



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES



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Expect the Holy Spirit “like the dewfall”

What's it like when the Holy Spirit comes to us? If you listen carefully when Eucharistic Prayer II is prayed by the priest at Mass, you will hear a beautiful image of how the Holy Spirit works: “make holy these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit on them *like the dewfall*.”

Like the dewfall. In many areas of the country where the climate and conditions are right, when you wake in the morning dew covers the ground. It comes silently in the night when the humid air of the day cools and forms dew at night on grass and fields, flowers and trees. The dewfall is so gradual and silent, you don't see it happening. But you see it when the tiny drops of water leave everything they touch moist. Walk through it in shoes or bare feet, and you will know it's there!

This image of the Holy Spirit coming in such a gentle way is something to reflect on

as we celebrate Pentecost, this year on Sunday, May 24.

The gentle work of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, it is true that the Spirit can come like a “strong, driving wind” (Acts 2:2), as at the first Pentecost. But our experience is more often that God comes to us not in storm, or earthquake, or fire, but in “a tiny whispering sound” (1 Kings 19: 11-12), as when he spoke to the prophet Elijah.

God works gently in us as we turn to him in prayer, and sincerely desire to follow him. We will not change overnight and at times will probably wonder if we will ever change. After all, we have many bad habits working against us. But God loves us and wants as his own, and never stops calling us to himself.



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God speaks to your heart. And he gently touches your life. After a time of friendship with Jesus, you will notice that the Holy Spirit has come quietly, gently and gradually into your life. He is teaching you, comforting you and bringing you deeper life. With pleasant surprise, you will notice that something is different in your life. You may have deeper hope, a new sense of joy, a healing, an experience of the fruit of the Spirit (“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”—Galatians 5:22-23).

In whatever ways the Spirit works in your life, you will likely see something new and refreshing. This is the promise of the God who loves you. Walk with Jesus daily and expect the dewfall. It is your gift from our loving God.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Easter joy and new life. Renewal in the Holy Spirit. We celebrate these realities of our faith in the coming weeks. How true it is that when Jesus calls us to follow him, he gives us all that we need to follow.

Pope Francis reminds us: “Jesus does not force you to be a Christian. But if you say you are a Christian, you must believe that Jesus has all power—and is the only one who has the power—to renew the world, to renew your life, to renew your family, to renew the community, to renew all things” (Homily, February 18, 2012).

Let us follow. Let us be renewed. There is healing, hope and joy for all who accept the invitation. Be ready for some great blessings.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Q&A

Talk with Jesus and listen to him

Q. You write in Let's Talk! that we should talk with Jesus and listen to him. What do you mean?

A. Talking and listening. These are things we commonly do each day, throughout the day, especially with people we like. With people we don't particularly care for, we do it less or not at all. But it is pretty much part of the human experience. And the more we do it, the better we often feel because it draws us to others and helps build friendships. At least that is the ideal.

So too with Jesus. Jesus is with us and he knows what we go through because he has already lived it. He knows the human experience—our experience. Jesus shared our “flesh and blood.” He became like us in every way but sin “so that he might be a merciful and high priest in every way” on our behalf (see Hebrews 2:14-18). So we need to get to know him. We need to have a relationship of friendship with him.

Talk with Jesus about your joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties. Pope Francis recently said, “I tell Jesus what comes to my mind” (Homily, February 3, 2015). Jesus wants to know what challenges you so he can intercede for you before the Father in heaven. We often have this strange idea that Jesus is out to get us. Well, he is in a way—to get us life on this earth and into heaven. But he is not out to make life miserable for us.

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CHURCH CALENDAR

APRIL 2015

- 2 Holy Thursday
- 3 Good Friday
- 4 Holy Saturday
- 5 Easter Sunday
- 12 Second Sunday of Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy)
- 19 Third Sunday of Easter
- 25 St. Mark, apostle
- 26 Fourth Sunday of Easter
- 29 St. Catherine of Siena, virgin and doctor

MAY 2015

- 1 St. Joseph the Worker
- 2 St. Athanasius, bishop and doctor
- 3 Fifth Sunday of Easter
- 10 Sixth Sunday of Easter
- 14 Ascension (in many places celebrated May 17)
- 17 Seventh Sunday of Easter (or Ascension if not celebrated May 14)
- 24 Pentecost
- 26 St. Philip Neri, priest
- 31 Most Holy Trinity

JUNE 2015

- 1 St. Justin, martyr
- 3 St. Charles Lwanga and companions, martyrs
- 5 St. Boniface, bishop and martyr
- 7 Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)
- 11 St. Barnabas, apostle
- 12 Sacred Heart of Jesus
- 14 Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 21 Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 24 Birth of John the Baptist
- 28 Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 29 Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles

Q&A Talk with Jesus and listen to him

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Listen to Jesus as he speaks a word to you through Scripture, especially the Gospels. Through that we will hear the Word of God speak to us. Pope Francis recently recommended once again that we read the Bible each day. "Today, for example, look for 10 minutes – 15, no more – read the Gospel, imagine and say something to Jesus. Nothing more; and in that way your knowledge of Jesus will grow greater and your hope will grow. Do not forget to have your gaze fixed on Jesus" (Homily, February 3, 2015).



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Let's do it!

Q. Father's Day is coming up soon and it just reminds me of what a lousy job I've done with my family. What can I do to help my kids want me to be in their lives?

A. Father's Day (this year June 21) and Mother's Day (May 10) can be hard, especially when we realize we haven't done right by our kids. In some ways, it is a good start to know that we have to repair the damage we have done. In this we also need to remember that grace is stronger than sin and can overcome even the greatest darkness (see Romans 5:20). This is the truth and it is our hope.

The first thing we need to do is pray every day for our kids, that they become everything that God wants them to be. Then we should pray that all the damage we have done in the relationships will be healed.

If they come to visit, make the visit about them. Show them your interest in them. Don't be super-spiritual. It won't ring true with them. Then do all you can to become a better you. (See Deacon Dolan's column on page 3.) Let them see change in you. It will take time, but hopefully the damage done will be overcome and healing will take place. Remember that grace is powerful and can overcome all things.

Q. What does the Catholic Church teach about the death penalty?

A. Over time, the Church's view of the death penalty has changed. Until recently, it was widely accepted by the Church, but St. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *The Gospel of Life* (1995) advanced the view that the death penalty should be rarely used, if at all. In countries (like the United States) where prisons are secure and it is unlikely that a person who has taken another's life will escape, then other remedies are better, such as life in prison (see *The Gospel of Life*, n. 27).

Pope John Paul II taught this recognizing that human life has a God-given dignity and value that must be protected. This is the case with all people, even those who have committed crimes. They must be given the opportunity to repent for their sin and to grow in the grace of God, becoming all God wants of them. With God "all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

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Let's Talk!

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Thank you for your help.

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Prisoner Saint

Bl. Franz Jägerstätter (1907 - 1943) + Franz was an Austrian farmer and peasant who suffered martyrdom at the hands of the Nazis during World War II. As a young man, he worked hard on the farm and in the mines, like many other young Austrians in the countryside. Neighbors saw him as somewhat wild and he fathered an out-of-wedlock daughter in 1933. Franz later married another woman who inspired him to deep faith. Together they had three daughters. By 1940, Franz concluded it was a serious sin to participate in the Nazi war effort. Twice his call to military duty was postponed until 1943. When called again, he refused to fight and was imprisoned. Franz was found guilty of treason and was beheaded by guillotine in August 1943. He was beatified in 2007.

Feast Day: May 21

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for April/May/June

APRIL

Universal. *Creation:*

That people may learn to respect creation and care for it as a gift of God.

Evangelization.

Persecuted Christians:

That persecuted Christians may feel the consoling presence of the Risen Lord and the solidarity of all the Church.

MAY

Universal. *Care for the*

Suffering: That, rejecting the culture of indifference, we may care for our neighbors who suffer, especially the sick and the poor.

Evangelization.

Openness to Mission:

That Mary's intercession may help Christians in secularized cultures be open to proclaiming Jesus.

JUNE

Universal. *Immigrants*

and Refugees: That immigrants and refugees may find welcome and respect in the countries to which they come.

Evangelization.

Vocations: That the personal encounter with Jesus may arouse in many young people the desire to offer their own lives in priesthood or consecrated life.

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

Building a Better Me

Peaches 2.0

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: OK, Deke. The Ladies and I have been talking about that thing that Pope Francis is doing in Rome that you mentioned in your homily.

Me: The Synod on the Family?

Peaches: Right. We thought we could have our own Synod meeting.

Me: Sure. What do you guys have in mind?

Mary: I just thought we could have a special program. We could divide the whole thing up into present and future ways to make our families stronger.

Me: Sounds great!

Mary: The first idea is that we cannot fix or change others. This is all about what WE can do.

Peaches: "Peaches 2.0"!

Mary: For instance, we can make our incarceration easier on our loved ones.

Me: Interesting. How?

Peaches: That was my area. I came up with not running up their phone bill, writing more letters and sending cards, remembering birthdays and like that.

Mary: Peaches' best idea was that we make visits more about the visitor than us! You know, don't be a problem and don't dump all our frustration with this place on them. Make it a nice visit about them!

Me: I like it! But that will take discipline on your part. This place frustrates me and I get to go home every night!

Peaches: We're thinking of a buddy system where you get together and unload on your buddy just before your visit!

Me: That's very creative!

Mary: The rest of the topics are about building a better ME.

Like, what can we do now to prepare us for when we get home?

Peaches: Yeah, the same old *me* coming home is not going to make my family stronger!

Me: Give me a taste.

Peaches: Well first, the basics. Since about 90% of us have alcohol and or drug issues, we need to address that first and seriously!

Me: True. Everything else you do goes out the window if you lose your sobriety.

Mary: I think it would be helpful if we could get everyone to realize that taking this kind of action while we're in here is how we can love our family now.

Peaches: So, we were thinking of maybe some presentations of the available programs like 12 Steps and Therapeutic Drug Community Programs.

Mary: Also, Grief and Loss, and Anger Management programs that deal with the other non-drug and alcohol traumas.

Me: Good idea. If we don't deal with our "stuff" our "stuff" WILL deal with us and our families!

Peaches: Of course, we would include presentations on the Educational Programs here: G.E.D., Parenting and vocational classes. They all make us better family members when we are released.

Mary: I don't think a lot of people understand that the big plus of being here is that we have the time to work on all of this stuff.

Peaches: Even if we get out and everything goes well, this stuff that we don't deal with will wreck everything we're trying to do!

Mary: Maybe we could get some speakers who are on parole to talk to us.

Peaches: Also, the Library could present some of the resources for these areas that we can use on our own.

Mary: Deke, do you think you could get the Chaplains in on this?

Me: Sure. I'll ask them. I think we could do something with the practices of forgiveness and watchfulness that would fit.

Mary: All I know is that anything would be an improvement for my family!

Me: Well, it's all relative but there are no perfect families for sure.

Peaches: The way I figure it is that God made families because if he didn't some people would have no one to love them!

Me: Could you not be looking directly at me when you say that?!

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.

The Seven Deadly Sins, Part 5

Sloth is the worst of the deadly sins

If you're feeling down a lot, unhappy with life, discontented, this can likely be traced to the impact of "sloth," the deadly sin also known as "spiritual apathy." Most people face spiritual apathy at some time or another. We come to a point where we just don't care much about what happens in our spiritual lives. So we don't bother to follow through on spiritual practices that give us life. In the process, we close ourselves off to God. No wonder sloth is considered the worst of the seven deadly sins.

Because of the circumstance of life in prison or jail, spiritual apathy can be a special challenge to you. But it doesn't happen only to people in prison or jail. It happens to people on the outside as well. It is truly a danger to us because we cut ourselves off from God. Of course, sometimes we are dealing with clinical depression and not sloth, and we need professional help when this is the case.

The Seven Deadly Sins

Pride Lust
Envy Gluttony
Anger Greed
Sloth

A sin of the spirit in us. "Sloth" is traced to the Latin *acedia*. Sloth is popularly understood to be a habitual lack of desire to exert ourselves, a tendency to accept idleness or to fall to laziness. As bad as this is to us physically and mentally, sloth is much more than physical and mental laziness. As a deadly sin, sloth is something of the spirit, something which attacks our relationship with God.

Of course, it may make itself known as mental and physical laziness, where we aren't interested in much going on around us.

Indifference and boredom become part of our daily experience. That is bad enough, and pretty deadly in itself. *But even more so, sloth is a spiritual laziness that deadens the spirit.* We feel worthless, hopeless, and a deep sadness. That is because we do not desire or do what truly gives us life. We do not desire God nor turn to him in the Sacraments, in prayer, in reading Scripture, though that builds us up and makes us better. *We cut ourselves off from the source of spiritual life.*

Why is sloth deadly? In the first place, we separate ourselves from God, the only One who can give us true life. From there, it is all downhill. Jesus promised us: "I came that they might have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). He said too, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me: (John 14:6).

Those who bank on these words find them to be true. Do you have a hard time accepting them? Follow this advice: "I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). When we embrace the truth in faith, we find our faith deepens.

Beyond sloth to a joy-filled life. Overcoming sloth begins with loving God and neighbor. As we turn to God and love him, we experience joy. The great saint, Thomas Aquinas, tells us the reason for this: Love causes joy because the Beloved, Jesus, is present to us and we are present to him. When we are spiritually lazy or indifferent to God and his Beloved Son, we experience sadness and dryness in our lives.

So we rededicate ourselves to those things that bring us closer to God. We have written about them many times in *Let's Talk!*, even in our last issue. Here again are the points in short form: 1) Read the Word of God. 2) Worship and pray. 3) Be part of a community. 4) Care for and serve others. (If you want to know more, ask your chaplain or volunteer for a copy of the Paulist Prison Ministries pamphlet "Conversion and Commitment to Christ.")

God is generous in his grace. Sloth can affect all of us at times. But before we become hopeless, we need to remember that God is generous in his grace, giving us all we need in abundance to experience his life. As we have written in previous articles in this series, grace super-abounds in this world and in our lives. St. Paul put it well: "despite the increase of sin, grace has far surpassed it" (Romans 5:20). But we have to be open to that grace in our lives!

And it is as simple as seeking to walk with Jesus each day through the four spiritual practices given above. If we are faithful to our daily walk with Jesus, we will see wonderful things happen. Do not give up. Accept Jesus' invitation to walk with you each day, and you will see victory. It is a promise you can count on.

~ Anthony Bosnick

Q&A

Talk with Jesus and listen to him

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This is the teaching of the Catholic Church, but not all Catholics accept this teaching. This should not surprise us, for all of us resist Church teaching on topics we do not agree with. We can all pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help all people to understand and embrace this understanding of the great value of life.

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

Come, Holy Spirit

A prayer for quiet meditation

*Come, Holy Spirit,
Fill the hearts of your faithful
And kindle in them
the fire of your love.*

*Send forth your Spirit and
they shall be created
And you shall renew
the face of the earth.*

*Let us Pray:
O God,
Who instructed the hearts
of the faithful
by the light of the Holy Spirit,
Grant us in the same Spirit
to be truly wise and
ever rejoice in his consolation.*

*Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.*

Pray for our benefactors

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