not tell you that you owe me your very self. Yes, brother, may I profit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

PHILEMON 7-20

Reflection

I ought not be surprised to find another reading that relates to the documentary **26.2 to Life**. With Paul we have the energy and urging for forgiveness among one another. In this documentary that told the story of the 1000-mile club at San Quentin, it was clear that the men regretted their crimes and wanted to reform their lives.

What I gleaned from the first reading of St. Paul is that we have all sinned and we are all called to mend our ways when we go astray. For God, there is no crime that cannot be forgiven. Restitution can be sought, as well as forgiveness and reconciliation.

As I watched this documentary, I kept within my heart those who had been harmed by the crimes committed upon their person. At the same time, the inmates who had admitted their crimes were seeking to change their lives as they voiced regret and sorrow for the harm they inflicted on others. I can hear St. Paul's words echoing within me as I peel back the layers of emotions that I experienced throughout the film. The crimes that were committed were horrible and each man did not shy away from the harm inflicted upon others – even death.

I saw the triumph of the human spirit and the desire to turn from evil ways and do good. I ached as the inmates came to understand that their own children were growing up without fathers present in their lives. I felt the deep hollowness and loss of those who had died at the hands of some of the men in 1000-mile club.

The words of Pope Francis echoed in my mind – *who am I to judge?* The courts have convicted these men, and they are serving their time. They have chosen to serve their time in a way that leads to their own sense of dignity and self worth despite their previous actions. They cannot change the past; they can change the trajectory of their souls.

The same goes for all of us who have never spent a minute behind bars. What I

witnessed in this film are men struggling to live differently, think differently, act differently, and embrace the person they are becoming. It does not wipe out their offense; though they are forgiven just as you and I are forgiven.

Refresh My Heart In Christ

O God of infinite love, when darkness seeks to find a home within me,
may I turn to you, the source of all light.

May I not turn from those who have caused harm and seek repentance,
for who am I to judge?

Let me live as St. Paul lived, full of passion as a disciple of Christ, seeking out
those in need.

May encouraging words flow from my mouth and a helping hand ready to
accept the stranger in need.



For Pondering

- Is there someone in your life that you need to forgive? What needs to heal in your own heart for reconciliation to occur?
- Reconciliation is a path to finding peace within and outside yourself. Is there anything within yourself that needs reconciling?

- How might you be a reconciling presence this day?

For Prayer

O God

*who sent his only Son so that we might have life and have it to the fullest,
May we seek forgiveness and reconciliation in our lives
and may we be that reconciling presence in our world.
Amen.*

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