

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES



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Say “Yes” to Jesus

Lent and Easter are special times in the Church Year when the call to follow Jesus is especially intense. Jesus calls out to us to follow him. No matter how you are feeling or how you are doing, say yes to him.

So often, we approach Jesus as if we think he is going to give us a good reprimand or turn from us. But really, Jesus is calling out to us to give us the gift of love and life. We should not approach him as if we expect a stern lecture on how bad we are.

Draw me near to you Jesus. When we approach Jesus, let us remember that he loves us. He wants us to be his own. In these seasons of Lent and Easter when Jesus calls out to us with a special grace, let us recall the parable of the lost sheep. Jesus loves us so much that, like the shepherd, he will leave the other ninety-nine sheep behind to search us out (Luke 15:4-6). And like the father in the parable of the Prodigal

Son, he is looking for us with a heart filled with desire and with open arms (Luke 15:20, 32).

May the desire of our heart and our answer to him be, “Draw me near to you, Jesus. Make me yours.” We can know that despite our sin, he wants us. This, of course, doesn’t mean we don’t ask for the grace to repent and change. Of course we do (see Psalm 119:1-8). But it recognizes that we are and always will be sinners greatly loved by God.

Let yourself be loved by God. Pope Francis has said, “More difficult than loving God is letting ourselves be loved by him.” What truth and wisdom in these



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words! Pope Francis also said, “The Lord loves us tenderly. The Lord knows the beautiful science of caresses—God’s tenderness. He does not love us with words. He approaches us, and in being close to us gives us his love with the deepest possible tenderness” (Homily, June 7, 2013).

Let yourself be enveloped in God’s tender love.

Say yes to God. Seek to follow God. Sometimes you will fail. Sometimes you will succeed. But you will gradually see your life change and you will find meaning and be filled with a deeper joy.

Deacon Dolan starts a new series on Pope Francis’ “The Joy of the Gospel.” See page 3.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Sometimes it seems that life has little or nothing to offer us. How especially true this is in prison.

But let us not yield to this temptation. Every life—your life—has meaning. Jesus is with us always and never abandons us. We know this to be true particularly when we have a personal and living relationship with Jesus.

Each day, ask Jesus to help you draw near to him and to learn of his life and love. As you do, you are sure to sense his kind and merciful presence with you. This is what makes life worth living, whether in prison or out.

May God bless you and keep you in his care.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Q&A

Encountering the living God

Q. *My friend here in prison wants to become a Catholic. The priest suggested RCIA and asked me to be his “sponsor.” I want to, but I don’t think I know enough. What should I do?*

A. What an honor to be chosen for this important work! And how fortunate you are to have RCIA in your prison. If your priest thinks you are ready to be a sponsor, accept the call and do all you can to be the best support possible for your friend.

RCIA—The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults—is a process to bring people to conversion in the tradition of the Catholic Church. It always tries to serve the individual in accord with his or her spiritual needs, even though it has established “phases” as people journey to Christ. The person leading the RCIA will be looking to help the catechumen (person learning the faith) grow in relationship to Jesus, through transformation and understanding. Many Catholics who serve in the RCIA find the process deepens their own faith as they share with the journey of the catechumens.

This will likely happen to you. Tell the priest or other leader your concerns about your own understanding. And ask them to give you material you can read and learn so you can better explain it to your friend. Trust that the Holy Spirit will be using this as a time for both you and your friend to grow in faith and understanding. You are likely to find that being an RCIA sponsor is one of the best things that can happen to you in your own faith journey.

continued on page 2

CHURCH CALENDAR

APRIL 2014

- 6 Fifth Sunday of Lent
- 13-19 Holy Week
- 13 Passion (Palm) Sunday
- 17 Holy Thursday
- 18 Good Friday
- 19 Easter Vigil
- 20 Easter Sunday
- 27 Second Sunday of Easter (Mercy Sunday)
- 29 St. Catherine of Siena, virgin and doctor

MAY 2014

- 1 St. Joseph the Worker
- 2 St. Athanasius, bishop and doctor
- 3 Sts. Philip and James, apostles
- 4 Third Sunday of Easter
- 11 Fourth Sunday of Easter
- 14 St. Matthias, apostle
- 18 Fifth Sunday of Easter
- 25 Sixth Sunday of Easter
- 26 St. Philip Neri, priest
- 29 Ascension (in many places celebrated June 1)
- 31 Visitation of Mary

JUNE 2014

- 1 Seventh Sunday of Easter (or Ascension if not celebrated May 29)
- 3 Charles Lwanga and companions, martyrs
- 5 St. Boniface, bishop and martyr
- 8 Pentecost
- 11 St. Barnabas, apostle
- 13 St. Anthony, priest and doctor
- 15 Most Holy Trinity
- 21 St. Aloysius Gonzaga, religious
- 22 Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)
- 24 Birth of John the Baptist
- 27 Sacred Heart of Jesus
- 28 Immaculate Heart of Mary
- 29 Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles

Q&A Encountering the living God

(continued from page 1)

Consider yourself blessed to be in this position and use it as an opportunity to make a year-long retreat!

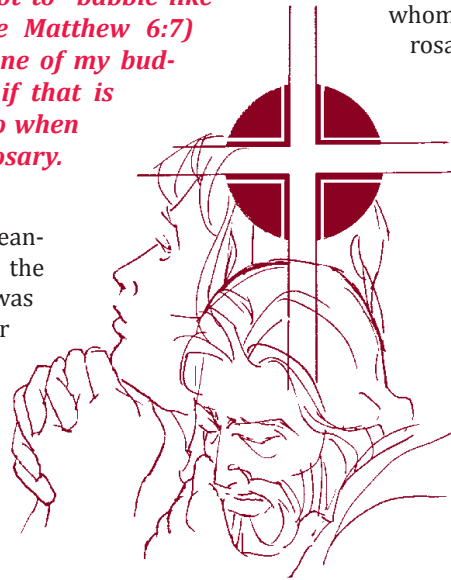
pray with a sincere heart open to God and his love, to listen to God, and to align our lives with God.

Q. The Bible says not to “babble like the pagans” (see Matthew 6:7) when we pray. One of my buddies here asked if that is what Catholics do when we say the rosary. What do you say?

A. Let's look for the meaning of this verse in the context of what Jesus was teaching about prayer (Matthew 6:5-8, 9-15; 7:7-11) in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 - 7).

Jesus is inviting his followers to pray to God who loves them and cares for them. Knowing God this way is what recent popes have called “an encounter with the living God” or “a personal encounter with Jesus.” Our relationship with God should be personal and friendly. We do not stand apart from God in fear but approach him knowing he forgives us for our sins and wants us as his friends.

When we know God in this way, there is no need to “babble” or “rattle on” in long-winded prayers. After all, God already knows what we need. He wants the best for us. When we babble on in prayer, it is likely that we don't trust God's care for us and are trying to convince God to give us what we think we need! Thus, Jesus teaches us to



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pray with a sincere heart open to God and his love, to listen to God, and to align our lives with God. May is the month of Mary to whom we pray the rosary. The rosary should help us meditate on or think about the spiritual truths that give us life and save us. This requires that we pray the rosary slowly and reflect on the mysteries as we pray. Praying the rosary this way helps us think about Jesus and his gift of life. It thus helps us to know and love Jesus more and to sense more deeply God's love for us. If our minds are blank when we pray the rosary or if we sense that we are “babbling,” we aren't praying the rosary correctly. This goes for all types of prayer, since prayer should be a heartfelt conversation with God.

Praying the rosary should help us grow in our relationship with God, to deepen our personal encounter with Jesus. This is a real blessing of praying the rosary.

Q. What does a Cardinal do?

A. Basically a Cardinal serves the Pope and helps him govern the Church. Some do that from the arch/dioceses around the world. Others do it in positions based at the

(continued on page 4)

Let's Talk!

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PMLTH1402

Two New Saints

Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II + Pope Francis will proclaim both John XXIII (born 1881, pope from 1958 to 1963) and John Paul II (born 1920, pope from 1978 to 2005) Saints of the Church on Sunday, April 27. Both popes were extremely popular and gave hope to many. And they lived in such inspiring ways with hearts filled with love for God and his people that they encouraged many with their holiness. May our prayer be that our hearts and the hearts of all people be open to the same grace that inspired and moved them. May we too be people who inspire others to love and goodness through the example of our lives. It is possible and God wants it for us!

Feast Day for John XXIII: June 3

Feast Day for John Paul II: October 22

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for April/May/June

APRIL

Universal. *Ecology and Justice:* That governments may foster the protection of creation and the just distribution of natural resources.

Evangelization. *Hope for the Sick:* That the Risen Lord may fill with hope the hearts of those who are being tested by pain and sickness.

MAY

Universal. *Media:* That the media may be instruments in the service of truth and peace.

Evangelization. *Mary's Guidance:* That Mary, Star of Evangelization, may guide the Church in proclaiming Christ to all nations.

JUNE

Universal. *Unemployed:* That the unemployed may receive support and find the work they need to live in dignity.

Evangelization. *Faith in Europe:* That Europe may rediscover its Christian roots through the witness of believers.

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

The Joy of the Gospel, Part 1

You can't give what you don't have

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: You know, Deke, I loves me some Pope Francis!

Me: Yeah, he's the "bomb" alright!

Peaches: Dude! He is the DIGGITY Bomb! I love how humble he is and how approachable he is.

Me: Yeah, the only way someone can break through all that ceremony is an authentic and fearless spirituality.

Peaches: He's the "real deal" all right. You know, some of us were talking the other night and we were wondering what changes he's going to make in the Church. You know?

Me: Well, actually, I do know. Not all the specifics but I know the direction he's heading.

Peaches: Oh, did you have lunch with him or something?

Me: No. I've been paying attention to the sermons and speeches he's been giving for one thing. He's not being cute about that any more than he is about how he acts. "What you see is what you get" with an integrated person who has done their inner work.

Peaches: Yeah, "how you do it is how you do it," alright.

Me: He has also given us the big picture in his apostolic exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel." That's the broad strokes of where his vision is.

Peaches: What's an "apostolic exhortation"?

Me: "Apostolic" refers to the apostles and their work. The Pope is a successor to the apostles.

Peaches: Peter!

Me: Correct. And an "exhortation" is when you urge people on to action, usually by strong arguments.

Peaches: Like a coach?

Me: Yeah, like at half time.

Peaches: So this "Joy of the Gospel" is Pope Francis' "I Have a Dream" speech?

Me: Yeah, that's a good comparison although his is a much longer document and not a short speech.

Peaches: So, what's the deal? What does he say?

Me: Well, OK, in the title "The Joy of the Gospel," he is concerned about being joyful because . . .

Peaches: A sad Christian is a bad Christian!

Me: Good bumper sticker! But I think it's fairer to say it positively, "Joy is the infallible sign of the Holy Spirit."

Peaches: So, a joyless Christian isn't done "cooking" yet?

Me: Right. No one can truly encounter Jesus and not be joyful. So, a joyless Christian is not fully evangelized.

Peaches: That's what evangelized is?

Me: Yes. Let me translate that Latin root word "evangelized" into English: "Good News-ed."

Peaches: OK, because everybody experiences joy when they get "good news"!

Me: Exactly. So you might know a lot of stuff about Jesus from Catholic school or Sunday school but if there's no joy . . .

Peaches: Then you haven't actually experienced him!

Me: And our job as followers of Jesus is to share that joy. It's wrong to keep it to ourselves. Every other person deserves to be joyful so our main job is to "Good News" people so that they can have the love of God like us. And of course, there are many different ways to do that and Pope Francis talks about them too in EG.

Peaches: "EG"?

Me: *Evangelii Gaudium*. That's the original Latin title of "The Joy of the Gospel."

Peaches: So all the "cool kids" call it "EG" now?

Me: Something like that.

Peaches: OK. So, I've got the "joy" part of the title. What's the "Gospel" part?

Me: Well, firstly, I would say that going back to our job is to spread the joy. Pope Francis is saying "You can't give it if you don't have it."

Peaches: Right! Sad Christians are not believable salesmen for "joy."

Me: The Pope calls them "Christians whose lives seem like a perpetual Lent without Easter!"

Peaches: Pretty good bumper sticker there too!

Me: But it isn't about "selling" anything. It's about sharing something. It's an invitation.

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 Seven Deadly Sins, Part 1

Sin and grace are both real

Several years ago, we printed a series of articles in *Let's Talk!* on the fruit of the Spirit. St. Paul listed the fruit in his letter to the Galatians (5:22), writing: "In contrast, the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." We might ask, "in contrast" to what?

Work of the flesh. The Spirit's fruit contrast with the fruit of "the flesh"—not physical flesh, but our innate selfishness. We experience these beautiful fruit of the Spirit in our lives as we are faithful to Christ on our journey of faith. Paul acknowledges the power, the fruit, of the Spirit before he lists the works, the fruit, of "the flesh" showing what was important to him.

In fact, St. Paul wrote, "The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; the two are directly opposed" (Galatians 5:17). In this passage alone, Paul listed 15 different sins, and ended with "and the like." It doesn't take much looking in Scripture to see lots of other sins listed, and some wild sinful behavior in the Old Testament as well. When we begin the penitential season of Lent, we are told not to steal and lie, hate our brother or curse the deaf (Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18). The same as we begin our Advent journey (Romans 13:11-14). Then again, throughout scripture and the Church year, sin rears its ugly head many times. After all, we are fallen creatures and sin mars our journey.

Whatever became of sin? Sin fell out of style for a time in the sixties and seventies. For a time, it wasn't taken very seriously by some. But today more spiritual writers again recognize the negative impact of sin on people's lives. As a consequence, more Christians are looking at how sin impacts our lives.

A popular treatment of sin a number of years ago was the book *Whatever Became of Sin*, written in 1973 by Karl A. Menninger, a well-regarded American psychiatrist. He wrote that after years of sin being dismissed as a mere psychological problem or perhaps as mental illness, he suggested we should see sin as a theological problem which we all experience in our lives. We should not ignore it or wish it away.

The "seven deadly sins." This group of seven sins is a traditional classification of sins from early Christian times to our own day. These sins are considered to be at the heart or root of all other sin. In the tradition, these sins are usually given as pride, envy, anger, sloth (laziness), greed, gluttony, and lust.

They are also known as the seven "capital" sins. "Capital" comes from the Latin *caput*, meaning "head." They are called "capital" because they cause or provoke other sins and vices. The purpose of this series of articles is not to set us on a guilt trip. Rather, it is to help us see more deeply into our lives at what may be the cause of our struggles as we seek to walk with the Lord on a daily basis.

Life through and in Christ. St. Paul yearned that people would know life in Christ. And he sought to understand what prevented this experience of life. As he wrote in his letter to the Romans, it might boil down to this: Life is in Christ; death is in sin. "If death began its reign through one man because of his offense, much more shall those who receive the overflowing grace and gift of justice live and reign through the one man Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

Paul's words should inspire us as we seek to follow Jesus: "despite the increase of sin, grace has far surpassed it" (Romans 5:20). Or, to put it another way: "grace is greater than sin." Or another way: "where sin abounds, grace super abounds."

As we look at these seven deadly sins, we should avoid the temptation to feel powerless in light of our own sin. Remember, by his cross and Resurrection Jesus has conquered sin and death. Grace is greater than sin. These coming reflections on the seven deadly sins are to help us know ourselves better and what makes us "tick." As we draw close to Jesus on our daily walk with him, this knowledge of ourselves should help us yield to the power of grace and come to a deeper and richer life in him.

~ Anthony Bosnick

Q&A

Encountering the living God

(continued from page 2)

Vatican in Rome and have oversight over important Church functions.

On February 22 this year, Pope Francis created 20 new cardinals. They join almost 200 others (some retired) to care for the Church. Pope Francis told the Cardinals that their position is not one of pride and privilege. It is a great honor, but one which calls them to be servants whose job it is to proclaim the Good News and live it as a witness of loving service to the world. It is a great responsibility.

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

Anima Christi (Soul of Christ)

A prayer for quiet meditation

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.

Body of Christ, save me.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water from Christ's side, wash me.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me.

Within Thy wounds hide me.

Suffer me not to be separated

from Thee.

From the malicious enemy

defend me.

In the hour of my death call me

And bid me come unto Thee

That I may praise Thee with

Thy saints and with Thy angels

Forever and ever.

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.