

February 22, 2012

Hello World!

Sanctuary! No. I am not an animal but many times during each day I am treated like Quasimodo of Notre Dame or as an untouchable of India. Except for the enlightened staff who are too few who work to inspire inmates to rise above their past, many have swallowed their academy indoctrination that inmates are sub-human and to be treated as such.

All I can do is pray for this latter group. All I can do is search for sanctuary. I have found it in four places. The first one is the hobby shop which in the past I have written about and sorely miss. The other two are the visiting room and the chapel. Unspoken but enforced by the severest peer pressure, those areas are off limits to racial or personal vendettas. They are places where humanity's face reigns supreme. Creativity in the hobby shop is escapism. Hugs and smiles from family and friends in the visiting room is invigorating, a physical reminder that I still exist to the greater world. Spirituality and hearing the Word breathed through a minister filled with the Holy Spirit during a chapel service is life saving, the cool drink of water in the self-imposed desert that is prison.

The fourth sanctuary is found within the heart. A prison and all its intended and unintended consequences can turn the heart black and hard as stone unless a conscious daily effort is made to prevent it. How easy it would be to believe the negative, to pull on the jacket of the criminal instead of acknowledging my criminal act and then strive to become the man my parents and God intended me to be.

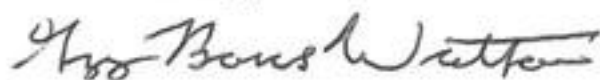
The Garden Chapel in San Quentin ministered over by Chaplain Earl Smith directed my thoughts to scripture and set my feet firmly on the narrow but lit path. It is only when I'm distracted by worldly desires that I stub my toe or trip. Thankfully, Jesus' gently hand is always there to help me back up.

Sanctuary! I no longer need to run from the torch carrying mob set to tar and feather me. I need not hide within a man-made structure for safety. I carry my sanctuary in the form of Jesus. I walk humbly but with confidence among those who cast stones at a man who sinned first. I'll accept the blows and bruises as a reminder of who I was, and with His strength in me I endure.

Sanctuary. We each carry it wherever our lives take us. The question is: Do you open your heart to enjoy all that this sanctuary offers or is it shut tight?

Thanks for checking in on me.

Cordially,



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Novel: A Thundering Wind (Amazon.com)