



Let's Talk!



A Catholic Ministry to Prisoners

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

Walk with Jesus each Day

Have you ever been asked when you were saved? Some Christians like to ask this question, especially of Catholics. It is a good question to consider. The answer is that Christ Jesus saved us when he died on the cross and rose to new life. We also believe that we personally enter into this salvation when we are baptized into Christ. And we are challenged to live out our salvation each day as we walk in faith through life.

Faith is a path. Pope Benedict XVI teaches us that faith is a path we must walk each day, no matter who we are or the circumstances of our lives. There is no day off. There is no time to forget our purpose. As long as we journey through life, our faith is "under pressure and under threat," says the pope.

Life can be—and often is—a "valley of tears," as we pray in the Hail, Holy Queen. We may want a life without challenges, but that is seldom the case in life. Our faith matures as we face life's challenges and struggle through unbelief. We know these struggles, but can go right through them as we walk each day with Jesus.

The wonderful truth is that Jesus is with us to refresh us and give us rest. The more we answer his call to take his yoke upon our shoulders and walk with him, the more we will find that "he is gentle and humble of heart" (see Matthew 11:28-30).



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Spiritual resolutions for the new year.

We can take practical steps each day that help us walk in faith with Jesus. These spiritual resolutions for the new year will help you do that:

- 1) Receive the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and reconciliation, as often as possible. If you can't, ask a chaplain or volunteer to bring you communion.
- 2) Pray each day. Talk to Jesus as to a friend.
- 3) Read

Scripture daily. This will comfort you as it leads you to Jesus. 4) Fellowship with other Christians and learn how to support one another in your faith. You may have to avoid some people for your own security or to avoid sin, but pray for them.

Make these spiritual resolutions your own this year. In good times and in bad, your faith will grow. You will know that Jesus is with you, giving you life, love, peace, and hope!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Another new year begins. Another opportunity to rededicate our lives to Jesus as his disciples! No matter what we have done or what our relationship with Jesus is, he is always calling us back to him. He came to give us life and life to the full (John 10:10).

As we begin the new year, take some extra time to talk with Jesus. You can turn to him anew and he will welcome you with open arms. Now is also a good time to commit to the four spiritual resolutions for the new year given in the article above. You will find them a good support in your walk with Jesus.

Father Kenneth Boyack, CSP
President, PNCEA

God's Word Changes Lives

This truth can change your life: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16). Do you experience Scripture teaching you and guiding you through life's journey?

The Church wants us to know that Scripture can guide our lives. And to that end, for three weeks this past October, a great assembly of bishops and experts in Scripture met in Rome to talk about the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church. This gathering is called a Synod of Bishops. Synods give leaders of the Church an opportunity to come together to prayerfully reflect on things of vital importance to the life of the Church and to all Christians.

A historic gathering. Because this Synod on Scripture is so important, we want to tell you about it here rather than having our usual question and answer column. History was made at the Synod in many ways. Never before had a Patriarch of the Orthodox Church addressed a Synodal Assembly at the Vatican. Never before had a Jewish Rabbi addressed the Pope, Cardinals and Bishops gathered together in Synod. Never before had the Holy Father appointed 25 women to take part in the Synodal proceedings at the Vatican. What a great day for the Church that all could join together to listen to each other and learn from one another!

During the three weeks they met, the nearly 400 Synod participants gave hundreds of suggestions to Pope Benedict XVI. These were summarized as 55 propositions. In order to make them more understandable to the average Catholic, these propositions were summarized in "four phrases" which we now look at. They help us to understand how Catholics approach Scripture and see its meaning for the Church and the world.

(continued on page 2)

January 2009

- 1 Mary, Mother of God
- 2 St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen, bishops and doctors
- 4 Epiphany of the Lord
- 5 St. John Neumann, bishop
- 11 Baptism of the Lord
- 17 St. Anthony, abbot
- 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- 18 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 21 St. Agnes, virgin and martyr
- 24 St. Francis de Sales, bishop and doctor
- 25 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 26 Sts. Timothy and Titus, bishops
- 28 St. Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor
- 31 St. John Bosco, priest

February 2009

- 1 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 2 Presentation of the Lord
- 5 St. Agatha, virgin and martyr
- 6 St. Paul Miki and Companions, martyrs
- 8 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 10 St. Scholastica, virgin
- 15 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 22 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 23 St. Polycarp, martyr
- 25 Ash Wednesday

March 2009

- 1 First Sunday of Lent
- 3 St. Katharine Drexel, virgin
- 7 Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, martyrs
- 8 Second Sunday of Lent
- 15 Third Sunday of Lent
- 17 St. Patrick of Ireland, bishop
- 19 St. Joseph, Husband of Mary
- 22 Fourth Sunday of Lent
- 25 Annunciation of the Lord
- 29 Fifth Sunday of Lent



Let's Talk!®

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God's Word Changes Lives

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The Voice of the Word: Revelation. The first point is that the Scriptures “bear witness’ to the divine word in written form.” They “memorialize” God’s work in creation in words. God’s word, however, goes beyond the Bible, because the Bible—as great a gift as it is—captures only that which has been written down. There is much more of God’s creative word that is not written down. Our faith is not centered on a book, as important as that book is. *Rather, our faith is centered on a person, Jesus Christ, who saves us.*

The Face of the Word: Jesus Christ. The Word of God was made flesh in Jesus Christ (John 1:14). Jesus reveals to us the full meaning of the Word of God and the unity of Scripture. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus reveals the Father to us. We need Jesus to understand the meaning of the word which preserves divine truth. “That the divine Word has put on a face is at the center of Revelation.”

The House of the Word: The Church. The Church is the home of this word, and “continues to keep, announce and interpret the word of God.” The Church is challenged in all that she does to proclaim the word. This is at the heart of her work and mission. In her liturgical celebrations, especially the Eucharist, in her preaching, teaching, and prayer, in all these ways the Church makes a home for the word. In this home, we are all nourished. The ministers of the Church are

challenged to take the word into their own lives, to live it and teach it.

The Roads of the Word: The Mission. Christ proceeds into the highways and byways of the world, making known the truth of God. As the Word made flesh, he brings the life of God to the world.



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He stands at the door of our lives knocking, asking to be invited in. “If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). To receive this life, we are called to read Scripture and pray with it, allowing the Word of God to transform us through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Benedict encouraged all followers of Christ to read the word and meditate on it, “so that it may continue to dwell in us, to live in us, and to speak to us. Let it resonate at the beginning of our day so that God has the first word and let it echo in us in the evening so that God has the last word.”

Can there be any stronger message that we Catholics must read Scripture daily, reflect on it, and let it transform us!

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

Prisoner Saint

St. Polycarp (c. 69 – c. 155) ✠ We know little about this extraordinary saint who led the Church in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) in its earliest days. His only writing to survive is his letter to the Church in Philippi. To those early Christians, he wrote these words of wisdom: “Stand fast... and follow the example of the Lord, ‘firm and unchangeable in faith, lovers of the brotherhood, loving each other, united in truth,’ helping each other with the mildness of the Lord, despising no man.” These are wise words for us too as we begin a new year! At age 86, Polycarp was arrested and sentenced to death by fire. When the flames did not harm him, he died from the thrust of a dagger. Polycarp remained faithful to Christ to the end.

Feast Day: February 23

The Twelve-Step Program

We sought through...Step 12

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Peaches: You know, Deke, this “spiritual awakening” in Step 12 kinda throws me. I’m not sure if it’s too vague or too super-duper religious sounding, you know?

Me: You might be assuming that it’s talking about some big thing like St. Paul meeting the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus or something.

Peaches: I kinda was actually...

Me: Yeah, I thought so. The “spiritual awakening” in the 12 steps is not supernatural, like St. Paul meeting Jesus. It’s a natural awakening of the human spirit. It’s more like when Jesus kept telling his disciples to “Stay awake!” (Matthew 24:42).

Peaches: So, what does our spirit wake up from?

Me: From being put into a coma by the drug and alcohol abuse. There’s an old Catholic saying, “Grace builds on nature.”

Peaches: Meaning?

Me: Meaning that, unlike us, God deals only in reality. He only works with what is. So, he works with us just the way we are and where we are at the moment. It also means that we can block him out.

Peaches: OK, so we put ourselves into a condition of addiction where we can no longer respond to God and we need to get back to normal human functioning to do that. But how do you know you’ve had a “spiritual awakening”?

Me: The human spirit shows itself through the various parts of the human person. As you live clean and sober you get healthier physically, mentally, emotionally. Over time, our will and imagination are returned to normal as well.

Peaches: I remember that! I remember hearing the birds in the Spring for the first time in years! I remember noticing the leaves changing colors in the Fall again!

Me: Good examples, P!

Peaches: So now that God has us back in touch with reality, we are ready and able to receive the blessings that he has been pouring out on us all along when addiction kept our human spirit from receiving them.

Me: Correct.

Peaches: The next part about “carrying the message” is an easy one to relate to practicing the Catholic faith, Deke.

Me: Easy? Really?

Peaches: Yeah, easy because you never shut up about it! It’s evangelization—sharing the good news. I think in both the case of Step 12 and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), the first disciple you’re making is yourself and the first Recovery you are strengthening is yours. You are deepening what you know about Recovery or God by sharing it with someone else who could use it.

Me: True. There’s another old saying, “If you want to learn something, teach it to someone else.”

Peaches: So you always make out on the deal by sharing. And sometimes the other person makes out too if they will accept the invitation that you’re offering. It will keep you straight.

Me: So, you’re saying that it works even if you don’t succeed in convincing the other person?

Peaches: Deke, that’s why the word “tried” is in there. We just have to try to carry the message. We deepen it in us, whatever the other person decides to do with it.

Me: Isn’t that powerlessness?

Peaches: Yeah it is, and I accept it!

Me: Isn’t acceptance another principle?

Peaches: Acceptance and powerlessness are some of the principles referred to where it says that we try to “practice these principles in all of our affairs.” Like when we are doing Step 12 work!

Me: I guess that takes care of the third part of Step 12!

Peaches: See, Deke? That’s what you call a “two fer”! Am I good or what?! Kinda scary, don’t you think?

Me: Frightening.

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 January/February/March

January

General. Family: That the family may become more and more a place of training in charity, personal growth, and transmission of the faith.

Missionary. Ecumenism: That the different Christian confessions, aware of the need for a new evangelization in this period of profound transformations, may be committed to announcing the Good News and moving towards the full unity of all Christians in order to offer a more credible testimony of the Gospel.

February

General. Openness to Holy Spirit: That the Pastors of the Church may always be docile to the action of the Holy Spirit in their teaching and in their service to God’s people.

Missionary. Church in Africa: That the Church in Africa may find adequate ways and means to promote reconciliation, justice and peace efficaciously, according to the indications of the Synod of the Bishops’ Special Assembly for Africa.

March

General. Women: That the role of women may be more appreciated and used to good advantage in every country in the world.

Missionary. The Church in China: That in the light of the letter addressed to them by Pope Benedict XVI, the Bishops, priests, consecrated persons, and lay faithful of the Catholic Church in the People’s Republic of China may commit themselves to being the sign and instrument of unity, communion and peace.

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

Year of St. Paul—Part III

The Resurrection renews the whole world

Every year during the 50 days of the Easter season, the Church proclaims in its prayer that “the joy of the resurrection renews the whole world.” This is a truth that touches and changes our lives. We need to be open to the renewing work of God in us through Jesus’ saving death and resurrection. As we experience God at work in our lives, we begin to know even now the blessing of following Jesus.

During this Year of St. Paul, which runs from June 28, 2008 to June 29, 2009, we are looking at different aspects of St. Paul’s life and teaching. In Part II of this series, we looked at what St. Paul teaches about the meaning of the death of Jesus in our lives. In Part III, we will focus on what Paul teaches about the meaning of Jesus’ resurrection. Even though we look at Jesus’ death and resurrection as separate parts of his life and ministry, they are together one great work which frees us from sin and brings us into new life.

Christ’s resurrection shows his teaching true. Every Christian has at some time or another wondered if following Jesus is “worth it.” The answer rests on whether Jesus is for real or not. St. Paul puts it this way: “If Christ has not been raised [from the dead], then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

The resurrection of Jesus confirms that Jesus is indeed “for real.” And since he is, then it is worth following him. But if our belief relies only on the word of others, then we might still feel we are on shaky ground. The Gospels all witness *first-hand* to the resurrection (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20-21). But there is more!

New life to those who believe. We do not have to rely solely on the testimony of others, even though this is solid and a good place to start. In addition, we can rely on the testimony of the power of the resurrection we find *in our own lives*. Through baptism, we have been raised up with Christ to new life. As St. Paul writes: “We were buried therefore with [Christ] by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

And again: “God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, ... made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him” (Ephesians 2:4-6).

Jesus’ resurrection changes us. Through our baptism into Christ and our lives of faith, we enter into and experience the power of the resurrection in our lives. When the Church prays that the resurrection renews the whole world, she means that *it renews us as well!* The challenge is to live each of our days in faith by the power of Jesus in us.

Is that possible? Scripture says yes. The Saints say yes. And we too know the answer is yes as we walk by faith and experience the power of the resurrection. It is that power that helps us to overcome sin, darkness, anger, and the like (see Galatians 5:19-21). We strengthen ourselves for our walk in faith through the sacraments, and through prayer and reading Scripture. We do not walk alone, but with others who encourage us and support us in our faith.

We will see more about the meaning of this in Part IV of this series when we will reflect on St. Paul’s teaching about the Church and the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Scripture passages to study:

- Romans 1:4, 6:1-14
- 1 Corinthians 15:12-13, 20-22
- 2 Corinthians 5:15
- Philippians 3:10-11
- 1 Peter 1:3; 3:21

Ways to take action:

1. In what ways can you speak of experiencing the power of the resurrection in your life?
2. What are some of the things that keep you from experiencing the power of the resurrection more deeply and fully?
3. Do you have hope and faith in the promise of new life for you through Jesus’ death and resurrection?

~ Anthony Bosnick

A Daily Prayer for Justice and Mercy

Jesus, united with the Father and the Holy Spirit, give us your compassion for those in prison.

Mend in mercy the broken in mind and memory.

Soften the hard of heart, the captives of anger.

Free the innocent; parole the trustworthy.

Awaken the repentance that restores hope. May prisoners’ families persevere in their love.

Jesus, heal the victims of crime.

They live with the scars.

Lift to eternal peace those who die.

Grant victims’ families the forgiveness that heals.

Give wisdom to lawmakers and to those who judge.

Instill prudence and patience in those who guard.

Make those in prison ministry bearers of your light,

for all of us are in need of your mercy!

Amen

2009 Calendars

New 2009 calendars are available, also the booklet “Prayers for Addicted Persons and Their Loved Ones,” and bookmark. In English and Spanish, all from the National Catholic Council on Alcoholism and related Drug problems. Send your name and address to: NCCA, 1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, MI 48360.

Letter from Prison

Our Letter from Prison column will continue in our next newsletter. Do you have a story of God working in your life you would like to share with others? Send us your witness of 325 words or less. Please send it to *Let’s Talk!*; PNCEA; 3031 Fourth Street, NE; Washington, DC 20017.

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.

Pray for our benefactors

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