



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

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Take courage! Don't give up.

We can all get discouraged and burdened from time to time, whether we are inside or outside. We can say, cheer up, and hope something happens. Sometimes it does. Often it doesn't.

Take courage. But Jesus gives us better advice. He says, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). We see this when Jesus' closest followers grew fearful on the Sea of Galilee during a storm with high waves. On top of that, they thought they saw a "ghost" walking toward them on the waves. The "ghost" was Jesus. He called out to them to take courage and not be afraid.

Remember that the disciples became fearful even though they had just witnessed Jesus multiply five loaves of bread and two fish to feed five thousand men, and

the women and children present too. On top of that, the leftovers filled twelve baskets! (Matthew 14:17-21). Quite a miracle. Such abundance. What a demonstration of power. Yet the disciples still grew afraid.

Confused. Doubting. Fearful. Peter shows us confusion, doubt and fear. Caught up in fear when he stepped out of the boat, Peter began to sink in the stormy waters. He cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus reached out to Peter and took him by the hand saying, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:30, 31). The disciples finally recognized the power shown through Jesus and said, "Truly, you are the Son of God" (v. 33).

If even the people closest to Jesus could forget and become afraid, no wonder it happens to us. We need to learn just as the disciples did that only by God's grace



can we walk the path of discipleship in the midst of the challenges and disappointments we face in life. The good news is that we can walk this path everywhere, even in prison.

Come to me. In our times of discouragement, doubt and fear, we can turn to Jesus and base your life and

hope on him. We take courage in him.

Let us pray on Jesus' words and take them into our hearts: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Jesus' invitation applies at all times and places, even in prison.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are now moving slowly but surely toward the celebration of Christmas. Let us use this time to prepare in a way that this Christmas will truly be a recognition and celebration of God's love for us through the birth of his Son Jesus.

We will know more surely that life is worth living. And the witness of our lives will bring hope to those around us and back home. What a gift it would be to offer that to others. Even in prison, you can live in such a way that you bring positive change to others, as well as to yourself.

So let us take courage! Let us continue onward and not give up! Let us *decide* to respond to Jesus' call to us and walk with him to renewed life. You will be surprised what you will find at the end of a day, a week, a month, a year!

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President,
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Q&A

Life is worth living!

Q. You have written a couple of times recently in *Let's Talk!* that our time here in prison can be positive. Tell us more.

A. OK. Here is something to think about. Once upon a time, probably before most of you were born, Fulton J. Sheen (1895-1979) was a popular radio and TV personality. What was so amazing about him was that he was a Catholic priest, then bishop and archbishop. He was immensely popular. His TV program was called "Life is Worth Living" (1951-1957).

It was a religious program, firmly Catholic in perspective. Despite the fact that Sheen had been a respected university professor of theology and philosophy at the Catholic University of America, there was nothing academic or too complicated about what he said. His message can be boiled down to "rely on Jesus Christ" and "keep a positive attitude." It's pretty basic, but what people needed to hear then . . . and now.

We have written much about spiritual practices and attitudes that can help your time in prison be more positive. So to keep it simple here, let's add:

- Rely of Jesus Christ.
- Keep a positive attitude.

The next question below goes into this more, as do other articles in this issue. We suggest

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CHURCH CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2018

- 1 St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, religious
- 2 Guardian Angels
- 4 St. Francis of Assisi, religious
- 7 **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 14 **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 15 St. Teresa of Avila, religious, doctor
- 17 St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop, martyr
- 18 **St. Luke, evangelist**
- 19 Sts. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests and martyrs, and companions, martyrs
- 21 **Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28 **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

NOVEMBER 2018

- 1 **All Saints**
- 2 All Souls
- 4 **Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 9 Dedication of the Lateran Basilica
- 10 St. Leo the Great, pope, doctor
- 11 **Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 12 St. Josaphat, bishop and martyr
- 13 St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, foundress
- 17 St. Elizabeth of Hungary, religious
- 18 **Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 21 Presentation of Mary
- 22 St. Cecelia, virgin, martyr
- 22 Thanksgiving Day in U.S.
- 24 St. Andrew Dung-Lac, priest, and Companions, martyrs
- 25 **Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe**
- 30 **St. Andrew, apostle**

DECEMBER 2018

- 2 **First Sunday of Advent**
- 3 St. Francis Xavier, priest and missionary
- 7 St. Ambrose, bishop
- 8 **Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 9 **Second Sunday of Advent**
- 12 **Our Lady of Guadalupe**
- 13 St. Lucy, virgin and martyr
- 14 St. John of the Cross, priest
- 16 **Third Sunday of Advent**
- 23 **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
- 25 **Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)**
- 26 St. Stephen, first martyr
- 27 **St. John, evangelist**
- 28 Holy Innocents, martyrs
- 30 **Holy Family**

Life is worth living!

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here that you look at each day as an opportunity to walk joyfully with Jesus, asking for his help, and keep looking toward heaven. And keep a conversation going with Jesus during the day. These two things are bound to make your life more positive.

Q. Last year sometime you wrote about being transformed in Christ. I really struggle with it.

A. You are bound to struggle. We all do. By the time we are teenagers, we have likely formed some pretty wicked habits that don't make life easy to live. Then in our young adult years we often add more bad habits that make living a life worthy of our calling as followers of Jesus even harder (see Ephesians 4:1).

But we can be victorious! We know it won't happen overnight or with a few words of proclamation. Growth in the spiritual life is a life-long process. But God has much good in store for us, and for you. He calls us to be transformed. We are called to the life-long journey to change and become like Christ. Transformation calls for dedication in living the Christian life. It calls us to grow spirituality.

A good, basic spirituality that works for people includes these things: 1) Read the Word of God each day. 2) Worship and pray. 3) Be part of a community of faith. 4) Care for and serve others. We write about these four points frequently in *Let's Talk!*. The booklet "Conversion and Commitment to Christ" tells you more about them. Ask your chaplain for a copy, which he or she can get from *Let's Talk!*.

Transformation doesn't happen overnight. It is a life-long effort! Let's get on with it.

Q. How can I celebrate Christmas more spiritually?

A. Christmas will be upon us before we know it. This is the celebration of God taking on human flesh to live among us. A good way to prepare for Christmas could include the following: 1) Spend some time—or extra time—in prayer each day during Advent (the four weeks before Christmas). Ask God to bless the Advent season for you that you would learn and experience more of God's love in your life. 2) Try to read the Scripture readings from Mass as often as you can and meditate on them. 3) Find ways you can care for and serve others. 4) Seek to be more joyful, for joy is a sure sign of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Here is a nice thought we want to share with you. It comes from St. Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross), who died in a Nazi extermination camp in 1942. She writes: "Only a few words from the Virgin Mary have come down to us in the Gospels. But these few words are like heavy grains of pure gold. When they melt in the ardor of loving meditation, they more than suffice to bathe our entire lives in a luminous golden glow."

Loving and quiet meditation on the words of Scripture brings us happiness. That "golden glow" is what brings peace and joy—that is the fruit of everything we have written in this column. Let's think

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Let's Talk!

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PMLTH1804

Martyr Saint

St. Josaphat (c. 1580-1623) + Josaphat Kuntsevych was born into an Eastern Orthodox family in what is today Belarus, a small land-locked country in Eastern Europe. He is of Polish heritage and is an extremely popular Polish saint, including among Polish immigrants to the United States. Josaphat lived a devout life as a young man and in his early twenties became a monk. He later became a Roman Catholic and was appointed an archbishop. His attempts to unify Orthodox and Catholics led to great anger among the Orthodox. Tensions grew so great that a mob rose up and attacked him. Josaphat never was imprisoned as he was quickly killed by the blow of an axe to his head. Josaphat is honored as a martyr of Christian unity. Many Polish churches, great and small, are named in his honor.

Feast Day: November 12

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for October/November/ December 2018

Each month the Pope entrusts prayer intentions to his Worldwide Prayer Network. His monthly prayer intention 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 to the monthly request below, 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.

OCTOBER

Evangelization:

The Mission of Religious That consecrated religious men and women may bestir themselves, and be present among the poor, the marginalized, and those who have no voice.

NOVEMBER

Universal: *In the Service of Peace* That the language of love and dialogue may always prevail over the language of conflict.

DECEMBER

Evangelization: *In the Service of the Transmission of Faith* That people, who are involved in the service and transmission of faith, may find, in their dialogue with culture, a language suited to the conditions of the present time.

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 4

Missionary Discipleship in Two Lines

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: So this Kingdom or Reign of God thing really puts everything else in perspective, Deke!

Me: Yup. It was Jesus' main teaching. As Pope Paul VI said, "everything else is 'the rest' that is given in addition" to spell out that Reign of God idea. (*Evangelization in the Modern World*, n. 8)

Peaches: You know what I like best about this Reign of God and Mission stuff? It's so practical.

Me: Absolutely!

Peaches: I mean, the Mission of the Church is doing the Mission of Jesus. Being baptized means that I take on the mission of Jesus for the Reign of God! Makes sense to me.

Me: And you can take that two-line definition of the mission and easily memorize it and check yourself on it every day! I love short mission statements!

Peaches: Why?

Me: Because it's harder to memorize and remember to apply mission statements that are two pages long! This one I just make into a morning prayer: "Lord, today help me to Proclaim, Witness and Serve your Reign of Love, Salvation and Justice. Amen." Easy peezy! Then at the end of the day, I spend a few minutes going over my day and seeing how well I accomplished my mission!

Peaches: How does that go?

Me: It's simple. I start looking over the day beginning from when I woke up, through the afternoon and evening and I try to find where I proclaimed, witnessed and served. So, I might remember that I told someone I would pray for them . . .

Peaches: That's proclamation!

Me: Yes. And then I remember that I went to Bible Study that night . . .

Peaches: Witness!

Me: And then I recall that I donated some money to charity and that's service!

Peaches: So you use it like bookends for your day?

Me: Yep. It keeps me on track and focused on my mission. Also, the more you do this little prayer and review, the more you find yourself not missing opportunities throughout the day to do the Mission of Jesus. It burns it into your brain.

Peaches: You still need to explain the second half of the two-sentence mission statement: *Proclaim, Witness and Serve God's Reign of Love,*

Salvation and Justice.

Me: OK, so remember the mission is not directed at the Church.

Peaches: Right! That's the basic mistake people make. The Church (that's me!) does the Mission of Jesus for the Reign of God.

Me: Correct! So the second part of the mission statement are the characteristics of this Kingdom: Love, Salvation, and Justice.

Anything that promotes more love, more justice, and more salvation is a work of the Kingdom. When you see those hallmarks, you are fulfilling the mission.

Peaches: So anywhere?! You mean it doesn't have to be a Catholic organization?

Me: No. You could start a secular Credit Union to help the poor. You could work for Big Brothers/Big Sisters. My wife volunteers as a nurse at a clinic for the poor run by Muslim doctors! If it makes the world more loving and more just it is part of the Kingdom and you are serving it.

Peaches: But "Salvation," that's a Church deal.

Me: Not always. The word "salvation" means "health, wholeness." Ultimately, it is Union with God.

I like Pope Paul VI's line that salvation is "liberation from all that oppresses us" (*EN* n. 9).

Peaches: I get it! So that would include body and mind not just the spiritual!

Me: As long as we humans have all those parts that can be oppressed, salvation has more than one layer. God loves all of you, not just your soul. That's why he tells us to feed the hungry for example.

Peaches: Then your wife working with the Muslim doctors is liberating people's minds and bodies! That would be a part of "salvation."

Me: Yup. She liberates the bodies and I liberate the souls!

Peaches: Quite the tag team you've got going over there!

Me: Please, my humility!

Peaches: Speaking of "liberation from all that oppresses us"!

Me: Busted!

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

Tomorrow is a new day

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. Now it is used by anyone seeking to follow Jesus more faithfully, including lay people like you.

We have taken the first four steps of the examen. In our previous article, we reflected on the fourth step: what we did, said, and thought in the circumstances of our day and tried to see if we were drawing closer to God, or moving from him. Now, in this fifth and last step, we **look toward tomorrow**. We think of how you might join ourselves with God’s plan for our lives.

Then, we end our examen with the “Our Father.” It’s a pretty simple process, from one step to the next, but a vital one for our spiritual health. And we should be looking to see how we can grow healthy spiritually. That is our hope.

“Master, to whom shall we go?” (John 6:68). As we saw in the article on page 1 of this issue (“Take courage! Don’t give up”), when we come to experience the love and truth of God in our lives through Jesus, we come to believe that we have nowhere else to turn but to Jesus. Despite our struggles with sin and doubt and whatever else, we ultimately return to the truth that Jesus has the words of eternal life (v. 68).

So it should be important to us to want to move ahead on our pilgrimage with Jesus. He transforms us. He gives us happiness. He is ultimately the person we are seeking. We may come to this “kicking and screaming,” but if we are open to his grace, we will know change.

We will come to know the joy it gives us. It will likely be a slow process, even years. But when we begin to realize the joy of new life in Jesus, we will be grateful. This is what is so important about this last step. No matter what our day was like today—with its successes and failures—we look ahead to tomorrow and to what God wants for us.

What does God want for us? In this last step as we look toward tomorrow, we don’t just jump on the band wagon or join the parade of any good thing that comes along. We have to ask what God’s plan is for us, *for me specifically*. We are all different, and what might be

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>

appropriate (or inappropriate) for one person, might not necessarily be appropriate (or inappropriate) for us.

For example, in prison you might be faced with a person who is a “problem personality” for you (and likely for others). You most likely are called by God to pray for that person. But it might not (and probably isn’t) right for you to “confront” the person. On the other hand, another individual might be called to talk to the person with the problem personality, while it is not for you to do.

Another example might be that you feel called to take some time to help an ailing fellow inmate. This is probably something God wants you to do as an act of loving your neighbor: I was “ill and you cared for me” (see Matthew 25:36, 43).

Try to think of other examples of this, based on your life and on the lives of those you know.

God loves you and wants the best for you. Keep in mind that God wants to give you a share of heaven, not to make your life miserable! There is no need to beat yourself with guilt. You have sinned, so ask forgiveness and move on to face tomorrow.

And as you move on, ask God to help you be aware of the short-term sins, things that aren’t a deep pattern. And look for the long-term patterns of sins, things you have been plagued with, sometimes for years. (These are points three and four of the examen.) Ask God to forgive and heal you. And look to the new day and ask him specifically what he wants for you. Continue with your walk with God.

Remember, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). But God has something better for us and calls us to it. As we wrote last time, “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” Ultimately with God in charge, it’s all small. See your sin, ask forgiveness, and move on. Tomorrow is a new day.

~ Anthony Bosnick

This is the final article in this series on the examen.

Life is worth living (continued from page 2)

bigger. Pray about and meditate on the truths we hear proclaimed in Scripture. Remember that life is worth living and live so that you know this and show it to others. God wants so much for us. Go for it.

May your celebration of Christmas be a true blessing and joy in your life.

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.

2019 Calendars Available

New 2019 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.

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