



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES



3031 FOURTH STREET, NE ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20017

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Live your new Easter life!

The fifty days of the Easter Season are the most important days we live and celebrate each year. More important than Christmas. More important than Lent. That is because we live with special awareness of Jesus' victory over sin and death. As the days go by it is so easy to fail to recognize and trust in the promises of God for us his people.

What is Easter life? Christians are constantly challenged to believe the spiritual truths which give us life and hope. A central truth of our Easter faith is that Jesus died to conquer sin and death and rose to give us new life. And that new life begins here and now! This is the living gift that is ours through our baptism into Christ and our life of faith.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Prisoners often write telling us of the cruelty and violence behind bars. Of the bitterness and hatred, the darkness and loneliness. What meaning can Jesus' Easter victory possibly have for those in prison?

Remember this: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Jesus rose from the dead and is "at the right hand of God [and] intercedes for us" (Romans 8: 31, 34). Amidst the trials of prison, remember that Jesus is with you and that he is praying for you to the Father.

You are not alone. When you open yourself to Jesus each day and all day, the darkness will turn to light. The despair to hope. The cruelty to kindness . . . all beginning first in your own heart. This is the power of the Easter victory in your life. Live in it and for it.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

In the fifty days of Easter (this year, April 8 to May 27), take special care to remember each day what Jesus has won for you. Live in awareness of that victory. This is our hope!

Patterns of sin hold

us back. We all know that the new life does not come automatically. As children of Adam, we still suffer from "concupiscent." That means that because of original sin we have a weakness to sin. Sin turns us from God and from one another. It weakens us and makes it difficult for us to live for God. Most of the time we live without much thought of God and our fellow man. We all know that to be the case!

But through baptism and faith, we are strengthened to live in a new way. We



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can live the new life Jesus has won for us. Of course it takes work because we are going against the bad habits we have formed because of sin and self-focus.

The road to new life.

Living your new Easter life won for you by Jesus takes developing a good spiritual discipline. As we have said many times, simply stated, it consists of several parts: 1) Read the Word of God daily. 2) Worship and pray. 3) Be part of a community. 4) Care for and serve others.

You can learn more about this road to new life in the Paulist Prison Ministry pamphlet "Conversion and Commitment to Christ." Your chaplain or volunteer can get a copy for you free of charge.

Q&A

God Wants the Best for Us

Q. I saw the "Jesus Prayer." How are you supposed to pray it?

A. The Jesus Prayer is an ancient and simple prayer. There are several variations. Perhaps the most frequent way to say it is "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy upon me." Often the words "a sinner" are added at the end. The prayer comes to us from the sixth or seventh centuries. It comes from the Eastern Church—that is, the Greek-speaking church of Asia Minor as opposed to the Latin-speaking church of the West (Europe). The origin is interesting as in the East there was a great sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church and of the work of the Spirit to enliven Christians.

This prayer is a form of meditation and is intended to be repeated over and over, *silently and peacefully*. It calms the mind and enlivens the spirit. At times of trial and stress, pray it and you will find it helps you to be aware that Jesus is with you. When it is so noisy and chaotic around you that you can barely think, pray it over and over and you will likely become aware of how close Jesus is to you. When you are tempted and angry, pray it and experience peace and consolation. Pray it when you are alone or with others. It is a way to turn your heart and mind to God.

The Jesus Prayer helps you remember that you are a child of God and that he loves you always and deeply through his Son Jesus.

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CHURCH CALENDAR

APRIL 2012

- 1 **Passion (Palm) Sunday**
- 5-7 **Easter Triduum**
- 5 **Mass of the Lord's Supper (Holy Thursday)**
- 6 **The Lord's Passion (Good Friday)**
- 7 **Easter Vigil (Holy Saturday)**
- 8 **Easter Sunday**
- 15 **Second Sunday of Easter (Mercy Sunday)**
- 22 **Third Sunday of Easter**
- 25 **St. Mark, evangelist**
- 29 **Fourth Sunday of Easter**

MAY 2012

- 1 **St. Joseph the Worker**
- 2 **St. Athanasius, bishop and doctor**
- 3 **Sts. Philip and James, apostles**
- 6 **Fifth Sunday of Easter**
- 13 **Sixth Sunday of Easter**
- 14 **St. Matthias, apostle**
- 17 **Ascension** (in many places celebrated May 20)
- 20 **Seventh Sunday of Easter** (or Ascension if not celebrated May 17)
- 26 **St. Philip Neri, priest**
- 27 **Pentecost**
- 31 **Visitation of Mary**

JUNE 2012

- 1 **St. Justin, martyr**
- 3 **Holy Trinity**
- 5 **St. Boniface, bishop and martyr**
- 10 **Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)**
- 11 **St. Barnabas, apostle**
- 13 **St. Anthony, priest and doctor**
- 15 **Sacred Heart of Jesus**
- 17 **Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 21 **St. Aloysius Gonzaga, religious**
- 24 **Birth of John the Baptist**
- 28 **St. Irenaeus, bishop and martyr**
- 29 **Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles**

Let's Talk!

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Visit us at www.pemdc.org

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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: info@pemdc.org.

Thank you for your help.

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Q&A God Wants the Best for Us

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Q. What does it mean to have a "personal relationship with Jesus"?

A. Catholics recognize that when we have a relationship with Jesus, it is more than just a "Jesus and me" relationship. Our understanding is that our relationship with Jesus is much more fruitful in a community of believers. Our encounter is personal, but it involves a community of believers—the Church. Jesus came to save us *and* to call together a Church to be his living presence in the world. Our encounter is nurtured by this community of the Church.

Members of the community of believers are often the ones who share the Good News with us that brings us to Jesus. We celebrate Mass and the sacraments with the Church. The Bible we read is the book of the Church. We are supported in our faith by other believers who teach us and support us on our journey. Thus, you can see that the Catholic understanding is centered on Jesus, but the Church is very important in our faith journey.

We encounter Christ when we meet Jesus through the Mass and sacraments, through prayer and scripture, and through other Christians. But Catholics understand that our faith is not just personal, just between Jesus and me. Thus, when Catholics talk about a personal encounter with Christ, we believe it is personal but that it goes from that to those around us. We are not called to be "lone rangers" in our faith, but part of the community of faith. That is the big

difference between a personal relationship with Jesus as understood by many Protestants and the personal encounter with Christ as understood by Catholics.

Q. What is Mercy Sunday?

A. The Church celebrates God's mercy on the wonderful feast of "Mercy Sunday," the Sunday after Easter. (This year it is April 15.) On this day we focus on God's tender love and mercy toward us. Remember how Jesus' "heart was moved with pity" when he saw the hungry and empty crowds (Matthew 14:14). Recall how God calls us through his Son, Jesus: "Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

These are the words of a God of love and mercy who calls us back to him. Accept Jesus' words at face value and return to him in his love and mercy. He welcomes the repentant sinner with open arms.

Q. I want to learn more about the Catholic faith. I was raised Catholic but haven't practiced in a long time. What do you recommend?

A. First, we recommend you talk to a Catholic prison chaplain or volunteer and tell them of your interest. There might already be a group you can join to study the faith.

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Prisoner Saint

Joseph Luu (1790-1854) + Joseph is one of the 117 canonized martyrs of Vietnam killed between 1745 and 1862. During this time, about 100,000 Christians suffered martyrdom. Joseph Luu was a lay catechist who taught about Jesus in his local village. In a wave of persecution starting in 1847, officials ordered husbands, wives and children separated. They destroyed Christian villages. Officials arrested Joseph and tortured him to make him renounce his Catholic faith. He refused and died in prison. Pope John Paul II canonized the Vietnamese martyrs in 1988.

Feast Day: May 2

Pope Benedict XVI's
Prayer Requests
for April/May/June

APRIL

General. *Vocations:* That many young people may hear the call of Christ and follow him in the priesthood and religious life.

Missionary. *Christ, Hope for Africans:* That the risen Christ may be a sign of certain hope for the men and women of the African continent.

MAY

General. *The Family:* That initiatives which defend and uphold the role of the family may be promoted within society.

Missionary. *Mary, Guide of Missionaries:* That Mary, Queen of the World and Star of Evangelization, may accompany all missionaries in proclaiming her Son Jesus.

JUNE

General. *Christ, Present in the Eucharist.* That believers may recognize in the Eucharist the living presence of the Risen One who accompanies them in daily life.

Missionary. *European Christians:* That Christians in Europe may rediscover their true identity and participate with greater enthusiasm in the proclamation of the Gospel.

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

Fruit of the Holy Spirit, Part 5

Making Connections!

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Peaches: OK, so the first three fruits on the list are “love, joy and peace” and St. Thomas says that these fruit “get together” our internal life—our spiritual life or soul.

Me: Right.

Peaches: Which brings us to the rest of the fruit of the Spirit: *kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

Me: Right. Now, since this is all related to the presence of the Holy Spirit growing in a person as they mature spiritually over time, these fruit are all connected.

Peaches: OK! OK! Let me! Let's see . . . connect the dots . . . we've got love, joy and peace . . . Hmmm . . . I would connect love with kindness and faithfulness because if we are loving we are kind and faithful to those we love.

Me: I can buy that. Of course, if we have the love of God living in us . . .

Peaches: The Holy Spirit!

Me: Yes. We love a whole lot more people than what we are capable of with just our own personal, human love.

Peaches: And joy, I would say, is the basis for generosity because even on a normal, human level if someone is happy or joyful they tend to be in a more generous mood.

Me: Good tie in. However, in the case of the fruit of joy, generosity is not a passing “mood” but a permanent stance toward everybody.

Peaches: . . . and peace, seems to me, to be the basis for having patience and being gentle. I notice when I'm not peaceful I have zero patience with anything and what comes out of that can be described in many ways, but “gentle” would never be one of the words on that list!

Me: I like all of your connections, P. It's important to tie in the wisdom that our faith offers with our own life experience.

Peaches: Hey, I'm evangelized over here, ya know!

Me: I will note that in my report to Rome.

Peaches: For real?! Oh, a joke. I see.

Me: What about self-control? We forgot that one.

Peaches: Shouldn't that be on the inner list of the fruit with peace, love and joy? Although it's also an outward thing like kindness. You have to use self-control toward other people.

Me: Yeah. Good point. Funny that it's way down at the end of the list. Why do you think St. Paul might of done that?

Peaches: I don't know but if he was listing the fruit from inner to outer I would think it would be right in the middle. Do you know the answer?

Me: No. Unless you can ask St. Paul, I don't think anyone does, but it is interesting. Kind of looks to me like an “after thought.” Like he was looking back on this list and thought that anyone who has all of this has self-control.

Peaches: . . . or as we would say, “Has it together” or “wrapped tight”! You know, this stuff is really cool!

Me: Yeah, well, the ancient, catholic, wisdom tradition has a lot to offer us as we try to live a happy and fully human life.

Peaches: How come I never got all of this when I was a kid?

Me: Well, first of all. You wouldn't have been interested because you were not able to grasp this, if you were a normal kid. I certainly didn't! This is for grown ups. We need to have the life experiences in order to test the wisdom and appreciate it. Can't do that as a teenager.

Peaches: Hey, look at what it says right after the list of the fruit of the Spirit here in Galatians 5:26: “Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another.”

Me: Why? Sound confusing?

Peaches: No sounds familiar. Sounds like my Tier!

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.

The Fruit of the Spirit, Part 6

Signs of God's Work in Us

All of us who are on pilgrimage with the Lord want to have some sense that God is at work in us and that we are changing for the better. We know that as we go through our days that at times—perhaps many times—we fail and sin. Sometimes it may seem that we are not making much progress, despite our sincere desire and attempts to do so. That is part of our experience as we seek to follow Jesus as his disciples. After all, most of us have had much experience with sin. And we know how hard it is to change those habits and attitudes that lead to sin.

But the good news is that “God is for us,” and if he is for us, “Who can be against us.” Nothing or no one can stand in the way of God at work in our lives. And Jesus, “who is at the right hand of God . . . intercedes for us” (Romans 8:31, 34). That is a truth we can rely on. We are not following Jesus on our own!

Fruit of the Spirit in us. As we rely on that truth and make the effort to live for God each day, we slowly begin to see the evidence of God at work in us. This work shows itself in the fruit of the Spirit. This is a gift of God to us, not the result of our own efforts. We know where our own efforts lead.

St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians writes about the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). These fruit are those wonderful characteristics that grow in us as we yield to God's work in our lives. So as we invite God into our lives and seek to follow Christ, we can hope to see the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We cannot state it enough: They are the result of God working in us, not of our own efforts.

Slow but sure. We don't see the fruit over night or all at once. The growth of the fruit is really the result of our following Christ over a lifetime, especially when we do not start on the way as children. We are on our earthly pilgrimage for as long as we choose as we live on this earth. Day by day, we journey along seeking to deepen our friendship with Jesus. We win some and we lose some. When we win, we rejoice. When we lose, we repent and ask forgiveness. In both cases we continue on, not letting pride or discouragement stand in the way on our pilgrimage.

It is up to us. God does not impose himself on us. So if we want to experience the fruit of the Spirit we have to invite God into our lives, cooperate with his grace, and allow him to work in us. It is worth stating once again. A good spiritual discipline helps us along the road of pilgrimage: 1) Read the Word of God daily. 2) Worship and pray. 3) Be part of a community. 4) Care for and serve others.

As Christians, we are most fully free and whole as we share in the love of Christ and become as he is. There is tremendous blessing in this. And that is why our walk with Jesus is worth the effort...now and most certainly in eternity.

~ Anthony Bosnick

This ends our six-part series on the fruit of the Spirit.

Questions for Prayer and Discussion

1. Can you describe times when you recognized the fruit of the Spirit in your life? How did this make you feel? How did others respond?
2. What appeals to you about the fruit of the Spirit? How have they made your life worth living? How does it make deeper friendships possible?
3. Here are some more Scripture verses about living in such a way that we bear fruit: Matthew 7:16-20; Luke 3:8-9; John 4:36; 5:12; 12:24; Romans 6:1-11; Ephesians 5:9.

Q&A

God Wants the Best for Us

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Or if you cannot be part of a group, they may be able to direct you in your study.

Second, ask the chaplain or volunteer to ask Paulist Prison Ministries for a copy of *Invitation. The Search for God, Self and Church*. This is an adult question-and-answer format study guide for adult learners and has proven helpful to many. You might also ask for a copy of the Paulist Prison Ministry pamphlet “Conversion and Commitment to Christ.” Both are free of charge when requested by a prison chaplain or volunteer.

Third, we have already recommended in the article “Live your new Easter life” in this issue that you develop a good spiritual discipline. Here that is again: 1) Read the Word of God daily. 2) Worship and pray. 3) Be part of a community. 4) Care for and serve others.

Best of luck in your study!

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



Peace Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument
of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are
born to Eternal Life.

Amen.

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.