

December 23, 2012

Hello World!

The holiday season, specifically Christmas, is a time to celebrate Christ's coming into the world to save mankind. It is also traditionally the time for families to gather and enjoy delicious, home-cooked meals with special desserts, the recipes handed down through generations. It is a time of joy.

Christmas in prison is extra punishment, because by my acts I have denied myself and loved ones of each other's company and that perfect slice of pumpkin pie will not be enjoyed by me. Bottom line, it sucks.

For many years I tried to ignore holidays, wrongly believing that if they did not exist, I would not be sad. In prison, the phrase, "It's just another day," is a poor Band-Aid on a painful wound.

As the years rolled by and through Christ my sight cleared, I have been able to see and feel God's many blessings. True, I am not a free man. I possess no fat bank account and there are no presents under an absent tree. However, I am privileged to be safe in a level II prison. I am productively employed as the laundry clerk. I am blessed with a beautiful and exceptionally smart fiancé. My father continues to heal from his stroke and I have godparents and friends who love me. Wow!

I suppose someone could point out, "But you can't be with them." Ha! Love transcends space and time. I am always with them and they are with me. Even my mother and sister who have passed surround me with their presence.

When we remove the material Christmas that consists of presents, tinsel, lights, and song, what is left? Jesus' love for us. When we think of treasured memories of Christmases past, what are they? They consist of the love of family and friends. Therefore, I have all that I could ever wish for. I am at peace and filled with joy.

However, for the fun of it, let us talk about food and gifts. Prisons nationwide are judged by inmates on the quality of its meals. Having spoken with many inmates arriving from

other prisons statewide, it is unanimous that this prison's (Valley State Prison) meals are superior, being properly prepared and served hot. Except for the few malcontents, no rational inmate expects gourmet dining. What is desired are meals that are flavorful and hot. California's prisons all serve the same meals. Why is there such a vast difference in quality between prisons? It comes down to pride in a job done well. From the free cooks to inmate workers - do they give a damn? Sadly, there is no incentive to do a good job and if they don't, only the inmates complain. And who cares about them? One complaint went all the way to the United States Supreme Court. The justices ruled, "It doesn't have to taste good, only be good for you." If I can't stomach it, it ain't good for me. So, again, I am blessed and thankful for the free cooks here who do give a damn. Pride is not necessarily a bad thing.

As to presents, that is something I have to give myself. Having recently transferred, my little locker is bare except for a 1.74 ounce bag of peanut M&M's. I am saving it for Christmas. Even though I know what is inside - peanuts covered in chocolate - the gift will be a welcome surprise to my taste buds.

So - surrounded by love, dining on a quality meal, and a gift whose recipe has been handed down through generations, I can only have a Merry Christmas. And may all of you out there in the world discover your own blessings to be grateful for.

Thanks for checking in on me.

Cordially,

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