



## Radical Hospitality in the Season of Advent

Nov 30, 2025 – December 24, 2025

“I was a prisoner, and you visited me” (Matt 25:36)

The word radical comes from the Latin *radix*, meaning root. *Radix* suggests being rooted, grounded, or firm in the earth. *Radix* was also used to suggest the figurative meaning of roots, suggesting something foundational. The practice of radical hospitality, then, is a rooted, grounded, foundational practice of hospitality, receptivity, and welcome. To practice radical hospitality involves being grounded, present in the moment, and receptive to all that is in and around us.

This sort of receptivity invites us to experience ourselves as part of something bigger: the family of humanity, the whole web of life. Just as a body instinctively brings its attention to the parts that are injured or most in need, the person who senses their place in the body of humanity makes a preferential option for those in the most need. This is what the Church has traditionally called a *preferential option* for the poor, vulnerable, or marginalized. This is hospitality for those who are most in need of, and often least experiencing, welcome, people that our society “others,” judges, labels, and marginalizes. No group of people may be more othered and pushed to the margins than the people that we lock in cages.

This season of Advent, [Heart-to-Heart](#) is inviting people of faith and people of conscience to reflect on the system of incarceration that we’ve created and how our sisters and brothers are being labeled and targeted for arrest, detention, extreme sentencing, and execution.

One out of every 160 Americans is a prisoner. Black and Brown people are grossly overrepresented in our prisons. Those who are poor make up a vast number of the incarcerated. How might the practice of radical hospitality transform the experiences of people who are incarcerated? How might the practice of radical hospitality transform the experience of our returning citizens? How might the practice of radical hospitality transform our faith communities? Ourselves?

Radical hospitality does not ask us to neglect our own needs. Radical hospitality involves being rooted and grounded in our experience. It involves connecting to and honoring our needs and the needs of others. Together, we can create a society in which everyone’s needs matter and are respected.

[Heart-to-Heart](#) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help those affected by incarceration to heal, thrive, and become the leaders they are called to be. We bring an educational, therapeutic program to people in three prisons and support returning citizen leaders. The men and women we accompany have inspired us by their resilience, vulnerability, and love. Those who’ve survived incarceration and healed may be the key to societal healing. For Advent we look to the wisdom of people who were incarcerated, with themes touching on the experience of incarceration, expectant waiting for justice, radical hospitality, hope, enfleshing love, and paying attention to God’s presence among us.



## Advent, Week 1: Hope for Justice and Expectant Waiting Heart-to-Heart

Sunday, Nov 30, 2025 — First Sunday of Advent

“It always seems impossible until it’s done.”  
- Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994)

Advent invites us to trust in the work God is doing in hidden places. Radical hospitality includes foresight, sensing the future that wants to arrive and needs our trust and participation.

Monday, Dec 1, 2025

“A prison cell, in which one waits and hopes, does resemble Advent. It is a time of stillness where the soul learns patience, where the heart listens for God’s coming.”  
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (1951)

Waiting can be a sacred act. In a society intent on action and doing, waiting with eyes wide open can reveal what’s really going on, informing our action in a way that busyness never can.

Tuesday, Dec 2, 2025

“In the dark night of the soul, bright flows the river of God. When all seems lost, our longing for God becomes the light guiding us forward.”  
- St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul* (1584–1591)

Central to radical hospitality is the practice of tapping into our deepest longings. These are our God-given needs and heart’s desires. Our longings and hungers point us to the fullness which God is desiring for us and in us.

Wednesday, Dec 3, 2025

“Others proclaimed ... to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. But what does it matter? ... I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance.”  
- St. Paul to the Philippians 1:17-19

How do we practice radical hospitality when judgment and condemnation are being thrown at us? Perhaps Jesus on the cross shows the way. Not only does he refuse to condemn those who condemn him, he also refuses to turn on himself. We never hear Jesus say, “What was I thinking, choosing Judas?!” Jesus’ nonviolence is a nonviolence toward self as well as others. He refuses to believe the judgment hurled at him.



Thursday, Dec 4, 2025

“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I’m changing the things I cannot accept.”  
- Angela Davis, Art Museum Teaching blog, 2017

The rooted receptivity of radical hospitality enables a profound seeing of what is. This includes seeing the economic, political, and cultural structures that create mass incarceration. This seeing naturally leads to compassion, to a willingness to suffer-with. Radical hospitality invites an awareness that leads to solidarity with our kin who suffer and cry out for liberation and systemic change.

Friday, Dec 5, 2025

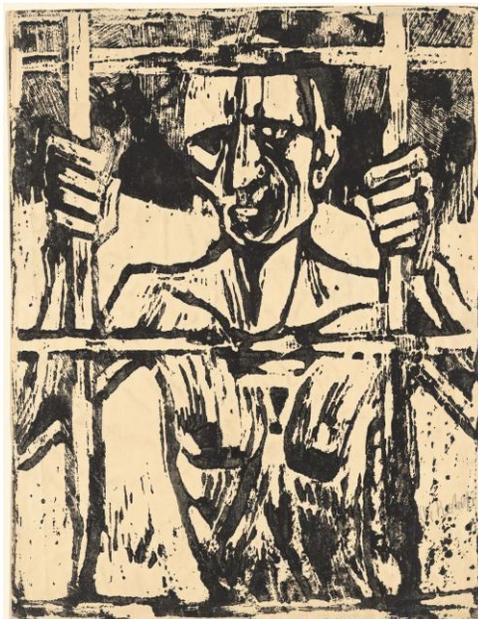
“Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground.”  
- Oscar Wilde, writing during imprisonment, *De Profundis* (1905)

Welcoming our own pain, giving space for tender fear, sadness, and the depths of loss, this is radical hospitality to self. Self-compassion is a holy act.

Saturday, Dec 6, 2025 — Feast of St. Nicholas

“In solitary, the minutes stretch into hours, and the heart learns patience it never knew it had.”  
(Anonymous prison letter)

Solitary confinement is “the practice of isolating people in closed cells for as much as 24 hours a day, virtually free of human contact, for periods of time ranging from days to decades” says Solitary Watch. Approximately 6% of the total prison population is likely to be in solitary confinement on any given day. That’s more than 80,000 people daily “in the hole.” The United Nations Committee Against Torture has condemned repeatedly solitary confinement as it is practiced in the United States, calling it “cruel, inhuman ... and degrading” (American Friends Service Committee). This is what we are paying for, with our tax dollars, and what we are co-creating, with our laws, policies, and attitudes.



*The Prisoner*, Christian Rohlf (1918)

## Advent, Week 2: Acting and Waiting Amidst Deep Injustice

### Heart-to-Heart



#### Sunday, December 7, 2025 — Second Sunday of Advent

“Justice too long delayed, is justice denied.”

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, 1963

One of the deepest disappointments in Dr. King’s life was the lack of support of civil rights from the white Church, especially from white pastors who he believed would take a stand with him, but instead chose silence or worse. Yes, Advent is a season of waiting, but what are we doing as we wait?

#### Monday, December 8, 2025 — Feast of the Immaculate Conception

“I was out of control. I needed to be arrested. I’m glad I was arrested, that may have kept me, or someone, alive.”

- Ralph, speaking from the county jail, Albuquerque, NM

Arrested means stopped, as in cardiac arrest. Many of the people we encountered in jail were addicted to drugs or alcohol. Being arrested gave a chance to get clean and sober. Then, new choices, new directions can come into sight and are possible. Being arrested is radically different from being imprisoned.

#### Tuesday, December 9, 2025

“The United States is unparalleled historically and ranks among the highest worldwide in its dependence on incarceration. Over 5,000,000 people in total are under supervision by the criminal legal system. Of these, nearly two million people, disproportionately Black, are living in prisons and jails instead of their communities. Compare this to the figures of the early 1970s when this count was 360,000.”

- The Sentencing Project <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/mass-incarceration-trends/>

Since the 1970s, incarceration in our country has grown from 360,000 people to nearly 2,000,000. Do the significantly harsher sentences that make this leap possible reflect Americans' attitudes toward people we label “criminals?”

#### Wednesday, December 10, 2025

“You can’t separate peace from freedom, because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom.”

- Malcolm X

The peace we all seek is intertwined. It is intertwined with other needs, such as the need for freedom. And all our needs, and ultimately, our destinies, are intertwined.

#### Thursday, December 11, 2025

“On one hand, we need to be in touch with what is wonderful because that will nourish us. And on the other hand, we have to be in touch with our suffering so that we can understand, love, and transform.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is This Moment*

In the midst of injustice and suffering, both movements are needed: touching the suffering, being present with ourselves, or another, in deep compassion, and touching into what is wonderful. Our God-given longings or needs are always oriented toward the good, always wonderful. Even when they are not met, they hunger within us to be acknowledged and felt.

Friday, December 12, 2025 — Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

“That is what the Church wants: to disturb people’s consciences and to provoke a crisis in their lives. A church that does not provoke crisis, a gospel that does not disturb, a word of God that does not rankle, a word of God that does not touch the concrete sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed — what kind of gospel is that? Just nice, pious considerations that bother nobody — that’s the way many people would like our preaching to be.”

- Oscar Romero, *The Scandal of Redemption*

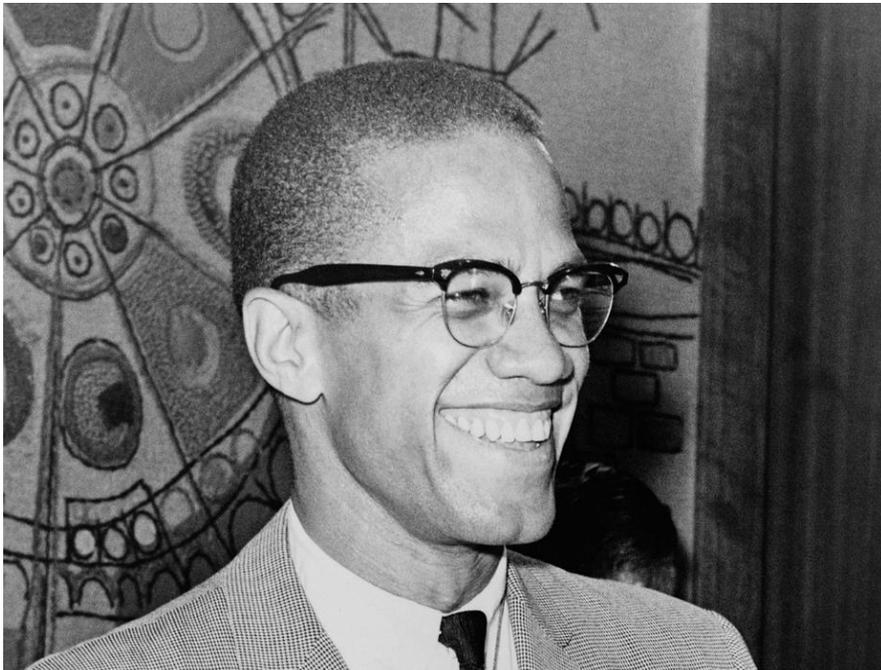
What happens when people of faith look the other way? What happens when people of conscience are so busy they miss their call? Mass incarceration.

Saturday, December 13, 2025

“Ultimately, we have just one moral duty: to reclaim large areas of peace in ourselves, more and more peace, and to reflect it toward others. And the more peace there is in us, the more peace there will also be in our troubled world.”

- Etty Hillesum

Since birth, we are called into the world. And, simultaneously, we are called to interior attention. These are not opposing movements, but a natural, inner-outer flow of being human and awake.



*Malcolm X*

## Advent, Week 3: What Moves Us to Action?

### Heart-to-Heart



#### Sunday, December 14, 2025 — Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday)

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

- Paul’s Letter to the Philippians 4:8

How do we stay focused on what is good while challenged with suffering and confronting injustice? One way is to dwell in the beauty of the need. Our God-given needs have an energy and life to them. They live in us and are always seeking fulfillment. Radical hospitality welcomes all our feelings and the needs to which they point. What is true, noble, and pure, are our universal, God-given needs.

#### Monday, December 15, 2025

“He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

- Jesus in Luke 4: 18-19

Jesus’ mission is identified with freeing prisoners. The work of freeing prisoners is God’s work.

#### Tuesday, December 16, 2025

“Peacemaking is hard, almost as hard as war ... There is no peace because there are no peacemakers.”

- Daniel Berrigan, S.J., *No Bars to Manhood*

Between 1970 and 1995, Jesuit priest Daniel Berrigan spent nearly seven years in prison for actions as a war resister and peacemaker. Our times call for peacemaking. What are we called to do to act for peace and justice?

#### Wednesday, December 17, 2025

“Waiting in line for visitation, I realized love is a lifeline, even when freedom is denied.”

- Anonymous prison reflection

Visits can mean the world for people who are incarcerated. Love is indeed a lifeline. This is the foundation of Heart-to-Heart’s prison ministry: To show up with love, to be present human-to-human. Prison is designed to steal - to steal people’s dignity, autonomy, and sense of worth. Everything we do in visiting our people in prison is built on acknowledging their innate dignity.

Thursday, December 18, 2025

“Prisons do not disappear social problems, they disappear human beings. Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages.”

- Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*

No country in the world is currently imprisoning more people than the United States. Nearly two million people have been “disappeared,” by our local, state, and federal governments. Mass incarceration not only hides social problems, it multiplies them.

Friday, December 19, 2025

“Too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows.”

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*

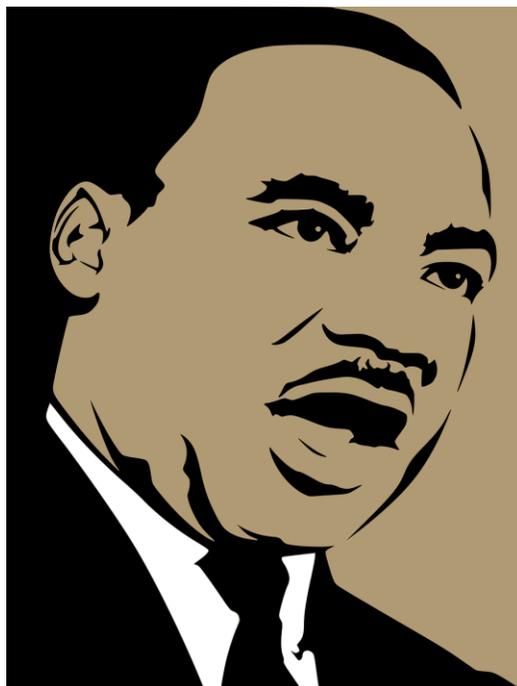
Radical hospitality is the sort of receptivity that awakens the body and the spirit, and galvanizes action where fear, complacency, or ignorance used to hold sway.

Saturday, December 20, 2025

“If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?”

- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*

The phenomenon of othering can be paused and “the other” can be seen in a new light, when we take our own inventories and face our own challenges to growth.



**Advent, Week 4: Incarnation**  
**[Heart-to-Heart](#)**

Sunday, December 21, 2025 — Fourth Sunday of Advent

“When we are no longer able to change a situation — just think of an incurable disease — we are challenged to change ourselves.”

- Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*

The Serenity Prayer invites us to ask for serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference. That may be the perfect prayer leading up to Christmas, the feast of the incarnation, or enfleshment, of Love. May God show us this week when and how to practice acceptance and when and how to act for change.

Monday, December 22, 2025

“We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*

How might we stir our hearts to compassion? Perhaps judging people based on what they suffered.

Tuesday, December 23, 2025

“The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.”

- Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The House of the Dead*

What is the prison system that we created saying about us? So many other nations have turned to restorative justice, yet our country is fixed on punishment. Massive numbers of people in cages, relentless use of solitary confinement, and every month, another state-funded execution. What does our prison system say about our civilization? Oh, come, oh come, Emmanuel, we might cry.

Wednesday, December 24, 2025

“One of the lies that people tell about prison is that men and women and children inside don’t crave the wonders that can be found in a book ... Some of what the men I knew in prison did to feel whole feels Biblical. And the center of it all was a book.”

- Reginald Dwayne Betts, *Freedom Begins with a Book, Journal of Higher Education in Prison*

R. Dwayne Betts spent more than eight years in prison and over a year in solitary confinement for a crime he committed at age 16. Books opened new worlds to him, and he started the nonprofit, Freedom Reads. What he did with his time of waiting changed his life and the lives of thousands of people.



Steve Tumolo, Chief Encouragement Officer, [Heart-to-Heart](#), Advent 2025