



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

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When it's hard to believe, ask Jesus to help

Do you want to step out in faith in this New Year? Do you want to open yourself to the great gifts God wants for you? Do you want this, but sometimes just find it too hard to believe?

If you face this, you are not too different from most of us.

Let's take a tip from St. Anselm (c. 1033-1109), the archbishop of Canterbury in England. He said, "I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand. For I believe this: unless I believe, I will not understand."

Wisdom for us too. Here we have a saint sharing some wisdom with us that comes from his own experience. To put this in simple words, St. Anselm is saying, "Let go and let God." In other words, believe in the spiritual truths and reality taught by the Church and open your mind and heart to God and he will do the rest.

When we believe—even though we still have doubts—we gradually come to under-

stand. When we think that we will believe when we have everything figured out for ourselves, we will likely never come to a life-giving belief. This is because it is the Holy Spirit who enlightens us and gives us understanding. If we don't let the Holy Spirit into our lives, we will likely find belief very difficult or impossible. Trying to figure out things for ourselves without God is the path to unbelief.

Invite Jesus into your life. One of the best things we can do for ourselves is to invite Jesus into our lives. The article in this issue on spiritual resolutions for your journey gives more detail on how to do this. Here we can say however that this openness to Jesus is how we encounter him in our lives. It is how we grow in relationship with the living God.

This is what brings us to belief. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, helps us under-



stand. It most likely will grow in us gradually, but one day we will be amazed at what has happened to us. We will see that we now believe and understand more than we did in the past. And that is a wonderful gift.

Father, give me the Holy Spirit. During the recently completed Year of Mercy, Pope Francis

urged us to pray every day, "Father, give me the Holy Spirit." Pray that you are open to the Holy Spirit so that you will come to a deeper belief and understand what it means to follow Jesus as his disciple. Trust that God will give you this gift for he wants the best for all of us!

Pope Francis has said: "Let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of throwing open the doors of his heart and repeats that he loves us and wants to share his love with us" (*The Face of Mercy*, n. 25). Be open to the surprise of faith God has in store for you.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We start a new year. This is a good time to look at our lives and make some decisions about where we are headed spiritually. And to ask ourselves where we would like to see change and growth.

This issue should help you grow in faith this year. The article on spiritual resolutions should help you see some things you can do to grow in faith. And the other article on page one focuses on what we can do when we find belief hard.

We hope both articles—and the others as well—are helpful to you. While we are helpless to make changes on our own, ask the Holy Spirit for the gifts to help you. And ask Jesus to walk with you on your faith journey this year. Remember that God is for us, and that makes all the difference.

Let us pray for one another!

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Expect great things from God!

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.

This is so important that we make this recommendation every New Year. If you are doing these spiritual practices already, rededicate yourself to them. If you aren't, consider beginning now. As you meet God each day, your life will change.

Develop your "spiritual discipline." 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 spend 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

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CHURCH CALENDAR

JANUARY 2017

- 1 **Mary, Mother of God**
- 2 Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, bishops and doctors
- 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
- 5 St. John Neumann, bishop
- 8 **Epiphany of the Lord**
- 9 **Baptism of the Lord**
- 15 **Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 17 St. Anthony of the Desert, hermit
- 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- 21 St. Agnes, virgin and martyr
- 22 **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 23 Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
- 24 St. Francis de Sales, bishop
- 25 **Conversion of St. Paul**
- 26 Sts. Timothy and Titus, bishops
- 28 St. Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor
- 29 **Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 31 St. John Bosco, priest

FEBRUARY 2017

- 2 **Presentation of the Lord**
- 5 **Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 6 St. Paul Miki and Companions, martyrs
- 10 St. Scholastica, nun
- 12 **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 14 Sts. Cyril and Methodius, priest and bishop
- 19 **Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 22 **Chair of St. Peter**
- 26 **Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

MARCH 2017

- 1 **Ash Wednesday**
- 5 **First Sunday of Lent**
- 12 **Second Sunday of Lent**
- 17 St. Patrick, bishop
- 19 **Third Sunday of Lent**
- 20 **St. Joseph, husband of Mary**
- 25 **Annunciation of the Lord**
- 26 **Fourth Sunday of Lent**

Let's Talk!

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Spiritual Resolutions to help you on your journey (continued from page 1)

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.

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).

You will find more ideas on reading Scripture in the Paulist Prison Ministries pamphlet "In Touch with God's Word. How to Read the Bible." Ask your chaplain or volunteer to help you get a copy.

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.

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 prison or jail. Of course, be prudent and don't get entangled with people who will use

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Prisoner Saint

Bl. German Gardiner (d. 1544) + German (also known as Jermyn) Gardiner was the last martyr in England under King Henry VIII. He was martyred as a defender of the Catholic Church in England after Henry decided to break from Rome and establish a new church there with himself as head. Henry was angry that the Pope would not grant him a divorce. (This is the King Henry who over time had six wives.) German was killed by the king to punish all those who questioned his decision to establish a new church in England and make himself head of that church.

Feast Day: March 7

We want your opinion and need your help.

We are printing two articles on Catholic spirituality by Deacon Dennis Dolan in this issue of *Let's Talk!*. They are part of five which he has written for prison ministry on spirituality. If you find them helpful, we will include all five of them in a new pamphlet for Paulist Prison Ministries.

After reading the articles, we would like to hear from you to see what you think about these questions:

1. Do you think the articles will be helpful to you in your attempt to grow spiritually?
2. Can you understand them? (Are they too hard, about right, or too easy?)
3. Deacon Dolan usually centers his column around his conversations with "Peaches". Would you prefer that approach for these articles, or is the current approach good for you?
4. Do you think other prisoners will be interested in this topic?
5. Would you like to see these articles gathered together in a new pamphlet, available in English and Spanish?

Please send your response to:

Paulist Prison Ministries
"Answers to Questions"
P. O. Box 29121
Washington, DC 20017

Living Out Your Faith, Part 1

What is Catholic Spirituality?

There is much talk today about spirituality. We frequently hear, "I'm spiritual but not religious." People understand "spiritual" in many ways. That is to be expected since people come from a variety of backgrounds and traditions. They also may tend to use the term with little precision.

In any event, when we as adults decide to grow in our spirituality, we can choose to educate ourselves about it. This new series of articles is an introduction to the basics of Roman Catholic Christian spirituality.

If that sounds very specific, it is. It needs to be. Since the word "spirituality" has been claimed and used by so many people of every or no religion and they each define spirituality in their own way, we will here limit ourselves to Christian spirituality, specifically of the Catholic variety. We will leave others to share their own experiences elsewhere in their own words.

Deeply rooted in Catholic tradition

Interestingly, the word "spirituality" is originally a Roman Catholic term. Although the idea of "spirituality" was expressed by the use of many different words in the Catholic tradition as far back as St. Paul's writings in the New Testament, the word itself first appears in the Fifth Century writings of Pseudo-Jerome (a writer misidentified as St. Jerome).

Spirituality appeared in its current form in the Seventeenth Century by Catholic French Spiritual writers (*Spiritualite*). It was brought into widespread Catholic usage in our time by two influential books in the early 1900s.

"Spirituality" replaced words like "devotion," "piety" and "interior life." Its use became more common after the 1950s and has since been used outside of Catholicism by many religious traditions Christian and non-Christian alike.

A personal lived experience

At its most basic level, spirituality points to the level of *personal lived experience*. This is why the word has come to be valued even by groups that had formerly dismissed it as only a Catholic theological concept. Everyone has a personal lived experience!

At the second level, spirituality can also refer to *the group's lived experience*. So, we could talk about national/cultural spiritualities such as Irish Celtic spirituality, Native American spirituality, and others. We could explore various spiritualities of Christian denominations like Lutheran spirituality, Anglican spirituality, or the spirituality of Hindus and Buddhists. Within Roman Catholicism there is a rich ancient buffet of spiritualities based on the worldwide

experiences of billions of people (Lay Spirituality, African Spirituality, and Feminist Spirituality from various cultures and historical time frames).

Also, on this Catholic spiritual buffet table, are the many spiritual paths that have come to us from various religious movements (Men's Spirituality and Catholic Worker Spirituality). Many spiritualities have developed from religious orders and their saintly founders. These founders of religious families (orders) modeled different ways to live out the Gospel. For example, St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Romuald, St. Teresa, and St. Ignatius. (The terms for these in order listed would be Franciscan Spirituality, Dominican Spirituality, Camaldolese Hermit Spirituality, Carmelite Spirituality, and Ignatian/Jesuit Spirituality).

Different approaches to the same Gospel

All of these follow Christ but emphasize different aspects of the Gospel as well as use different practices and expressions. For example, Jesuit priests and brothers may put in the first place of their spirituality the imitation of the obedience of Jesus to the Father while Franciscans first focus on following the poverty of Jesus.

None of these paths neglect the other components of Jesus' life or teachings. That denial would cause them to be disapproved and rejected by the Church. Different spiritualities are different approaches to the same Gospel. They are all made of different kinds of balance among the various parts of Jesus' teaching and practice. No one can give equal time to everything.

Monks will emphasize prayer and give more time in the day to it than a missionary nun who also prays but is also busy serving the poor as a nurse. However, prayer has an important place in both the life of a missionary and a monk. The lives of both the missionary and the monk also have a place for helping the sick. It's a matter of emphasis.

It is also a matter of a different, personal vocation or calling from God. The mother of young children must put formal prayer or meditation aside when it's time to feed her children if she wishes to be doing God's will. (This is an example of "discernment." The mother is choosing between two good things: prayer and feeding her little kids.) Various balances are fitted to different circumstances, temperaments and responsibilities. This is Catholic Christian Spirituality.

Catholic Christian Spirituality

Roman Catholic Christians have many spiritual paths to choose from in following Jesus within their tradition. The largest Church learned long ago that one size does not fit all! Having certified

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Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for January/February/March 2017

Starting in 2017 Pope Francis is presenting only one prepared prayer intention per month, rather than the two presented before this year. He plans, however, to add a second prayer intention each month related to current events or urgent needs. The urgent prayer request will help mobilize prayer and action related to the urgent situation. Because of our production schedule, it does not look at this time like *Let's Talk!* will be able to present these second requests, but you could ask your chaplain or volunteer to get them for you.

JANUARY

Christian Unity: That all Christians may be faithful to the Lord's teaching by striving with prayer and fraternal charity to restore ecclesial communion and by collaborating to meet the challenges facing humanity.

FEBRUARY

Comfort for the Afflicted: That all those who are afflicted, especially the poor, refugees, and marginalized, may find welcome and comfort in our communities.

MARCH

Support for Persecuted Christians: That persecuted Christians may be supported by the prayers and material help of the whole Church.

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

Living Out Your Faith, Part 2

The Tree of Catholic Spirituality

A helpful image for understanding Catholic Spirituality is a tree. The few schools and types of spiritualities that I have already mentioned could be viewed as branches of a tree. These branches are different sizes and shapes like the spiritualities. Some are larger, some smaller. Some are older and some newer. Now, what about the roots and trunk of the tree of Catholic Spirituality?

What we are picturing as a tree trunk and its roots are the basics of those branch spiritualities. The roots are the Holy Spirit. The trunk is the New Testament revelation about God and us.

Roots and trunk together

All of the various spiritualities are fed and supported by these sources. There can be no genuine Catholic Spirituality without the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus (see 1 Peter 1:11), so the revelation of the Christian Scriptures is absolutely necessary as well.

However, the roots and trunk not only support and feed the various branch spiritualities but also are a spirituality in themselves! In fact, the roots and trunk are the spirituality attested to by the Gospels, St. Paul and the early Church. The roots and trunk were the first spirituality and remain the *primary* spirituality.

With the wealth of choices among spiritual approaches that Catholics enjoy this is sometimes overlooked. The major proponents of the "root and trunk" spirituality in modern times were Father Louis Lallemand, SJ (1588-1635) and Servant of God Father Isaac Hecker, CSP (1819-1888).

Father Hecker sorted out his own confusion on the subject of various spiritualities when as a new Catholic he came upon Father Lallemand's book *Spiritual Doctrine*. Father Hecker was never without this book again, reading and re-reading it throughout his life. (Pope Francis also mentioned in 2013 that Father Lallemand's book was a big influence on his own spirituality! You will notice he speaks of the Holy Spirit very often.)

Get the Holy Spirit

Written in the early modern period and based on the medieval theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, it is a dense and difficult book for the average person to wade through. However, for all practical purposes, Lallemand's teaching can be reduced to some simple and portable points (which Hecker did for others as their spiritual director/spiritual coach):

1. Get the Holy Spirit.
2. Listen to the Holy Spirit.
3. Do what the Holy Spirit tells you to do.

You have to walk before you can run

The context or situation for carrying out these

simple steps was the normal practice of the Catholic faith. If this were not the case with an individual who had come to them for spiritual direction both Frs. Lallemand and Hecker would first see to establishing this basic *foundation* of the life of faith before going on to putting on the *roof* of spirituality.

Obviously, neither of these men would understand the current claim to be "spiritual but not religious." They saw the ordinary practice of religion as the only possible building block for any "advanced" spirituality. It was a matter of "you have to walk before you can run."

In practice what this would mean was going to Mass and Communion as often as possible: Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession/Penance) regularly and having a basic understanding of the faith (CCD, Catechism, Sunday School, Religious Education) and finally some spiritual discipline.

Your spiritual discipline

Spiritual discipline is like an athlete's training routines applied to the spiritual life. Spiritual discipline would involve removing whatever keeps you from the normal practice of your faith as well as removing whatever keeps you from receiving, listening to or doing what the Holy Spirit inspires you to do!

For example, if I cannot easily make it to Mass to strengthen myself in the Holy Spirit, the spiritual discipline could be, I give up an hour of sleep to get to an earlier Mass that I can fit into my schedule. Many people get up earlier than they have to in order to make sure they get to a gym or get their run in.

If I find it hard to listen to the Holy Spirit, the spiritual discipline might be to set aside some more quiet time to tune into the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Or maybe to "fast" from all my electronic devices for a day.

If I am in touch with the Holy Spirit and tuned in and listening but I find it hard to do what the Spirit is inspiring me to do, I might have to spend some time pinpointing what the problem is and then pray to overcome it. So, if I decide that my problem is that if I do what the Holy Spirit is asking of me my friends will laugh at me, the spiritual discipline could be that I will meditate on the stoning of St. Stephen (see Acts 7:54-60) and pray for the courage to put up with my little suffering of being made fun of.

It is often said, "God has a plan for your life." It is often asked, "How do I find out what God's plan for my life is?" Here is an infallible way to answer that, a step at a time: Get the Holy Spirit, Listen to the Holy Spirit, Do what the Holy Spirit tells you to!

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Do not be held captive by the past

Pope Francis held a special Jubilee Mass for the Year of Mercy on Sunday, November 6, 2016 for 1,000 prisoners from 12 countries and their families, as well as prison chaplains and volunteers in St. Peter's Basilica. Below are some excerpts from his homily.



Hope is a gift of God. We must ask for it. It is placed deep within each human heart in order to shed light on this life, so often troubled and clouded by so many situations that bring sadness and pain. We need to nourish the roots of our hope so that they can bear fruit; primarily, the certainty of God's closeness and compassion, despite whatever evil we have done.

There is no corner of our heart that cannot be touched by God's love. Whenever someone makes a mistake, the Father's mercy is all the more present, awakening repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace.

Today we celebrate the Jubilee of Mercy for you and with you, our brothers and sisters who are imprisoned. Mercy, as the expression of God's love, is something we need to think about more deeply. Certainly, breaking the law involves paying the price, and losing one's freedom is the worst part of serving time, because it affects us so deeply.

All the same, hope must not falter. Paying for the wrong we have done is one thing, but another thing entirely is the "breath" of hope, which cannot be stifled by anyone or anything. Our heart always yearns for goodness. We are in debt to the mercy that God constantly shows us, for he never abandons us (cf. Augustine, *Sermo* 254:1).

We know that in God's eyes no one can consider himself just (cf. *Rom* 2:1-11). But no one can live without the certainty of finding forgiveness! The repentant thief, crucified at Jesus' side, accompanied him into paradise (cf. *Lk* 23:43). So may none of you allow yourselves to be held captive by the past! True enough, even if we wanted to, we can never rewrite the past. But the history that starts today, and looks to the future, has yet to be written, by the grace of God and your personal responsibility.

By learning from past mistakes, you can open a new chapter of your lives. Let us never yield to the temptation of thinking that we cannot be forgiven. Whatever our hearts may accuse us of, small or great, "God is greater than our hearts" (*1 Jn* 3:20). We need but entrust ourselves to his mercy.

Faith, even when it is as tiny as a grain of mustard seed, can move mountains (cf. *Mt* 17:20). How many times has the power of faith enabled us to utter the word *pardon* in humanly impossible situations. People who have suffered violence and abuse, either themselves, or in the person of their loved ones, or their property. . . there are some wounds that only God's power, his mercy, can heal.

But when violence is met with forgiveness, even the hearts of those who have done wrong can be conquered by the love that triumphs over every form of evil. In this way, among the victims and among those who wronged them, God raises up true witnesses and workers of mercy.

May Our Lady. . . look upon each of you with a Mother's love. May she intercede for you, so that your hearts can experience the power of hope for a new life, one worthy of being lived in complete freedom and in service to your neighbour.

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Spiritual Resolutions to help you (continued from page 2)

and/or abuse you. That is why community is so important. When two or three are gathered together Christ is with you (see Matthew 18:20) 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. Encountering Christ means learning about him, but just as important, it means experiencing his presence in your life. You will know when this is happening.

May this year be a time of special blessing for you on your journey. Expect great things from God.

2017 Calendars Available

New 2017 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: **NCCA, 1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, MI 48360**

What is Catholic Spirituality? (continued from page 3)

that none of these approaches goes against the Gospel, the Church encourages Christ's disciples to use their God-given freedom in the Holy Spirit to choose from among these tested paths what best suits their own circumstances and personality. Even choosing bits and pieces from several different spiritualities to make one custom fit for your personality and circumstances.

It should be noted that, like anything else in life, where there are so many choices, we might not find some of these paths attractive for us. Like the Church, we too must respect the freedom of our sisters and brothers to choose what is most helpful for their own salvation just as we respect the choice of a friend in the selection of a spouse or career that may not be for us.

Just to give you a sense of the scope of these paths within the Catholic tradition, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* lists 35 major Types and Schools of specifically Catholic Spirituality! There are various subsets under each of these. One size does not fit all!

Deacon Dennis Dolan is a retired chaplain from York Correctional Institution in Connecticut. He continues his ministry with and for prisoners through his writing.

The Works of Mercy, Part 4

We are in relationship with God and neighbor

There is much suffering in the world. There always has been. Both the Old Testament and New Testament addressed this suffering, for God does not want his people to suffer. To relieve the suffering around us, God calls on us to reach out to our suffering neighbor and be instruments of relief to them and to the world.

He calls on us. *Yes, we are to relieve our suffering neighbor!*—even while we are in prison or jail. God's wish for us is clear, as we hear through the words of Jesus: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25:35-36). These are six of the seven corporal works of mercy. The seventh is to bury the dead.

We call them corporal works of mercy because they deal with the body. (The word "corporal" comes from the Latin word *corporālis*, meaning body.) Some of them deal with internal needs— 1) food and 2) drink. Some with external— 3) clothing and 4) shelter. And some concern suffering— 5) disease, 6) imprisonment and 7) death/burial. In this article, we will look at the first four corporal works of mercy and in the next issue finish up with the last three.

Satisfying internal needs for food and drink. Hunger comes from a lack of real food and it has always plagued people. It is still a problem today in many parts of the world and in areas of our own country, in cities, suburbs and country. If we open our eyes and hearts, wherever we look we will see hungry people. This is our challenge, to be open to the needs of others. We are not isolated individuals, but are called to live in community and in oneness with others and to be aware of other's needs.

The same can be said for drink. Clear, fresh water is in short supply in many parts of the world. Dirty water spreads disease. Waterborne diseases kill up to one million people each year, according to the United Nations figures. Even in the United States this can still be a problem, especially in areas where pollutants enter the drinking water and poor sanitation carries disease. Pope Francis has written, "Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights" (*Laudato Si*, n. 30).

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Counsel the doubtful
Instruct the ignorant
Admonish sinners
Comfort the afflicted
Forgive offenses
Bear wrongs patiently
Pray for the living and the dead

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry
Give drink to the thirsty
Clothe the naked
Shelter the homeless
Visit the sick
Visit the imprisoned
Bury the dead

Satisfying external needs for clothing and shelter. The prophet Isaiah said "[Clothe] the naked when you see them" (58:7). Jesus says in Scripture "[I was] naked and you clothed me" (Matthew 25:36). Clothing is a basic need, so we give to those who are without. Scripture calls us to have compassion on those who need clothing (Tobit 4:16).

And with shelter too, we are called to provide for the homeless or those without a place to live. It is a great challenge in our society because shelter is so costly and there is so much need. As hard as it is, we need to be aware that the stranger or homeless needs to be welcomed and treated with love. We need to provide for them in any way we can.

How do we do this in prison? In the confines and circumstances of prison and jail, choices and opportunities are limited. But still, we can respond in several ways. First, pray for those with bodily needs that are unmet. Prayer is powerful and we can ask God to put on the hearts of those able to respond the desire to do so. Second, be aware of the hurting people around you in prison. Can you give them a hand when they are in need? Third, the list of seven corporal works of mercy is just the beginning. There are many needs that are not included on the list. Ask the Holy spirit to show you what some of these needs might be in those around you.

The greatest commandment is to love God and neighbor (see Luke 10:27). We are not isolated individuals but are in relationship with God and one another. The corporal (and spiritual) works of mercy are practical ways we can live out that relationship.

In our next issue, we will complete this series of articles as we consider the last three corporal works of mercy.

~ Anthony Bosnick

The Tree of Catholic Spirituality (continued from page 4)

Four Clarifying Questions

- 1. How do I get the Holy Spirit?** The Catholic answer is the scriptural answer: baptism (John 3:5).
- 2. How do I listen to the Holy Spirit?** The promptings of the Holy Spirit are experienced like any other inspiration. (Note that the word "inspiration" is from the word "spirit" as in to be full of the Spirit of God.) It is not a "voice from on high" like in some Hollywood religious movie. For example, you see someone sitting alone eating in the Chow Hall. The thought comes to you that you should go eat with him. So you do!
- 3. How do I tell the difference between the different thoughts?** That's pretty basic. If you want to get into the weeds on this ask your Catholic chaplain for some reading on "discernment." (That's the theological term.)

Traditionally, we would experience our own thoughts (which I know that I'm thinking). They may be good or bad. I follow the good ones and ignore (or fight against!) the bad.

Then there are "good" thoughts. (What would Jesus do?) They come from the Holy Spirit.

Evil thoughts obviously come from the Evil Spirit.

In short, do good. Avoid evil. Simple to say but hard to do!

- 4. So, what is there to "discern"?** We discern what is *more* for God's glory – what is the better of two good things. We do *not* discern between good and evil. We have the commandments. We follow them.

But we may need to discern (think/pray) about whether God wants me to be an accountant or a teacher. Marry this person or that? Teach religious education or lector at Mass? Discernment is deciding between two good things. There is nothing to discern between good and evil. We do good and we avoid evil.

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