



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES



3031 FOURTH STREET, NE ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20017

Vol. 23, No. 1 – January/February/March 2016

Be patient and merciful

“Be patient and merciful.” Those words are for us as we begin this Jubilee Year of Mercy. Patient and merciful describe God himself and the way God responds to us. And they describe the way God wants us to respond to those around us.

Year of Mercy. Pope Francis, knowing that this world is short on mercy, has declared that from December 8, 2015 through the Solemnity of Christ the King (November 20, 2016), the Church will focus on God’s mercy—“contemplate on the mystery of mercy.” He says, “It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it” (*The Face of Mercy*, n. 1).

Think for a minute. Who can’t use a bit more joy, a bit more serenity (calmness), a bit more peace? All of us can! And God wants that for us. Mercy opens “our hearts

to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness” (*The Face of Mercy*, n. 2). In receiving God’s mercy, all God asks of us is that we show mercy. We need to imitate God in his mercy.

Merciful like the Father.

Jesus is like his Father, and so he tells us, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Matthew 9:13). But we often are more inclined to give sacrifice, not mercy. Especially to those around us. We may think that if we just say a few more prayers or maybe give up something, we can get by. But God wants more from us. He wants us to be merciful.

Pope Francis writes that Jesus asks us “not to judge and not to condemn” (*The Face of Mercy*, n. 14). It is so easy to do this in our everyday actions toward others. Jesus asks us to forgive others and give them mercy.



Pope Francis writes, “In this Holy Year, we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society” (*The Face of Mercy*, n. 15). And aren’t prisons places on the outermost

fringes? So especially in prison, accept God’s mercy and be merciful.

A tall order, but possible. God gives abundant grace. It is never too late to start anew and be merciful. No matter our past, the future is ours to live in a new way, step by step. In this Year of Mercy, let us accept God’s mercy for us. And let us resolve to show mercy to those around us. We will be blessed and will likely be surprised by what a difference this makes in our lives.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Jubilee Year of Mercy has begun! You will read much about it in this special six-page issue of *Let’s Talk!* and in the other issues to come in 2016. Pope Francis says to us about this special year to let God “surprise us.”

God is “rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4), so we can expect the best. God will pour out his grace, but we need hearts open to it. God does not force his love on us. He has given us free will to accept it or reject it. Let us accept! We are sure to be in for some surprises.

Be sure to read on page 5 Pope Francis’s talk with prisoners in Philadelphia when he visited the U.S. in September.

Let us pray for one another that we will be open to God and his love, receive his mercy, and give it to those around us. In this Year of Mercy and New Year, God’s promise of mercy can give us great hope.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Allow God to surprise you!

Spiritual resolutions in the Year of Mercy

Pope Francis wants us to have high expectations for this Jubilee Year of Mercy. He writes, “Let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of throwing open the doors of his heart and repeats that he loves us and wants to share his love with us” (*The Face of Mercy*, n. 25). He also encourages us to “live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us in his merciful indulgence” (n. 22).

While God is totally generous with us, we still have to *act* and *respond* to him. The gift of mercy is free, but God will not force it on us. So we have to open our lives to him. In this Year of Mercy, you can use your time of incarceration as a time to grow closer to Jesus and grow in faith. So this year can be a good time to rededicate ourselves to our daily walk with Jesus.

Experience has probably shown us that growing in faith doesn’t happen automatically. We have to do our part. Many spiritual directors recommend that if we want to grow spiritually, we need to develop our own “spiritual discipline.” At the heart of this is that we try to do what we can, not what we can’t. By this they mean that if you don’t have an hour a day of quiet for prayer, don’t attempt to pray an hour a day in quiet prayer. It won’t happen and you’ll just end up frustrated. Thus, seek to build a realistic spiritual life that suits your present circumstances.

continued on page 2

CHURCH CALENDAR

JANUARY 2016

- 1 **Mary, Mother of God**
- 2 Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, bishops and doctors
- 3 **Epiphany of the Lord**
- 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
- 5 St. John Neumann, bishop
- 10 **Baptism of the Lord**
- 17 **Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 18-25 **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**
- 21 St. Agnes, virgin and martyr
- 22 Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
- 24 **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 25 **Conversion of St. Paul**
- 26 Sts. Timothy and Titus, bishops
- 28 St. Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor
- 31 **Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

FEBRUARY 2016

- 2 **Presentation of the Lord**
- 5 St. Agatha, virgin and martyr
- 6 St. Paul Miki and Companions, martyrs
- 7 **Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 10 **Ash Wednesday**
- 14 **First Sunday of Lent**
- 21 **Second Sunday of Lent**
- 22 **Chair of St. Peter**
- 28 **Third Sunday of Lent**

MARCH 2016

- 6 **Fourth Sunday of Lent**
- 13 **Fifth Sunday of Lent**
- 17 St. Patrick, bishop
- 19 **St. Joseph, Spouse of Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 20-25 **Holy Week**
- 20 **Palm Sunday**
- 24 **Holy Thursday**
- 25 **Good Friday**
- 26 **Holy Saturday**
- 27 **Easter**

Let's Talk!

PEM President: **Rev. Frank DeSiano, CSP**

Editor: **Mr. Anthony Bosnick**

Layout Editor: **Mrs. Joann Sullivan**

Art: **Steve Erspamer, SM**

Visit us at www.pemdc.org

©Paulist Evangelization Ministries

All Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Bible*. Used with permission.

Change of Address: Please help us keep our mailing list accurate. Send all changes in your name and/or address to: Paulist Prison Ministries; 3031 Fourth Street, NE; Washington, DC 20017; or by email to: info@pemdc.org.

Thank you for your help.

PMLTH1601

Spiritual Resolutions in the Year of Mercy

(continued from page 1)

Everyone's circumstances differ, even in prison or jail. Your level of confinement and the number of others around you will affect the amount of distractions you face and the time you get for some quiet. Even your own personality will impact what you can and should try to do. Here are some suggestions for "spiritual resolutions" for the Year of Mercy. You can read more about them in the Paulist Prison Ministries pamphlet "Conversion and Commitment to Christ." Your chaplain or volunteer can get a copy for you.

A good spiritual discipline consists of several parts. Here are some to consider: 1) Read the Word of God. 2) Worship and pray. 3) Be part of a community. 4) Care for and serve others. Let's take a look at them.

First, the Word of God. Read Scripture. Listen to Scripture being read. Since every Catholic Mass consists of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Mass provides a good time to hear the Word proclaimed. Listen to it and try to pick up something you can remember to guide you.

It can sometimes be difficult to attend religious services while in prison or jail. Thus, it is also good to develop a daily habit of reading something from the Bible. You might want to follow the daily Mass readings. Or you might want to work your way through books of the Bible (starting with the New Testament), and perhaps the entire Bible itself.

It is important to remember that reading Scripture isn't a speed-reading contest. Read slowly and reflect on what you read. Ask the Holy Spirit for insight and

understanding. Write down in a notebook, if you can, something that strikes you. (Maintain the privacy of your prayer notes.) Remember, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16).



You can learn more about the Bible and how to read Scripture in the new booklet "In Touch with God's Word. How to Read the Bible," recently published by Paulist Prison Ministries. Your chaplain or volunteer should be able to get a copy for you.

Second, worship and pray. Attend Sunday Mass if you can. If it isn't available on Sunday, attend when it is offered. The Eucharist is the great sacrament of life and love. Participate with an open heart and mind, with the desire of meeting Jesus and learning from him, growing in him, being healed by him.

For most people, the liturgy is at most once a week for an hour or less. Thus, in addition, have a time of personal prayer each day. Set aside a time and place when you can talk with God. A little such time is better than none. If possible, read Scripture during this time as well. If none of this is possible, take time during the day to turn your mind and heart to God and talk with him. This is an example of "Pray as you can, not as you can't."

Third, be part of a community. If there is a Catholic fellowship or church at your prison or jail, participate in it if you can.

(continued on page 6)

Prisoner Saint

St. Dismas (d. c. 33) + Dismas is the repentant insurgent (Matthew 27:38) crucified with Jesus. He asked Jesus to remember him "when you enter upon your reign." Jesus responded, "I assure you: this day you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42, 43). This man is traditionally called Dismas, a name derived from Greek (*dysme*) meaning "sunset" as at the crucifixion "darkness came over the whole land" (v. 44). St. Dismas is a great example of a person who turned his error in life into a positive. In this Year of Mercy, we are reminded through Dismas that God's mercy is greater than we can ever imagine. Jesus rescued Dismas from his sin and opened the doors of Paradise through his faith. The same gift is for all who trust God and hope in his mercy.

Feast Day: March 25

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for January/February/March 2016 in the Year of Mercy

JANUARY

Universal. *Interreligious Dialogue:* That sincere dialogue among men and women of different faiths may produce the fruits of peace and justice.

Evangelization.

Christian Unity: That by means of dialogue and fraternal charity and with the grace of the Holy Spirit, Christians may overcome divisions.

FEBRUARY

Universal. *Care for Creation:* That we may take good care of creation—a gift freely given—cultivating and protecting it for future generations.

Evangelization. *Asia:* That opportunities may increase for dialogue and encounter between the Christian faith and the peoples of Asia.

MARCH

Universal. *Families in Difficulty:* That families in need may receive the necessary support and that children may grow up in healthy and peaceful environments.

Evangelization.

Persecuted Christians: That those Christians who, on account of their faith, are discriminated against or are being persecuted, may remain strong and faithful to the Gospel, thanks to the incessant prayer of the Church.

Pope Francis invites you to join him in praying for these intentions.

Year of Mercy, Part 2

Hiding in plain sight

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: So, Deke, we have this *Jubilee Year of Mercy* but what exactly is mercy? And why is that the priority? Not everyone would agree with that.

Me: True, but it was Jesus' priority. Everything he did and taught revolved around mercy. Remember, there are a zillion agendas in the Church; only one of them is Jesus' agenda!

Peaches: But some people would say it's about being a good person.

Me: Yes. And Jesus' definition of a good person would be a merciful person.

Peaches: OK. What about salvation or repentance? Aren't they more basic? It all starts with repentance of our sins.

Me: Absolutely! However, your hope of salvation lies in the mercy you show to others according to Jesus, "Blessed are the merciful, they shall have mercy" (Matthew 5:7), or "The measure you use for others will be measured back to you. Pressed down and overflowing they will pour it into your lap" (Luke 6:38).

Peaches: I get it. If you want mercy from God you have to show mercy to other people.

Me: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Matthew 6:12).

Peaches: What about repentance? That comes before mercy right?

Me: It does, but what is the experience of repentance? Mercy! The experience is precisely that God is cutting me a break!

Peaches: So mercy is central to the beginning of the process that Jesus laid out and to the fulfillment of the process in salvation!

Me: And at every point in between.

Peaches: But you know, Deacon, mercy is not actually all that popular. It's usually seen as weakness.

Me: That's true, but that shows how few Christians have actually done it.

Peaches: Done what?

Me: Repent! If you repent you experience God's mercy through forgiveness then you feel compelled to give mercy to others! If you don't feel the need to do that, I'd have to question if you actually did repent. Remember Jesus' test: "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7:16).

Peaches: Action, not words.

Me: Exactly. You know, Jesus told a story of a guy who gets forgiven and then won't forgive others (see Matthew 18:21-35). It doesn't end well for him.

Peaches: OK, but mercy is still a hard sell. Seems like weakness.

Me: Yeah, I know but think about this. Who is it that shows us mercy?

Peaches: God.

Me: Who is *All* . . .

Peaches: Powerful! Oh, the opposite of weak. I get it.

Me: Extending mercy is actually a sign of strength.

Peaches: OK, but I go to church and I'm not sick of hearing about mercy all the time. What's up with that?

Me: We have a lot of *un*-evangelized Christians is what's up with that! They may be knowledgeable from CCD, Catholic school religion classes, seminary or whatever, but they truly don't get *IT* so they tend to focus on something else.

Peaches: Well, I guess that's true. If God were to give us justice, we'd have no chance.

Me: The Pharisees still think they do!

Peaches: Pharisees?! That's a bit over the top, isn't it?

Me: Well, you tell me. What would be the reaction of most Christians in any Church if I got up in the pulpit and said that mercy was more important than going to church?

Peaches: Pretty ugly, I'd guess.

Me: Yet, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Go find out the meaning of this: I desire mercy not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13).

Peaches: It's more important to show mercy than to go to the temple.

Me: Whether Jesus is forgiving or healing, he's giving someone a new start – mercy. And if he's teaching, on some level it's about mercy.

Peaches: Reminds me of the discussion I had with Crazy Lucy the other night. . . .

Me: And we're done.

Deacon Dennis Dolan recently retired as chaplain at York Correctional Institution in Connecticut. He continues his ministry with and for prisoners through his writing as he discerns where God is calling him in service.

Help for your Journey

All of us need help as we seek to grow in our faith, especially as we seek to grow in our relationship with Christ. Our Christian life is a journey, a life-long pilgrimage. We arrive at the destination when we meet Jesus face to face.

We will struggle along the way. But God is with us because in his mercy he wants us to have life, and life to the full (see John 10:10).

Paulist Prison Ministries has several resources available to prisoners which can help on your journey. You can either ask your chaplain or prison volunteer to help you get copies or write to us at: Paulist Prison Ministries; 3013 Fourth Street, NE; Washington, DC 20017.

1. "Conversion and Commitment to Christ." Provides basic help on following Christ and committing your life to him.
2. "In Touch with God's Word. How to Read the Bible." This new pamphlet helps you get familiar with the Bible and get more out of it as you read it.
3. *Let's Talk!* and *¡Hablemos!* These quarterly newsletters are available through your chaplain/volunteer, or you can get an individual copy in those prisons without chaplains/volunteers.
4. The Bible. Limited copies are available. Talk with your chaplain or write to us.
5. Prayer booklets, pamphlets and other resources. Check with your chaplain or write to us.

All of this material is made available through generous donors to Paulist Prison Ministries. Please pray for them.

A Daily Prayer for Justice and Mercy

*Jesus, united with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
give us your compassion for those in prison.*

Mend in mercy the broken in mind and memory.

Soften the hard of heart, the captives of anger.

Free the innocent; parole the trustworthy.

Awaken the repentance that restores hope.

May prisoners' families persevere in their love.

Jesus, heal the victims of crime. They live with the scars.

Lift to eternal peace those who die.

Grant victims' families the forgiveness that heals.

Give wisdom to lawmakers and to those who judge.

Instill prudence and patience in those who guard.

*Make those in prison ministry bearers of your light,
for all of us are in need of your mercy!*

Amen.

2016 Calendars

New 2016 calendars are available, also the booklet "Prayers for Addicted Persons and Their Loved Ones." And a bookmark. In English and Spanish, all from the National Catholic Council on Alcoholism and Related Drug Problems. To request this material, send your name and address to: **NCCA, 1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, MI 48360**



What is God's hope for you in this Year of Mercy?

God has great hopes for us. What is his hope for you? The photos below show the Baptism of two women in the Edna Mahon Correctional Facility in New Jersey on July 7, 2015. These women came to a point on their spiritual journey where they wanted to be baptized and receive the new life promised them by Jesus. New

life! That is what it is all about. Catholic chaplains and volunteers are ministers of God's grace. They will help you on your spiritual journey. Ask them to help you grow closer to Jesus in this Year of Mercy.



Baptism and Mass of Reception of Tianle Li and Julie Michaels into the Catholic Church on July 7, 2015. L to R: Msgr. Randy Vashon, Tianle Li, Barbara Fredericks (Tianle's sponsor), Julie Michaels, John Pezik (Julie's sponsor), Deacon Mike Meyer



The Rite of Baptism. "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." With these simple words, the two candidates are baptized into new life in Christ and become members of the Catholic Church.

Look to Jesus. He comes to save us from the lie that says no one can change.

Remarks of Pope Francis at the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility, Philadelphia, Pa. Sunday, September 27, 2015

Thank you for receiving me and giving me the opportunity to be here with you and to share this time in your lives. It is a difficult time, one full of struggles. I know it is a painful time not only for you, but also for your families and for all of society. Any society, any family, which cannot share or take seriously the pain of its children, and views that pain as something normal or to be expected, is a society “condemned” to remain a hostage to itself, prey to the very things which cause that pain. I am here as a pastor, but above all as a brother, to share your situation and to make it my own. I have come so that we can pray together and offer our God everything that causes us pain, but also everything that gives us hope, so that we can receive from him the power of the resurrection.



“All of us have something we need to be cleansed of, or purified from. May the knowledge of that fact inspire us to live in solidarity, to support one another and seek the best for others.”

Pope Francis

I think of the Gospel scene where Jesus washes the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. This was something his disciples found hard to accept. Even Peter refused, and told him: “You will never wash my feet” (Jn 13:8).

In those days, it was the custom to wash someone’s feet when they came to your home. That was how they welcomed people. The roads were not paved, they were covered with dust, and little stones would get stuck in your sandals. Everyone walked those roads, which left their feet dusty, bruised or cut from those stones. That is why we see Jesus washing feet, our feet, the feet of his disciples, then and now.

Life is a journey, along different roads, different paths, which leave their mark on us.

We know in faith that Jesus seeks us out. He wants to heal our wounds, to soothe our feet which hurt from travelling alone, to wash each of us clean of the dust from our journey. He doesn’t ask us where we have been, he doesn’t question us about what we have done. Rather, he tells us: “Unless I wash your feet, you have no share with me” (Jn 13:8). Unless I wash your feet, I will not be able to give you the life which the Father always dreamed of, the life for which he created you. Jesus comes to meet us, so that he can restore our dignity as children of God. He wants to help us to set out again, to resume our journey, to recover our hope, to restore our faith and trust. He wants us to keep walking along the paths of life, to realize that we have a mission, and that confinement is not the same thing as exclusion.

Life means “getting our feet dirty” from the dust-filled roads of life and history. All of us need to be cleansed, to be washed. All of us are being sought out by the Teacher, who wants to help us resume our journey.

The Lord goes in search of us; to all of us he stretches out a helping hand. It is painful when we see prison systems which are not concerned to care for wounds, to soothe pain, to offer new possibilities. It is painful when we see people who think that only others need to be cleansed, purified, and do not recognize that their weariness, pain and wounds are also the weariness, pain and wounds of society. The Lord tells us this clearly with a sign: he washes our feet so we can come back to the table. The table from which he wishes no one to be excluded. The table which is spread for all and to which all of us are invited.

This time in your life can only have one purpose: to give you a hand in getting back on the right road, to give you a hand to help you rejoin society. All of us are part of that effort, all of us are invited to encourage, help and enable your rehabilitation. A rehabilitation which everyone seeks and desires: inmates and their families, correctional authorities, social and educational programs. A rehabilitation which benefits and elevates the morale of the entire community.

Jesus invites us to share in his lot, his way of living and acting. He teaches us to see the world through his eyes. Eyes which are not scandalized by the dust picked up along the way, but want to cleanse, heal and restore. He asks us to create new opportunities: for inmates, for their families, for correctional authorities, and for society as a whole.

I encourage you to have this attitude with one another and with all those who in any way are part of this institution. May you make possible new opportunities, new journeys, new paths.

All of us have something we need to be cleansed of, or purified from. May the knowledge of that fact inspire us to live in solidarity, to support one another and seek the best for others.

Let us look to Jesus, who washes our feet. He is “the way, and the truth, and the life”. He comes to save us from the lie that says no one can change. He helps us to journey along the paths of life and fulfillment. May the power of his love and his resurrection always be a path leading you to new life.

It's mine, and I want more!

We have become pretty insensitive to greed. In our culture today, many people want more than they need and think that they deserve it. They may work hard for all they have. Some justify greed because they say it helps keep the economy going! More money, another car, a bigger house, a better vacation, more of everything—it all keeps the economy going!

This is nothing new. Greed has been around since the beginning of time. The negative effects of greed are so great that greed is considered a deadly sin! We will get to that shortly.

Greed among us. Greed got a big boost in the 1987 film *Wall Street* when the fictional character Gordon Gekko said, "Greed is good! Greed is right! Greed works! Greed will save the U.S.A.!" The quote in the movie is likely based on financier Ivan Boesky's famous words in a commencement address at Berkeley, California in 1986 when he actually declared: "Greed is all right. . . . Greed is healthy. You can feel greedy and still feel good about yourself."

Boesky himself became so enthusiastically greedy that it led to his conviction in the late 1980's for criminal activities, including illegal insider trading. As a result of a plea bargain he received a sentence of 3.5 years and a fine of \$100 million. He served his sentence at Lompoc Federal Prison Camp in California and has been permanently barred from working in financial securities.

What is greed? Greed is a desire for money and possessions so strong that we ruthlessly seek after things and think that other people and objects exist for our own pleasure. There is no real need for these things. Greed makes us want things for no rational purpose.

When we look at Scripture, we see that greed gets a big thumbs down. "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions" (Luke 12:13). And: "Put to death the parts of you that are earthly: . . . the greed that is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). The ancient Greek writers, such as Plato and Aristotle, saw greed as an unquenchable desire to have what is not ours but what belongs to others.

Clearly, we see that greed is not of the holy and it can become idolatry because of our undue focus on possessions and our desire for them. When this is the case,

greed can so scar a person's heart and mind that they lose their sense of reality and who they are before God and among other people.

So driving is the impulse toward greed that we can lose so much perspective that we commit criminal activities. Hopefully it will not be on such a grand scale as Ivan Boesky practiced, but his situation helps us see the point.

A deadly sin. From this, we can see why greed is a deadly sin. It so dulls our conscience that it makes us think only of ourselves and not of our call to love God and neighbor. We so turn in on ourselves and our desire for possessions that we lose our connection to God and others, the connection that gives us life and meaning.

All the deadly sins are ultimately like this in one way or another. They are about us. We become self-focused and selfish. In the Christian life, we are called to love God and neighbor. Jesus puts it clearly and simply: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31).

All sin that turns us from this calling is ultimately deadly.

Life through and in Christ. St. Paul yearned that we would know life in Christ. And he sought to understand what prevented this experience of life. As he wrote in his letter to the Romans, it might boil down to this: Life is in Christ; death is in sin (see Romans 5:17). Paul's words should inspire us as we seek to follow Jesus: "despite the increase of sin, grace has far surpassed it" (Romans 5:20). To put it another way: "grace is greater than sin."

As we end this series on the seven deadly sins, we should avoid the temptation to feel powerless in light of our own sin. Remember, by his cross and Resurrection Jesus has conquered sin and death. Grace is greater than sin. And in this Year of Mercy, let us trust that God wants us to know his life and love more deeply. God's mercy is greater than any sin. We can trust that.

The Seven Deadly Sins

Pride	Lust
Envy	Gluttony
Anger	Greed
Sloth	

~ Anthony Bosnick

Spiritual Resolutions in the Year of Mercy

(continued from page 2)

(If it is a general Christian fellowship, make sure that they aren't "Catholic bashers" out to tear you down.) When Jesus formed a body of followers known as his disciples, he was setting an example for us. It is important to be part of a community.

A community can provide fun and fellowship that encourages us and that supports us in hard times. Others in prison can be good people for you to talk with and grow with, and provide positive relationships. A community of believers is a place where we live out our faith, so our faith doesn't remain something just in our heads. It has to be in our hearts too, and participation in a community with other Christians challenges us to live out our faith.

Fourth, care for and serve others. This follows closely on number three above. Our faith isn't just about ourselves. It is about caring for and serving others as well. So look for ways you can care for others while incarcerated. Of course, be prudent and don't get entangled with people who will use and/or abuse you. That is why community is so important. When two or three are gathered together Christ is with you and you can better know when to be involved with another and when not to.

Act and respond to God. At the heart of these spiritual resolutions is a "personal encounter with Christ." All of these things help you to encounter Christ, and when that happens you will grow spiritually. So *act* and *respond* to God. And let God surprise you this year. Remember, "He never tires of throwing open the doors of his heart and repeats that he loves us and wants to share his love with us" (*The Face of Mercy*, n. 25).

Expect great things from God this year. May the Jubilee Year of Mercy be a time of special blessing for you on your journey!

Pray for our benefactors

Let's Talk! and its Spanish translation *¡Hablemos!* are supported by donations. They are given free of charge to prison chaplains for distribution to inmates by Paulist Prison Ministries. Please pray for our benefactors. To help support this ministry, please send your donation to the address on page 2 of this newsletter.