



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

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Looking for happiness?

We all are. The challenge to finding happiness is to look for it in the things that last, not in the things that perish. Things that perish: money, drugs and alcohol, pride in ourselves. St. Paul has a good list in Galatians 5:19-21. Things that last: love, joy, peace, kindness. Again, St. Paul points the way in Galatians 5:22-23.

You can probably add things to both lists from your own experience. Try it. It will likely lead to some interesting thoughts and discussions.

Are we seeking Jesus? Jesus is the one who brings us what lasts. He is the food for everlasting life (John 6:27). So, we seek him in the Eucharist, the sacraments, scripture. And we seek him as we love God and neighbor (Mark 12:30-31).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are on a pilgrimage through life with Jesus. He calls us to accompany him to a better life, *beginning now*. He is with us always (Matthew 28:20). But too often we don't recognize we are on a journey, let alone that Jesus is with us.

God wants more for us—and for you—than to be stuck in life with little or no hope. He wants us to have happy and fulfilled lives, even while in prison. Perhaps you have never experienced deep happiness. Perhaps you feel that life has left you behind.

Let go of that and know that Jesus has come to give you life “and life to the full” (John 10:10). As you read the articles in this issue, ask the Holy Spirit for the understanding to see more clearly the better life God has for you and what you need to do to receive it.

Let us pray for one another.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

We can look high and low for him, in all we say and do. There is nothing that is too small or insignificant in our lives that we cannot find Jesus there. Look for him as you go through your day. As you talk with family and friends. As you have meals. As you recreate. In your confinement. Jesus can be found everywhere, especially where there is suffering and sorrow.

We must encounter Christ. Through these many ways, we meet Jesus. In Christ, we find what is good. He came to give us life, and life to the full (John 10:10). Isn't that what you want?

Our encounter with Jesus refreshes us. Jesus says to us, “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).



See Jesus in your everyday actions and events. In one of Jesus' encounters with his disciples after the resurrection, the disciples came to recognize him when he told them to cast their nets into the sea (John 21:1-7). In this—their *everyday activity*—they saw Jesus.

So too with us! We encounter Jesus in *our* everyday activities, as well as the special events like the Eucharist and the sacraments. Do not overlook meeting Jesus as you go through the routine of your day. Jesus is constantly calling you to himself. Listen and answer. You will find him and happiness.

Q&A

Finding a better way

Q. I'm in here for a while. I've got to find a better way.

A. You face what everyone faces, whether we are in or out of prison, rich or poor, young or old, or whatever! We all face boredom, anger, getting fed up with the pettiness of life. Only, confinement makes it worse.

Whether we admit it or not, we are all looking for something better that gives us purpose and meaning. We experience *new purpose and meaning* in our lives when we look outward from ourselves to the needs of others. We often find selfishness when we look inward and focus on ourselves.

Works of mercy. Here is a thought, time-tested by the saints: The works of mercy help us look to the needs of others around us. “The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities” (*Catechism*, 2447). They are a means of grace, bringing us deeper happiness and life. This may seem pretty “heavy duty,” but give it a try and you will see that it is true!

Being in confinement, your options are limited compared to someone on the outside. But the works of mercy can be practiced in prison. They are all found in scripture and have been part of Catholic spiritual tradition since the early church.

Meeting Christ in others. There are two “sets”: the spiritual and the corporal

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CHURCH CALENDAR

JULY 2019

- 3 St. Thomas, apostle
- 7 Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 11 St. Benedict, abbot
- 14 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 15 St. Bonaventure, bishop and doctor
- 21 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 22 St. Mary Magdalene
- 25 St. James, apostle
- 26 Sts. Joachim and Ann, Parents of the Blessed Virgin
- 28 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 29 St. Martha
- 31 St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest

AUGUST 2019

- 1 St. Alphonsus Liguori, bishop and doctor
- 4 Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 6 The Transfiguration of the Lord
- 8 St. Dominic, priest
- 10 St. Lawrence, deacon and martyr
- 11 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 14 St. Maximilian Kolbe, priest and martyr
- 15 Assumption of the Virgin Mary
- 18 Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 20 St. Bernard, abbot and doctor
- 21 St. Pius X, pope
- 22 Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 24 St. Bartholomew, apostle
- 25 Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 27 St. Monica, mother
- 28 St. Augustine, bishop and doctor
- 29 Passion of St. John the Baptist

SEPTEMBER 2019

- 1 Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 3 St. Gregory the Great, pope and doctor
- 8 Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 9 St. Peter Claver, priest
- 13 St. John Chrysostom, bishop and doctor
- 14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross
- 15 Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 16 Sts. Cornelius, pope and Cyprian, bishop, martyrs
- 20 Sts. Andrew Kim and Companions, martyrs
- 21 St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist
- 22 Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 23 St. Pius of Pietrelcina, priest
- 27 St. Vincent de Paul, priest
- 29 Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 30 St. Jerome, priest and doctor

Let's Talk!

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Q&A Finding a better way

works of mercy. They help us encounter Christ through the needs of others. That is why they are ways to happiness.

◆ First, the *spiritual* works of mercy concern the *spiritual needs* of others. The seven elements are to instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, admonish the sinner, comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, forgive all injuries, and pray for the living and the dead.

Hold these attitudes in your heart through the day. As you meet people who are struggling and in need, the works can help you respond to them. You will see that embracing these attitudes helps you turn from yourself to others. They call you to respond positively to others and will challenge you to be better. This brings happiness.

◆ Second, the *corporal* works of mercy concern the *material needs* of others. The seven elements of these are to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. Being in prison with limited options, the corporal works of mercy are practiced differently than outside. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see how they might be done in prison.

Practicing the works of mercy, both corporal and spiritual, help give meaning in our lives because they bring us into personal contact with Jesus in our needy brothers and sisters. As we meet them, we meet Christ who has a special love for those in need.



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The works of mercy can be part of a “better way” for you. Give them a try.

Q. How can I become more faithful in following Jesus?

A. Let’s briefly go back to the “spiritual resolutions” we made at the beginning of this year in *Let’s Talk!*. Along with the works of mercy mentioned above, these resolutions will help you live in a way that brings happiness through your growing closeness with God.

- ◆ Read Scripture, the word of God.
- ◆ Worship and pray.
- ◆ Be part of a community.
- ◆ Care for and serve others—the works of mercy!

The spiritual resolutions build a life more focused on God and thus lead to deeper happiness.

Q. Any more on the First Step Act?

A. As we said in the last issue of *Let’s Talk!*, Congress passed this prison reform legislation and it was signed into law on December 20, 2018. Now it needs to be funded.

Supporters are concerned because the cost for the next five years is \$75 million a year, but the president’s plan lists \$14 million. There is no money this

year, so supporters are looking toward the upcoming budget year which begins on October 1, 2019.

When the proposed Trump budget was released, only \$14 million was listed for First Step programs. Many people are lobbying the White House and Congress

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Prisoner Saint

St. James the Apostle (? – A.D. 44) + This James was the brother of John and the son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19-20). He was part of the privileged group of John and Peter present with Jesus at the Transfiguration and at Gethsemane (Matthew 9:2-13; 14:33). Jesus called James and John “Sons of Thunder” because of their zeal and high-spirited natures (Mark 3:17). They asked Jesus for a place of honor at his side (Mark 1:35). Jesus purified them and used them to proclaim the Good News. James stood out enough that he was the first apostle to be martyred after being arrested by King Herod (Acts 12:1-3).

Feast Day: July 25

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for July/August/September 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.

JULY

Universal: That those who administer justice may work with integrity, and that the injustice which prevails in the world may not have the last word.

AUGUST

Evangelization: That families, through their life of prayer and love, become ever more clearly "schools of true human growth".

SEPTEMBER

Universal: That politicians, scientists and economists work together to protect the world's seas and oceans.

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 3 Community

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: OK, so continuing on with Pope Francis' four steps to living as a "missionary disciple" . . .

Me: Let's see. We've covered *Encountering Christ* and *Accompanying Others*. Francis' third point is the idea that we are a *Community* of missionary disciples.

Peaches: Yikes! That's going to be hard to sell in here, Deke.

Me: I know. Most inmates have little to no experience of a functioning community.

Peaches: Most inmates have little to no experience of a *functioning family!* That's why all you hear around this place is "look out for number one." No one is much of a "joiner" of anything!

Me: You're right, Peaches, but did you give birth to yourself? Raise yourself? Educate yourself?

Peaches: No.

Me: Do I live on an island by myself? Do I grow my own food? Do I make my own clothes, etc.?

Peaches: I get it.

Me: Thinking you can be a world unto yourself is an illusion! It does not work.

And I know because I have daily conversations with inmates being released from here who've got nowhere to go!

Peaches: And no money!

Me: But saddest and most telling of all is, they don't even have one person to come and pick them up at the gate! That's where extreme individuality brings us all. Our faith is a community-based faith not one focused only on the individual.

Peaches: Really?

Me: Yes. Starting with the Holy Trinity!

Peaches: You're losing me, Deke.

Me: The Holy Trinity is a community of three Persons in a love relationship! We believe, being God, that the Trinity is the ultimate reality. What is that reality? It's a community of love.

Peaches: The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, right?

Me: Right! And the Holy Spirit is the love that flows back and forth between them. God is in a real sense a Community. Which

means that community is the ultimate basis for everything else that exists!

Peaches: Kind of puts the Kybosh on the "Lone Ranger" approach, huh?

Me: And don't take our word for it. Ask a scientist and they'll tell you everything is, in fact, connected!

Peaches: So, by "community," we're going way beyond the people in church, huh?

Me: Yes. Remember the community-based faith thing?

Peaches: Yeah.

Me: We Catholics even have an entire area of Church teaching called "Social Doctrine."

Peaches: OK, so "social" comes from "society" which is just another word for "community"!

Me: Correct! And one of the key ideas in that Social Doctrine is the idea of "Solidarity."

Peaches: Which means?

Me: It means "mutual support" or "we are all in this together," kind of thing.

Peaches: Is this where the idea of "the common good" that you keep mentioning comes from?

Me: Yup.

Peaches: So, we're all in this together because everything is connected. If we mess it up everyone will suffer and if we make it better everyone benefits! Like the environment! All our plastic is now killing the ocean!

Me: Which will kill you and me! Pope Francis just wrote an encyclical on the environment because he wants us to enlarge our idea of community to include the entire planet before it's too late.

Peaches: So, the people at Mass, the people on the planet, the environment, the Universe! This is a big community-based faith!

Me: And it all begins and ends with the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit that flows between the Father and the Son also flows through us and between us unless we choose to block it.

Peaches: Like my cellie! She is so not in the flow!

Me: OK, I think we're getting off topic here.

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

We are not alone on this journey

All of us who have been baptized into Christ have received the “Great Commission.” This is same call that Jesus gave to the disciples after he rose from the dead. “Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

This call to share the Good News is in all the Gospels (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21). In fact, Acts of the Apostles is also about the spread of the Gospel. It is the core of the message of much of the remainder of the New Testament as well.

The response of our encounter with Christ is to accompany others as we go out in our lives and invite others into this new life! Our Christian life is not a private affair; it is to be lived with others.

Bring the love of Jesus to others. At the heart of our going out is to bring the love of Jesus to others. We are not to nag them. Or try to make them feel we are superior. Or browbeat them with how sinful they are. No, we are to help them want the love Jesus has for them. Our witness is first grounded in our experience of God’s love for us.

Scripture is filled with the proclamation of God’s love. There is so much, it is hard to choose one passage. So how about this: “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8). The love of God moves us to bring Jesus and his love to others. This can happen anywhere, even in prison or jail.

We cannot live discipleship alone. We can’t effectively share the Gospel alone. We cannot be “Lone Rangers,” traveling alone through life trying to bring Christ to others. Being followers of Jesus—disciples—means that we are part of a like-minded and similarly motivated community of people. As starters, Jesus called his disciples to go out “two by two” (Mark 6:7).

Other people help us to be honest and to live authentic Christian lives. If we are open, they help us to see both our weak

points and our strong points so we can grow as disciples. We are on a life-long journey, and our hope is to be purified and grow more effective as disciples of Christ.

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.**



Together with others, we are better able to see how we fall short and need to develop a deeper relationship with Jesus. It is very difficult if not impossible to do this alone. So do not separate yourself from others, but join together to worship, pray, and fellowship. That will help us grow as disciples who can more effectively share the Good News with others.

Slow down and be present to others. We have all seen it: someone so enthusiastic about something that they do all the talking and don’t listen to others. That becomes pretty tiring fast. To accompany a person, we need to be aware of what they are thinking and needing. We can only do this by listening and reflecting.

Pope Francis wrote: “Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way” (“The Joy of the Gospel,” para. 46). Let faith, hope and charity lead and guide you, not your own agenda, whatever that may be.

Difficult situations are not impossible situations. Some people—including ourselves!—face real problems. Pope Francis tells us to “see things with the eyes of Christ” who loves us beyond measure. God is the wonder-worker, not us. We can be the disciple; God will be God. Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). When the disciples asked Jesus who could be saved, he replied, “For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

Keep this in mind as you seek to accompany others on their journey with God. We are in this together. You have an opportunity, even in prison, to do God’s work. We do it together.

~ Anthony Bosnick

Finding a better way *continued from page 2*

for additional funding. Those who have served time and are now released are part of this effort, as are families of current and former prisoners.

What can you do? Many people want to see adequate funding to support the reform and additional prison reform as well, so this is not a forgotten issue. It is a difficult one though. If you are able to write to elected officials, do so. And encourage family and friends to do the same. All it takes is finding out who your federal elected officials are. If you have internet access, use that. If you don’t perhaps someone can help you.

A lot of politics is involved in prison reform and funding, but also many people of good will want to see reform. Of course, there are others who are not supportive. Take action where you can, and keep this in prayer.

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.

Pray for our benefactors

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