

# Let's *Talk!*<sup>®</sup>

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A Catholic Ministry to Prisoners



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

## Live Out Your Easter Faith

**D**o you believe in God? Do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead and reigns with the Father in heaven? Do you believe Jesus loves you and wants to be part of your life no matter what your past and present is like? These questions... and many more are about faith. *Our faith and your faith!*

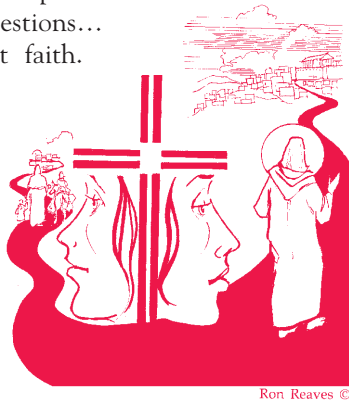
Each day is another opportunity to live out your faith. During the inspiring weeks of the Easter season, we will hear in the liturgy in the Acts of the Apostles the story of the growth in faith and spread of the faith in the early Church. And we will

hear about what our faith means in the readings from the Gospel of John. If you can, follow along with those readings as you participate in Mass or read them in a Bible.

**Our faith is never complete.** Faith is more than what we have in our heads...more than what we believe. *It is something that we seek to live out day after day.* Our faith is tested daily in our joys and in our sufferings. In good times, when things are going well with us and we are not challenged much by life, our faith might seem secure and even

easy. But it is during bad times, the times of suffering, when we see what our faith is really like.

Our faith matures as we walk with God each day through our sufferings. In bad times, if we keep our hope in God and do not turn from God and go our own way, we will see our faith grow. And we will grow in virtue.



Ron Reaves ©

**Faith is a path.** Faith is lived out on our walk through life. Pope Benedict XVI has written that "Faith is always a path. As long as we live we are on the way, and on that account faith is always under

pressure and under threat." Even the Pope knows that living the faith is a challenge!

In hard times, you might falter in how you live your faith. But turn to Jesus, open yourself to the free-flowing grace of God, pick up the pieces...and move on. Through the challenges of your life, do not give up. In good times and in bad, we meet God on our journey. As we walk faithfully with him, our faith deepens and grows. And there is no better time to do this than the grace-filled season of Easter.

### Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Church joyfully proclaims at Easter that "Christ is Risen." And to that the Church adds that "The joy of the resurrection renews the whole world." These words are hope-filled. They proclaim the truth that the grace of Easter is indeed great and that it can change our lives! God promises it. The challenge for us is to let God into our lives and renew them.

Let us live each day expecting God's life and love to bring joy to our lives. May the life God pours out flow into your life and change you. God's promise is real. It is for us all to let it happen. May the Easter season bring you great blessings.

**Father Frank DeSiano, CSP**  
President, PNCEA

## Following Christ

By Rev. Frank DeSiano, CSP

**W**hile people often claim to be "saved" because of an experience they have had, we know that the point is not just an experience. Rather, it's about becoming a disciple. Here is one story about becoming a disciple from the Gospel of Matthew (9:9-13):

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Matthew is a "tax collector." In ancient Israel, that meant that people saw Matthew as a betrayer of his people, for he collected tax for the enemy. People also undoubtedly saw Matthew as a cheat, for he charged extra and put this money in his own pocket. We do not know what made Matthew get up and follow Jesus. In many ways, we do not know what makes people change, except, of course, the power of God.

But we see what follows: Matthew and his associates are sitting down at table with Jesus, learning from him, and eating with him. In other words, they become disciples, the group that will call Jesus their "Teacher," and will continue to learn from him.

**Four Parts of Discipleship.** We also see here the seeds of the four parts of discipleship—1) Word; 2) Worship and Prayer; 3) Community and 4) Service. Let's explore what these mean more fully.

*(continued on page 2)*

April 2010

- 1-3 Easter Triduum
  - 1 Mass of the Lord's Supper (Holy Thursday)
  - 2 The Lord's Passion (Good Friday)
  - 3 Easter Vigil (Holy Saturday)
- 4 Easter Sunday
- 11 Second Sunday of Easter
- 18 Third Sunday of Easter
- 25 Fourth Sunday of Easter
- 29 St. Catherine of Siena, doctor

May 2010

- 1 St. Joseph the Worker
- 2 Fifth Week of Easter
- 3 Sts. Philip and James, apostles
- 9 Sixth Sunday of Easter
- 10 St. Damian of Molokai, missionary
- 13 Ascension of Our Lord (in some places celebrated May 16)
- 14 St. Matthias, apostle
- 16 Seventh Sunday of Easter or Ascension of Our Lord (if not celebrated May 13)
- 23 Pentecost
- 26 St. Philip Neri, priest
- 30 Holy Trinity
- 31 Visitation of Mary

June 2010

- 1 St. Justin, martyr
- 3 St. Charles Lwanga and Companions, martyrs
- 5 St. Boniface, bishop, martyr
- 6 Body and Blood of Christ
- 11 Sacred Heart of Jesus
- 12 Immaculate Heart of Mary
- 13 Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 20 Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 21 St. Aloysius Gonzaga
- 24 Birth of John the Baptist
- 27 Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 28 St. Irenaeus, bishop
- 29 Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles



Let's Talk!®

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Following Christ

**Word.** Disciples are learners. They listen to their Teacher. They learn the Word of God. Just as Matthew sits down with Jesus to hear him at table—and what a lesson Jesus teaches about God's mercy—so every disciple has to be willing to sit down with Jesus and learn from him.

We do this in a variety of ways. First of all, we listen to the Gospels and the other scriptures. We can do this as the scriptures are read to us. We can also do it in our own private reading. The important thing is putting ourselves into the story, into the Word. Are we like Matthew, or Matthew's friends (still fence-sitting) or the leaders who do not get the point?

Listening to the Word means talking with Jesus and making Jesus the center of my life. It also means being willing to follow Jesus in my actions and being willing to learn more from him. So the Word of God leads to: • *Conversion* to Jesus (making him the center) and • *Relationship* (making Jesus the key to all my relationships)

**Worship and Prayer.** Notice what happens when Matthew follows Jesus. He and Jesus sit down at table with others. He shares life with Jesus and shows his relationship by staying, praying, and eating with Jesus. From the very beginning, Jesus shared himself with his disciples at a meal. And, from the very beginning, Jesus' disciples have continued his meal. We call this the Mass or the Eucharist (which means the Thanksgiving).

Lots of people say they follow Jesus, but

they never express that following by worshiping with others at Mass. Mass is the way we continue to eat with Jesus and learn from him. Similarly, lots of people claim they pray, but they never really give Jesus the time of personal prayer. As a result, they don't really

know the Father of Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. I am a disciple then when I: • Put aside time to *pray personally every day*, • Put aside time to *participate in Mass at least once a week*.

**Community.** After Matthew follows Jesus, he doesn't go into a corner. He hangs out with Jesus, and he hangs out with others who are listening to Jesus. Following Jesus, then, means following him with others, in community. And it isn't always the community of the perfect, the people who never sin. Rather, it's the community of others who are striving to follow the Lord.

We have made religion often a private matter, something in our heads or in our emotions. It wasn't that way for Jesus, or for the first followers of Jesus. If you said you loved Jesus, then you had to show it by how you treated your brothers and sisters. How often have we met people who said they were "saved" but didn't really care about anyone else?

So if I follow Jesus, I do so by: • *Sharing my spiritual walk* with our brothers and sisters, • *Showing my love for Jesus by loving others*.

**Service.** Jesus startles everyone by saying that he did not come for the healthy (those who think their lives are OK). He came for those who are hurting, those who know they

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Prisoner Saint

**Bl. John Davy (d. 1537)** ✠ John Davy was a devout monk and deacon of the Carthusian Order in London who spent his days in prayer and contemplation. When King Henry VIII broke from Rome and declared himself head of the church in England, he demanded that all accept his spiritual leadership. Many refused, including the Carthusians. To end their opposition, they were arrested and imprisoned in Newgate Prison. John was faithful to his conscience and to the Church and did not give in. He was chained to a wall where he starved to death on June 8. He was declared blessed in 1886.

**Feast Day: June 6**

Growing in Prayer, Part 4

# Church Community

By Deacon Dennis Dolan

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

**Me:** Correct.

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

**Me:** Yup.

**Peaches:** And the way we live this life like Jesus is by acting in love that includes everybody.

**Me:** Right again.

**Peaches:** And that way of acting in love for everybody is sometimes called “service” because it has to do with actions not feelings.

**Me:** Right.

**Peaches:** OK. Now we’re done with the “warm ups” and are ready to get into the real spirituality.

**Me:** Warm ups? All of that is “real” spirituality. Prayer and meditation are an important part, but still just a part.

**Peaches:** OK. I get it. It’s not just about prayer and meditation. It’s a whole package.

**Me:** Which brings us to the next ingredient in our recipe for Catholic Christian Spirituality: Community—the Church.

**Peaches:** OK, putting the beads away, again.

**Me:** Community is something that keeps us from just being on a personal head trip.

**Peaches:** Because you have to deal with other people, you can’t stay locked up inside, right?

**Me:** Right, and all of us when we are locked up inside are out of touch with reality.

**Peaches:** In other words, we are in la la land because reality is where the truth gets at our little head games.

**Me:** Very good, P! That’s why Jesus’ starting point was a community, the Church. Jesus did not write one word of the Bible. He left that to his followers. Jesus had something more essential to do: create a community. Because “Faith is caught not taught.” You can learn about faith from a book or by yourself, but you need to be with others to experience it and keep it.

**Peaches:** Just like you can’t learn dancing or karate from a book alone.

**Me:** Right. Also, we become like the people we hang around with.

**Peaches:** Like my Mom used to say, “Birds of a feather flock together”?

**Me:** And that works for the good or the bad. That’s the way we’re wired. That’s how babies learn to talk. That’s how advertising works. We don’t even know it’s happening to us.

**Peaches:** I don’t know about that. I do my own thinking.

**Me:** Not all the time and neither do I. Advertisers spend millions of dollars for a 30 second ad during the Super Bowl. The ads are often entertaining and give little or no reason why you should buy the product. They just show the product and millions of us buy it. That’s why they’re back next year with those ads again. They work. The big joke is, we tell ourselves, “This is my idea!” Madison Avenue knows the truth. Maybe we should stop kidding ourselves.

We’ve always known this. If you hang around toxic people, eventually, you become toxic. If you hang around positive people, you eventually pick that up to.

**Peaches:** So if you hang around faith-filled people...

**Me:** You can only be a Christian if you’ve met one. Faith is caught not taught.

**Peaches:** But I could benefit from the Church community, read my Bible and do it myself without joining the Church community.

**Me:** Be a parasite? Sure you could. Doesn’t sound like Jesus to me though.

**Peaches:** A parasite?

**Me:** Yeah. A “taker” not a giver like Jesus. Use the Church to get what you need but not contribute to the work of passing it on to the next person, which is how it got to us.

**Peaches:** And we even get the Bible from the Church. So without a community you wouldn’t have the Bible.

**Me:** Without the community, Jesus would’ve been forgotten completely by now.

**Peaches:** So, the community keeps us tied into reality, teaches us how to live a life like Jesus.

**Me:** And communicates the power to live that life through the Sacraments...

**Peaches:** The Holy Spirit!

**Me:** Yes...NOW, get out those beads!

**Peaches:** Woot! Woot!

*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 April/May/June

### April

**General.** *Fundamentalism and Extremism:* That every tendency to fundamentalism and extremism may be countered by constant respect, by tolerance, and by dialogue among all believers.

**Missionary.** *Persecuted Christians:* That Christians persecuted for the sake of the Gospel may persevere, sustained by the Holy Spirit, in faithfully witnessing to the love of God for the entire human race.

### May

**General.** *Human Trafficking:* That the shameful and monstrous commerce in human beings, which sadly involves millions of women and children, may be ended.

**Missionary.** *Priests, Religious and Committed Lay People:* That ordained ministers, religious women and men, and lay people involved in apostolic work may understand how to infuse missionary enthusiasm into the communities entrusted to their care.

### June

**General.** *Respect for Human Life:* That every national and transnational institution may strive to guarantee respect for human life from conception to natural death.

**Missionary.** *The Churches in Asia:* That the Churches in Asia, which constitute a “little flock” among non-Christian populations, may know how to communicate the Gospel and give joyful witness to their adherence to Christ.

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



## Lectio Divina, Part 4

# Let Your Heart Rise to God in Prayer

This is the fourth part of a six part series on the method of prayer known as *lectio divina*. We will review quickly for those who have missed earlier parts of this series.

*Lectio divina* is the practice of reading, meditating on, and praying with Scripture. (The two words are Latin for “divine word” or “divine reading.”) Through the practice of prayerfully reading Scripture, we meet God and hear his word for our lives. We develop a sense of God’s loving care for us and how he wants to lead us on our walk with him. This is because “God’s word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Four steps or movements are involved in *lectio divina*. 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. In this article, we will look at praying with the text.

**Prayer of the heart, not of words.** We have been meditating on Scripture in our hearts, taking in what God speaks through his divine Word in Scripture. We have been waiting upon God, waiting for him to speak to us. We have let God into our hearts, and have left behind what keeps us from God—our anger and prejudice, our bitterness and impurities—the things of the flesh (see Galatians 5:19-21).

Now we respond to God in prayer. Many of us are not good at prayer. Our prayer often involves many words we say to God, even though our hearts may be far from him. So now in our prayer we may think we should recite our favorite prayers. But that is *not* what this prayer is. Instead, this time of prayer involves the words and phrases from Scripture we have been meditating on. This prayer will likely bring to our mind words of thanks or love or praise to God. For many of us, this is not easy prayer. Thus, we may be tempted to want to rely on formal prayers or prayer books.

**Prayer of the Psalms.** An answer here is to turn to the Psalms. If you have been praying over one of the readings from daily or Sunday Mass, you may want to use the Responsorial Psalm from the Mass to stimulate your prayer. Each Mass includes an appropriate Response from the Psalms to the readings of the Mass.

Another thing you can do it to use some verses from the Psalms to stimulate your prayer. This is a good practice because when we pray with the Psalms we are speaking back to God words he has given to us. Jesus did this in his prayer. On the cross, his words “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me” (Matthew 27:46) are from Psalm 22:2. Mary’s great prayer known as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) is nearly all from the Psalms.

Of course, our prayer here will not flow so seamlessly from the Psalms as does Mary’s prayer, but the Psalms can inspire this time of prayer. In many Bibles, each Psalm has a title that can help you decide what to pray. For example, if you are joyful and want to praise God, try Psalm 1, 4, 148, 149, 150, and many more. If your heart is heavy with sorrow for sin, you might pray Psalm 51 or 57. If you are fearful, Psalms 23, 29, or 54 may be helpful.

**Practicing *Lectio Divina*.** If you want to make *lectio divina* part of your spiritual practices, set aside a time and place for it at least once a week. If necessary, ask some of your 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.

### Questions for Prayer and Discussion

1. Have you tried the practice of *lectio divina*? What challenges and/or blessings have you found from it?
2. Do you have any favorite Psalms that you think will help you with your prayer?
3. Have you experienced Scripture as “living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword” judging “the reflections and thoughts of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12)?

~ Anthony Bosnick

## Following Christ

(continued from page 2)

need help. In this way he taught his followers what he was all about—serving other people, particularly those in the greatest need.

Salvation is not just about me, and how I feel, and whether I am turned on. Salvation is about being part of the kingdom of God and serving others just as Jesus did. While we may not be doing miracles like Jesus, we know when people are hurting—and how to help them. We know the lonely, the struggling, those being picked on, those who need a hand. We can always offer them our help, our presence, and our prayers.

We can think of the Kingdom of God as a ripple started in the water. Jesus makes the first splash—but Jesus needs his followers to continue that splash. Jesus, after all, is looking at us just as he looked at Matthew. He sees our messy lives. But he still looks and says, “Follow Me!” We look back at him. What will we say in return?

Rev. Frank DeSiano is President of PNCEA Prison Ministries.

## Stories about Conversion and Commitment

We are still looking for stories about conversion and commitment while in prison to include in our summer issue and in a pamphlet. Keep it to 325 words or less.

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. Your reward is knowing that your story may help and encourage others. We may not be able to use all the stories sent to us.

Please send your story to *Let's Talk!*; PNCEA; 3031 Fourth Street, NE; Washington, DC 20017.

### Pray for our benefactors

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