



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

PO BOX 29121 ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20017

Vol. 25, No. 1 – January/February/March 2018

I am not ashamed of the gospel

St. Paul declared that he was not ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16). Are you?

This question is important! And we should ask ourselves this question because the gospel is “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (v. 16). These are words to remember and embrace as we begin this New Year.

As we often struggle along in life, we can take courage in the truth that there is power for us to live our lives in new and life-giving ways. We do not have to remain in anger. Nor do we have to let darkness overcome us. We do not have to be bitter. We can forgive and love. The gospel of Jesus Christ can help us each day take another step in new life.

The gospel is life and power. Ringing loud and clear throughout Scripture is

the good news that Jesus has died and is risen. It inspires. It empowers. It brings us joy. Through it, we have “life to the full” (John 10:10).

The gospel will change our lives if we will only let it. It means opening our lives to Christ and following him. We are challenged to live in a way that allows him to speak to us and change us. Developing and following spiritual disciplines like those described in the article “Spiritual resolutions to help you on your journey” on page 6 of this issue can help us slow down and be open to God.

Conduct yourself in a way worthy of Christ. St. Paul wrote to Timothy to “keep the commandment without stain or reproach” (1 Timothy 6:14). The greatest command is “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).



Scripture shows us how to do this. We can start with the words of Jesus in the Beatitudes. “Blessed are the poor in spirit...” (Matthew 5:3-9). The Beatitudes teach us a whole new way of living.

And we can turn to St. Paul who helps us see how we should live: “put to death... immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry... anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene language.... Stop lying to one another.... Put on a new self which is being renewed” (Colossians 3:5, 8-10).

Christ lives in me. The hope of glory. St. Paul encouraged the Colossians, *and us*, with these words of truth: “Christ in you, the hope for glory” (Colossians 1:27).

So we come back to the question: Are you ashamed of the gospel? Or will you let its power work in you and transform you? This is our great hope in the New Year, and always, even now in prison.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We start a new year. And before long we will also be starting Lent, which begins on February 14. This issue of *Let's Talk!* has special articles to help you prepare for the New Year and for Lent. We even have some words from Pope Francis for Lent in the article on page 5.

We hope this issue will help you on your journey, especially to help your heart be a place where Jesus comes alive each day. It is hard everywhere, but even harder in prison. But the great truth is that this is what God wants for all of us. He gives us everything we need to make it possible.

Our hope is that this issue will help you grow in faith this year. Spend some extra time with “Spiritual resolutions to help you on your journey” on page 6. The four spiritual resolutions there can help you grow in faith throughout the 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

Q&A

Welcome to the field hospital

Q. I heard the Church is supposed to be like a field hospital. What does that mean?

A. The expression of the Church being like a “field hospital” is one that Pope Francis likes to use. By that he means that the Church in the world is situated in a battle zone and is called upon to “clean and heal wounds.” A field hospital takes care of injuries right on the battlefield or place of disaster because there is no time to spare to get people further away to a safer facility.

This concept of Church contrasts with the image of the Church as a nice club where people gather for a pleasant Sunday social. The Church is for the sick. As Jesus said, “Those who are healthy do not heed a physician, but the sick do” (Luke 5:31). By the way, we are all sick. People who don’t think they need the field hospital fool themselves.

Pope Francis said this in a homily in 2015: “This is the mission of the Church: the Church heals, it cures.... It’s true: there are many, many wounded! So many people need their wounds healed! This is the mission of the Church: to heal the wounds of the heart, to open doors, to free people, to say that God is good, God forgives all, God is the Father, God is affectionate, God always waits for us.”

continued on page 2

CHURCH CALENDAR

JANUARY 2018

- 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
- 7 **Epiphany of the Lord**
- 8 **Baptism of the Lord**
- 14 **Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 17 St. Anthony of the Desert, hermit
- 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- 21 **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 22 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 **Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 31 St. John Bosco, priest

FEBRUARY 2018

- 2 **Presentation of the Lord**
- 4 **Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 5 St. Agatha, virgin and martyr
- 6 St. Paul Miki and Companions, martyrs
- 10 St. Scholastica, nun
- 11 **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 14 **Ash Wednesday**
- 18 **First Sunday of Lent**
- 22 **Chair of St. Peter**
- 25 **Second Sunday of Lent**

MARCH 2018

- 4 **Third Sunday of Lent**
- 11 **Fourth Sunday of Lent**
- 17 St. Patrick, bishop
- 18 **Fifth Sunday in Lent**
- 19 **St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 25 **Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord**
- 29 **Holy Thursday**
- 30 **Passion of the Lord (Good Friday)**
- 31 **Holy Saturday**

Let's Talk!

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

Editor: **Mr. Anthony Bosnick**

Layout Editor: **Mrs. Joann Sullivan**

Art: **Steve Erspamer, SM**

Visit us at www.pemdc.org

©Paulist Evangelization Ministries

All Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Bible*. Used with permission.

Change of Address: Please help us keep our mailing list accurate. Send all changes in your name and/or address to: Paulist Prison Ministries; PO Box 29121; Washington, DC 20017; or by email to: info@pemdc.org.

Thank you for your help.

PMLTH1801

Welcome to the field hospital

(continued from page 1)

This is a good word to us now in the New Year and as we look forward to Lent. Are you wounded? Are you sick? Do you need hope? Come to the hospital and let Jesus minister to you.

Q. *What's a mystic?*

A. Most people have no idea of what a "mystic" is. If they do, they likely think in terms of someone who is lost in ecstasy, a trance or frenzy. True, some mystics lose awareness of what is going on around them as they are overwhelmed by their personal contact with God.

Catholics believe people can and do have mystical experiences. Some Saints like Catherine of Siena (1347 – 1380) and Teresa of Avila (1515 – 1582) had such mystical experiences. Closer to our time, St. Padre Pio (1887 – 1968) had some such experiences. Most of us don't have mystical experiences in such a dramatic way. And most of us don't want them!

We may think mysticism is uncommon, and perhaps extraordinary mystical experiences are rare; but there are many ordinary times when people have an experience of deep union with God. Even the "average" person in church can experience God in a personal and intimate way.

In fact, the twentieth-century theologian Karl Rahner wrote that it is important to know God personally. Rahner wrote that in our time if Christians are not mystics—that is, people who experience God in their lives—they will be nothing. By this he means that we need this personal experience of God's life and love in our lives. Christianity is not just about following rules and regulations. It is also about knowing God and his love for us.



We have written many times that 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.

But God wants it to happen, so he does all he can to help us encounter him. God doesn't make it hard for us. We just must allow God's grace to open us to him and offer a little effort on

our part to be open to the uncountable ways he meets us in our lives each day.

Q. *It's hard to do Lent in prison. Any suggestions?*

A. This year Lent begins on February 14, Ash Wednesday. It continues to Holy Thursday when the Church shifts gears to focus on the Eater Triduum, the three days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday and the Easter Vigil.

Prisoners face many of the same challenges that people outside face in Lent: lots of distractions, tiredness, spiritual dullness, laziness. We all know how that is.

We can recommend you take a look at the four Spiritual Resolutions featured in the article on page 6 of this issue and try to practice them in your life. Or you can pick one of two to focus on. Ask God to be with you and to help you and know that he wants you to know his life and love.

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

Prisoner Saint

St. Agnes of Rome (c. 291 – c. 304) + This young martyr was a member of the Roman nobility. She was raised in a Catholic family, who were among the first converts to the faith as it spread into Italy. Agnes was a beautiful young girl and many young men sought her both for her beauty and her family wealth. Agnes had a singular love for Christ and chose not to marry. This angered the young men who turned her in to the authorities as a Christian. At that time, Christians were suffering another round of persecution for their faith. Agnes was arrested, imprisoned, and ultimately subjected to brutal torture before she died. She is still honored today for her desire to give herself to Christ alone.

Feast Day: January 21

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for January/February/March 2018

Each month the Pope entrusts prayer intentions to his Worldwide Prayer Network, the Apostleship of Prayer. His monthly prayer intention (one month is universal and the next month is for evangelization) is a global call to transform our prayer into "concrete gestures" of service. It is a monthly action plan mobilizing us to join together to build a more human and caring world.

In addition, the Holy Father at the beginning of the month offers a second prayer intention for his immediate concerns, a "last minute" intention to get us out of the "globalization of indifference." Your chaplain or volunteer may be able to get this request for you.

JANUARY

Evangelization:

Religious Minorities in Asia. That Christians, and other religious minorities in Asian countries, may be able to practice their faith in full freedom.

FEBRUARY

Universal: Say "No" to Corruption. That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist any lure of corruption.

MARCH

Evangelization:

Formation in Spiritual Discernment. That the Church may appreciate the urgency of formation in spiritual discernment, both on the personal and communitarian levels.

Pope Francis invites you to join him in praying for these intentions. Your prayer is needed and can help change the world.

The Church's Mission, Part 1

Welcome to the Kingdom of God!

Peaches: You know, Deke, I can't stand it here anymore!

Me: Anything in particular?

Peaches: All the religious fighting in this place. It's driving me nuts. I hate it!

Me: Me too. It's one of the biggest causes for unbelief in my opinion. "See how these Christians hate one another."

Peaches: Why, though, Deke?! I don't get it!

Me: Because all the people doing that are operating out of a mistake that the Church is the most important thing.

Peaches: Deacon Dolan! Shame on you! You're ordained!

Me: But also, theologically educated! So that I know the church is secondary.

Peaches: To what? God?

Me: Actually, to the Kingdom of God. When believers forget that, it all tends to go sideways.

Peaches: Got to admit, the Kingdom is not something that I'm really up on.

Me: Not entirely your fault. The idea of the Kingdom is not placed at the center of either most sermons or even religious education.

Peaches: Then why is it so important?

Me: Because it is what Jesus came to preach, "Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand!" (Mark 1:15).

Peaches: He preached about a lot of other stuff we hear about all the time: love, peace, forgiveness, etc.

Me: All those things are "in addition" to the central message of the Kingdom.

Peaches: I don't know, Deke. Since none of us hears much about this Kingdom teaching, I'm thinking you're out on a limb this time.

Me: No. I'm standing on the ground pointing to the trunk of the tree. And I have all the Popes, bishops and theologians of the Church standing next to me. I didn't come up with this myself. It really is the central idea of Jesus' preaching.

Peaches: Then how come we're not hearing more about it? It's not the main dish in my experience.

Me: I don't know how to answer that. I was as confused as you are when I learned this. My guess is it's the same reason Christmas is actually the biggest feast of the year and not

Easter: The human mind is still processing that God came to us! That God became one of us!

Maybe in another thousand years most of us will be ready to absorb that God rose for us. Then, we will have to deal with the Holy Spirit being given to empower us and finally we will be able to turn toward the Kingdom when we ask, "What does the Holy Spirit empower us for?"

Peaches: So, you don't have a good answer?

Me: Not really. Maybe, people have spiritualized it too much. I don't know. But I do know that the Kingdom is the missing piece of most Christians' equation that makes the "math" go bad. It's why there is all this tribal, negative nonsense.

Peaches: Explain the math to me, at least.

Me: OK. So, tell me what's wrong with this picture: a sailor, a marine, an airman and a coastguardman get into a bar fight over which branch of the service is better.

Peaches: It's stupid, Deke! I mean, it's good that they're all proud of their branch but they all serve America! They're on the same team, for crying out loud!

Me: Bingo! Now substitute church denominations for the branches of the service and the Kingdom for America and you've got it!

Peaches: Oh, right! First things first! They forgot their common purpose!

Me: Exactly. That's why we say, "The Church does not have a mission, but the mission has a Church!"

Peaches: So, the Church's mission is the Kingdom of God?

Me: Yes. It was Jesus' mission and we follow Jesus, right?

Peaches: So, the Kingdom is the reason for the existence of the Church. Then the Church actually *is* the mission for the Kingdom. Which means all this denominational infighting is as ridiculous as your example of the people in the bar!

Me: Being antagonistic is optional. Jesus never said, "Blessed are the knuckleheads!"

Peaches: Well, at least, that mission math adds up!

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 Examen, Part 3

Stop. Look. Listen.

The “examen” is a form of prayer “discovered” and then developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) about 500 years ago. So it has been around a long time and has proven to be helpful to people as they seek to follow Jesus more faithfully. In earlier times the *examen* was used mostly by priests, sisters and brothers who had made a deeper commitment to follow Jesus. It is now used by everyone seeking to follow Jesus more faithfully, including lay people like you.

This article is on the first “step” of the examen—to place yourself in God’s presence and give thanks for his great love for you.

This article is on the second “step” of the examen—pray for the grace to understand how God is acting in your life.

You have taken the first step in the examen already: quietly put yourself in God’s presence. Ask him for the grace of a quiet heart. And thank him for his love for you and the gifts he has given you.

Pray for light. We now ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts and minds and help us understand how God is working in our lives. From this we can see that we are not just trying to come up with things off “the top of our heads,” but asking the Spirit of God to enlighten us. *We are looking for both the long-term things and the short-term things of each day.* We keep looking each day and await a surprise of the Holy Spirit.

Those who use the examen in a serious way as a part of their spiritual discipline know from experience that the Holy Spirit works in a mysterious way in our lives. The Spirit shows us the deep, sometimes hidden things that turn us *away* from following God. The Holy Spirit also shows us those things that are leading us *toward* God, but that we just aren’t particularly aware of. The experience of the Saints shows that *we should expect both actions of the Spirit.*

A surprise of the Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind and heart. In the Nicene Creed (which we pray at Mass on Sunday and Holy Days), we proclaim that we “believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life.” The Spirit reveals God to us. And the Spirit enlivens and enlightens our minds and hearts. The Spirit sheds light into the darkest places in our lives. And so, in the examen we ask the Spirit to shed light on our lives and actions.

What a surprise we often have when the Spirit shows us the deep things of our lives. In the fast-paced world we live in with all the

Five Steps of the Examen

- 1. Place yourself in God’s presence.** Give thanks for God’s great love for you.
- 2. Pray for the grace to understand** how God is acting in your life.
- 3. Review your day** — recall specific moments and your feelings at the time.
- 4. Reflect on what you did, said, or thought** in those instances. Were you drawing closer to God, or further away?
- 5. Look toward tomorrow** — think of how you might collaborate more effectively with God’s plan. Be specific, and conclude with the “Our Father.”

Source - <https://goo.gl/5SKCrQ>

constant distractions and the concerns and desires of the flesh, we often miss what God is doing in our lives. But when we take the time to ask the Holy Spirit to help us see how God is working in us, we are often in for *both small and big* surprises. It is really an exciting thing when this happens.

Stop. Look. Listen. These three words are taken from the warning signs that are often posted at railroad crossings where there are no electric signals that flash when a train is coming. I remember when a classmate in high school was driving, came to such a crossing, slowed down, and heard a train. But instead of stopping, he decided to try to beat the train. The engineer tried to bring the train to a screeching halt, but clipped the rear bumper and dragged the car down the tracks. Boy, were this classmate’s parents ever mad! So were the police and firemen! In the rural location where we lived, the whole town was talking about this for some time to come!

The point is that we have to slow down, stop and listen if we are to understand what the Spirit is trying to tell us. For this step in the examen to be helpful, we have to take the time to listen to the Spirit. And we have to trust that God wants to show us something through it. Because God wants the best for us, we can trust that in time we will be sensing the ways that God is at work in our lives.

God wants the best for us. When we take the time to ask the Holy Spirit to show us the inner workings of our hearts and minds, the Spirit does this! God our Father knows us better than anyone else and wants to bless us. All we have to do is open our hearts and let the Holy Spirit work in us. It is a really a freeing and liberating experience.

Try it, you’ll like it. Guaranteed.

~ Anthony Bosnick

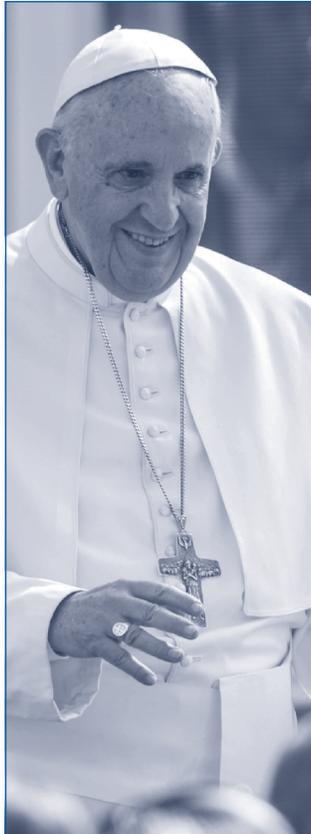
2018 Calendars Available

New 2018 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.**

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.

Pope Francis: "Does the Lord feel at home in my life?"

Lent begins this year on February 14. Pope Francis gave the catechesis excerpted below based on John 2:13-25 during the Angelus of March 8, 2015. This same reading will occur again in the Catholic Mass this year on March 4, which is also the Third of Sunday of Lent. May his words inspire and encourage you.



Dear brothers and sisters,

In this time of Lent we are preparing for the celebration of Easter, when we will renew the promises of our Baptism. Let us travel in the world as Jesus did, and let us make our whole existence a sign of our love for our brothers, especially the weakest and poorest, let us build for God a temple of our lives. And so we make it "encounterable" for those who we find along our journey.

If we are witnesses of this living Christ, so many people will encounter Jesus in us, in our witness. But, we ask – and each one of us can ask ourselves – does the Lord feel at home in my life? Do we allow Him to "cleanse" our hearts and to drive out the idols, those attitudes of cupidity, jealousy, worldliness, envy, hatred, those habits of gossiping and tearing down others. Do I allow Him to cleanse all the behaviors that are against God, against our neighbor, and against ourselves?

Each one can answer for himself, in the silence of his heart: "Do I allow Jesus to make my heart a little cleaner?" "Oh Father, I fear the rod!" But Jesus never strikes. Jesus cleanses with tenderness, with mercy, with love. Mercy is His way of cleansing. Let us, each of us, let us allow the Lord to enter with His mercy – not with the whip, no, with His mercy – to cleanse our hearts. The whip of Jesus with us is His mercy. Let us open to Him the gates so that He would make us a little cleaner.

Every Eucharist that we celebrate with faith makes us grow as a living temple of the Lord, thanks to the communion with His crucified and risen Body. Jesus recognizes that which is in each of us, and knows well our most ardent desires: that of being inhabited by Him, only by Him. Let us allow Him to enter into our lives, into our families, into our hearts. May Mary most holy, the privileged dwelling place of the Son of God, accompany us and sustain us on the Lenten journey, so that we might be able to rediscover the beauty of the encounter with Christ, the only One Who frees us and saves us.

© Vatican Radio

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

Grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled, as to console;

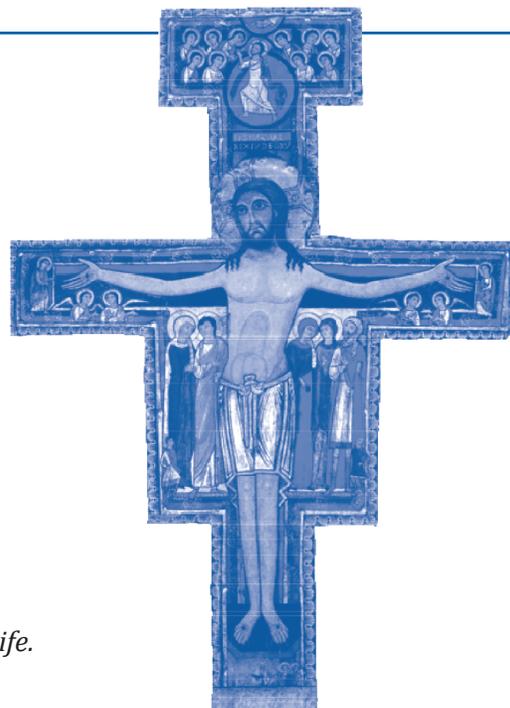
To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.



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 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 from this ministry.

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. This is an example of "Pray as you can, not as you can't."

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 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.