

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES



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Jesus, remember me

As Jesus hung on the cross, one of the criminals crucified with him said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). Jesus responded, “I assure you: this day you will be with me in paradise” (v. 43).

These are words to remember and to pray—both what the criminal said and how Jesus responded. In these words there is trust, hope, love and mercy. They apply to us in all of our joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties. They apply to us year round and throughout our lives. *Everything* in us and in our lives is a concern to Jesus.

And so we pray that Jesus remember us . . .

In our joys. We pray to Jesus to remember us in our joys, in all those things that bring happiness to our lives. We pray that

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During the time of this issue of *Let's Talk!*, we pass through three Church seasons—the remaining weeks of Lent, the whole of Easter up to Pentecost, and then we return to Ordinary Time. In all of these seasons, we hear different and important messages on what it means to follow Jesus.

The important thing is that we *hear* and *follow*. In following, we grow closer to Jesus and encounter the truth of his love for us. We read in this issue that God does want to surprise us and that he never tires of showering us with his love. This is a truth we can rely on.

As you read the articles in this issue, be open to the mystery of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). And be open to the surprise that God has in store for you. He wants your life to be filled with blessing. Even, and especially, in prison!

Let us pray for one another!

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Jesus is with us and will make our joy complete and help us share it with others. We pray that he will give us a heart that loves others and wants the best for them too. We pray that we will be instruments of God's joy and love to others.

In our hopes. In all our hopes, we pray that Jesus will remember us and be with us. Hope is not just for ourselves, but for all people. We pray that Jesus will fulfill our hopes and dreams, and in doing that make us people who inspire others around us to hope.

In our griefs. In all our griefs and sufferings, we pray that Jesus remember us and be with us. In every way that we experience sorrow, we ask that our sorrow and grief transform us and others. We pray that we will be instruments of healing change for others.

In our anxieties. In everything that makes us worried, anxious, and frightened, we ask Jesus to remember us and be with us in our anxiety. We turn to Jesus and ask his tender mercy on us. We pray that we be instruments of God's tender mercy to others.

Grace that changes. Pray that Jesus remembers you in all the moments of your



life. Pray for the grace to be open to the work of God in you. The paradise that Jesus promises is not just some far-off place. *It is now* in our daily lives. We pray in the Lord's Prayer that his “kingdom come.” Jesus wants that for us and he will gladly honor our prayer that he remember us.

As 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). Let us pray that Jesus remember us and be open to the surprises he has in store for us.

Paradise begins now!

Q&A

Encounter Jesus in your life

Q. You wrote that in our spiritual lives, we need to encounter Jesus. Tell me more what this means.

A. We encounter God's love in this world through all things that are good and of him. Everything that is good brings us closer Jesus. We just have to be open to it.

We start with the understanding that God is in a loving relationship with us . . . from the moment of our conception. God wants us to *know* and *experience* his love. The problem is that there are too many things in the world and in our lives that get in the way *and* that we put in the way.

Every inordinate drive for money, power, sex, pleasure—you name it—gets in the way. We stand in the way when we want whatever appeals to us. You can probably think of a lot of things in your life. So unless something happens, God doesn't stand a chance and our encounter with a loving God is unlikely to happen.

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CHURCH CALENDAR

APRIL 2017

- 2 **Fifth Sunday of Lent**
- 7 St. John Baptist de la Salle, priest
- 9-15 Holy Week
- 9 **Palm Sunday**
- 13 **Holy Thursday**
- 14 **Good Friday**
- 15 **Holy Saturday**
- 16 **Easter**
- 23 **Second Sunday of Easter (Sunday of Divine Mercy)**
- 25 **St. Mark, evangelist**
- 29 St. Catherine of Siena, virgin and doctor
- 30 **Third Sunday of Easter**

MAY 2017

- 1 St. Joseph the Worker
- 2 St. Athanasius, bishop and doctor
- 3 **Sts. Philip and James, apostles**
- 7 **Fourth Sunday of Easter**
- 14 **Fifth Sunday of Easter**
- 21 **Sixth Sunday of Easter**
- 25 **Ascension** (in many places celebrated May 28)
- 26 St. Philip Neri, priest
- 28 **Seventh Sunday of Easter** (or **Ascension** if not celebrated May 25)
- 31 **Visitation of Mary**

JUNE 2017

- 1 St. Justin, martyr
- 4 **Pentecost**
- 5 St. Boniface
- 11 **Most Holy Trinity**
- 13 St. Anthony of Padua, priest and doctor
- 18 **Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)**
- 21 St. Aloysius Gonzaga, religious
- 23 **Sacred Heart of Jesus**
- 24 **Birth of John the Baptist**
- 25 **Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28 St. Irenaeus, bishop and martyr
- 29 **Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles**

Let's Talk!

PEM President: **Rev. Frank DeSiano, CSP**

Editor: **Mr. Anthony Bosnick**

Layout Editor: **Mrs. Joann Sullivan**

Art: **Steve Erspamer, SM**

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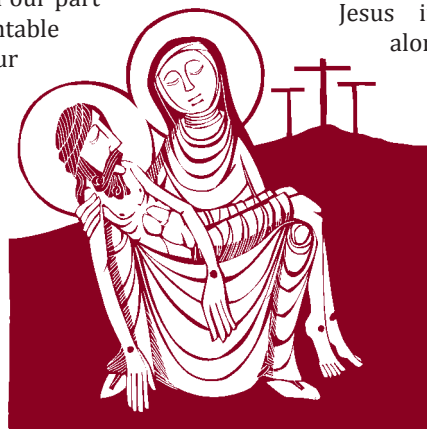
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Q&A Encounter Jesus in your life

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But God wants it to happen, so he does all he can to help us encounter him. The booklet "Conversion and Commitment to Christ," which we frequently mention in *Let's Talk!* will tell you more about encountering Jesus in your life. Briefly, we do this through 1) reading the Word of God; 2) worship and prayer; 3) being part of a community of faith; 4) caring for and serving others. (You can ask your chaplain for a copy of "Conversion and Commitment.")

God doesn't make it hard for us. We just have to allow God's grace to open us to him and give a little effort on our part to be open to the uncountable ways he meets us in our lives each day. *And we have to respond to these ways.* Move forward with God when you sense him calling you; draw back when you sense temptation turning you from God. It's pretty simple, but not easy. If it were easy, we'd all be in much different places now.



Q. Why is Mary so important to Catholics? After some people in here get done blasting her, I'm really confused.

A. A lot of Catholics ask this same question. A place to start is with Mary at the foot of the Cross. "Near the cross of Jesus, there stood his mother. . . . Seeing his mother there with the disciple whom he loved [the apostle John], Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, there is your son.' In turn he said to the disciple, 'There is your mother.' From that hour onward, the disciple [John] took her into his care" (John 19:25-27).

In this passage, we see that at the sacred time of Jesus' passion and death, he told Mary that the Disciple John—who represents all the followers of Jesus—is her son. And he told John that Mary is his mother. This is not just about Mary and John. *Mary is your mother too.*

Mary was chosen by God to be the Mother of his Son, Jesus. Mary, in all trust, said yes to God (Luke 1:38). She would do whatever God wanted. This faithful woman is our faithful mother now too.

Think of Mary as the loving mother of Jesus in the home of Nazareth along with Joseph caring for Jesus and forming him as a man of God. Think of her following him on the way of the Cross and at the foot of the Cross. How her heart broke for him. And then, at Pentecost, how the Spirit came upon her.

She is now your mother. "There is your mother." Think of how she loves you and cares for you. Think of how her heart breaks for you in your sufferings and how she wants you to know the love of Jesus. When you know Mary in this way, it is easier to understand why Mary is so important to Catholics (and to other Christians too).

The month of May is traditionally a time that the Church turns to Mary, our Mother. Perhaps this will be a good time to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand more about what it means for Mary to be your mother and for you to be her child.

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Prisoner Saint

St. John Nepomucene (1345-1393) + John lived in what is today the Slovak Republic in Eastern Europe. When John was still a boy, he was overcome by an illness. His parents prayed that he would be healed, and he was. This gave John a strong sense of the love of God. The desire to serve God grew in him and he became a priest. John was known for his kindness to the poor and for his preaching. He became so well known that the king invited him to serve in his court. When the king asked John to tell him what his wife said in confession, John refused. The king promised John riches and power if he would tell him what his wife confessed. When John again refused, he was imprisoned and drowned. John inspires us today in many ways, including holding to ourselves what others tell us privately.

Feast Day: May 16

Living Out Your Faith, Part 3

Indwelling Spirit

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: You know, Deke, that class on spirituality gave me a lot to think about. It was deep!

Me: Glad you liked it. Let's see how well I did. How would you sum it up for, say, your cellie?

Peaches: Well, it made me think of computers. So, there are all kinds of hardware and they're all different like people: You've got smart phones, tablets, desktops – whatever! And because people are all different, they run different programs. But they all need the operating system to run the program they want.

Me: OK.

Peaches: So you were saying that we are all different like different devices but we need the Holy Spirit to be our operating system and then we can choose whatever app or program we like. Those would be our different spiritual practices.

Me: I like it! The Holy Spirit is our primary Spirituality as Christians. The Spirit leads us to all the various Christian spiritualities that fit our personal needs at that time in our lives! Very good, P!

Peaches: So, I get the Catholic theory of the spiritual freedom that the Holy Spirit leads each of us to, but I'm not sure of *how* to go about it.

Me: Well, there are, of course, many ways to do that. I can share how I did it to get you started. I started by saying this prayer to the Holy Spirit every day. It has all the main points that I covered in it. Also, I take one line or idea in it and think, meditate and pray on it until I really own it. Here's a copy. (See prayer at bottom of page.)

Peaches: OK. Thanks. So I can read this on my own. I can even eventually memorize it if I do it everyday. But walk me through how you meditate on it.

Me: Well, it's fairly simple. Basically, meditation is thinking about something. You look at it from every angle. You try to figure how to make this thing work in your life. Actually, everybody meditates all the time.

Peaches: No they don't!

Me: Sure. A bank robber meditates on how to rob that bank. They look at it from all angles: How many exits? How many guards? Etc. We

all "meditate." The only difference is what we meditate on.

Peaches: OK, so walk me through this prayer.

Me: Sure. But remember there are many other insights into these ideas.

Peaches: Got it! My mileage may vary . . .

Me: OK, first line: "*Holy Spirit, Depth of God, I adore you living in the depth of me.*"

So, I sit with the idea that God is never far away, He is living in me! That's why he is talked about as the "Indwelling Spirit." He dwells or lives in me – in the deepest part of me. Now, this may not be easily seen or understood at first. It takes some time and sensitivity to be in touch with this reality that we are "God bearers" by baptism – we carry God in ourselves. God is never far away.

Peaches: See, just that part, was worth going to the class! What an amazing difference when we know and understand that God is always so close . . .

Me: St. Augustine says that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves!

Peaches: How can we doubt God loves us if he would decide to actually live in us – in our deepest us!

Me: See, and now you're doing it! You're doing your own meditation on that idea as the Indwelling Holy Spirit leads you to do it! You are not following my thoughts. And that's much better because the Holy Spirit will tailor the insights to you personally! Isn't that great?!

Peaches: It is. And it's also pretty great that I now know that you learned to meditate by robbing banks!

Me: See, that right there . . . that's how rumors get started!

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

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for April/May/June 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, *Let's Talk!* is not able to present these second requests, but you could ask your chaplain or volunteer to get them for you.

APRIL

Young People: That young people may respond generously to their vocations and seriously consider offering themselves to God in the priesthood or consecrated life.

MAY

Christians in Africa:

That Christians in Africa, in imitation of the Merciful Jesus, may give prophetic witness to reconciliation, justice, and peace.

JUNE

National Leaders: That national leaders may firmly commit themselves to ending the arms trade, which victimizes so many innocent people.

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

We need your opinion. We are looking for the best way to include these articles on spirituality in a pamphlet. Please let us know what you think of this article in the "Peaches" style as compared with Deacon Dolan's spirituality articles in the last issue of *Let's Talk!* in the "essay" style. Write us at the address on page 2. Thank you.

Simple Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit, Depth of God, I adore you living in the depth of me.

Make me attentive and responsive to Your promptings that I may continue the mission of Jesus for the Reign of God in my own time and place.

Flow through me, my Advocate and Comforter!

Give me Purity of Heart that I may abandon myself to you.

Give me Final Perseverance that I may always walk only in your light until that day when I walk into your eternal dawn. Amen.

An easy way to make this teaching and spirituality a daily practice is to pray the simple prayer above until you have it memorized. It contains the main points of Holy Spirit based spirituality.

The Works of Mercy, Part 5

We bring comfort to the suffering

In our society, even on the outside, we tend to live in isolation from one another. We don't often consider what it means to be brothers and sisters to one another—especially with those who are not family members. But from the very beginning of scripture, God calls us to be our brothers' keepers.

In the first pages of scripture, after Cain killed his brother Abel, God asked Cain where his brother was. Cain responded arrogantly, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 1:9). The answer is, of course: You are your brother's keeper.

The same holds for us. We are called to live in communion with one another and in solidarity with them. Our communion with others reflects the communion that the members of the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—have with one another. And in that communion, we are in solidarity with others. We are one in support and care, not in opposition with others.

This is the basis of the final three corporal works of mercy—visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead.

Visit the Sick. The Church teaches us, "Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 1500). This is especially true with grave and long-term sickness, whether in body, mind or spirit.

Sickness can very often make us realize the shortness of life and how fragile it is. We all will die. In serious illness, the sick can help us realize that all that matters is our final end with God in heaven. We can bear witness to that truth to the sick as well. I remember one time visiting a very sick woman, who knew her life was in the loving hands of God. Her example brought comfort to me as I saw that the same was with me, only the time and place would be different. When she said to us, "I am going home," we knew she realized she was at the door of heaven. It was deeply moving and strengthened my faith.

Visit the imprisoned. This corporal work of mercy is interesting to think about for one in prison. We are called to remember those in prison as if we are in prison with them. "Be as mindful of prisoners as if you were sharing their imprisonment" (Hebrews 13:3). You are. So treat your comrades in prison as you would want them to treat you (see Luke 6:3).

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

Encourage them in their despair. Comfort them in their loneliness and emptiness. Be the presence of Christ to them. Show them kindness. Show them what it means to be a follower of Christ.

Bury the dead. We bury the dead because it is a sign of our faith in the immortality of the person. We wait the day when we will rise to new life in body and soul in heaven when we enjoy "a new heaven and earth" (Revelation 21:1). Of course, very few people bury the dead. We leave it up to the professionals.

I had a very interesting experience recently when as a member of a parish St. Vincent de Paul Society we were asked for funds to help a family without means bury their grandmother. Should we spend money on this when there are so many other needs? We asked ourselves, "What would Jesus do," and decided to help find the funds to give the grandmother a burial.

Besides burying the dead, we are called to visit them in cemeteries if we are on the outside. And certainly to remember them in prayer. There are many ways we can participate in the work of mercy, even while in prison.

What is at the heart of the works of mercy? At the heart of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy is that we are called to live like followers of Christ. We are called to think about others and their needs. We are called to care for them. We are called to see Christ in them . . . and act accordingly.

As we end this series of articles on the works of mercy, our prayer is that we explore what they mean to us and that we try to live them out more fully each day. This is what Jesus wants of us, even—and especially—in the confines of prison. May they help us to be more fully human.

~ Anthony Bosnick

Encounter Jesus in your life

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Q. *I get distracted a lot and think about trash. Is there some prayer or something that you can recommend to help me?*

A. A good prayer to say in your mind and heart is the "Jesus Prayer": "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." Repeating it over and over as you go through your day will help you put your mind on God and take it away from trash.

Let's Talk! responds to prisoners questions. Write to us with your questions at the address on page 2 of this newsletter. We like hearing from our readers.

Pray for our benefactors

Let's Talk! and its Spanish translation ¡Hablemos! are supported by donations. They are given free of charge to prison chaplains for distribution to inmates by Paulist Prison Ministries. Please pray for our benefactors. To help support this ministry, please send your donation to the address on page 2 of this newsletter.