



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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Bend your ear. Listen and put into practice.

Living the Christian life challenges us all! It calls us—all of us—to look at our lives and reflect on how we are following Jesus each day. None of us should think it is impossible. And with the New Year upon us, now is a good time to rededicate ourselves to our daily walk with Jesus.

Listen to the word of God. Put it into practice. Pope Francis is gifted in the way he helps us focus on what is important. Last fall he reflected on Luke 8:19-21, a Gospel passage about Jesus and his family. Pope Francis said this: “These are the two conditions in order to follow Jesus: listen to the word of God, and to put it into practice. This is the Christian life – nothing more. Simple, simple. Maybe we’ve made it a little difficult, with many explanations

that no one understands, but the Christian life is thus: listening to the word of God and practicing it.”

Bend your ears . . . Pope Francis went on to say that “The point is not to hear casually, but to bend our ears – really to listen to the word of God, which we find in the Gospel – the pages of which need to be heard, and heeded, rather than merely read by rote.”

He continued: “Listening to the word of God means reading it and then asking, ‘What does this say to me? How does this speak to my heart? What is God saying to me, with this word?’”

Put it into practice. Pope Francis said advancing the Kingdom of God is for all of us. He means you in prison and jail too – not just popes, priests, religious sisters,



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(even though their work is vital too!). He said this: “There is the Kingdom of God, hidden, in the holiness of daily life, everyday holiness. Because the Kingdom of God is not far from us, it is near . . . It is close to us every day.”

Look at your life. Where do you need

to listen and to put into practice what God teaches? As Pope Francis said: “Let the Spirit come, change our soul and carry us forward in silence, in peace, in tranquility, in closeness to God, to others, in worship of God, without spectacle.” Think about it. Go for it. Especially now in prison.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A New Year of opportunities awaits us. We can look at our days as offering us both positive and negative challenges. Let’s go for the positive. With that attitude we are likely to find opportunities for personal and spiritual growth each day.

Pope Francis has said that “God does not wait for us to go to him, but it is he who moves toward us. . . . That is what God is like. He always takes the first step; he comes toward us” (General Audience, March 27, 2013).

Let us respond to God’s call and invitation to follow him. This is not to say it will be easy, but it will be grace-filled. God gives us all we need to follow him. This New Year is a good time to rededicate ourselves to our daily walk with Jesus! Be ready for some great blessings.

May God bless you and keep you in his care.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Growing in faith together

Spiritual Resolutions to help you on your journey

In this New Year, something to keep in mind is this: you can use your time of incarceration as a time to grow closer to Jesus and grow in faith. Many people like to look at the New Year as a time to make resolutions to improve their lives. So now can be a good time to rededicate ourselves to our daily walk with Jesus.

Experience has probably shown us that growing in faith doesn’t happen automatically. We have to do our part. Many spiritual directors recommend that if we want to grow spiritually, we need to develop our own “spiritual discipline.” At the heart of this is that we try to do what we can, not what we can’t. By this they mean that if you don’t have an hour a day of quiet for prayer, don’t attempt to pray an hour a day in quiet prayer. It won’t happen and you’ll just end up frustrated. Thus, seek to build a realistic spiritual life that suits your present circumstances.

Everyone’s circumstances differ, even in prison or jail. Your level of confinement and the number of others around you will affect the amount of distractions you face and the time you get for some quiet. But even your own personality will impact what you can and should try to do. Here are some suggestions for “spiritual resolutions” for this New Year. (You can read more about them in the Paulist Prison Ministries pamphlet “Conversion and Commitment to Christ.” Your chaplain or volunteer may be able to get a copy for you.)

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CHURCH CALENDAR

JANUARY 2015

- 1 Mary, Mother of God
- 2 Sts. Basil the Great and 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
- 22 Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
- 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 2015

- 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
- 14 St. Cyril, monk & St. Methodius, bishop
- 15 **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 18 **Ash Wednesday**
- 22 **First Sunday of Lent**

MARCH 2015

- 1 **Second Sunday in Lent**
- 3 St. Katharine Drexel, virgin
- 7 Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, martyrs
- 8 **Third Sunday in Lent**
- 15 **Fourth Sunday in Lent**
- 17 St. Patrick, bishop
- 18 St. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop, doctor
- 19 **St. Joseph, Husband of Mary**
- 22 **Fifth Sunday in Lent**
- 25 **Annunciation**
- 29 **Palm Sunday**

Let's Talk!

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Spiritual Resolutions to help you on your journey

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A good spiritual discipline consists of several parts. Here are some to consider: 1) Read the Word of God. 2) Worship and pray. 3) Be part of a community. 4) Care for and serve others. Let's take a look at them.

First, the Word of God. Read Scripture. Listen to Scripture being read. Since every Catholic Mass consists of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Mass provides a good time to hear the Word proclaimed. Listen to it and try to pick up something you can remember afterward to guide you.

It can sometimes be difficult to attend religious services while in prison or jail. Thus, it is also good to develop a daily habit of reading something from the Bible. You might want to follow the daily Mass readings. Or you might want to work your way through books of the Bible (starting with the New Testament), and perhaps the entire Bible itself.

It is important to remember that reading Scripture isn't a speed-reading contest. Read slowly and reflect on what you read. Ask the Holy Spirit for insight and understanding. Write down in a notebook if you can something that strikes you. (Try to maintain the privacy of your prayer notes.) Remember, "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).

Second, worship and pray. Attend Sunday Mass if you can. If it isn't available on Sunday, attend when it is offered. The Eucharist is the great sacrament of life and love. Participate with an open heart and

mind, with the desire of meeting Jesus and learning from him, growing in him, being healed by him.

For most people, the liturgy is at most once a week for an hour or less. Thus, in addition, have a time of personal prayer each day. Set aside a time and place when you can talk with God. A little such time is better than none. If possible, read

Scripture during this time as well. If none of this is possible, take time during the day to turn your mind and heart to God and talk with him. This is an example of "Pray as you can, not as you can't."

Third, be part of a community. If there is a Catholic fellowship or church at your prison or jail, participate in it if you can. (If it is a general Christian fellowship, make sure that they aren't "Catholic bashers" out to tear you down.) When Jesus formed a body of followers known as his disciples, he was setting an example for us. It is important to be part of a community.

A community can provide fun and fellowship that encourages us, and that supports us in hard times. Others there can be good people to talk with and grow with, and provide positive relationships. A community of believers is a place where we live out our faith, so it doesn't remain something just in our heads. It has to be in our hearts too, and participation in a community with other Christians challenges us to live out our faith.

Fourth, care for and serve others. This follows closely on number three above. Our faith isn't just about ourselves. It is about caring for and serving others as well. So look for ways you can do that while in

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Prisoner Saint

St. Paul Miki (c. 1562 – 1597) + This Japanese saint was born into a wealthy family, the son of a military leader. Fitting his position in life, he received an education by the Jesuits teaching in Japan. Moved by their preaching and example, he joined the Jesuits in 1580 and was later ordained a priest. He became known for his preaching, drawing many to Christ. During a persecution of Christians, Miki was arrested and jailed along with others. Together they marched 600 miles to Nagasaki where they were martyred on February 5. He preached his last sermon hanging from a cross, forgiving his executioners. Paul Miki and his 25 companions were canonized in 1862.

Feast Day: February 6

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for January/February/March

JANUARY

Universal. *Peace:*

That those from diverse religious traditions and all people of good will may work together for peace.

Evangelization.

Consecrated life: That in this year dedicated to consecrated life, religious men and women may rediscover the joy of following Christ and strive to serve the poor with zeal.

FEBRUARY

Universal. *Prisoners:*

That prisoners, especially the young, may be able to rebuild lives of dignity.

Evangelization. *Separated spouses:*

That married people who are separated may find welcome and support in the Christian community.

MARCH

Universal. *Scientists:*

That those involved in scientific research may serve the well-being of the whole human person.

Evangelization.

Contribution of women:

That the unique contribution of women to the life of the Church may be recognized always.

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

Building a better me

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: Deke, do you know what this Restorative Justice program is about?

Me: Well, basically these approaches are aimed at “restoring.” It’s the opposite of “retributive” justice . . .

Peaches: Easy now, Deacon, not all of us went to college! I don’t know what that is.

Me: (Laughing) Peaches, YOU are an expert on “retributive” justice! That’s what this whole prison is!

Peaches: Punishment?!

Me: That’s what retributive justice is basically: Punishment for harm caused that will deter the offender from doing it again.

Peaches: OK, that’s another S.A.T. word for me! So what’s the “diff”?

Me: Restorative justice seeks to put everything and everyone back into right relationship, not just to punish the offender. It would involve everybody who had a stake in the situation.

Peaches: So like the victim, their family . . .

Me: . . . and the community, the offender, perhaps the offender’s family—all stakeholders.

Peaches: So now, the goal is to get all these stakeholders (that’s 3 S.A.T. words!) together to make things right?

Me: Yes.

Peaches: That’s a long way from just punishing someone!

Me: It is. And it’s a lot more work on everybody’s part but when you’re done everyone is able to go forward with their lives.

Peaches: So what would be the pieces of a restorative justice program once you get all the stakeholders involved?

Me: Generally, they create different opportunities for the offender and victim and families to discuss the crime and its effects. Offenders get to deepen their realization of the harm, take real responsibility for it, and try to find ways to repair the harm. Also, the community finds ways to assist the ex-offender in getting back into society.

Peaches: Heavy!

Me: Oh yeah, but healing for all.

Peaches: Kind of like going to Confession.

Me: Very similar because the purpose of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to restore the sinner to communion.

Peaches: And the steps of owning the harm of our actions and having real sorrow are also in the sacrament.

Me: As is “giving back”—penance!

Peaches: We kind of already do some of that here. We have inmates who give back by cleaning the highways, volunteering to do community service, and training dogs for the blind.

Me: That’s part of restorative justice. Just like in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, sometimes, the penance cannot be given back directly so it’s done for the community in general.

Peaches: They say that about making amends in N.A.

Me: Well, N.A. and the other 12 Step programs are also aimed at restoration of the individual not at punishment so they tend to cover a lot of the same ground.

Peaches: I see why you said it’s more work than punishment. Not everyone will want to go into all of that painful stuff.

Me: True. But they are the same people who don’t want to do all the painful stuff at the 12 Step meetings or in Confession at the chapel. At the end of the day, we all choose what kind of person we are going to be and no one can do the work but us to create that person. People can only help set us up to do it.

Peaches: Maybe some of us inmates could get together and try to get more restorative stuff going here.

Me: It might work.

Peaches: Doesn’t matter if “it” works. The point is that I can make it work at least for me. I can restore me and my life. The rest is gravy. You know, it feels like a positive shift in my outlook with this restorative justice idea. I feel like I’m using my time instead of just doing my time. It makes me feel like the rest of this bid could be *my* project instead of something I just have to suffer through!

Me: . . . and don’t forget you also have all those new S.A.T. words to break off!

Peaches: Oh, Deacon, chow hall conversation is going to sparkle tonight—trust!

Deacon Dennis Dolan recently retired as chaplain at York Correctional Institution in Connecticut. He continues his work with and for prisoners through his writing as he discerns where God is calling him in service.

Anger is a short madness

Really? Isn't this overstating it a bit about anger? What does getting a little hot under the collar have to do with madness?

Well, the Roman poet Horace (who lived in the first century before Christ)—who saw anger as a short madness—described it this way because anger involves loss of control of one's senses, which is like a short-term madness. He went on to say, "so control your passion or it will control you." Those controlled by anger, when they come to their senses, will likely want to undo what their temper caused them to do (Horace, *Letters*, 1.2).

A deadly sin. Anger can become such a strong passion in us that it leads to all sorts of other sins. Church tradition and ancient wisdom see anger as a deadly sin. Jesus spoke some strong words against anger. "Whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother 'Raqa' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna" (Matthew 5:22).

"Raqa" is the Aramaic word meaning "imbecile" or "blockhead," which of course are insulting words of abuse. Anger will subject you to judgment by a local council; worse anger to trial before the Sanhedrin, and even worse anger to punishment in Gehenna (a reference to hell, or a hell-like place).

So anger is pretty serious. Jesus, of course, displayed a righteous anger at times

(Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 3:5). This is seen as "righteous" because it was aimed against the defamation of the holy temple and at the people's unbelief. This anger was an affront against God, not aimed at tearing down others.

Why is anger deadly? In the first place, anger tears *us* down. We become less than what we are called to be. In our anger, we focus in on ourselves, perhaps on what we want but didn't get or on what we think was an injustice. It can make us clam up and hold things to ourselves. We can even become irrational and not be able to think things through clearly. We lose the ability to communicate and to be friends with others.

When this happens, our anger turns out from us and lands on others. It thus breaks down family ties, and relationships with others. It can make us mean and unable to respond to others. Our anger can also make others not want to respond to us, to break off ties with others and friendships. Anger makes life miserable for others and they want nothing to do with us. At its worst, anger can make us strike out at others, and even harm or kill them.

When anger is directed inwardly at ourselves or outwardly toward others, or both, it breaks our peace and can even make us sick. Think of what anger has done to you.

Now perhaps we can see why anger is a deadly sin.

Beyond anger to new life. Scripture guides us with very practical advice. We

read in Ephesians: "Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger and do not leave room for the devil" (4:26-27). This is saying if we do get angry, to be reconciled by the end of the day (4:26-27). In Colossians we read: "But now you must put them all away: anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene language out of your mouths" (3:8).

There is something better than anger: the fruit of the Spirit, which is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). Seek that fruit for a happy life.

Grace is greater than sin. St. Paul's great hope is that all people would know life in Christ. 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).

As you look at your life, do not give up when you see anger. Rather, be inspired by Paul's words to us as we 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." Jesus is with us on our life-long pilgrimage. We may not change overnight, but if we invite Jesus to walk with us, we will see victory!

~ Anthony Bosnick

The Seven Deadly Sins

Pride **Lust**
Envy **Gluttony**
Anger **Greed**
Sloth

Spiritual Resolutions to help you on your journey

(continued from page 2)

prison or jail. Of course, be prudent and don't get entangled with people who will use and/or abuse you. That is why community is so important. When two or three are gathered together Christ is with you and you can better know when to be involved with another and when not to.

A Personal Encounter with Christ. At the heart of these spiritual resolutions that you can make part of your spiritual discipline is a "personal encounter with Christ." All of these things help you to encounter Christ, and when that happens you will grow spiritually. May this year be a time of special blessing for you on your journey.

2015 Calendars

New 2015 calendars are available, also the booklet "Prayers for Addicted Persons and Their Loved Ones." And a bookmark. In English and Spanish, all from the National Catholic Council on Alcoholism and Related Drug Problems.

To request this material, send your name and address to:

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