

Let's Talk!

A Catholic Ministry to Prisoners



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

Those with hope live differently

No one who attended the Mass Pope Benedict XVI celebrated in Nationals Stadium in Washington could miss the message: *The one who has hope lives differently.* It appeared throughout the stadium on large banners and across people's chests on T-shirts! Walking around the stadium, you could not but be inspired by the message.

Knowing God. Living differently because of hope is a message we should think about each day, and not forget. What does it mean to you? Some reading this may be faced with life in prison. Others may still have long years ahead of them, and still others may be out before too long. No matter your situation, what is it that gives you hope? What is it that makes life worth living?

In his encyclical *On Christian Hope (Spe Salvi)* issued in November 2007, Pope Benedict tells us that our reason for hope is that we have come to know God. Our hope flows from "a real encounter with this God" (para. 3). Such an encounter means that we live differently—for God and for others.

Living differently. How do you live differently? There isn't a magic answer to

this question. It comes back to the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

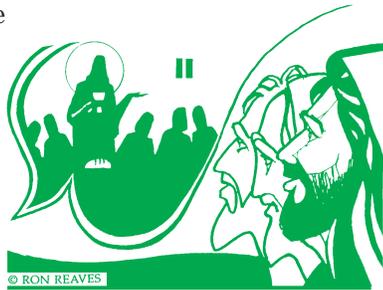
Look at your own life. How do you try to live differently in prison? Is it even possible?

It may be hard, but with God "all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). Some things are basic: • Attend the liturgy when you can. • Pray each day. • Read Scripture. • Fellowship with other Christians to support one another. You may have to avoid some people for your own security, but you

can pray for them. You can seek to serve others and to change your heart.

Jesus is with you. You likely regret different things in your life. While you can't turn the clock back and relive your life, you can live each day in a new way. Make this your goal. Know that Jesus is with you. His rod and staff comfort you and you need fear no evil (see Psalm 23:4; *Spe Salvi*, para. 6).

This will give you hope so you can live differently. It may be a slow walk with Christ, but our pilgrimage on this earth generally is.



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Christ is our hope Pope Benedict XVI calls Americans to embrace Christ

Americans met a kind and loving pastor during Pope Benedict XVI's six-day visit to Washington, D.C. and New York City in April. While the impact of the pope's visit is still being studied, a recent poll shows that Pope Benedict left both practicing and inactive Catholics as well as non-Catholic Americans with a positive view of himself and the Church.

The poll also showed that a majority of Catholics said they were more in touch with their spiritual lives after the visit than before. The poll was conducted by the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion for the Knights of Columbus.

During his visit, Pope Benedict urged Americans to embrace Christ in their lives and hearts. He also called Catholics to love and serve our neighbors in all the situations where we meet, in both society and the Church. Through both his words and deeds, he taught what it means that Christ is our hope.

Embrace the living God. A repeated theme in Benedict's messages during his visit is the importance of people having "an encounter with the living God." He spoke as well about helping people "establish and nurture...[a] living relationship with 'Christ Jesus, our hope'."

Meeting and embracing God who lives is vital for all of us. It empowers and strengthens our lives so that we can live as Christians in the situations in which we find ourselves. Over the years, Pope Benedict has taught in many ways about "meeting Christ." By this he means that in the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, and in our prayer and reading of Scripture, we meet God and allow him to guide us. He recognizes, too, the importance of being in community with other Christians who help us stay faithful to our personal walk with Christ.

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Life is worth living! The late Archbishop Fulton Sheen helped make this truth famous. He firmly believed that a life directed toward God the Father, lived with Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit is a life of blessing.

We believe that too. Life may not be easy. It may be filled with trials. But when we encounter the living God each day, our lives change. Little by little, we experience hope and joy. We begin to live differently. We find that life is worth living and make the most of it. Trust in that promise.

Father Kenneth Boyack, CSP
President, PNCFA

July 2008

- 3 St. Thomas, apostle
- 6 Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 11 St. Benedict, abbot
- 13 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 14 Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha, virgin
- 15 St. Bonaventure, doctor
- 20 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 25 St. James, apostle
- 26 Sts. Joachim and Anne, parents of Mary
- 27 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 29 St. Martha
- 31 St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest

August 2008

- 1 St. Alphonsus Liguori, bishop, doctor
- 3 Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 4 St. John Mary Vianney, priest
- 6 The Transfiguration of the Lord
- 8 St. Dominic, priest
- 9 St. Edith Stein
- 10 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 11 St. Clare, virgin
- 14 St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, priest, martyr
- 15 Assumption of the Virgin Mary
- 17 Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 20 St. Bernard, abbot, doctor
- 21 St Pius X, pope
- 22 Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 24 Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 27 St. Monica
- 28 St. Augustine, bishop, doctor
- 29 Martyrdom of John the Baptist
- 31 Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 2008

- 3 St. Gregory the Great, pope, doctor
- 7 Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 8 Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 9 St. Peter Claver, priest
- 13 St. John Chrysostom, bishop, doctor
- 14 Triumph of the Cross
- 15 Our Lady of Sorrows
- 16 St. Cornelius and St. Cyprian, bishops and martyrs
- 20 Sts. Andrew Kim Taegŏn, Paul Chŏng Hasang and companions, martyrs
- 21 Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 26 Sts. Cosmas and Damian, martyrs
- 27 St. Vincent de Paul, priest
- 28 Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 29 Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Archangels
- 30 St. Jerome, priest and doctor



Let's Talk!®

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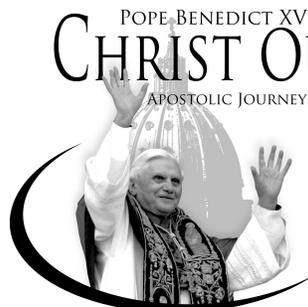
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Pope Benedict XVI calls Americans to embrace Christ (continued from page 1)

Live just lives. Pope Benedict's talks were laced with teaching about how social justice is central to living true Christian lives. In his address at the White House, he said that "The preservation of freedom calls for the cultivation of virtue, self-discipline, sacrifice for the common good and a sense of responsibility towards the less fortunate." And to the Jewish people at Passover he said that "This holy time of the year should be a call to both our communities to pursue justice, mercy, solidarity with the stranger in the land, with the widow and the orphan."



The themes of Catholic Social Teaching were also prominent in his address to the United Nations, and appear elsewhere as well. In the gathering with handicapped children in New York, Pope Benedict showed his love and concern for those with disabilities through his tender words and especially his actions. The scene was so moving that it left many of the parents and care-givers in tears.

Pope Benedict's words on social justice are more than a call to *do* something. They are a reflection on our call to *be* something—authentic human beings. When we are authentically human, our lives are more unified and reflect care for others.

Be truly human. Pope Benedict has a specific understanding of what a human person is and what we are called to be. He

sees the human person grounded in God-given dignity, with rights and responsibilities. We reflect divinity because we are "little Christs." We are not just blobs of protein.

Rather, humans are divinely-filled and inspired beings because we are made in the image and likeness of God. We are renewed in Christ and empowered by baptism.

This perspective needs to strengthen us and guide us as we live our daily lives, even and especially in prison. This is what moves us in our daily lives as we try to live for Christ and reach out to others in love and service each day. The world may not care, but Christians should, for this is what leads us to God.

Pope Benedict's visit included two large public Masses (in Washington and New York) as well as his address to the United Nations General Assembly. A unexpected meeting with victims of clergy sex abuse was heralded as a possible turning-point in forgiveness and healing. Additional gatherings included meetings with the Catholic bishops, leaders of other religious groups, youth and seminarians, children with disabilities, as well as with President Bush at the White House.

In our next issue, we will resume our Question and Answer column in this space. Please send us your questions about the Catholic faith to the address on page 2 of this newsletter.

Prisoner Saints

Sts. Cosmas and Damian (d. c. 287) ✠ Cosmas and Damian were physicians and twins. Born near the Black Sea in what is today Turkey, they were known far and wide for their gift of healing and because they would accept no pay for their services. Their generosity brought many to the Catholic faith. During the early years of the Diocletian persecution, they were arrested and imprisoned. When they refused to renounce their faith despite many tortures, and were finally beheaded with a sword. Their fame spread throughout Europe and inspired many. If you listen carefully to the priest praying the First Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, you will hear them honored. You will also hear Catholics call on them for their prayer in the Litany of the Saints.

Feast Day: September 26

The Twelve-Step Program

Watch and repent always...Step 10

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: So, Deke, that brings us to Step 10: "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

Me: Right!

Peaches: I get that the Inventory is the virtue of honesty and admitting we're wrong is the virtue of humility.

Me: Right. Those are good connections to Catholic spirituality.

Peaches: And the "continued" part means ongoing practice!

Me: Yup. The personal inventory is the daily practice of what we did in steps 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

Peaches: Wow! How can you do all that every day? It must take hours!

Me: No. It's a much shorter version. Remember, when we originally do the Steps we are dealing with a pile up of issues from years and years. In the Inventory, we are only looking at a day or even just a part of one day.

Peaches: So this is like that 12-Step slogan, "One Day at a Time"!

Me: Exactly. And that's one of the ways you can do your Inventory: run through the slogans and see if you're living them and applying them to your life.

Peaches: I can see how that would really work. "People, places and things"; "Let go and Let God."

Me: The Inventory will help keep small things from becoming the big problems that will cause a relapse. On the positive side, it also helps us to grow. Keeping an eye on the character defects that we found in Step 4 is another way to do the Inventory. Not to mention that we can't make much progress at all if we are not realistic and honest in viewing ourselves. And someone who is daily checking their attitudes, motivations and actions out is going to have a clear and realistic picture of themselves.

Peaches: Isn't this like going to Confession weekly?

Me: Very much so! That's another good connection with Catholic spirituality. Even closer would be the Examen.

Peaches: I forgot about that!

Me: That must mean you're not doing it, P!

Peaches: Busted, Deke.

Me: But the Examen is just an Inventory that is focused on our Spirituality instead of our Recovery. But they will both reinforce each other and make both these areas of our lives stronger and more reality-based.

Peaches: In the Examen, you just look over your day and see where you sinned, right?

Me: Yes, but you also make it a conversation with God. We ask his help to see clearly. We make a plan for how to do better and ask him to give us the strength to put it into action. It's not just a negative, "My bad" practice. Like the Inventory, we spot, admit, correct, and amend our faults. Without this, our "progress" is just a fantasy. Progress means taking steps in Spirituality or Sobriety.

Peaches: This also reminds me of what I read about the Desert Fathers in the early Church. A big part of their spirituality was "examining their thoughts," wasn't it?

Me: That's another good connection! And they were regularly doing that to correct what was wrong and grow in their Spirituality. Same. Same.

Peaches: They called it "Watchfulness."

Me: Sure. They were also applying the slogans—Jesus' Slogans: "Watch" and "Repent." He said that all the time when he

was walking around preaching. The Desert Mothers and Fathers called it Noetic Warfare.

Peaches: Noetic!? Now, there's an S.A.T. word, Deke!

Me: Greek, actually. It means "of the mind": Mind Warfare.

Peaches: A "Battlefield of the Mind"! Sounds like something in 12-Step material, all right!

Me: All of this is good practice.

Peaches: "Practice" makes it sound like piano lessons!

Me: Yeah, but this is practice to be a functioning, adult Human Being.

Peaches: Well, it ain't easy being human, that's for sure.

Me: Or a Christian!

Peaches: I guess if someone says it's easy, then you know that they are not really trying to live it, huh?

Me: Oldest "Chaplain Trick" in the book, P!

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 July/August/September

July

General. Volunteers: That there may be an increase in the number of volunteers who offer their services to the Christian Community.

Missionary. World Youth Day: That World Youth Day in Sidney, Australia may awaken the fire of divine love in young people and make them sowers of hope for a new humanity.

August

General. Respect for Creation: That the human family may know how to respect God's design for the world and thus become ever more aware of the great gift of God which Creation represents for us.

Missionary. Call to Holiness: That through discernment of gifts and commitment to spiritual formation, holiness may be promoted among the people of God.

September

General. Refugees: That Christians may defend and protect refugees.

Missionary. Christian Families: That every Christian family may be a small evangelizing community which is responsive to the needs of others.

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

Year of St. Paul

St. Paul witnessed to Jesus, had a spirit of sacrifice

Most people wonder from time to time if their lives are making a difference in this world. Many people—both inside and outside of prison—feel they are stuck where they are in life. Consequently, they tend to live day-to-day with no sense of purpose and meaning.

At times like these, it would do us well to look at the life of St. Paul. Even though he was an extraordinary and gifted man, we can still learn something from him about making a difference in life. St. Paul had a purpose to his life and a reason to live. And he was willing to make the sacrifices to achieve his purpose.

The Pauline Year. This year—from June 28, 2008 to June 29, 2009—is a special year dedicated to St. Paul. Pope Benedict XVI has proclaimed this “Pauline Year” to celebrate the 2,000 anniversary of St. Paul’s birth. While we are not sure exactly of the year St. Paul was born, this is about as close as scholars can get from the available evidence.

Pope Benedict sees it as important to the Church and world to celebrate this year dedicated to St. Paul. In everything, Paul witnessed to and proclaimed the truth of Jesus. And so too does the Church and world today need men and women who live and share their faith in Christ. And as Paul gave all for the gospel, even his life, so too do the Church and world today need people willing to sacrifice so that the Good News of Christ will touch people’s lives.

A celebration for all Christians. Pope Benedict also prays that this year will be “ecumenical.” That is, he hopes it will involve all Christian churches, reflecting St. Paul’s desire for unity and harmony among those who follow Christ. You may want to check with your chaplain to see how Christians in your jail or prison might join together to study and reflect on the meaning of St. Paul’s life for the Church today. There are already many ideas posted on the Internet.

Remember this: Just because you are in jail or prison does not mean that you are not part of the Church. *Christ needs you to be a witness where you are and in your particular situation.* Use the opportunities available to you to

reflect the life and love of God in Christ Jesus, even to the point of sacrifice. Your life can make a difference.

The little way. St. Paul was a great man with great ideas, called by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. What he taught can inspire you on your way. Very few people are as tremendously gifted as Paul, but that does not mean we do not have gifts and talents we can use.

We all have received gifts from God through the Holy Spirit who came upon us at Baptism and empowers us in Confirmation (see Isaiah 1:6). Through the Eucharist and other sacraments and our personal prayer, we are strengthened each day to follow Christ in a noble way.

Most of us are called to live according to the “little way.” We will not do great things in the eyes of the world, but through faithfully following Christ in the little things of life, we live our faith and show it to others. The teachings of St. Paul can strengthen us as we walk in the little way of daily faithfulness and sacrifice. We will look at some of those teachings in the coming issues of *Let’s Talk!* as we celebrate this Year of St. Paul. Through these teachings you will see how your life can make a difference to other people.

Scripture passages to study:

- Acts of the Apostles 7:54-58; 9:1-30; 11:25-30; chapters 13 –28
- Romans 11:1
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-10
- 2 Corinthians 11:16 – 12:12
- Galatians 1:11 – 2:14
- Philippians 3:4-6
- 2 Timothy 3:10-11

Ways to take action:

1. In what ways can you be a better witness to Jesus through your life?
2. What things keep you from being a more faithful witness?
3. How can a spirit of sacrifice help you overcome those things that keep you back?

~ Anthony Bosnick

Letter from Prison

Prayer for Happiness

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, have mercy Lord. Welcome Blessed Trinity.

Praising Jesus. Praising God. Praising Holy Spirit. Thank you Jesus. Thank you God. Thank you Holy Spirit. Jesus, Holy Spirit, Father. Yes. Praise God for the thought of Happiness.

In the name of Jesus Praying happiness. Jesus Choosing happiness. Jesus Focused happiness. Praising Jesus Healing happiness. Thank you Healthy happiness.

In the name of Jesus Increasing happiness. Jesus Yes Christ happiness. Jesus Forgiveness happiness. Jesus Peaceful happiness. Thank you Jesus. Thank you God. Contemplating happiness. Praising Jesus. Praising God Believe in happiness. Thank you Jesus Trusting happiness. God your holy will be done.

Praising Jesus. Praising God. Praising Holy Spirit. Jesus Singing happiness. Jesus Recalling happiness. Jesus Praising happiness. Jesus Blessed happiness. Praising Jesus. Praising God. Rejoicing happiness. Jesus Giving happiness. Holy Spirit Christ in you. Praising Jesus. Praising God. Praising Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus: Teaching, Preaching, Dreaming happiness. Jesus Liberating happiness.

In the name of Jesus Thinking happiness. Jesus Wanting happiness. Jesus Heaven happiness. Jesus Seeking happiness. Jesus Freedom happiness. Jesus Resurrection happiness.

Praising Jesus Thanking God Renewing happiness. Jesus Inner happiness. Jesus Mental happiness. Jesus Right Here happiness. Jesus Receiving happiness. In the name of Jesus Claiming happiness. In the name of Jesus Witness happiness. Jesus New Self happiness. In the name of Jesus Behold happiness. In the name of Jesus Saved From Fear. Amen.

~ A prisoner from Pennsylvania

Pray for our benefactors

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