

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's

Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES



3031 FOURTH STREET, NE ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20017

Vol. 22, No. 4 – October/November/December 2015

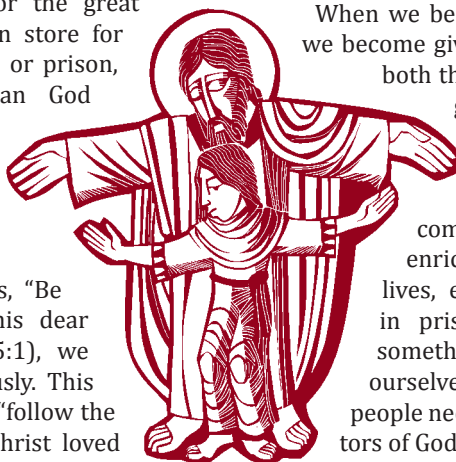
Imitate God!

Lots of times in our Christian lives we take the easiest road possible. It sometimes looks like we don't have much hope for ourselves—for the great possibilities God has in store for us. You might be in jail or prison, but that doesn't mean God has given up on you. So don't give up on yourself! God wants just as much for you as for anyone else.

When St. Paul writes, "Be imitators of God as his dear children" (Ephesians 5:1), we should take him seriously. This means that we need to "follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you" (v. 2). And here is how we do that: "Get rid of all bitterness, all passion and anger, harsh words, slander and malice of every kind. In place of these, be kind to one another, compassionate and mutually forgiving, just as God has forgiven you in Christ" (4:31-32).

Be a giver, like the Gift. We may see where we are now and think that it is too hard to imitate God. But let's set our hopes high. And with God's grace we will gradually achieve more. True, it can be a long road. After all, we do have some seriously bad habits and ways of relating that need changing. But "for God all things

are possible" (Matthew 19:26). Let's not give up on what God has ready for those who love him.



When we become imitators of God, we become givers, like Jesus. Jesus is both the Gift and the one who gives. Jesus gives us all that we need to become more like him. When we do, we become generous givers who enrich the world with our lives, even—and especially—in prison. Imitating God is something to work toward, for ourselves and because other people need our witness as imitators of God.

Joining those who have gone ahead. November is the month when the Church honors those who have gone on ahead of us and are with God waiting for us to arrive. These are the countless numbers of people who have gone before us and passed on to new life with God in heaven. Among them are many of our relatives and friends. They have passed on to a new and different life, and that is the great gift we too await.

It is worth becoming imitators of God. When we do, we will know great blessing now and will go on ahead to be with God eternally in true and final peace and love.

Jesus is the Face of Mercy

Everyone needs the mercy of God. So often we go through our days and our lives not knowing God's mercy and love for us. This can be especially true for people in prison and jails, where life is not about mercy but punishment. When we don't know that God looks at us with a heart of mercy, we have little or no hope for our lives. We can become joyless and hopeless. We can lose our meaning and purpose for life.

Pope Francis recognizes that we all need to "contemplate the mystery of mercy." It is the "wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace." And so he has declared the "Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy," a year set aside to reflect on God's mercy and love. The Year begins on December 8, 2015, the celebration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. It ends on the Solemnity of Christ the King, November 20, 2016.

He writes that mercy is "the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness." Yes, "we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). But while God calls us to turn from that sin, he does not reject us. Rather, he calls out to us and longs for us to return to him, just as in the parable of the prodigal son (sometimes called the parable of the merciful father) the loving father waited for his son to return home (Luke 15:20-21).

And so in the Year of Mercy, our hope is that we would learn more of God's mercy toward us, and experience it. And just as important, that we become more merciful to those around us. As we learn more that God loves us, we too can become instruments of mercy. Even in prison.

For more, see the article on page three of this issue by Deacon Dolan. We will also be looking at this more in the coming year.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Every moment of our lives is an opportunity for blessing. This is so even when we are in prison or jail. It's often hard to believe and act on, but God wants the best for us so we need to think and act in ways that help us know that blessing. So we are challenged to take heart and trust in the truth.

The challenge for all people is to know the truth and to persevere in it. As children of a God who loves us, we need to be open to God and receive what he gives to us. Our prayer and hope is that the articles in this issue will help you on your way.

Let us pray for one another and be a blessing to others. In that we will know the hope that keeps us going.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President, Paulist Evangelization Ministries

CHURCH CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2015

- 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 Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests and martyrs, and companions, martyrs
- 25 **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28 Sts. Simon and Jude, apostles

NOVEMBER 2015

- 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
- 15 **Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 17 St. Elizabeth of Hungary, religious
- 21 Presentation of Mary
- 22 **Christ the King**
- 24 St. Andrew Dung-Lac, priest, and companions, martyrs
- 26 Thanksgiving Day in U.S.
- 29 **First Sunday of Advent**
- 30 St. Andrew, apostle

DECEMBER 2015

- 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 **Third Sunday of Advent**
- 14 St. John of the Cross, priest
- 20 **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
- 25 **Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)**
- 26 St. Stephen, first martyr
- 27 **Holy Family**
- 28 Holy Innocents, martyrs

Q&A

Rapture, Purgatory and End Times

Q. Do Catholics believe in the “Rapture”?

A. The questions about the “Rapture” and about “Purgatory” (below) are both about the end times. These are good questions to consider in November when Catholics reflect on the end times and as we honor All Saints and All Souls, those who have lived their lives well while on Earth and have gone on ahead.

Catholics and Protestants such as Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Methodists do not think in terms of the Rapture when looking at the end times. “Rapture” is generally used more by Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Fundamentalists.

What happens in the end times has puzzled Christians since the beginning of Christianity. Catholics have focused on the belief that after death, the faithful are alive with God in heaven until Jesus comes again. The focus is on those who have passed from this life and gone on ahead of us. Catholics emphasize more being alive in Christ, waiting for the final coming of Jesus when in body and soul they will rejoice in eternal glory. Catholics focus more on the end times being when we welcome the Lord and return with him to heaven.

Among those Christians who accept the Rapture, there is not one accepted understanding of what it is. They tend to focus more on what happens when Jesus comes again, especially to those still alive

on earth when he comes. Some see a period of a thousand years when Jesus will reign on earth. Some think he will reign for this time in heaven. Others think it will be a time of the redeemed being “snatched up” to heaven.



The concept of the end time is different for different groups of Christians but when talking about it with those that differ from us we are challenged to listen to each other with respect, although at times it may be difficult.

Q. What about Purgatory?

A. The Catholic understanding of Purgatory developed out of the desire to understand what happened with those who died believing in God but who had not lived in a way that reflected very deeply God’s life and love for them and for others. They may have believed, but had lived with considerable indifference or sin toward God, family and neighbor. Catholics believe that God’s love is so great that if they had even a sense of love and belief in God in their earthly lives, God would do not condemn them to suffer eternal separation from him, but would allow them to pass through a time of further purification.

The Catholic focus can be summed up with a word from Scripture: “We await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be

continued on page 4

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: pemdc@pemdc.org.

Thank you for your help.

PMLTH1504

Prisoner Saints

The 498 Spanish Martyrs (d. 1930's) + Being a Catholic in Spain in the 1930's called for sacrifice, even to the point of imprisonment and death. It was a time of great unrest, a result of many long-term tensions. The turmoil culminated in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) that tore the country apart. These 498 martyrs were bishops, priests, men and women religious, and laypeople. They gave their lives for love of Jesus Christ as heroic witnesses to the Gospel. These martyrs were declared “blessed” in October 2007. They are among over 6,800 Catholics imprisoned and killed in Spain in the 1930's specifically because they were faithful to their faith and the Church. The message of these martyrs is one of faith and love. Their example calls us to examine our lives and to resolve that our faith and love shine forth—even heroically.

Feast Day: November 6

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for October/November/December

OCTOBER

Universal. *Human trafficking:* That human trafficking, the modern form of slavery, may be eradicated.

Evangelization.

Mission in Asia: That with a missionary spirit the Christian communities of Asia may announce the Gospel to those who are still awaiting it.

NOVEMBER

Universal. Dialogue:

That we may be open to personal encounter and dialogue with all, even those whose convictions differ from our own.

Evangelization.

Pastors: That pastors of the Church, with profound love for their flocks, may accompany them and enliven their hope.

DECEMBER

Universal. *Experiencing God's mercy:* That all may experience the mercy of God, who never tires of forgiving.

Evangelization. *Families:* That families, especially those who suffer, may find in the birth of Jesus a sign of certain hope.

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

Year of Mercy, Part 1

First things first

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: What was that Year of Mercy thing that Father mentioned at Mass?

Me: The Pope has designated 2016 as the Year of Mercy. He published a papal bull . . .

Peaches: A "bull"?!

Me: Yeah, it's an official announcement. Old school talk. It is titled "*The Face of Mercy.*"

Peaches: Mercy has a "face"?!

Me: Yeah, His name is Jesus. Ever heard of him?

Peaches: Are ordained people supposed to be wise guys?

Me: Don't tell the bishop on me!

Peaches: So, seriously, Deke, what is the point of a Year of Mercy?

Me: More precisely it's a *Jubilee* Year of Mercy. A Jubilee was called in ancient Israel every 50 years. It was sort of a "Reset" button for social justice (see Leviticus 25:8-13).

During a Jubilee, slaves and prisoners would be freed, debts forgiven, land returned to owners who had lost it. That was important in a place where pretty much the only way to earn a living was by farming a piece of land.

Peaches: So it was a built in "do over"?

Me: Right. It was a time of great joy or jubilation, as you can imagine.

Peaches: Yeah, this place would go off the hook if they just announced, "OK. Everybody go home now!"

Me: So, it let people succeed or be punished but would not put them out of the game forever.

Peaches: But why Mercy? Why not hold up justice or prayer or a whole bunch of other good teachings?

Me: You know the expression, "First things first"?

Peaches: Sure.

Me: For a Christian, Mercy is that first thing. Cardinal Walter Kasper.

Peaches: Who's he?

Me: He's an Archbishop in Germany and a major player at the Vatican. A theologian and writer. Anyway, Cardinal Kasper wrote a book called *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*. Which Pope Francis said he really got a lot out of!

Peaches: I see the connection. Sounds like Pope Francis and you know me, Deke! I loves me some Pope Francis!

Me: Easy now, P! Can we get back to "First things first"?

Peaches: Sorry. I went away for awhile. I'm back now. Go ahead.

Me: "First things first" does not mean that the second thing isn't important or that the third item doesn't need to be done. It just means we have to have our priorities straight and take care of that first thing first!

Peaches: Got it. And the first thing to take care of for Christians is Mercy.

Me: Correct! As Cardinal Kasper says Mercy is THE essential part of the message of Jesus and THE key to Christian life. The KEY! Not a nice "extra" for us when we get around to it! Because the central position of Mercy is what makes Christianity unique compared to other religions.

Peaches: So that's the answer to when people say "all religions are alike"?

Me: Yes. Now, other religions also have teachings like Mercy but we put it in the center. We put it first. Because that's where Jesus put it. Like the other religions, we also have teachings on prayer, justice, worship, charity, etc. Various religions have most of these items but they place them in different orders. For us, Mercy is the key.

Peaches: Pope Francis is reminding us of that because Mercy got "lost in the sauce"?

Me: Well, not "lost" but sometimes when you're working on number two and three on your list, number one can get ignored or taken for granted.

Peaches: So Pope Francis is calling the Church back to basics: Mercy First!

Me: Yeah, next year there will be a lot of talks and sermons, classes, books, articles and big celebrations all around the world focused on Mercy.

Peaches: So we're refocusing. I think I get it now!

Me: Just connect the dots: Jubilee-Face of Mercy-Jesus.

Peaches: Again with the wise remarks?! That's it! I'm telling the bishop! Stop laughing!

Me: Tell him I said, "Hi"!

Peaches: Quit laughing! You're making me laugh now!

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.

Gluttony is about too much food for our own good

The dictionary tells us that the word “glutton” comes from a word meaning “to devour.” It goes on and says that from this idea of devouring food, we understand that a “glutton” is “a person who eats too much.” And “gluttony” is “the habit or act of eating too much.”

Plain and simple. But not attractive. Gluttony conjures up none too appealing images in our minds of someone who, to put it politely, eats too much and is likely grossly overweight as a consequence. He or she likely pays for this by suffering from health issues. (Even while recognizing this, we should say from the start that sometimes a person who is greatly overweight is not suffering from gluttony, but from a bodily disorder over which they have little or no control. This may be a person with a physical condition that needs attention.)

Gluttony in perspective. Scripture doesn't say much about gluttony, but when it does, it is pretty unflattering. Among the Proverbs we read, “The drunkard and the glutton come to poverty” (23:21). And the Old Testament law instructs that if parents have a son who is “a glutton and a drunkard,” they should take him to the elders “and all his fellow citizens shall stone him to death . . . to purge the evil from your midst” (see Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

There is a reason for this. Historically gluttony is more often a sin of the rich and/or comfortable. In the past, only the rich could eat too much because food was so scarce. And for most people it wasn't very tasty. Things began to improve for those better off when

the spice trade brought much-desired spices from the East to improve the taste of food.

In our time, when food is abundant in large parts of the world, gluttony has become more of an equal-opportunity sin. But we are still challenged by data from the Global Hunger Index which lists 55 countries today with a “serious or worse hunger situation.” There are still nearly a billion people in the world who do not have enough to eat.

Why is gluttony a deadly sin? It comes down once again to gluttony being “all about me.” This is not too different from the other deadly sins. Like them, gluttony turns us away from God and from our neighbor and turns attention to ourselves. And too often, we forget what is more important for our lives: our relationship with God and with neighbor (remember the greatest commandment).

There is a certain pleasure that goes with eating, at least for most people reading this. There is nothing wrong with that. But if the pleasure causes us to want to eat too much too often, we run into trouble.

Five ways of sinning by gluttony. Sir Patrick Leigh-Fermor, a British World War II hero (and later quite famous as a travel writer), wrote about gluttony in the little book *The Seven Deadly Sins* (a collection of short essays first published in England in 1962). He saw five ways that we sin by gluttony:

Too soon: We start eating again much too soon after finishing another meal or snack.

**The Seven
Deadly Sins**

Pride	Lust
Envy	Gluttony
Anger	Greed
Sloth	

Too expensively: We want the best and most luxurious food and drink.

Too much: We just don't know when to stop. We love eating between meals; at meals we can't stop at moderate or filling portions. We need dessert to top off a meal, or between meals.

Too eagerly: We just love to eat, just about anything, and forget that there are many who are hungry.

Making too much of a fuss: Food becomes the focus. We talk about our meals, how they are prepared, what is in them, what they cost.

Thus, we can see the pattern. Food becomes all about us. It is a way to fill the void caused by indifference to God and all higher things. And we are little interested in those around us. Gluttony becomes a deadly sin because it is too much about a material thing and all about us.

What is the remedy? We turn once again to those things that bring us closer to God. We have written about them many times in *Let's Talk!* 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.

God is generous in his grace, giving us all we need in abundance to experience his life. Grace super-abounds in this world and in our lives (see Romans 5:20). Let us be open to that grace!

~ Anthony Bosnick

Q&A

Rapture, Purgatory and End Times

(continued from page 2)

found without spot or blemish before him, at peace” (2 Peter 3:13-14). In other words, live well for God and neighbor and you will dwell with God eternally in heaven. You will not have to worry about what will happen in the end times.

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

A Prayer of St. Anselm (c. 1033 - 1109)

*Lord Jesus Christ;
let me seek you by desiring you,
and let me desire you by seeking you;
let me find you by loving you,
and love you in finding you.*

*I confess, Lord with thanksgiving,
that you have made me in your image,
so that I can remember you,
think of you, and love you.*

*But that image is so worn and
blotted out by faults,
and darkened by the smoke of sin,*

*that it cannot do that for which it was made,
unless you renew and refashion it.*

*Lord, I am not trying to make my way
to your height, for my understanding
is in no way equal to that,
but I do desire to understand a little of your truth
which my heart already believes and loves.*

*I do not seek to understand so that I can believe;
but I believe so that I may understand;
and what is more,
I believe that unless I do believe,
I shall not understand.*

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.