



**I was in prison and  
you visited me...**

Matthew 25:36

## Father's Day

Father's Day is a big deal in prison. On one hand, it is a reminder of separation. On the other hand, it is the embodiment of hope realized in reunification. The luckiest will get a face to face visit with a young child. Distance, cost of travel, paperwork required for clearance, and the lack of adult accompaniment for children all act in concert to prevent paternal contact. Visitation is victory!

For those anticipating a visit with young children, Father's Day presents the day they are most likely to see their children. There is great excitement and men who mark time by, "...years to go," start marking time by "...days till I see my child." A positive experience provides sustaining hope and motivation that they can do the things they need to do in order to be reunited.

There is a place in the Catholic mass where the priest breaks off a small piece of the consecrated host and then drops it in the chalice. There are names for these two tiny gestures- the breaking is the *fraction* and the placement in the chalice is the *commingling*. The *fraction* and the *commingling* express the nature of the Christian journey- separation and unity. We are a broken and fallen people, and the Christian journey is a pilgrimage back to the Father.

Those in prison have a spiritual advantage over those of us outside the walls. We are victims of complacency. Comfortable and easy lives can dull our senses to the pain of separation and our intrinsic need for unity. Those in prison understand separation in a way few of us can. Their temporal confrontation of separation sharpens their spiritual sensitivity to the future joy of reunification.

I cannot witness the *fraction* and the *commingling* at mass without thinking about the pilgrimage of the prisoner. We are on the same journey- just different routes. My thoughts go not just to reunification with the Father, but to reunification with my brothers in Christ on the other side of the walls.

I will visit the unit shortly after Father's Day. I can picture Michael's twinkling eyes and hear the lilt in his voice as he tells me about a visit with his daughters. He will want to hear all about my Father's Day, but mostly, he will want to share and relive the joy of seeing his girls.

We are simply two men who share a love of Christ and a love of our children.