

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY  
TO PRISONERS

# Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

PO BOX 29121 ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20017

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## Shine like a light to the world!

**T**his is our calling: We are to shine like lights in the darkness of the world around us! As we begin this New Year, let us make that our goal.

It isn't going to be easy, that's for sure, but it is our calling as followers of Jesus. In fact, St. Paul writes to the Philippians that "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" (sound familiar?) the Christians at Philippi do "shine like lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). At all times and places, even in prison, we are to shine like lights showing that there is a better way to live.

**Hold on to the word of life.** St. Paul says simply, "Hold fast to the word of life" (2:16). Walk with Jesus. Talk with him. Follow him. This is not just about trying to be better persons. It is about a relationship with Jesus, the Word of Life.

We will fail at times. We will stumble along. But other times we will see success. Jesus will inspire us and strengthen us to live better lives. By God's grace and Jesus with us, we will experience more life and joy. And how we will shine in the darkness.

### Build on the foundation of Jesus.

St. Paul told the Corinthians that Jesus is the foundation and to build on him (see 1 Corinthians 3:11). And Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me" (John 14:6). Embrace and hold on to this truth as your own. We are temples of God. He dwells in us (1 Corinthians 3:16). This is a truth that can guide and inspire us on our way through life.



### Spiritual resolutions for the New Year.

Several articles in this issue of *Let's Talk!*—especially the one on page 6—are about spiritual practices that will help you build this new life as you follow Jesus.

Spend some time reading about and studying these practices. Some of you reading this issue may have already seen these spiritual resolutions in past years. But it is good to review them and seek anew to live them.

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you on your daily walk with Jesus. You can shine like a light to the world around you—even while in prison. The great thing is you don't do this on your own. Jesus is with you. Go for it.

### Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The New Year is here! We rightly should ask ourselves how this year will be different from last year, and all previous ones. Central to that question is to make or renew a commitment to follow Jesus as his disciples. Let us recommit ourselves to him.

Let us also commit ourselves to being missionary disciples, people who seek to bring Jesus' life and love to the world around us. This is our calling as active followers of Jesus, no matter where we are. 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. Check out the articles on becoming missionary disciples.

Also note a letter from me to all of you on page 5. My hope is that it will strengthen you to follow Jesus more faithfully.

Let us pray for one another!

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP  
President  
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

### Q&A

## It's not about being good!

**Q. I've tried a lot and I can never be good enough. What should I do?**

**A.** It will probably surprise most people that the Christian life is not just about being good. Rather, it is about following Jesus and embracing him in our lives.

Early in the gospels, Jesus says, "Come, follow me" (Matthew 4:19). The call to follow is repeated many times in Scripture (see Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11).

Jesus doesn't tell us in Scripture to "Be good!" This is fortunate, because being good is not really in any of us. But those who are "good" have found that it is possible as they have met Jesus and learned of his love for them. Jesus is what makes it possible for us to do the good things that we are called to do.

Those good things are rooted in the great command: love God and love neighbor (see Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34). As we walk with Jesus, we learn the way of love. And our lives change. We become the people we—in our best times—want to be.

Jesus reaches out to us and calls us to follow him. *He* is his gift to us. Take a look at the article on page 6: "Spiritual resolutions to help you on your journey." The four simple points in this article will help you grow in your ability and desire to follow Jesus. And while the heart of the Christian life is not just about being good, we become good as we follow Jesus.

It is a gradual process because as we follow Jesus our bad habits come with us. Gradually, and over a lifetime, we change into the people we want to be. Tell Jesus you want him in your life and you want to walk with him each day. Do not be discouraged, but expect great things from God! You are in for the surprise of your life.

*continued on page 2*

## CHURCH CALENDAR

### JANUARY 2019

- 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
- 6 **Epiphany of the Lord**
- 13 **Baptism of the Lord**
- 17 St. Anthony of the Desert, hermit
- 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- 20 **Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 21 St. Agnes, virgin and martyr
- 22 Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
- 23 St. Vincent, deacon and martyr; St. Marianne Cope, virgin
- 24 St. Francis de Sales, bishop
- 25 **Conversion of St. Paul**
- 26 Sts. Timothy and Titus, bishops
- 27 **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28 St. Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor
- 31 St. John Bosco, priest

### FEBRUARY 2019

- 2 **Presentation of the Lord**
- 3 **Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 5 St. Agatha, virgin and martyr
- 6 St. Paul Miki and Companions, martyrs
- 10 **Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 14 St. Cyril, monk; St. Methodius, bishop
- 17 **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 22 **Chair of St. Peter**
- 23 St. Polycarp, bishop and martyr
- 24 **Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

### MARCH 2019

- 3 **Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 6 Ash Wednesday
- 10 **First Sunday of Lent**
- 17 **Second Sunday of Lent**
- 19 St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 24 **Third Sunday of Lent**
- 25 Annunciation of the Lord

## Let's Talk!

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## It's not about being good!

**Q. Some time ago, you wrote about the "Jesus Prayer." What's that prayer again?**

**A.** "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." There are several versions of this, coming to us from the Eastern or Orthodox Churches. It's great to pray as you go through the day. It is a way we can open our hearts to God.

**Q. What's up with prison reform?**

**A.** It looks like some things may be underway. We live in some pretty challenging times with the political divisions in the country right now. But one thing that has emerged is a desire to try to reform parts of the prison system. Much is motivated by the desire to reduce the costs of prisons in the United States.



A 2017 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated the annual cost of prisons to be about \$81 billion. That figure includes the cost of operating prisons, jails, parole and probation. The Prison Policy Initiative reports that there is an additional cost of about \$100 billion for policing and court costs, and costs to families to support incarcerated family members. The total could come to around \$181 billion if all these costs are included.

**What's happening?** In May 2018, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 360-59 for various reform measures in legislation called the "First Step Act." That is a big positive vote from members of both parties. Some members of Congress are opposed to it because they feel it doesn't go far enough. It must also pass a much more conservative Senate.

Congress needs to work out a package of changes that can pass both houses of Congress and the President. Fortunately, at this point it looks like the President sup-

(continued from page 1)

ports this or something similar. The cost of prisons is the motivating factor.

One provision of the First Step Act is to end the disparity in sentencing for crack and the powdered form of cocaine for those convicted of crack offenses before 2010. The First Step Act would make reform retroactive.

A second consideration is to limit mandatory minimum sentencing by expanding it to people with limited criminal histories. Some complicated political compromises are involved with this.

A third provision is to enforce existing rules, such as placing prisoners in facilities within 500 driving miles from their families or homes. The Bureau of Prisons would be required

to match people with rehabilitative services, education and training opportunities.

There is also a move to expand "compassionate release" to elderly and terminally ill inmates.

Finally, at the state level, some states are restoring voting rights to certain felons after they have served their terms and made certain changes in their lives.

**What can you do?** The letter on page 5 of this issue gives some ideas of what you can do: 1) Enlist your family and friends to push for prison reform. We all need to work so that prison is less punishment and more rehabilitation. 2) If you are able, you can also write to your legislators and governor and encourage prison reform. Let them see that there are better options than currently employed. 3) All of us can pray for those legislators and government leaders who are making the decisions. Ask God to give them wisdom and caring hearts toward prisoners.

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## Prisoner Saint

**St. Agatha (c. 231 – c. 251) +** Agatha of Sicily was a young woman killed for her faith in Jesus and love for him. So great was her devotion to Jesus that she vowed she would not marry and would follow only him. This didn't set well with Quintianus, the Roman governor of Sicily who had taken a liking to her. During a time of persecution of Christians, he arrested Agatha, to take her to a judge. Quintianus himself was that judge. Agatha was imprisoned for a month and subjected to brutal and unimaginable torture. She still refused to marry and was killed. Agatha was so honored by the people for her faith and bravery that she is one of the seven women commemorated in the First Eucharistic Prayer at Mass.

**Feast Day: February 5**

## Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for January/February/March 2019

Each month the Pope entrusts prayer intentions to the Apostleship of Prayer, 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 requests 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.

### JANUARY

**Evangelization:** That young people, especially in Latin America, follow the example of Mary and respond to the call of the Lord to communicate the joy of the Gospel to the world.

### FEBRUARY

**Universal:** For a generous welcome of the victims of human trafficking, of enforced prostitution, and of violence.

### MARCH

**Evangelization:** That Christian communities, especially those who are persecuted, feel that they are close to Christ and have their rights respected.

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

## Living as Missionary Disciples, Part 1

By Deacon Dennis Dolan

# Encountering Christ

**Peaches:** Deke, you know how you keep talking about being "missionary disciples"?

**Me:** Yup. Why? Wearing it out?

**Peaches:** Well, not for me but I am not real clear on exactly how a person goes about doing it.

**Me:** Pope Francis has pointed to a four step process: Encounter Christ, Accompany People, Live in Community, and Send and Go Forth.

**Peaches:** Well, I've got step one so tell me about step two.

**Me:** Hold on! That step one is the most important and most difficult.

**Peaches:** Well, I know Jesus.

**Me:** Yeah, but how well?

**Peaches:** OK. . . I'm listening.

**Me:** A lot of people know *about* Jesus but they don't really *know* Jesus.

**Peaches:** True. You can pull my file but that doesn't mean you know me. Certainly it doesn't mean we're friends.

**Me:** Pope Francis carefully chose that word "Encounter." To "encounter" someone takes an act of the will. It's a decision. Actually, it's many decisions to encounter over and over in order to go deeper and know that person.

**Peaches:** I got you. It takes effort and will to know someone and also time if you're going to get to a friendship level.

**Me:** It also takes attention! You give this person your attention. You ask them to tell you who they are—to share their story. You listen! Then you also give yourself to that person. That also takes real generosity!

**Peaches:** OK. So, decision, time, attention, effort and generosity.

**Me:** And then, if it's friendship, you have to open yourself to the relationship and let it shape you! One of the signs of a real encounter is that you come away different. Your life is lived differently because of this person.

**Peaches:** Wow. That's a lot!

**Me:** Yep. 'taint easy! This is why most people don't "encounter" Christ or become a real friend of Jesus—it costs too much effort to get there! It's also why people have a lot of acquaintances but not a lot of friends.

**Peaches:** . . . or any, especially if you're talking about real friends!

**Me:** It's not that Christ doesn't want your friendship—after all, he died for you!—but a relationship is a two way street.

**Peaches:** You know what hits me about this? Everything you said about encountering Christ is true for being friends with anybody! With me! Anybody!

**Me:** Yes. We are talking about a relationship. Same rules apply to a relationship with Jesus as they do to you. God is a person so . . .

**Peaches:** Funny. Makes sense but part of me somehow thinks there's a trick or should be.

**Me:** It's not a trap door universe! If God wants a relationship with a human being, he'll have to have that relationship the way humans do it. We are not going to catch God in some rabbit trap that we make.

**Peaches:** Too bad. I'd still like a "trick" that I could learn.

**Me:** Again, think about becoming a friend with anyone. What would help you to do that?

**Peaches:** Go where they are?

**Me:** Church, Word, and Sacraments!

**Peaches:** Do what they do?

**Me:** Serve the poor, sick, imprisoned, the left out and the hurting.

**Peaches:** Hang with their friends?

**Me:** Good! Those would be the people that actually do those things you just mentioned and show themselves to be joyful in their friendship with Christ. You'll learn little from the "just go to church" crowd.

**Peaches:** Spend time alone with them?

**Me:** Prayer, Meditation, Retreats. And the key to all of this is the desire to be with Jesus. Just like any other friend. It's not "work." It's joy! We enjoy being with our friends.

**Peaches:** Hey! These are "tricks"! I thought you said there were no tricks!

**Me:** You said that. I just said no rabbit traps! There's always "tricks."

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



## Go and Make Disciples, Part 1

# A way of life for followers of Jesus

If we are serious about following Jesus, we will hear and respond to his call to us: "Go and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19). What a command! But Jesus doesn't leave us on our own to do this. He also said, "Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world" (28:20). So while the call is challenging, Jesus is with us through it all.

Remember, this call applies to *you* even in prison! And what better place to call people to Jesus and make disciples than in prison? This is not to say it will be easy. Hardly so! But as in every place, "The harvest is rich" (Luke 10:2). Oh, he also said, "and the workers are few." But Jesus says to pray that the "harvest-master"—that's Jesus himself—would send workers to the harvest. Those workers are you!

**Live an active Christian life, not a passive one.** Calling people to become disciples is full of surprises, challenges, rejections... you name it, it is part of our experience. I have a priest friend who many years ago said, "It's fun to be Catholic!"... through all the joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties we face every day. And we face them all.

In prison, as everywhere else, the more we live as active Catholics, and not passive ones, the happier and more fulfilled we are. Active Christians look for ways to live out the Christian life. Passive ones just take what rolls by, if that. So, living as a missionary disciple means living active Christian lives. We engage and encounter Christ. We engage and encounter the world. We walk and talk with people on the journey. And more. That is much different from a passive Christian life where we don't think much about what is going around us, including with Jesus.

**Knowing Jesus v. knowing about Jesus.** What is the difference between "knowing Jesus" and "knowing about Jesus?" Think about it a minute. Knowing Jesus is knowing a person. In knowing a person, we experience their love for us and at times even their disappointment in us. We have a *relationship* with them. Hopefully, we are happy to be with them. The same with knowing Jesus, it's about a love that grows into a personal relationship with him. This is "heart" knowledge.

On the other hand, knowing *about* Jesus means that we may know

some historical details about his life, where he was born, how he lived, where he died. We might know some theological points about him. But our hearts do not yearn for him or burn with love for him, like they did in the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:32). Knowing *about* Jesus is "head" knowledge.

**Heart and Head.** But lest we think this is an "either/or" relationship, it's not. It's a "both" relationship. Our knowledge of Jesus has to be both heart *and* head. It cannot be just one or the other. Head knowledge is needed; heart knowledge is needed. But to know Jesus and be a missionary disciple takes both.

Both are needed because our faith involves both the head *and* the heart. Heart knowledge grows when it is nourished by head knowledge. And our head knowledge grows when it is nourished by the heart. So seek them both to be a missionary disciple.

Some of you may be thinking you can't wait to get started. Others may be ready to close the book and say this isn't my thing. In the first case, great, let's get started. In the second, just give it a try. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a deeper sense of the love of God through Christ Jesus and let that taste spur you on to a deeper experience. It is a journey, but you will experience joy and reward beyond imagination.

**Go and make disciples.** Living as missionary disciples is a life-long journey. So that it doesn't become too complicated for us to consider in this short series of articles, we will focus on just four characteristics of missionary discipleship: 1) Encounter Jesus in your life. 2) Accompany others on the journey to conversion. 3) Grow in the community of God and neighbor. 4) Go forth as a missionary disciple.

Making disciples is really an exciting life. That is because we enter into the work of God and the Holy Spirit gives us the love and knowledge of what to do and what to say. As we live this out, we begin to experience ever more deeply joy in our lives. Joy is a sure sign that God is with us.

~ Anthony Bosnick

*This is the first article in a planned six-part series. It is based on the teaching of Pope Francis and the Catholic Bishops of the U.S.*

## Living as Missionary Disciples

1. Encounter Jesus in your life.
2. Accompany others on the journey to conversion.
3. Grow in the community of God and neighbor.
4. Go forth as a missionary disciple.



## It's not about being good!

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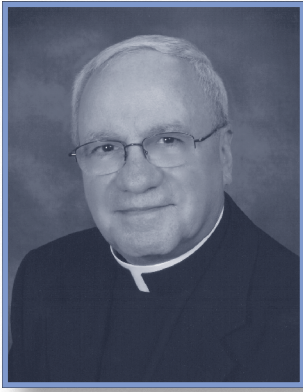
We have to go to press with *Let's Talk!* before a vote can be taken on these measures. In our next issue, we will report on any vote taken and changes to be made. Watch for that.

*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.**

**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.



**Father Frank DeSiano, CSP**  
President  
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

## God is on your side!

### *Dear Friends,*

Not a day goes by without me thinking about, and praying for, those who are incarcerated. Ever since my work in Manhattan, and my trips to Rikers or down to “the tombs” (as they called the jail back then), I realize how difficult prison is. I realize, too, how empty and defenseless people can feel in prison in a place that fosters fear and gives so little support.

Society exercises the criminal-justice system according to laws, who breaks them, and how people should be punished. That seems fair enough. Some of us have been victims of the crimes of other people, so we know what it feels like to be hurt by another, or to be robbed. So protecting others from criminals makes some sense.

But prison should be about more than protecting society. We often hear the word “rehabilitation” or “correction,” but prison often does not strengthen the prisoner. Rather, it sends people out often with fewer resources than when they arrived, and often without hope or direction. It reinforces some of the worst aspects of human nature, especially bullying, fear, and reprisals.

So here are two ideas:

First, as believers, how can we make the most out of prison? How can we use our present time and place to prepare for a future when we can return to family and friends? Our faith should give us resources to experience God’s love on a deeper level, to grow in our love of others, and to do the inner and outer changes that will allow us to love and serve others more fully in the future. We at Paulist Prison Ministries send bibles, pamphlets, and prayer books so prisoners can have better pictures in their minds than prison usually affords—pictures of hope, of inner strength, of knowing God’s power in our lives.

Second, we all need to work for prison reform. This was a hotter topic a few years ago, and it needs to heat up again. Part of prison reform would mean: 1) an end to needlessly long sentences; 2) true social and human resources in education and behavioral skills made available to prisoners; 3) social workers to track benefits and opportunities for prisoners before they are released; 4) diminishing punishment disproportionately given to people of color; 5) eliminating prisons run for profit.

As prisoners, it will not be easy for you to work for some of these things, but I hope they give you a bigger picture of the issue, and I hope you can think about these and enlist your family and friends to push for prison reform. We all need to work so that prison is less punishment and more rehabilitation. Everyone knows how often crime is connected to poverty or drugs. That’s why social rehabilitation has to be the key agenda item for correction.

I close now with one prayer: that you not give up! I pray that you see God on your side, that you see Jesus in prison with you, strengthening you; that you pray for the Holy Spirit to continue the changes you need in your heart; and that prison be a way in which you can grow in sympathy and love for others.

Remember that I, and millions like me, think of, and pray for, you every day.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank DeSiano CSP". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP  
President  
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

*I pray that you see God on your side, that you see Jesus in prison with you, strengthening you; that you pray for the Holy Spirit to continue the changes you need in your heart; and that prison be a way in which you can grow in sympathy and love for others.*



Expect great things from God

## Spiritual resolutions to help you on your journey

**I**n this New Year, keep this in mind: your time of incarceration can be 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 is a good time to rededicate ourselves to our daily walk with Jesus.

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

**Develop your "spiritual discipline."** Growing in faith doesn't happen automatically. We have to do our part and work at it. 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 and fail. Thus, seek to build a realistic spiritual life that suits your present circumstances.

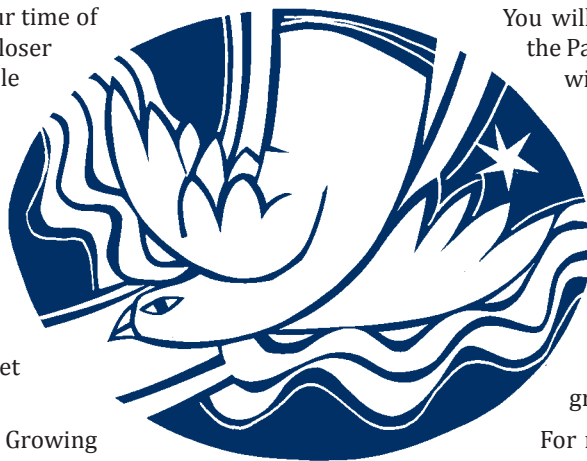
Everyone's circumstances differ, even in prison or jail. Your level of confinement and the number of others around you will affect the distractions you face and the time you get for some quiet. But even your own personality will impact what you can and should try to do. Here are some suggestions for "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. Consider these: 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, read 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.

Remember, 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. (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." Your chaplain or volunteer can 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 to meet Jesus and learn from him, grow in him, and be 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. Pray the "Jesus Prayer." (See page 2.)

**Third, be part of a community.** If there is a Catholic fellowship or group at your prison or jail, participate in it if you can. (If it is a general Christian fellowship, make sure 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 encourage us, and support us in hard times. They 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. 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 that helps you 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.

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**Expect great things from God.**

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