

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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## On pilgrimage with Christ

**W**e have just lived through two of the most grace-filled seasons of the Church year—Lent and Easter. During these seasons we look at our lives in a special way to see how we might change and become the better people we want to be. Now we are in Ordinary Time and remain in it until the end of the year when we arrive at Advent and Christmas.

Hopefully, during these past thirteen plus weeks, we have allowed the Holy Spirit to show us areas of our lives that need renewal. Like most people, we probably wish we had done more to cooperate with God's grace in our lives. But we start where we are at.

**We are on a pilgrimage with Christ.** So now we look at where we are and decide to continue on! We decide to build on what we have achieved, or learn from what we did not achieve. No matter what our ex-

perience, we trust in the wonderful promise Jesus makes to us: "I came to give you life, and life to the full" (John 10:10). God wants the best for us. God is generous and forgiving, so now is a good time to think about where we want to go on our walk with Christ in the coming days, weeks and months.

A pilgrimage is a walk or a journey. We are on this journey each day of our lives until our lives as we know them end. So let's take advantage of this time and use it to grow in our relationship with Christ. Do not squander the grace God gives you. Plan ahead to where you want to be on your pilgrimage with Christ.

**Every life has value and matters.** We know how we have squandered many of the gifts and opportunities God has given



to us. But God never gives up on us. He continues to call us to himself. And as we begin to see our lives in the light of his life and love, we can see more clearly how our lives matter, even in prison and especially in prison.

Make each day count. Look for ways you can help others, even in your own loneliness and sorrow. As you do you will begin to see life change. You will see the small and even large ways your life comes alive in Christ's love. In this long season of Ordinary Time, trust in that.

For practical suggestions about your pilgrimage, read the short pamphlet "Conversion and Commitment to Christ" from Paulist Prison Ministries. Your chaplain or volunteer can get a copy for you free of charge.

### Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

About the worst thing we can do to our spiritual lives is to act as if our lives don't matter. So we go around like we are in a fog and don't think how our words and deeds make a difference to those around us.

Our lives do matter. So make your life count! Where ever we are—in prison or outside—our lives are important and can make a difference in this world. You may never know how something you say or do will make life better for another person...and for yourself.

Live each day like your life is important. Be aware of what you say and do. If during the day or at the end of the day you see that you didn't, ask God's forgiveness and begin again. Remember that God wants the best for you. Live your life like it matters.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP  
President  
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

## Prayer. It's like talking to a friend.

### Part 1: Adoration and Confession

By Fr. William Brailsford

**D**o you remember walkie talkies? They existed long before anyone dreamed of a cell phone. It was a simple way of communicating, especially in emergencies. It was better than the two tin cans attached to a rope which some knew as kids.

Well, prayer is our walkie talkie to God. Prayer is, simply put, a conversation with God. It is a special way to connect, and it does not need to be a stiff or formal thing. It is like talking with a friend. Prayer is a way we show our Love for God. It is a proof of his love for us.

**A basic plan for prayer.** Even the disciples wondered about the right way to pray, so they asked Jesus himself. He told them "when you pray, pray like this" and he gave them what we have come to know as the "Our Father" or "The Lord's Prayer" (see Matthew 6:9-13). It is a prayer etched in all our hearts, and it has a simple, uncomplicated structure that gives us guidance on how we ought to pray, how we ought to talk with God.

A problem people often face in prayer is that they make it too complicated! Keep it simple. Here is an idea: Think of the book of Acts in the New Testament. As you spell out the word itself, you unlock the secret to a good, solid prayer life: **ACTS**.

- A** stands for Adoration.
- C** is for Confession.
- T** takes us to Thanksgiving.
- S** is simply for Supplication. (Petitioning)

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## CHURCH CALENDAR

### JULY 2012

- 1 Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 3 St. Thomas, apostle
- 8 Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 11 St. Benedict, abbot
- 14 Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha, virgin
- 15 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 22 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 25 St. James, apostle
- 26 St. Joachim and St. Anne, parents of Mary
- 29 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 31 St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest

### AUGUST 2012

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

### SEPTEMBER 2012

- 2 Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 3 St. Gregory the Great, pope, doctor
- 8 Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 9 Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 13 St. John Chrysostom, bishop, doctor
- 14 Triumph of the Cross
- 15 Our Lady of Sorrows
- 16 Twenty-Fourth 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 Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 27 St. Vincent de Paul, priest
- 29 St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, archangels
- 30 Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Let's Talk!

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Thank you for your help.

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## Prayer. It's like talking to a friend.

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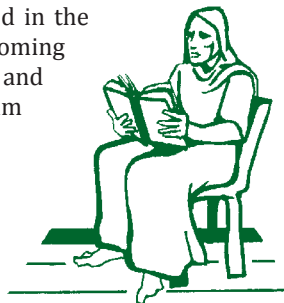
**Adoration.** Let's explain. When we pray, whether our hearts are hard and heavy or completely content, we begin by adoring God. We don't start by serving up a laundry list of wants and requests. We do not demand things from him. Rather we praise God for his everlasting goodness to us. We praise him in the heights and in the depths, we praise him for our coming and going, for our morning zest and our evening rest. We worship him with all the angels and saints.

As a guide to adoration think of the prayer we call "The Gloria" or "The Glory to God." It goes like this: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we give you thanks for your great glory....For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen." That is adoration or praise!

The psalms can also inspire us in our adoration and praise of God: "Praise the Lord, O my soul; I will praise the Lord all my life; I will praise the Lord while I live" (Psalm 146:2). Or "Praise the Lord for he is good; sing praise to God for he is gracious" (Psalm 147:1).

**Confession.** After this time of worship and praise, this adoration, we begin a time of confession to God. We know, as St. Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, "that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Because we were born sinners when we inherited the original sin that Adam and Eve committed in the Garden of Eden, sin becomes as a second nature to us.

When we sin, we separate ourselves from God. The amazing thing is that God loves us so much that he provides a cure, a remedy, a chance to start again. When Jesus died on the Cross for our sake, the bonds of sin were ripped apart. They were destroyed, and forgiveness became possible.



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When our prayer bears our confession, we are saying to God: "Father, I've messed up again and I'm sorry for that. Please forgive me for doing this and that and this again." He hears those prayers and it warms his heart.

By the very fact that our time of adoration has transformed into a time of confession, God knows that we care about our

Christian life and we acknowledge that God alone can give us the strength and courage to live in union with him. We honor God with our confession. He honors us back with his loving forgiveness.

**How do I confess?** A good question would be "How do I confess my sins?" A very solid, simple approach is the use of what is called the examination of conscience. We gather our thoughts together, searching deep into our hearts, remembering the ways we may have disappointed God and separated ourselves from him. In our prayer, we recount those sins as best as we can remember.

We can do this because we started with a heart filled with praise. We now feel comfortable talking with our Father in heaven who told us in his Holy Bible that "I no longer call you workers but friends," and that there is "no greater love than a

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## Prisoner Saint

**Blessed John of St. Martha (1578 - 1618) †** John was born in Spain in 1578. Not much is know about his early life. He was inspired to follow Christ as a priest and desired to work in the foreign missions. He entered the Franciscan order, which sent missionaries all around the world, and was ordained a priest in 1606. He was sent to Japan and mastered the Japanese language, serving faithfully as a missionary. In a wave of persecutions in Japan, he was arrested in 1615 and spent three years in prison before being beheaded in 1618. He is part of a long tradition of faithful Franciscan priests who died in foreign missions as they sought to teach the Good News of Jesus.

**Feast Day: August 16**

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

**JULY**

**General.** *Work Security:* That everyone may have work in safe and secure conditions.

**Missionary.** *Christian Volunteers:* That Christian volunteers in mission territories may witness to the love of Christ.

**AUGUST**

**General.** *Prisoners:* That prisoners may be treated with justice and respect for their human dignity.

**Missionary.** *Youth Witness to Christ:* That young people, called to follow Christ, may be willing to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

**SEPTEMBER**

**General.** *Politicians:* That politicians may always act with honesty, integrity, and love for truth.

**Missionary.** *Help for the Poorest Churches:* That Christian communities may have a growing willingness to send missionaries, priests, and lay people, along with concrete resources, to the poorest Churches.

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

Talking about Religion, Part 1

# Love First. Speak Second.

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

**Peaches:** OK. Let's get down to it, Deacon. Give me some answers to this crazy, fundamentalist chick's questions. She's driving me nuts!

**Me:** No.

**Peaches:** No?!

**Me:** Yeah, "no" – opposite of "yes"?

**Peaches:** What's with you, O Deacon of the Most High? In a bad mood today, are we?

**Me:** No. I just won't give you ammunition for another ridiculous jailhouse argument about religion.

**Peaches:** But I thought you were going to help me with this?

**Me:** I am. But you obviously have not done the "homework" that I gave you last time, so I'm not going to give you "tit for tat" Bible quotes (which never work anyway, by the way) until you do. There's enough anti-gospel energy flowing around here without me adding to it – or you!

**Peaches:** "Anti-gospel energy"...?

**Me:** Tell me, P, getting us to increase tension in the name of the gospel of peace, who do you think might be pulling those strings?

**Peaches:** OK, Satan, I hear you. But how do you know I didn't do the homework you gave me?

**Me:** Because, I still don't know her name. You are still talking about her as "the crazy, fundamentalist chick."

**Peaches:** So?

**Me:** So, I told you to listen to her. Get her to tell you her story and why she believes what she does and why it's important. I told you to compliment her where appropriate on how well her life witnesses to the gospel. And I told you to pray for her. If you did half of those things, you would be using her name when you speak about her. She is not a person yet. She's still a problem.

**Peaches:** OK. Busted. But I did do the assertive part of telling her "not now, I'm busy." And I challenged her on the insecurity of her belief that makes her to be always talking about it.

**Me:** Sorry. No points for that. That is just more anti-gospel energy because you did not love her enough to let her be a damaged, imperfect human being, like the rest of us. You didn't listen. You didn't love her.

**Peaches:** Yeah. OK. Sorry about that, but it's so hard, Deke!

**Me:** Discipleship is hard. But you can do "hard."

**Peaches:** Yeah, I've done 19 years of hard so far. Deke, I guess that I was just too eager to get on with it.

**Me:** You mean "hit her back"?

**Peaches:** Alright, it's sinking in now,

**Me:** Peaches, who made the first move? God or us?

**Peaches:** God.

**Me:** We are called to do the same.

**Peaches:** But she is just so nasty to me!

**Me:** Well, you can also reverse the approach that I gave you to establishing the correct "gospel-energy" when that happens. You require her to love you as well. Ask her, "Are you a Christian?", "Do you consider me your sister in Christ?" If she says "yes," then you can say, "Jesus says you have to love me. Go pray for me until you love me. Then we can dialogue about these things."

**Peaches:** And if she says "No. You are not my sister in Christ"?

**Me:** Then you say, "Jesus also says you have to love your enemies. Go pray for me as your enemy until you love me. Then we can dialogue about these questions." But again, like Christ, *you* must make the first move to love and establish the gospel-energy. If not, it's just a debating trick, not dialogue.

**Peaches:** And I "win the battle and lose the war."

**Me:** Yes.

**Peaches:** Karen.

**Me:** What?

**Peaches:** Her name is Karen.

**Me:** Now, we're getting somewhere! Come back when you can "feel the love" and I will give you some material for dialogue. Now, *go in Peace*.

**Peaches:** Got it – *in peace*.

**Me:** "Thanks be to God!"

**Peaches:** Couldn't resist that pious little dig, could we, Deacon?

**Me:** Nope. Like I said, we are all damaged and imperfect, 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.*



# Make life worth living

What is your idea of living the good life? What would make life worth living for you? Is it to eat, drink, and be merry? How about ample wine, women and song? Or as we put it in my younger days, cash, cars and cuties? Are these the things that you think will make you happy and your life satisfying? As you can see, all these things are pretty much about satisfying the flesh and the ego. Experience may have taught you that in the long run—and even in the short run—they do not satisfy for long, if at all.

So what is left?

**The moral virtues.** What do you think of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance?

In his book *Ethics*, the Greek philosopher Aristotle 350 years before Christ taught that these things lead to the good life. Aristotle wanted to find ways to make life better and he proposed these “virtues” as the way to do that. Twelve hundred-fifty years after Christ, the great theologian and philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas (1225/27 – 1274) wrote about them in this way in his great work the *Summa theologica*. The moral virtues have been around a long time!

We also find them in Scripture in many books of the Bible. The book of Wisdom has this beautiful verse: “She [Wisdom] teaches moderation (temperance), and prudence, justice, and fortitude, and nothing in life is more useful for men than these” (8:7).

This article begins a six-part series of reflections on the moral virtues. They are intended to help us understand what it

means to live the good life, or to live life well. The next articles will look at each virtue in turn to see how it helps make that possible.

**What are the virtues?** Before going any further, let's stop to consider what the virtues are. There are both *moral* (or human and cardinal) virtues and *theological* virtues. As described in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the virtues are habits and convictions to do good and that contribute to a good life (CCC, 1803, 1804, 1833). The ones mentioned above—prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance—are the moral virtues. These are the ones we will look at in this series. (Later we will consider the theological virtues—faith, hope, and love.)

The moral virtues are also called the “human” virtues because they do not come to us through supernatural grace like faith, hope and charity do, but are rooted in who we are as human beings. They are also called “cardinal,” which comes from the Latin *cardo* or hinge. They are the hinge upon which the door of life swings.

We develop and grow in moral virtue as we see these good things in the positive example of others. In looking at admirable people—good-acting people, not necessarily the Saints, although the Saints did practice the moral virtues—we are inspired by them. Do you have examples of such people in your life?

If we are lucky, our parents or some relatives might have displayed particular virtues. Or we might have had a teacher or a coach. Sometimes we may see someone

or hear about someone who inspires us to want to do better. We develop these virtues. It is possible not to have had these good examples in our lives to inspire us to live in a good way. We know where that can lead—even to jail or prison. And if not there, it can lead to a pretty miserable life.

In the upcoming parts of this series, we will look more fully at each of the virtues, but for now we will have to be satisfied with a short description of each.

## The Moral Virtues

- **Prudence** helps us decide in every situation which action is really the best for us and to decide to do that. Sometimes it may mean “tough love” is necessary!
- **Justice** is the virtue which leads us to be honest and true to God and neighbor and to give what is due to them.
- **Fortitude** (also called courage) helps us to overcome fear or indifference and do what is called for in any situation.
- **Temperance** helps us be moderate with bodily pleasures so that we don't drink or eat too much, or too little for that matter.

At this point, it would be helpful to try to memorize the moral virtues in anticipation of learning more about them later. And if you have other resources available to you, you could start reading a bit about them.

~ Anthony Bosnick

## Prayer. It's like talking to a friend. *continued from page 2*

man who lays his life down for his friends” (see John 15:15, 13). And remember he did do that for you already.

Does this mean that you have to go back all the way to your childhood and remember every sin you have ever committed? No, not at all. You start with the sins after your last examination of conscience and confession. Those old sins in the past are not only forgiven but forgotten. We look ahead, not behind.

Some folks use the Ten Commandments as a guide, going through each commandment one by one to be reminded where they stand

with God. Others group sins into general categories. The key is the honesty. The well-examined heart and mind is a gift to God. If your heart is still heavy after your confession, remember always that God readily forgives and completely forgets our sins.

**Thanksgiving and Supplication.** The next steps in a successful prayer life are thanksgiving and supplication (which is the act of a humble request or an earnest petition.) We'll tackle those in the next issue.

*Fr. William Brailsford is director of the Missions Office of the Archdiocese of Washington, where he has also served as a parish priest.*

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