



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY  
TO PRISONERS

# Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES



3031 FOURTH STREET, NE ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20017

Vol. 19, No. 4 – October/November/December 2012

## Time for giving gifts

**M**any people think about giving gifts this time of year before Christmas... and about receiving them. But being in jail or prison limits what you can do about gifts. Let's take a look at Scripture to see what you might do about gift giving.

**Gift-givers in Scripture.** Probably the most famous gift-givers we recall in Scripture are the three magi. They gave great material gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12). How about Mary? She gave her very self to be used by God to bring his Son Jesus into the world (Luke 1:26-38). Remember the Good Samaritan. He gave from his heart and purse so that the injured stranger would be cared for (Luke 10:29-37). And how about the young boy who gave five barley loaves and two fish which Jesus used to feed the multitude (John 6:9-13)?

All kinds of people. All kinds of gifts.

Perhaps what these gift-givers had in common is that they gave something of value to themselves for the blessing of others.

**Give of yourself.** So you are in prison...what can you give? You likely can't give material gifts, but take a cue from these examples from Scripture and think of the ways you can give of yourself to others as your gift.

Give of your talents. Can you read? Help someone learn to read. Is there someone lonely and downcast? Speak an encouraging word. Know how to use computers? Teach someone else. Is someone looking to learn about the Catholic faith? Share your faith with others. Is someone always picked on? Speak a word of kindness or give a measure of protection to the weak.



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Have an extra magazine? Share it with others. Do you have a bit of extra food? Maybe someone could use it. Is the place a mess? Clean up after yourself. What else can you think of?

**Make your life a gift.** The point is to make your life a gift to others. A gift doesn't have to be something bought in a store. It can come from your very self, from your own heart. Does this seem too hard...too different? It may be, this is a special time in your life when you are challenged to change your life. And this is one way to do it, and to make your life in small ways and even in big ways a gift to others.

If you do this, you will truly live out the spirit of gift-giving in the best way possible.

### Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Most of us are surprised, when we look back, to see how quickly time goes. If we don't live with a purpose, we will find that we are wasting our lives.

Now is a special time in your life when you are fulfilling the requirements of a sentence. Use this time to the best for yourself (and your family) so that you can become the person you and those who know you want you to be.

Each day is a chance to change for the better. With this desire to change, over time we will see that we are changing and have changed. This is the work of God in us, working through our efforts. Let God touch your life and let his grace change you. It will be a great and pleasant surprise to see what comes about!

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP  
President, PEM

## Prayer. It's like talking to a friend.

### Part 2: Thanksgiving and Supplication

By Fr. William Brailsford

**W**e all need a basic plan on how to pray. Even the disciples asked Jesus how they should pray and he gave them a simple format which we know as the Lord's Prayer or the Our Father.

**A conversation with God.** Prayer is, simply put, a conversation with God. It is a special way to connect, and it should not be a stiff or formal thing. It's like talking with a friend. Prayer is a way we show our love to God. It is a proof of his love for us.

As we mentioned in Part 1 of this short two-part series on prayer, a problem we often face in prayer is that we make it too complicated. You can keep prayer simple by remembering the book of Acts in the New Testament. As you spell out the word itself, you unlock the secret to a good, solid prayer life: **ACTS**.

**A** stands for Adoration.

**C** is for Confession.

**T** takes us to Thanksgiving.

**S** is simply for Supplication (Petitioning).

In our first article, we conquered adoration and confession! Now comes the joyous act of Thanksgiving and Supplication (Petitioning). We have offered suitable praise to God in adoration, and we have repented of our sins in confession. Now in our time of prayer we thank God for all the incredible things he has done for us.

*continued on page 2*

## CHURCH CALENDAR

### OCTOBER 2012

- 1 St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, virgin, doctor
- 2 Guardian Angels
- 4 St. Francis of Assisi, religious
- 7 **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 14 **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 15 St. Teresa of Avila, virgin, doctor
- 17 St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop, martyr
- 18 St. Luke, Evangelist
- 19 Sts. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests and martyrs, and companions, martyrs
- 21 **Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28 **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

### NOVEMBER 2012

- 1 All Saints
- 2 All Souls
- 4 **Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 9 **Dedication of the Lateran Basilica**
- 10 St. Leo the Great, pope, doctor
- 11 **Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 12 St. Josaphat, doctor, martyr
- 13 St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, virgin
- 17 St. Elizabeth of Hungary, religious
- 18 **Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 21 Presentation of Mary
- 22 St. Cecilia, virgin, martyr
- 22 Thanksgiving Day in U.S.
- 24 St. Andrew Dung-Lac, priest and martyr, and companions, martyrs
- 25 **Christ the King**
- 30 **St. Andrew, Apostle**

### DECEMBER 2012

- 2 **First Sunday in Advent**
- 3 St. Francis Xavier, priest
- 7 St. Ambrose, bishop, doctor
- 8 **Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 9 **Second Sunday of Advent**
- 12 **Our Lady of Guadalupe**
- 13 St. Lucy, virgin, martyr
- 14 St. John of the Cross, priest, doctor
- 16 **Third Sunday of Advent**
- 23 **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
- 25 **Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)**
- 26 St. Stephen, first martyr
- 27 **St. John, apostle, evangelist**
- 28 Holy Innocents, martyr
- 30 **Holy Family**

## Let's Talk!

PEM President: **Rev. Frank DeSiano, CSP**  
 Editor: **Mr. Anthony Bosnick**  
 Layout Editor: **Mrs. Joann Sullivan**  
 Art: **Mr. Ron Reaves**



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### Combined Federal Campaign #11877

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Thank you for your help.

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## Prayer. It's like talking to a friend.

*continued from page 1*

**Thanksgiving.** We thank God for both our successes and failures. We thank him for both our joys and trials. We thank him for creating us in his own image and giving us the heart, mind and soul to follow him in both good times and bad. We acknowledge that everything comes from him. This part of our prayer is a spiritual thank you card.

Mention thanksgiving and our thoughts turn, of course, to the holiday by that name. But it is quite appropriate when it comes to prayer. When the Pilgrim Fathers came to America, it was no easy task. In fact, it was pretty hard.



They came over in small boats in a journey that took about two months. At times, the weather was hazardous; the sea could often be violent. They lived together in cramped quarters, with rationed food. Some died on the journey. Some wished that they had never set sail.

When they came ashore in New England they had no friends waiting for them and no place to lay their weary bodies. There was no food in store for them. But they were on a specific mission to honor God. Their first act when they arrived was to get on their knees in thanksgiving to God who saw them safely through the past difficult times.

When they started out on their pilgrimage, they began with adoration. During the hard times at sea, confession was always on their lips and in their hearts. Now, thanksgiving was the order of the day. Their new life in the new world was about to begin, and they needed help. Rightfully they came to a time of supplication, the last pillar in our foundation of prayer.

**Supplication or Petitioning.** Supplication is the fancy word for petitioning, or pleading, with God to ask for his help. We must be primed before entering into this

special part of our prayer time. Our hearts must be lifted up, our souls cleansed, and our rejoicing complete. It is now, and only now, that we ask God to supply our needs and fulfill our desires.

We have to avoid the temptation to approach our sacred time of prayer like greedy children waiting in line to sit on Santa's lap. Rather we ask, as we do every time we say the Our Father, that his will be done for us.

Yes, it is true that prayer changes things. Most important of all is that it changes us! We ask God for help. We ask for his healing touch. We beg him to show us his loving and kind heart. We plead for his sacred embrace.

**Prayer puts first things first.** Adoration. Confession. Thanksgiving. Supplication. We offer you our hearts, Lord, promptly and sincerely. Prayer is not about getting out of a mess, but of putting first things first.

It is fine and good to pray other, formal prayers that we might have memorized or find in prayer books. The Our Father and Hail Mary are two examples of wonderful prayers.

Keep in mind that prayer is to open our hearts and souls to God. It is a conversation with God. Remember that when you say these prayers, to let God speak to you as you speak to him. Prayer is not a one-way street, but a conversation.

The proper approach to prayer brings proper prayer about. And in the end, we are fortified and filled with an understanding heart so that we can say with confidence as St. Paul did: "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

*Fr. William Brailsford is director of the Missions Office of the Archdiocese of Washington, where he has also served as a parish priest.*

## Prisoner Saint

**St. Cecilia (d. c. 176 to 180)** + Like many saints of the earliest days of the Church, it is hard to pinpoint the events of the life and martyrdom of St. Cecilia. But the fact that she is honored (along with just seven women) in the Mass and that a church was built in her honor, indicates to many that there is much merit to her life, death and martyrdom. During a time of persecution in the early Church, her husband and his brother were arrested, followed by Cecilia. She was a woman of deep faith who did not abandon it in the face of persecution and great pain. It is said that a song was on her lips as she lay dying, and is thus the patroness of musicians.

**Feast Day: November 22**

## Pope Benedict XVI's Prayer Requests

for October/November/December

### OCTOBER

**General.** *New Evangelization:* That the New Evangelization may progress in the oldest Christian countries.

**Missionary.** *World Mission Day:* That the celebration of World Mission Day may result in a renewed commitment to evangelization.

### NOVEMBER

**General.** *Ministers of the Gospel:* That bishops, priests, and all ministers of the Gospel may bear the courageous witness of fidelity to the crucified and risen Lord.

**Missionary.** *Pilgrim Church:* That the pilgrim Church on earth may shine as a light to the nations.

### DECEMBER

**General.** *Migrants:* That migrants throughout the world may be welcomed with generosity and authentic love, especially by Christian communities.

**Missionary.** *Christ light for all humanity:* That Christ may reveal himself to all humanity with the light that shines forth from Bethlehem and is reflected in the face of his Church.

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

## Talking about Religion, Part 2

# Don't Embarrass the Pope

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

**Peaches:** OK, so before I give you Karen's "latest," what's with all this talk about "dialogue"? You're wearing that word out!

**Me:** Vatican II. It was a major concept that emerged in many of the Council documents.

**Peaches:** I don't get the big deal.

**Me:** Dialogue is two people, talking back and forth, respecting each other, listening carefully, learning from each other.

**Peaches:** As opposed to...?

**Me:** Preaching at. Confronting. Talking down to. Not respecting. She disrespects you. Then you disrespect her. You don't like it. She doesn't like it and—here's the craziest part!—you both claim Jesus approves of what you're doing!

**Peaches:** Yeah, two wrongs don't make a right, huh?

**Me:** OK, enough about the insanity, let's do some "gospel," shall we?

**Peaches:** OK. I'm there...dialogue...respect...peace... Let me have it, Deacon!

**Me:** What's the question?

**Peaches:** Like how do I even talk to her? Nothing I say seems to get through.

**Me:** First, since she is a fundamentalist Christian, you will have to offer her specific texts from scripture.

**Peaches:** Yeah, she won't listen to anything else.

**Me:** Well, some people will and with them you can help them with science, history and so on but in this case it will be mostly from the Bible. So the good news is that from this dialogue you are going to learn your Bible much better! That's one of the benefits of dialoguing with other religions, you grow in your own religion.

**Peaches:** OK. Let's get specific. She's always on me about the Rosary. She says Jesus said no repetitious prayer.

**Me:** OK. Ask her how often she says the Our Father. If it's more than once, that's repetitious.

**Peaches:** She'll just say that she doesn't say it more than once at a time.

**Me:** Ask her to show you the scriptural time limit.

**Peaches:** There is none, right?

**Me:** Correct. Of course, if you want to see repetition in a prayer—which Jesus would've prayed as a good Jew—check out Psalm 136! You could also ask her to explain why Jesus says the tax collector in Luke's Gospel (18:10-14) was justified by his repetitious prayer. There is also the story of the widow who hounds the judge (Luke 18:2-8) and the friend who won't stop banging at the door until his friend gives him something for his guest (Luke 11:5-9).

So you could actually make a case that Jesus recommends repetitious prayer since he is holding up the widow and the nagging friend and the tax collector as examples for us to imitate in prayer. Not to mention Jesus himself engages in repetitious prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39-44) by asking the Father several times to take the cup away from him.

**Peaches:** Then why did Jesus say not to babble on as the pagans do (Matthew 6:7)?

**Me:** Jesus is condemning a form of repetition that pagans employed as a *magical* sort of way to *force* their gods to give them what they prayed for. Basically, Jesus is saying that there is no magic in prayer or forcing God's hand to give us what we ask for.

**Peaches:** Wow! That's a lot of scripture compared to her single verse.

**Me:** And that's another thing. We have to always look over the whole of scripture to answer questions. That's where we often go wrong.

**Peaches:** Cool beans!

**Me:** Make sure those beans stay "cool" too, Missy! Make sure that you share these scriptural verses respectfully and listen to her in a "dialogue." Let's not have you two acting like a couple of politicians playing "got cha!" here.

**Peaches:** Got it. Let's not embarrass Jesus.

**Me:** Vatican II!

**Peaches:** Right! Dialogue! Don't embarrass the Pope, either!

*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.*

Living the Good Life, Part 2

## Make good habits, break bad habits

If there is anything that can make or break living the good life, or better put—*living life well*, it is the habits we form. We all have good habits and bad habits—hopefully more good ones than bad ones. If you are like most people, you struggle with enough bad habits to make living life well a challenge.

In this series of articles we are considering what it means to live well. We are doing that through the time-honored way of the moral virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Why? Because they are paths to living life well. And when we live well, we are happier. And happiness is something all people want.

**Habits—good and bad.** How well we live the virtues in our lives depends in good part on whether or not we have developed good habits that influence our daily lives. There is an interesting reality here regarding habits. In many ways, it is easier to build good habits than it is to try to overcome or break bad ones. As we find how good the virtues help to make our lives, we want that. And as we want the good habits, we gradually turn from the bad ones. In some cases, they gradually fade away. Rather than trying to kill stubborn bad habits off, they sometimes die a natural death.

We need to be open to virtue in our lives, to really want it. Let's look at just two areas of our lives. **First**, Christians recognize that openness to God and his life in us can set the stage for us to grow in virtue. So growing in virtue often occurs as we grow spiritually. **Second**, growing in virtue may mean we have to overcome addictions to drugs, alcohol and/or disordered sexuality and the hold they may have on us. Let's look briefly at these areas in turn.

**Establish a good spiritual discipline for your life.** A good spiritual discipline consists of several parts. (For more detail on the four points below, ask your chaplain or write us for a copy of the Paulist Prison Ministries pamphlet "Conversion and Commitment to Christ.")

~ **First, the Word of God.** Read Scripture. Listen to Scripture being read. Mass is an important time to hear the Word proclaimed. Listen to it and try to pick up something you can remember afterward to guide you. It is also good to develop a daily habit of reading the Bible.

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

~ **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. When Jesus formed a body of followers known as his disciples, he was setting an example for us. A community can provide fun and fellowship that encourages us, and that supports us in hard times.

~ **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 do that while in prison or jail. Of course, be prudent and don't get entangled with people who will abuse you. That is why community is so important.

**Overcoming Addictions.** Many people are burdened by addictions of various types. If your prison has a program to help overcome addictions, see if you can get into it. Take it seriously, and ask God for the grace to overcome. In addition, note in this issue the offer from the **National Catholic Council on Addictions** for their free material on addictions that you can use alone or with other programs. Write to them and ask for that material.

In the coming articles in this series, we will look at the four moral virtues and related topics. You can be sure that as you develop good habits and seek to grow in virtue, you will experience more and more what it means to live the good life—to live life well. It is something to strive for!

~ Anthony Bosnick

## Keep in mind...

Help with addictions

Every day is an opportunity to grow into the type of person we want to be. We can use each day wisely and take a step toward our goal. Or we can 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 Addictions (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 2013 calendar (available in November 2012). All material is available in English, and some in Spanish. Indicate the language you need. Their mailing address is: NCCA, 1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, MI 48360. You can also contact them by email at [ncca@guesthouse.org](mailto: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

We hope to publish a short booklet on prayer, using the article in this issue and the previous issue. We would like to include short letters from prisoners about the importance of prayer in their lives—how it helps you, how it strengthens you, how it gives you hope and courage. Do you have a story of God working in your life through your prayer that you would like to share with others? Keep it to 250 words or less. Please send it to *Let's Talk!*; Paulist Prison Ministries; 3031 Fourth Street, NE; Washington, DC 20017.

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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