

12/16/20

Dear OCPM Family,

I am truly grateful for all of the information and materials that your ministry has provided to me while I was incarcerated and I also look forward to a continuing correspondence in the years to come.

At the time of this letter, I have been in Santa Teresa for sixteen days and I am doing well. I am currently in a re-entry program. I am living in sober housing with my rent paid up until April. I have applied for medical insurance and when I start working I can stay here as long as I want to for \$700 per month.

On December 20, Sunday, I decided that I would investigate an Orthodox Church to "come and see," (John 1). I was still unfamiliar with the bus routes and schedules and I didn't even know what time the Liturgy began as I walked toward the transit center, determined to find the Way, the Truth, and the ~~light~~ Life.

By the time I arrived at church the Liturgy had already started and it was already only a few minutes before Holy Communion. After the service, one of the men approached me and asked me if I was new to the area and I told him that I was. He asked me if I was new to Orthodoxy and if this was my first time at an Orthodox Church and I paused for a moment, considering my options. The open kindness of his eyes softened my heart and I told him that I learned about it in prison. He did not even skip

a beat, then he said that there have been a number of people who found Orthodoxy in prison. He asked me if I would like to see the inside of the Church and I said that I would love to. He introduced me to Father Michael who gave me blessed bread.

I met many new people, including Matushka, Father Michael's wife. They asked what brought me to Santa Teresa; I paused before stating, "parde." They ~~was~~ said, "That's okay, Orthodoxy is full of repentant sinners."

Then I caught the bus back to the transit center and walked home to assimilate all that I had just experienced. I was surprised that people could accept me being fresh out of prison.

I weep now as I realized the love and acceptance that was freely offered to me. It might not be what I had planned but I have finally come home.

In Christ,

Greg