



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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## Vine and Branches

This is the time of year after spring rain and summer heat that vines grow wild if not tended. Their branches twist and turn and entangle everything in their way. They may show abundant growth, but little fruit. They need to be pruned if they are to bear their intended fruit.

The same is true in our lives. We need to be trimmed and pruned if we are to bear good fruit in our lives.

**Vine and branches.** Jesus tells us, "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5). And he says that we must remain in him if we want to bear much fruit. Without him, we "can do nothing" (v. 15). Jesus wants all his followers to bear fruit, even when you are in jail or prison.

This might surprise you. You might think that because you are in prison, your life has lost its meaning. But the truth is that no matter who we are or where we are, our lives still have dignity and mean-

ing. In whatever circumstances we might be, we should never feel that there is no purpose for our lives.

Even now while you are in prison, you can use the daily circumstances of your life to bring deeper meaning to your life and to the lives of those around you. This is what it means for you to "bear fruit."

**Bear much fruit.** Through the witness of your life lived with Christ, you can be an instrument of peace. You can bring love where there is hatred; forgiveness where there is injury; faith where there is doubt; light where there is darkness; joy where there is sadness. (See the Prayer of St. Francis, page 4). You can bring others hope. In these ways, you bear fruit wherever you are.

In prison, you have to be prudent and



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careful. But if you are involved in a faith community with other Catholics (and other Christians), you will have plenty of opportunity to bear fruit. The prison community of faith is where you are now living your life. The lived-out faith of this community may be a light of truth and joy which brings others to follow Christ.

**Jesus wants you as his disciple.** Follow Jesus and let yourself be like a fruitful branch on the vine of Christ. Allow yourself to be pruned by the Father to bear much fruit. Remember Jesus' words, "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples" (v. 8). Being in prison doesn't excuse you from this call. It only changes how you can respond.

### Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in this season of grace! How good it is to know that Christ is calling you to follow him as his disciple. Even while in prison, your life has purpose and meaning. The challenge you face is the same challenge we all face: how can we use each day to walk more faithfully with Christ and bear abundant fruit in our lives. We hope that this issue will help you on your faith journey.

We would like to hear from you if you have a positive experience to share with others about the blessing of reading Scripture. We would like to print your story in a future issue. See page 4 of this issue for more information.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP  
President, PEM

## Reading Scripture for Spiritual Growth, Part 1 Tips for Getting Started

Reading the Bible is a spiritual discipline with great rewards and benefits for the spiritual life of Christians. Today the Church "forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ,' by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ'" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 133). It is so important that the Catholic bishops from around the world met in Rome in 2008 to focus on the Bible in the life of the Church and Christian.

### Pray when you read Scripture

Even before we begin to look at ways to read the Bible, we want to start by saying that prayer should be part of our Scripture reading. Reading the Bible is a spiritual practice that helps us meet the living God and to grow closer to Jesus. It should help us become more faithful disciples or followers of Christ.

Reading Scripture should help us learn about Jesus and the early Church. It should also help us learn about the ancient Israelites in the Old Testament. Growing in knowledge of the Bible and its history is a good thing. But a primary reason for reading Scripture is to grow spiritually, not just to gain intellectual knowledge. To do that, we need to pray when we read Scripture. This helps us and God to talk together.

Prayer helps us learn how God's word in Scripture applies to our personal lives. When we say that we should pray as we read Scripture, we mean to talk with God about

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## CHURCH CALENDAR

### JULY 2011

- 1 Sacred Heart of Jesus
- 2 Immaculate Heart of Mary
- 3 Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 10 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 11 St. Benedict, abbot
- 14 Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha, virgin
- 15 St. Bonaventure, bishop, doctor
- 17 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 22 St. Mary Magdalene
- 24 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 25 St. James, apostle
- 26 St. Joachim and St. Anne, parents of Mary
- 29 St. Martha
- 31 Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### AUGUST 2011

- 1 St. Alphonsus Liguori, bishop, doctor
- 4 St. John Mary Vianney, priest
- 6 The Transfiguration of the Lord
- 7 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 8 St. Dominic, priest
- 9 St. Edith Stein, virgin, martyr
- 10 St. Lawrence, deacon, martyr
- 11 St. Clare, virgin
- 14 Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 15 Assumption of the Virgin Mary
- 20 St. Bernard, abbot, doctor
- 21 Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 22 Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 24 St. Bartholomew, apostle
- 27 St. Monica
- 28 Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 29 Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist

### SEPTEMBER 2011

- 3 St. Gregory the Great, pope, doctor
- 4 Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 8 Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 9 St. Peter Claver, priest
- 11 Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 13 St. John Chrysostom, bishop, doctor
- 14 Triumph of the Cross
- 15 Our Lady of Sorrows
- 16 St. Cornelius, pope and martyr, and St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr
- 18 Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 20 St. Andrew Kim Taegön, priest and martyr, St. Paul Chông Hasang, martyr, and companions, martyrs
- 21 St. Matthew, apostle
- 23 St. Pio of Pietrelcina, priest
- 25 Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 27 St. Vincent de Paul, priest
- 29 St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, archangels
- 30 St. Jerome, priest, doctor

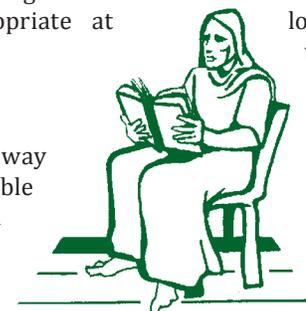
## Tips for Getting Started

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what we are reading and what it means for us. We do not mean reciting formal prayers such as the Lord's Prayer or the Hail Mary. These prayers are good and important, but more appropriate at other times.

### Take notes when you read Scripture

As you read and pray your way through Scripture, if the Bible you are using is your own, you may want to underline passages and write notes in the margin. When you come across those passages again later, these notes and underlinings will help you remember that you sensed their importance for your life.



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Another helpful practice when reading Scripture is to keep a notebook about what you are learning. This will give you more space and freedom to ponder the meaning of a passage and to see how it might apply in your life. It also helps you keep your thoughts about your spiritual life organized and together in one place. You do not have to write in your "spiritual notebook" or "journal" every day, but having it available is a way to take your conversation with God more seriously.

Both taking notes in your Bible and keeping a spiritual notebook will help you learn from Scripture and remember God's special word to you.

### Develop your own reading plan.

To read through the Bible, *develop a plan that is realistic for you*. Know how much you can read per day. Do not take on

so much that you get tired of the practice or can't remember what you have read. Perhaps start with two chapters a day, along with a Psalm or part of a longer one. At this pace, it will take about a year and a half to read through the Bible. Reading the Bible is not a speed reading contest. Do what you are comfortable with and find helpful.

Some people think that starting at the beginning of the Bible and reading through to the end is a good way to go. This is likely *not* the best way for a first-time Bible reader because it is too easy to get bogged down in difficult Old Testament books.

Perhaps a better way is to start with the Gospels and read through the New Testament, then return to the Old Testament. A variation on this is to read the Gospels according to Matthew and Mark, then skip to St. Paul's letters. Then return to read Luke's Gospel and Acts of the Apostles. From there, read the Gospel according to John and the three letters of John. Finish with the remainder of the New Testament. You may also want to read a Psalm or part of a Psalm each day as well.

When you have read through the New Testament, then you can turn your attention to the books of the Old Testament, starting at the beginning and working your way through. You could add some variation by reading some of the prophets along the way, and a Psalm and other Wisdom literature each day.

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## Let's Talk!

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### Combined Federal Campaign #11877

**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](mailto:info@pemdc.org).

Thank you for your help.

PMLTH1103

## Prisoner Saint

**St. John Chrysostom (c. 349–407)** + John Chrysostom is considered one of the great preachers in the history of the Church. In fact, his name means "golden mouthed." So beautiful was his preaching, especially on biblical passages, that he was sent against his desires to become Archbishop of Constantinople. This city was perhaps the greatest and most important one in the empire. While in that great city, John angered the wealthy and the empress Eudoxia for his homilies calling the rich to share their wealth with the poor. In anger, they banished John from the city and sent him into exile, where he continued to defend the poor and to write and preach on the Gospel. He was sent into further exile and died on the journey there.

*Feast Day: September 13*

## Pope Benedict XVI's Prayer Requests for July/August/September

### JULY

**General.** *Relieve suffering of AIDS patients:*

That Christians may contribute to alleviating the material and spiritual suffering of AIDS patients, especially in the poorest countries.

**Missionary.** *Witnessing to the joy of the Gospel:*

For the religious who work in mission territories, that they may be witnesses of the joy of the Gospel and living signs of the love of Christ.

### AUGUST

**General.** *World Youth Day:*

That the World Youth Day taking place in Madrid may encourage all the young people of the world to root and found their lives in Christ.

**Missionary.** *Re-encountering the faith:*

That Christians in the West, docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, may re-encounter the freshness and enthusiasm of their faith.

### SEPTEMBER

**General.** *Teachers:*

For all teachers, that they may convey love in truth and educate in authentic moral and spiritual values.

**Missionary.** *Christian communities in Asia:*

That the Christian communities spread throughout the Asian continent may proclaim the Gospel with fervor, bearing witness to beauty with the joy of the faith.

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

## Fruit of the Holy Spirit, Part 2

# Seed, Weed, Fruit

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

**Peaches:** OK. So the Holy Spirit is the love that flows between the Father and the Son.

**Me:** Check!

**Peaches:** And that flow of love flows through us because of our baptism.

**Me:** Check!

**Peaches:** And besides God giving us God's own self in baptism, he gives us the "seven gifts" of the Spirit.

**Me:** Yes, the Holy Spirit is the source of all gifts or graces that make us holy. That's why the Spirit is called the "Sanctifier." He is the one who makes us holy.

**Peaches:** Makes sense... How does the Holy Spirit do that?

**Me:** By being the spiritual director or coach of our lives.

**Peaches:** How exactly?

**Me:** He inspires us. Gives us ideas. Draws us toward Jesus. Transforms us into Christ with love.

**Peaches:** Then, why does it seem like many folks don't get very far? Is the Director asleep at the switch or what?

**Me:** Not at all. Imagine a movie director. Does she do everything to make the movie?

**Peaches:** No. You've got actors and a crew and....

**Me:** ...so the director "directs," but the people she directs have to cooperate with her direction?

**Peaches:** Oh, so the Holy Spirit can be directing up a storm but if we don't cooperate and take his direction, then nothing will happen.

**Me:** Then nothing *can* happen.

**Peaches:** So, no movie. But what is he directing us to do?

**Me:** To be holy. To be like Jesus.

**Peaches:** Yeah, see that's a problem for me, Deacon. I ain't Jesus. Not even on a good day!

**Me:** You're not supposed to just *be* Jesus. He's directing you to be *your* version of Jesus. The unique, one of a kind, never seen before or since "Peaches version of Jesus!" And I have to be my own version of Christ too.

**Peaches:** I don't know if that is more of less confusing.

**Me:** We are all different people with different personalities, right? The Holy Spirit has a unique one of a kind purpose and mission for my life and your life.

**Peaches:** If we all get the same Seven Gifts in baptism, how can we all come up with different results? How can we have a unique mission?

**Me:** If you read the lives of the Saints, they were all holy...

**Peaches:** ...all like Jesus.

**Me:** Yes, but each of them is different. They are themselves too.

**Peaches:** Their own version of Jesus!

**Me:** Right. And the Holy Spirit directs by the way he leads us to develop the same Seven Gifts in unique degrees and different combinations.

**Peaches:** OK, but how do the gifts actually work?

**Me:** I think of them kind of like seeds.

**Peaches:** Now, don't get all agricultural on me, Deke. City girl, remember?

**Me:** Well, "city girl," I think if I gave you a gift of seeds, and planted them, fertilized them and watered them for you, you could handle that, right?

**Peaches:** Sure! I wouldn't have to do anything. You've done it all.

**Me:** Not quite. The Holy Spirit at our baptism makes us a gift of these seven seeds. They are planted in us and watered and fertilized by the Grace of God, but don't forget "cooperation."

**Peaches:** What's left for me to do?

**Me:** Weed. It's our only job really. We just have to remove the people, places and things that will choke the seeds to death and the Holy Spirit even helps us with that!

**Peaches:** OK, so that's why the difference between people! We all get the same gift but some of us "weed" and some of us don't!

**Me:** Right. And if we "weed," gradually those "seeds" will ripen into the Fruit of the Holy Spirit that will actually be visible in our lives.

**Peaches:** Mmmmm... I miss fresh fruit in this place.

**Me:** Easy! Stay with me, "city girl"!

*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 3

# Patience and Kindness: Life Becomes Worth Living

Inside prison and out, two human qualities that are often in very short supply are patience and kindness. What a difference they make in life! We know all too well how it is when we are on the short end of a relationship and are not respected with patience and kindness by someone. And we know from sad experience how empty we feel when we fail to be patient and kind to others. In the letter to the Galatians, St. Paul writes about the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

The presence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives is a sign that God is working in us. While the fruit of the Spirit are freely given, experience shows us that they come to us only when we want them. This doesn't mean that we have to be perfect before we experience the fruit, nor does it mean that we will never fail. What it does mean is that even with all our sin and failures in the spiritual life, God is so generous with his love that he gives the fruit of the Spirit to all who are sincerely trying to live for him. We become "like Christ" as we share his divine nature. And the fruit of the Spirit is evidence of that.

In this third article in the series on the fruit of the Spirit, we look at patience and kindness. In doing this, we are inspired by what Paul wrote elsewhere: "Now I will show you the way which surpasses all the others." Then he writes about the way of love (1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:1-13). In particular he says, "Love is patient; love is kind" (13:4).

**The fourth fruit: patience.** Love is patient. It is rooted in God and is a fruit of the Spirit we experience as we follow God. When we read about patience in Scripture, we often do so in light of how God treats us.

We all know that patience is not something we can often conjure up ourselves. To grow in patience, we need to repent (or turn from) those things that cause us to react to people with annoyance. The opposite of patience is to be quick-tempered, or annoyed with others. Sometimes we have developed a personality that automatically responds with anger or annoyance and we have no real reason to respond that way.

The long road out of that is to recognize our impatience, repent for it when we see it, and ask God for the grace to change us. We can. For patience and kindness to grow in us, we need to turn from those things opposed to them. Paul writes: "Do you hold [God's] priceless kindness, forbearance, and patience in low esteem, unaware that the kindness of God would lead you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4).

**The fifth fruit: kindness.** Love is kind. Again, this is rooted in God. The word Paul uses here for kind is the same word Scripture uses for the yoke of Christ, where we read that his "yoke is easy" (Matthew 11:30). That is, his yoke does not chafe or rub us in the wrong way. This is how we want to go through life, experiencing and giving kindness, and not the rub. It makes life worth living.

Life in prison is tough, and so too is it in the world. But the reality is that if we want these gifts, we need to be willing to follow Jesus as faithful disciples!

~ Anthony Bosnick

### Questions for Prayer and Discussion

1. Can you describe a time when you overcame an impatient impulse with patience? What was the response of the person toward whom you were patient?
2. Can you describe a time when you sense that you have experienced the fruit of kindness? Does this fruit appeal to you?
3. Here are some more Scripture verses about patience and kindness: Patience—Romans 9:22; 1 Timothy 1:16; 1 Peter 3:20; Kindness—Joel 2:13; Ephesians 2:7; Philippians 4:5. What do they tell you about the patience and kindness you can expect as fruit of the Spirit?

## 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.*

## Tips for Getting Started

*(continued from page 2)*

To help remain faithful to the practice, you may find it helpful to set a certain time aside each day when you read the Bible. Then, stay with it. You are sure to find daily Bible reading a great blessing.

*This is the first of a two-part series on reading the Bible. If you think it will be helpful to make this into a pamphlet for use in prison, send a note to us at the address below.*

## Stories on Reading the Bible

We are looking for stories from prisoners about how reading the Bible helps you spiritually. We hope to use some of them in the pamphlet on reading the Bible we are planning for later this year. We may also print some of them in the fall 2011 issue of *Let's Talk!*

**Please focus your story on how reading the Bible helps you grow spiritually in prison.** Keep it to 300 words or less.

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. Your reward is knowing that your story may help and encourage others. We may not be able to use all the stories sent to us.

Please send your story to *Let's Talk!*; (Reading the Bible), Paulist Prison Ministries; 3031 Fourth Street, NE; Washington, DC 20017.

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