

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES



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Live out your faith

Pope Francis always seems to be saying something to get us thinking! Consider his words about faith:

“Do not be afraid to live out faith! Be witnesses of Christ in your daily environment, with simplicity and courage. Above all, may you be able to show those you meet, your peers, the Face of mercy and the love of God who always forgives, encourages, and fills us with hope” (Message, June 21, 2013).

Is it really possible to live out your faith in jail or prison? A good question. One we will have to answer “yes” to. God is with us always and everywhere. He sends the Holy Spirit and all graces to give us wisdom and strengthen us. The challenge is to remember this and to call upon the Spirit to help us be aware of our call as followers of Jesus.

This, however, is something that we are so often in the habit of forgetting. The things of the day and of our situations can so distract us and weigh us down, that we forget God is with us. We focus on our problems and burdens rather than on the presence of Christ with us.



But how? In these three months at the end of one Church year and the beginning of another, the Church teaches us much about Jesus and who he is. In the liturgies of this time, we will see many ways that Jesus is with us, including as loving companion, Messiah and Lord, Christ the King, and as the infant Child of God we celebrate at Christmas. If

you can read the Gospels from daily Mass, listen to what they say about Jesus. Then recognize that Jesus is with you, right then and there.

He is not somewhere distant spying on us to punish us for our sins. He is with us as the source of life and love that transforms our lives. He is “the Face of mercy and the love of God who always forgives, encourages, and fills us with hope,” to recall the words of Pope Francis. Look at Jesus this way and know that he wants the best for you and those around you.

It happens in prison. Don't waste time thinking it can't happen to you. It happens all the time, even in prison. If you want more proof, read the “Letter from Prison” on this page. It can happen to you!

Letter from Prison

“Our Lord is Present in Prison Too.”

In our last issue of *Let's Talk!*, we had a question from a prisoner about why there seemed to be so many Catholics in prison. We wrote that there is more to being Catholic than just the name. A faithful Catholic is a person who has tried to live the Christian life each day and to follow Jesus. It is more than someone who may have been baptized a Catholic, but really hasn't lived out the faith.

Our response brought this thoughtful response from a prisoner on death row.

Dear Fr. DeSiano,

After reading the Q&A in Let's Talk! I hope that it is okay that I respond to it.

I guess I should start by telling you some about myself. I was one of the ones born into the Catholic faith, which is to say baptized as a child. For most of my life I did not know what it meant to be Catholic.

Fast forward to now. Seventeen years ago I was locked up for a murder, knowing that my life was over as far as this world was concerned. I started studying the different faiths. In the end what I learned was I always felt that I was born Catholic, now through many years of study I am Catholic by choice.

Being that so many of us were baptized as children, it is no wonder that there might be so many here. Surely that does not mean to say that Catholics are bad, no more so than anyone else.

I have been very lucky to have faithful Catholics in my life. Sadly I did not have them growing up, and I would bet most Catholics in prison did not either.

I'm not really sure how to put some thoughts into words so I will just say it

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Something that can give us hope is to remember that Jesus is with us always—through thick and thin, in our joys and hopes, in our sorrows and sufferings. He never forgets us. It is we who forget him.

Remember too that Jesus is not out to get you. He is here to bring you into the daily experience of his life and love. Recall that he is present with you to help you overcome.

And overcome you will. This doesn't mean you will not struggle. Nor that you will not experience failure. It does mean that as you go through your days remembering Jesus is with you, you will more and more experience victory and know his loving presence.

May God bless you and keep you in his care.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President, PEM

CHURCH CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2014

- 1 St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, virgin, doctor
- 2 Guardian Angels
- 4 St. Francis of Assisi, religious
- 5 **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 7 Our Lady of the Rosary
- 12 **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 15 St. Teresa of Avila, virgin, doctor
- 17 St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop, martyr
- 18 St. Luke, Evangelist
- 19 **Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 26 **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28 Sts. Simon and Jude, apostles

NOVEMBER 2014

- 1 **All Saints**
- 2 **All Souls**
- 4 St. Charles Borromeo, bishop
- 9 **Dedication of the Lateran Basilica**
- 10 St. Leo the Great, pope, doctor
- 11 St. Martin of Tours, bishop
- 12 St. Josaphat, doctor, martyr
- 13 St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, virgin
- 16 **Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 17 St. Elizabeth of Hungary, religious
- 21 Presentation of Mary
- 22 St. Cecilia, virgin, martyr
- 22 Thanksgiving Day in U.S.
- 23 **Christ the King**
- 24 St. Andrew Dung-Lac, priest, and companions, martyrs
- 30 **First Sunday of Advent**

DECEMBER 2014

- 3 St. Francis Xavier, priest
- 7 **Second Sunday of Advent**
- 8 **Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 12 **Our Lady of Guadalupe**
- 13 St. Lucy, virgin, martyr
- 14 **Third Sunday of Advent**
- 21 **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
- 25 **Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)**
- 26 St. Stephen, first martyr
- 27 St. John, apostle, evangelist
- 28 **Holy Family**

Let's Talk!

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Thank you for your help.

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Letter from Prison **"Our Lord is Present in Prison Too."** *continued from page 1*

this way. Just because we came to prison as bad Catholics does not mean we cannot be good Catholics. Our Lord is just as much here in prison as He is out there.

Thank you for allowing me to share some of my walk with you. It has been a long hard path filled with many sins. But as I look in the mirror now I see the man that Jesus has made me into, and if not for the Catholic teachings and faith, I would still be lost. Praise God!!!

A prisoner on Death Row
California

Pope Francis Speaks on Prison Reform

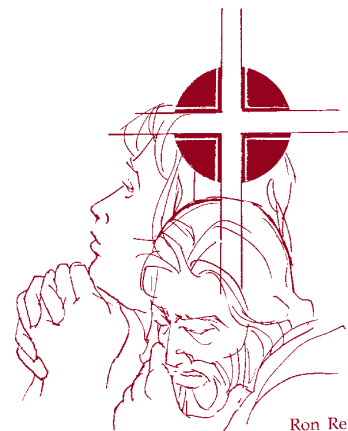
The important Catholic magazine *America* (published by the Jesuit Fathers for over 100 years) in its August 4-11, 2014 issue carried an editorial which said that "The evidence is piling up that too many Americans are wasting away in prison." *America* cited a talk by Pope Francis on May 30 to the International Criminal Law Association which called for major reforms of criminal justice systems, all across the world.

The editorial said that Pope Francis "proposes that prisoners—through reparation, confession and contrition—should be able to return to society." The "law and order" movement in the United States starting in the 1960's has left us with a system heavy on punishment and light on rehabilitation and preparation for those convicted of crimes to return to society prepared to resume life as an employed responsible citizen.

The *America* editorial quoted Pope Francis stating that an increase in penalties does not solve social problems or reduce crime rates. Rather, they "may give rise to serious social problems. . . . Criminality is rooted in economic and social inequality." He stated further, "A society that is governed solely by market laws and creates false expectations and superfluous necessities . . . discards those who are not at the top and prevents" many others "from taking an open road in life."

America offered some thoughts to guide reform. "The reformed prison of the future . . . should educate inmates not just with job skills but with the liberal arts, instruments for moral rejuvenation. Sentences must be shorter. There should be alternatives to incarceration for those who suffer from addiction or mental illness. Elderly or ill prisoners who are not likely to re-offend can be released. Prisons must be evaluated on their success or failure in reducing recidivism."

Prison reform will not be quick or easy. It calls for much work outside prison . . . and inside. A primary work for you inside prison is to pray fervently for this reform. We cannot doubt the power of prayer to change things.



Ron Reaves ©

Prisoner Saint

St. Edmund Campion, S.J. (1540-1581) + Campion lived in difficult times when Queen Elizabeth I of England was consolidating her power. She sought to remove the last presence of the Roman Catholic Church in England, which had been replaced as the official church by Anglicanism. Campion came from a respected family and was ordained a deacon in the Anglican Church in 1564. Drawn to the teaching of the Catholic Church, he rejected Anglicanism in 1571 and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1578. He returned to England to teach the Catholic faith, but was betrayed, arrested and imprisoned. He was found guilty of treason in November 1581. With two other priests, he was hanged, drawn and quartered on December 1, 1581 at 41 years of age, martyred for holding to the truth of the Catholic Church. Pope Paul VI canonized him in 1970.

Feast Day: December 1

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests
for October/November/
December

OCTOBER

Universal. *Peace:* That the Lord may grant peace to those parts of the world most battered by war and violence.

Evangelization. *World Mission Day:* That World Mission Day may rekindle in every believer zeal for carrying the Gospel into all the world.

NOVEMBER

Universal. *Lonely people:* That all who suffer loneliness may experience the closeness of God and the support of others.

Evangelization. *Mentors of seminarians and religious:* That young seminarians and religious may have wise and well-formed mentors.

DECEMBER

Universal. *Christmas, hope for humanity:* That the birth of the Redeemer may bring peace and hope to all people of good will.

Evangelization. *Parents:* That parents may be true evangelizers, passing on to their children the precious gift of faith.

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

Lost in the Sauce

The Indwelling Spirit

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: So, Deke, you know all those books I've been reading on spirituality? I'm confused. There are so many approaches! So many insights from all these different saints. I gotta tell you, I'm getting "lost in the sauce"!

Me: Don't worry about it, Peaches. It's only "sauce"! Just concentrate on the "spaghetti" and don't worry about the "sauce".

Peaches: I know it's my metaphor but now I'm getting lost talking about "sauce"!

Me: Easy, girl! There are many approaches, but they are not what is essential for Christian spirituality. There are many "sauces" to choose from, but the "spaghetti" is what is important and it stays the same! How can all those approaches be "Christian" spirituality if they didn't have something in common? What is common is the Christian "spaghetti".

Peaches: So I can pick any approach to spirituality that I like? I can choose to follow St. Francis or St. Ignatius or St. Benedict's approach?

Me: Yep. God made us all different. One size does not fit all. Nor should it! Why would God make us all unique and not give us a unique way to him that works for us?

Peaches: God wouldn't.

Me: Choose your own sauce, P. That's part of the fun of being part of the Great Catholic Spiritual Buffet!

Peaches: OK, so tell me about the "spaghetti".

Me: Sure. God has made us all unique individuals so we will like different approaches.

Peaches: "Sauces".

Me: Right but the basics, the "spaghetti" is the same because we are also the same in our humanness and in Christ. So, let's look at the spaghetti part. How are you connected to God?

Peaches: Baptism.

Me: What did you get from your baptism?

Peaches: The Holy Spirit.

Me: Very good! The Holy Spirit of God LIVES in you now. All you have to do is listen to the Holy Spirit. The Indwelling Spirit will lead you personally.

Peaches: As in "God has a plan for your life"?

Me: That's the program. The Holy Spirit IS Christian spirituality. What could be more "spiritual" than God living in you?

Peaches: Come on! That's too simple! There's more than that!

Me: A little more. You also need to do what you can to tune into the Spirit and get rid of whatever prevents you from "hearing" the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

Peaches: How?

Me: That would be "mortification" and "recollection".

Peaches: Oh, I've seen those words in your books!

Me: Right. They are standard terms in Catholic spirituality. Mortification is like self-discipline. That's how you get rid of whatever is keeping you from hearing the whispers of the Holy Spirit.

Peaches: Like when you decide to get into shape—you do the opposite of what got you out of shape. So you exercise, eat right and stuff?

Me: Correct. So you would decide to maybe make more time for prayer, spiritual reading, go to confession more often, and watch your mind and heart for patterns of why you do things.

Peaches: And recollection?

Me: That's the opposite of being scattered all over the place. You re-collect your "self". Bring it back in. Stay focused.

Peaches: How?

Me: By reminding yourself that God lives in you all day long. Some people ask the Holy Spirit's help each time they start something new. Thank the Holy Spirit after they finish a thing. Promise to go wherever the Holy Spirit points them.

Peaches: So recollection and mortification are like the two pieces of garlic bread!

Me: Huh?

Peaches: Sure. We can choose our sauce but the spaghetti is always the same and you have to have the two pieces of garlic bread to make it a complete meal? Thanks, Deke! I've really learned something!

Me: Me too. I've learned that you're hungry!

Peaches: Lately I keep dreaming about The Olive Garden!

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 Seven Deadly Sins, Part 3

Green with envy

You may have heard the common expression that someone is “green with envy.” It doesn’t sound good, and it isn’t. This expression means that we are very unhappy because someone has something we want. As one of the seven deadly sins, envy can lead to death of the human spirit in us. It makes us dejected, can lead us to hate another, and makes us rejoice when a person we are envious of suffers. Envy is not pretty.

The phrase “green with envy” comes from the ancient world—this problem is age-old! It is found in Greek literature as long as seven centuries before Christ. The Greeks believed that jealousy was accompanied by an overproduction of bile, lending a pale green cast to the victim. Envy makes us so tied up in knots that it affects us physically, turning us a light shade of green because of bile build up in us. Not pleasant.

Envy makes its ugly appearance in Scripture shortly after the sin and fall of our first parents (Genesis 3:1-7). In the very next chapter of Genesis, we read that Cain killed his brother Abel because he was envious of him (Genesis 4:3-5, 8). Envy and man have a long history together!

Envy is a deadly sin. It should not be hard to see why envy is a deadly sin. It harms the human spirit, even kills it. In our jealousy of others, our desire to be like them, or to have what they have, it breaks down our unity with others. It erodes communion and our desire for the best for others. Jesus’ desire for us, expressed in his high-priestly prayer at the Last Supper, is “that all may be one,” even as he and his Father are one (John 17:20-21).

Envy makes this oneness impossible and so breaks down the Body of Christ, the Church, which is the living witness of Jesus’ presence in the world, and of God’s gift of life and love through Jesus. When people see envy, they do not see the love of Christ manifested in the world. We weaken and even destroy the witness of the Church to the truth of Christ. Envy is about us, but it goes beyond us in its ugly impact.

Envy in our lives. Examine your own life to see if envy is a great sin for you. It seems to be a very common sin in most people. We are not alone in our envy. Are there people you envy for their abilities, looks, personality, sense of humor? How about for their wealth, family life, ability to attract the opposite sex, or perhaps their skill at talking their way out of a problem or situation? What else can you envy a person for?

Envy kills, so we need to strive against it. The Church has some words of guidance for us in our efforts against envy: “The baptized person should struggle against it by exercising good will. Envy comes from pride; the baptized person should train himself to live in humility: ‘Would you like to see God glorified by you? Then rejoice in your brother’s progress and you will immediately give glory to God. Because his servant could conquer envy by rejoicing in the merits of others, God will be praised’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2540, quoting St. John Chrysostom).

Remember these key words for us in our efforts against envy: “exercise good will” and “live in humility.”

Grace is greater than sin. St. Paul wrote to the Romans that life is in and through Christ. Paul’s great hope is that all people would know life in Christ. For Paul, it comes to this: 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 envy. 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.” Or, “where sin abounds, grace super abounds.”

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

Help with addictions; 2015 Calendar

Every day is an opportunity to grow into the type of person we want to be. We can use each day wisely and take a step toward our goal. Or we can let time pass us by. God gives us the grace to take that step forward. Our challenge is to accept the grace as freely as God gives it.

While on their walk through life, many people struggle with addictions of different sorts. If that is your burden, the National Catholic Council on Addictions (NCCA) offers you help. Their approach is spiritual, which you can add to support your personal efforts and any programs you may be attending.

Write to them for their booklet “Prayers for Addicted Persons and Their Loved Ones,” their “Serenity Prayer Bookmarks,” and their 2015 calendar (available in November 2014). All material is available in English, and some in Spanish. Indicate the language you need. Their mailing address is: NCCA, 1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, MI 48360. You can also contact them by email at ncca@guesthouse.org or by toll free telephone at 800-626-6910, ext 200.

Take advantage of this free offer. You’ll be glad you did.

Prayer of Surrender

*Take, O Lord,
and receive my entire liberty,
my memory, my understanding
and my whole will.
All that I am and all that I possess
You have given me:
I surrender it all to You
to be disposed of according to
Your will.
Give me only Your love
and Your grace;
with these I will be rich enough,
and will desire nothing more.*

Pray for our benefactors

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