

April 4, 2020

Dear NAME OF INMATE,

I hope this letter finds you doing well. It's been a few tough weeks since we've been locked out! Who would ever think people were disappointed that they couldn't get into prison! We've been not only locked out of prison; we've been locked out of the churches. We can't go to Mass, though we are allowed to go to adoration, which is a blessing, but it's limited to 10 people spaced apart.

Anyway, I thought I'd take some time to write, and to let you know that I've been thinking about you and keeping you in my prayers. I hope you're doing ok during these crazy times. I don't recall anything any way close to this happening in the past, and hope it goes away quickly. This is Palm Sunday weekend and the beginning of Holy Week, sad that we can't participate in all of the things we had planned to celebrate the gift we've been given through Christ's death and resurrection.

The readings are Matthew 26:14--27:66, which you've probably already read by the time you get this mail. It's the Passion of our Lord.

The word "passion" has powerful implications. Theologically, we use it to describe the suffering love that Jesus endured for each of us when he was beaten, mocked and crucified as he willingly took onto himself the punishment and destructive forces of our sins.

We also use this word to refer to a strong motivation to do something that we enjoy or greatly care about, and this is why we can say that Jesus cared "passionately" about us while enduring The Passion. The strong love that Jesus exhibited in his ministry and on Good Friday is a lesson on what it means to have "compassion" for others. We walk with them in their sufferings; we "suffer with" them. This is passionate love in its holiest form.

Read the scriptures for Passion Sunday with an eye on how they reveal Jesus' passionate love for you. See yourself in the passion of the people who enthusiastically welcomed Jesus as well as in those who rejected and denied him.

Consider how much compassion Jesus must have felt for you when he subjected himself to the excruciating pains of his final hours. He did this for you despite how much you've hurt him through any lack of compassion for others. Rejoice in his passionate love for you! This will empower you to repent and grow stronger in holy love for others.

My prayer: Jesus Christ, I recognize that sometimes we follow You and proclaim you as our Lord and God, and other times we reject Your teachings and refuse to follow Your example. Forgive us and empower us with Your Holy Spirit to be a faithful witness of Your love and forgiveness. Amen.

Know that you're loved.

Your brother in Christ,
YOUR NAME
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