

Let's *Talk!*[®]

A Catholic Ministry to Prisoners



PNCEA Prison Ministries • 3031 Fourth St., NE • Washington, DC 20017

The Beautiful Will Save Us!

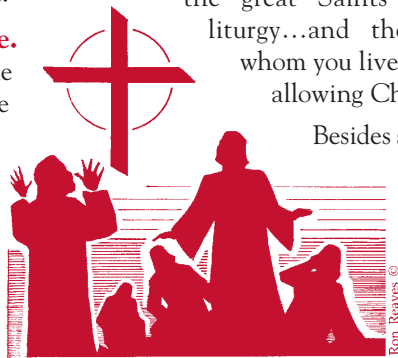
Dorothy Day (1897-1980) spent her life caring for the poor and vulnerable in New York, and elsewhere. She was the founder of the Catholic Worker movement, and was totally dedicated to Christ and his Church. She lived with the down and out. She knew poverty and ugliness. She often said, "The Beautiful will save us."

Jesus is the Beautiful One.

Dorothy Day was quoting the Russian writer Dostoyevsky. He was referring to the redeeming beauty of Christ. Jesus loves us, calls us to himself, forgives us, and gives us life. We experience his beauty even now as we open our hearts to him and follow him. When we experience Jesus' life—which gives us peace, joy and hope—our lives change and we see beauty.

In these last months of the year, we follow Jesus in the Sunday Gospel readings to Jerusalem where he died to save us. We celebrate him as Christ the King at the end of the Church year. Then we prepare during the four weeks of Advent to celebrate his birth at Christmas. To know Jesus and his beauty, we must know the truth of who Jesus is *in our heads*, but we also need to know him *in our hearts!*

Learn to see Jesus. Pope Benedict XVI taught, "Nothing can bring us into close contact with the beauty of Christ himself other than the world of beauty created by faith and light that shines out from the faces of the saints, through whom his own light becomes visible." These saints include the great Saints we celebrate in the liturgy...and the *faithful people* with whom you live in jail or prison who are allowing Christ to touch their lives.



Besides seeing Jesus in the saints, we see him too through the Eucharist and other sacraments, especially reconciliation. We see him through Scripture and through our prayer.

As we open our lives to Jesus, we begin to see the beauty that saves.

You don't need to be perfect first!

Pope Benedict tells us that as we respond to God's call to us, "it is not necessary to be already perfect." No, our weakness and sin do not stop us from following Jesus "as long as they help make us more aware of the fact that we are in need of the redeeming grace of Christ."

Let us daily walk with Jesus, open our hearts to him, and be saved by beauty.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Every day is another opportunity to follow Jesus, another chance to grow closer to him. The challenge we face is to not let the distractions of daily life cause us to lose sight of the goal. It's likely that your situation in jail or prison makes it hard to follow Jesus. The noise, anger, and distractions can derail any faith journey!

Find other Christians who have the same goal you do of following Jesus. Join with them and help one another to keep your "eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:2). Do what you can to support one another on your daily faith journey. As you do, you will experience in some way the peace, joy and hope we all want.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President, PNCEA

Q & A

Go and make disciples

Q. I never knew Catholics are supposed to evangelize. Is that true?

A. Yes, it is true! Catholics are called to share the Good News of Jesus Christ—that is, to evangelize! Unfortunately, many people think of evangelism in a negative way, like cornering people and asking them if they are "saved." If they can't say they have been, then you talk to them until they agree to "give their lives to Jesus." This is **not** the Catholic understanding of evangelism.

Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) called evangelism "the essential mission of the church" and said that the church "exists in order to evangelize" (*On Evangelization in the Modern World*, no. 14). This call is from Jesus himself, who told his followers, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). To help Catholics do this, the bishops of the United States in 1992 issued a plan for Catholic Evangelization called *Go and Make Disciples* (GMD).

GMD sets forth three goals that can help us understand what it means for Catholics to evangelize.

The first goal of GMD is that Catholics should have "such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others." Evangelization begins in our own lives. It calls for the continual deepening of our own faith. Without that, we cannot effectively share the Good News with others.

The second goal is that we are called "to invite all people...to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ." Notice *invite*. Catholics do not intimidate or browbeat people. Our hope is that they "join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith." Thus, we need to live and share our faith in an appealing way. Our call to share that faith with others is rooted in this.

(continued on page 2)

October 2009

- 1 St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, virgin, doctor
- 2 Guardian Angels
- 4 **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 7 Our Lady of the Rosary
- 11 **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 15 St. Teresa of Avila, virgin, doctor
- 17 St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop, martyr
- 18 **Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 19 Sts. John de Brebeuf, Isaac Jogues, and Companions, martyrs
- 25 **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28 Sts. Simon and Jude, Apostles

November 2009

- 1 All Saints
- 2 All Souls
- 4 St. Charles Borromeo, bishop
- 8 **Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 9 Dedication of the Lateran Basilica
- 10 St. Leo the Great, pope, doctor
- 11 St. Martin of Tours, bishop
- 12 St. Josaphat, doctor, martyr
- 13 St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, virgin
- 16 **Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 17 St. Elizabeth of Hungary, religious
- 21 Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 22 **Christ the King**
- 26 Thanksgiving Day in U.S.
- 29 **First Sunday in Advent**
- 30 St. Andrew, apostle

December 2009

- 3 St. Francis Xavier, priest
- 6 **Second Sunday of Advent**
- 7 St. Ambrose, bishop
- 8 **Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe
- 13 St. Lucy, virgin, martyr
- 14 **Third Sunday of Advent**
- 14 St. John of the Cross
- 20 **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
- 25 **Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)**
- 26 St. Stephen, first martyr
- 27 Holy Family



Let's Talk!®

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Q & A: Go and make disciples

(continued from page 1)

Finally, the third goal of GMD is that we are to “foster gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.” In other words, evangelization is not just about us. It is about changing our lives *and* changing the world around us. That change is to bring about the kingdom of God.

This is how Catholics fulfill Jesus’ words to “Go and make disciples.” This is what it means for Catholics to evangelize.



At Vatican II, and since, the Church is more often described by images used by Christ and the apostles to unfold the mystery of the Church. No one of those images in itself can fully reveal the mystery of the Church. But taken together they help us understand what the Church is more richly than do terms such as “Church Militant.”

One image favored by Vatican II is to see the Church as “the People of God” (1 Peter 2.9-10). The Church is a people called by Christ to build the kingdom of

Q. What is the “Church Militant”?

A. The “Church Militant” refers to all people of the Church here on earth living out their faith while on their earthly pilgrimage. It is but one part of the Church, the others being the “Church Triumphant” and the “Church Suffering.” The Church Triumphant is the Church in heaven, all those Saints who are now with God. The Church Suffering are all those who have died and are undergoing purification as they await the time when they stand before God in heaven.

At one time, these three terms were quite commonly used. They have been largely replaced in usage since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), also known as Vatican II. That is because these terms in reference to the Church are somewhat limited since they describe the Church according to the state of grace and sin of its members.

God in the world through the witness of their holiness (see 1 Corinthians 11:25; 1 Peter 1:23). They are called to holiness and share with Christ his priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices by right of baptism into Christ.

Other beautiful images of the Church from Vatican II you might want to think about are “Flock of Christ,” “Vineyard of God,” “Temple of the Holy Spirit,” and “Spouse of the Immaculate Lamb.” Also consider “House of God,” “Our Mother,” and “the Jerusalem from Above.” Here are some Scripture passages that will help you explore these images further: Matthew 21:33-43; John 10:1-10, 11; 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 4:26; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 12:17; 19:7; 21:1, 2, 3.

Let's Talk! responds to prisoners' questions about the Catholic faith. Send us your questions to the address on the front of this newsletter.

Prisoner Saint

St Eulalia of Mérida (d. 304) ✠ Born In Spain in the last decade of the third century, Eulalia of Mérida was likely named after St. Eulalia of Barcelona, another martyr saint of Spain. Not much is known of her, except that she was tortured and burned to death in 304 during a time of intense persecution. The 12-year old Eulalia was arrested and imprisoned and taken to a local judge. It is believed she argued with the judge for forcing Christians to worship false gods. At first he was amused and tried to flatter her in the hope she would leave things alone. When she didn't, she was brutally tortured, but never gave up her faith. She is one of the glories of the Catholic faith in Spain.

Feast Day: December 10

Growing in Prayer, Part 2

Spirituality for the Other 23 Hours a day...

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: So the spiritual life is this everyday life that we are living, right?

Me: There is no other life that you can live, is there?

Peaches: And we live this life in the Spirit of Jesus, right?

Me: If you're a Christian, that would be the plan.

Peaches: So that means you do what Jesus did. You treat other people around you as he did. Everything but the miracles, right?

Me: Yeah, most of us won't be performing any miracles but we could still multiply the loaves and fishes and heal the sick.

Peaches: I'm assuming you mean by working in a soup kitchen or being a doctor, right?

Me: Yes. We have to use ordinary, everyday ways of feeding the hungry or curing the sick instead of miracles. But the miracles certainly point to the things that Jesus felt were important.

Peaches: So, if we are living a spiritual life in the spirit of Jesus, we will think these things are important to be involved in too.

Me: Yes, mam. "Inclusive Service" is the part of the spiritual life that is most often left out in my experience.

Peaches: What do you mean "inclusive"?

Me: It's service that includes everyone not just us Catholics.

Peaches: Right, we don't serve others because *they* are Christian. We serve others because *we* are Christians.

Me: Like they say down at the Soup Kitchen, "The Soup is the Sermon."

Peaches: "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one"?

Me: That's a good one too!

Peaches: Is it just me? When I think of "spirituality," it's prayer, meditation, and stuff like that that comes to mind. I never think of service.

Me: I think that's pretty common and I blame us preachers for it. If we were preaching it more, the average person would be

making that connection. And when you look at the Gospels, service is what Jesus is doing the vast majority of the time! I mean, how is it that we keep overlooking that?!

Peaches: So, you're saying service is not optional?

Me: Is love optional for a Christian?

Peaches: No, of course not.

Me: So...?

Peaches: So, service isn't optional either.

Me: Why not?

Peaches: I guess because service is an active love.

Me: Is there such a thing as an "inactive" love?

Peaches: I guess not. Sounds silly when you say it that way.

Me: OK. So, let's put it together in order of importance. By what does Jesus say we will be judged in Matthew 25? Prayer? Meditation? Church? Sacraments?

Peaches: No, it's feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned—stuff like that.

Me: Stuff that is "active love" to use your term. And why is acting in love his "test" do you think?

Peaches: Well, I imagine that the service is sort of the fruit on the tree of spirituality. Meditation, prayer and sacraments are like the weeding, watering, and fertilizing of the tree of spirituality. If your tree has fruit then you must be OK in the weeding, fertilizing, and watering departments!

Me: Exactly what Jesus was saying! "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7:16). In Jesus' view, the test and proof of our spirituality is not what happens during our prayer time. It's the way we live the rest of the time. It is our loving service extended to all people that makes the kingdom that Jesus preached a reality instead of just another theory. Get it?

Peaches: Got it! No fruit – no farm!

Me: Maybe I should let you preach...

Deacon Dennis Dolan is chaplain at York Correctional Institution, Niantic, Conn. and is a member of the Diaconal Mission Service Team of the Diocese of Norwich.

Pope Benedict XVI's Prayer Requests for October/November/December

October

General. *Sunday Eucharist:* That Sundays may be lived as the day on which Christians gather to celebrate the Risen Lord in the table of the Eucharist.

Missionary. *Spirit of Mission:* That all the people of God, whom Christ has commanded to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, may diligently fulfill their missionary responsibility.

Pope Benedict XVI invites all people to join him in praying for these intentions.

November

General. *Care of Creation:* That all people of good will, especially those who make political and economic policies, may commit themselves to care for all creation.

Missionary. *Peace of God:* That believers of every religion may witness through their lives and through dialogue that the Name of God brings peace.

December

General. *Children:* That children may be respected, loved, and never exploited.

Missionary. *Christ, Light of the World:* That during Christmas the peoples of the earth may recognize the Incarnate Word as the light that illuminates every person, and that every nation may open its doors to Christ, the Savior of the world.

Lectio Divina, Part 2

Take time to read the word prayerfully

In our busy world, we tend to want to hurry up and get done so we can move on to something else. Even when we feel inclined to read the Bible, we can rush through it so quickly that we can't really remember what we've read.

In this series of articles, we are considering *lectio divina*, an ancient form of prayer perfect for us today. We will review briefly in case you didn't see Part 1 of this series, and to refresh our memories. The two words *lectio divina* are Latin for "divine word" or "divine reading." It is the practice of meditating and praying with the divine word of Scripture. *Lectio divina* is a true grace for all people because it helps people hear from God and experience God's direction for their lives and his love in a very real way.

If that is something you want in your life, then consider *lectio divina* as a spiritual practice for your life.

Pray alone or with others? In Part 1 of this series, we wrote that *lectio divina* involves four steps or movements. First, we listen to or read a biblical text. Second, we meditate on or reflect on the text. Third, we pray with the text to see what deeper meaning God reveals. Fourth, we open ourselves to God to contemplate deeply on what God speaks to us.

For most of us, we will be reading the biblical text ourselves rather than listening to it being read. Generally we will be practicing *lectio divina* alone, although it can be and is done by some in a small group. (Traditionally it was done in a group. And practicing it in a group can be very rewarding as we benefit from the insights and learnings of the other group members.) With lots going on around us and with many different schedules, however, it is sometimes easier to do this alone if we are going to do it at all!

Select and read the biblical text. You have many options to choose from. But remember, this is not a Bible study or a time to read through several chapters of scripture. You can set aside another time to do that.

You will want to focus on perhaps 5 to 15 verses, depending on the length of the verses. After you try *lectio divina* a few times, you will instinctively know how much to read.

- **First**, when you choose the text to read, you may find it helpful to follow the readings used at Sunday Mass, particularly the Gospel reading. These are already a good length so that most are not too short or too long. Reading passages used at Mass will give you a good introduction to the Old Testament as well as to the letters and Gospels in the New Testament.
- **Second**, the key here is to read *slowly* and *attentively*. Read the passage and perhaps read it a second time, especially if you feel distracted. Does a particular verse strike you? Or a phrase? Or even a word? Jot down that verse, or phrase, or word. You will return to it and it will become the focus of your prayer. You can spend ten or more minutes reading the passage before moving on to the next steps.

Don't become discouraged. Practicing *lectio divina* means setting aside a time and place for it, perhaps once a week. It may mean asking some of your Christian friends to help you find a time and place somewhat free of distractions. You will likely find that it is worth the effort as the fruit of *lectio divina* is great and rewarding. We grow in recognizing God's tender mercies toward us, to God's presence with us. We sense a direction for our lives, a meaning for us even now.

Questions for Prayer and Discussion

1. Do you think you are ready to try *lectio divina*? Why or why not?
2. Which do you think will work best for you, trying this alone or with others?
3. Do you see ways you can find a time and place for *lectio divina* in your daily routine—once a week, if not more?

~ Anthony Bosnick

Help with addictions

Every day is an opportunity to grow into the type of person we want to be. We are all on a pilgrimage in this life. We can use each day wisely and take a step toward our goal. Or we can sit and let time pass us by. God gives us the grace to take that step forward. Our challenge is to accept the grace as freely as God gives it.

While on their walk through life, many people struggle with addictions of different sorts. If that is your burden, the National Catholic Council on Alcoholism and Related Drug Problems (NCCA) offers you help. Their approach is spiritual, which you can add to support your personal efforts and any programs you may be attending.

Write to them for their booklet "Prayers for Addicted Persons and Their Loved Ones," their "Serenity Prayer Bookmarks," and their 2010 calendar. All material is available in English and Spanish. Their mailing address is: NCCA, 1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, MI 48360. You can also contact them by email at ncca@guesthouse.org or by toll free telephone at 800-626-6910, ext 200.

Take advantage of this free offer. You'll be glad you did.

Letter from Prison

Our Letter from Prison column will continue in our next newsletter. Do you have a story of God working in your life you would like to share with others? Send us your witness of 350 words or less. Please send it to *Let's Talk!*; PNCEA; 3031 Fourth Street, NE; Washington, DC 20017.

Please include a note from your chaplain stating you are in good standing at the prison. To protect your privacy, we do not print your name or prison, but do give your location by state. We are not able to pay for your submissions.

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