

Keep your name on The List!

Nine years ago I went to prison ... to **the Donaldson** maximum security State Prison located in Bessemer ... 30 miles west of Birmingham.

Now realize that I wasn't sent there ... **rather** I was invited there ... I was invited by my brother **Jim**, who had been visiting the **inmates** in this Prison for many **years** ... he invited me to join the **Kairos team** when they made their **monthly visit** on the 3rd Saturday of every month.

So I went through the **application process** in **mid summer** to be a visitor to the Prison and I received verbal clearance and **approval** in **September**.

Then on **the 3rd Saturday of October**, **18 Men** from the **Kairos team** & **I** met outside Donaldson Prison **at 10AM**. **All** were quickly admitted through the **initial staging area** of the visitor Center, **except me**. You see, **my name wasn't on the list!**

Even though I had been notified of **my approval** a month earlier, **somehow my name never got onto** the **Approval List** held by the **Guard** at the **front Gate**.

So I couldn't go in ... because **my name wasn't on their list**.

The thought occurred to me ... they're making it **as hard** to get into Prison ...
as they make it to get out of Prison!

The Guard even called the **head Chaplain** of the Prison.

But he confirmed that **if I wasn't on the list**, I **couldn't come in**.

Thankfully, the **Guard** continued searching through this **big book** of lists. My name wasn't recorded by **Parish**; **nor** was it recorded by **Diocese of Birmingham** ... **but fortunately** for me, she found ... at the very back of **her book**, a page labeled **Catholic** and **that's where** they had recorded **my name** and **security clearance!**

Whew! So they finally let me enter the **Prison Gates** and join the **Kairos Team!**

Once inside we spent the whole morning ministering to some **42 inmates** who were part of the Program. It was a **wonderful experience** to get to share the **love of God** with them in their makeshift **Chapel room**.

It clearly shows **how God** can do wondrous things whenever people ...
open themselves to Him ... **even** in a maximum-security prison!

But, you know, even though we had a **wonderful time** that morning ...

I **couldn't stop** thinking about the **sinking feeling** I had when I arrived expecting to go in and **they** said to me, “*You can't go in; your name isn't on the list!”*

I remember **the look of surprise** from my **brother** and many of the **other men** who had already passed through the Gates and were standing inside waiting for me.

But I couldn't join them ... because my name wasn't found in **their book.**

Here I thought I had done everything right ... and I just assumed that my name would be on **the list when I wanted to go in ... **but initially** it wasn't there.**

And that created great distress in myself and in others ...
at **the thought** that they got in ... and **I was left outside!**

Well, there's another Place ...
where entry is determined by whether or not your name is on **the list**.

And that place is Heaven ... and **the list** that is kept ... is in **the Book of Life**.

We heard the Prophet Daniel refer to this in our **First Reading
when he speaks about the **End Times** saying,
*"At that time ... people will escape, everyone who is found written in the book."***

What Book? The **Book of Life** ... which is **God's Book** ...
that lists the names of all those who choose to be with Him, who is **Life**.

Recall how **Jesus** said, *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,
no one goes to the Father except through Me."*

From this it's very clear that **Jesus** is **Life** ...
and choosing Him is **the only way** to be with the Father in **Eternal Life**.

To enter the Gates of Heaven, our names must be written in the **Book of Life!**

This we know ... our names were written in **God's Book** on the day of our **Baptism**

You could say that's the day God gave verbal approval for us to enter into **Heaven**.

But now it's up to us to be sure our name remains on **His Approved List**.

If we're wise enough to keep our name listed in **God's Book of Life**,
then as **Daniel** says, *"(We) shall shine brightly ... like the stars forever."*

But if we're foolish enough to let our name fall off of **God's Book of Life**,
Daniel warns that *"(We) shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace."*

The **choice** is ours. And from my little experience at the Prison that day, I assure you **that I do not want that feeling ... of arriving at my Final Destination ... only to be told that I can't go in ... because my name isn't on the List.**

This is **serious** ... which is **why Jesus Himself** speaks of the coming tribulation and what will happen in the end times. He says in the Gospel today,
“Know that (I) am near, at the gates.”

Imagine how distressing that would be to have the Sun and Moon darkened and see Stars falling from the sky and see the Son of Man coming on the clouds!

How awful ... and yet in the midst of all this calamity ... there is one thing that would give us solace ... the presence of Jesus!

Mark says,
we *“will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.”*

For those who know, love & serve Him, the **sight of Jesus** will be comforting.
For those who have fallen away from Him, the **sight of Jesus** will be very scary.

Then it will be **too late** to start the process of getting your name on the list in **God's Book of Life.**

The **best time** to prepare to be admitted to Heaven is **right now.**
We need to be sure that our name is on the List and never comes off!

We do this by repenting of and turning away from Grave sin ... because it's Grave Sin that takes our name off the List and removes it from the Book of Life.

Virtuous living along with frequent use of the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion insure that our names stay on the List for Heaven.

The **Gates of Heaven** are open ... it's **up to us** whether we pass through or not.

Jesus made this possible for us as the author of **Hebrews** reminds us today, saying:
*“Every high priest stands daily ... offering ... sacrifices that can never take away sins.
But (Jesus) offered one sacrifice for sins ...
and has made perfect forever ... those who are being consecrated.”*

That's **all of us, baptized Christians,** who have devoted our lives to following Him.

Jesus hopes that in hearing His words in the Gospel, **all of us** will respond ... with urgency! He wants us to take a spiritual inventory of our lives, to **honestly assess**

those **areas** where we are lacking in **virtue** and **goodness**. And **then**, take action to improve them.

What would happen if you **died** tonight?

Are you quite sure that **your name** is still written on **the list of entrants** to the Kingdom of Heaven?

The **words** you **definitely** don't want to hear are,

"You can't go in; your name isn't on the List!"

In our **Gospel Acclamation Jesus** said, "*Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to stand before the Son of Man.*"

Hear what **the Lord** is saying,

"This is really going to happen. Judgment Day is coming ... for real!"

Yet, many don't believe it. They don't even want **to think** about it.

And the **Devil** is all too happy to **help us** to not think about it. **He's** doing everything he can to **distract us** and **keep us** from being prepared to **meet the Lord**.

Realize that serious Sin takes **our name** off the List of **those** who get into the **Kingdom of Heaven!**

Take this to heart and **then** take the time to take your spiritual inventory.

Examine your **conscience**.

If your life was required of you today,

would your name be written in the **Book of Life** for all time?

Or are there things that you need to turn away from doing to get back on **the List**?

Judgment Day is coming; we just don't know when.

Jesus says today, "*of that day or hour, no one knows ... only the Father.*"

Could we be living in the **End Times**? We **could be**.

But **whether** we are or not, the **idea** is **to live** as **if we were**.

The **idea** is **to live** in a state of readiness to **meet the Lord** ... to **live each day** in a state of Grace ... and to keep our name **on the List** for all time!

Take **your inventory** and prepare yourself.

Turn away from **all sin** & lead a good **life**

so **your name** will be easily found there in **God's Book**, the Book of Eternal Life!