

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

PO BOX 29121 ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20017

Vol. 27, No. 1 – January/February/March 2020

What would Jesus do?

In every situation we face each day, it is good to ask ourselves “What would Jesus do?” What would he say? How would he act?

Too often, even as we want to follow Jesus, it is about us, not him. So we have to make our acts, words and thoughts about Jesus. Is this too much for us to do?

Really, it is . . . for us, but not for Jesus. So as we go through our days, let's remember he is present with us and he gives his grace to strengthen us.

Abundant grace. St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans that “where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more” (see Romans 5:21). Paul is saying that where there is sin, there is even more grace! God is not stingy with his grace.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We begin the New Year. Some of you have the hope of the completion of your sentence and release. Others know you have more time before that happens, if it does. No matter what your personal situation, let us face the New Year in the reality that God dwells in us and enlightens and empowers us for all things.

This is the reality that God gives us, his people. It is his guarantee to you. Live in that hope and promise. Do not give in to discouragement. Face your future in the truth that in Christ you are free. St. Paul tells us, “For freedom Christ has set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).

Know that Jesus is with you. Turn to him and rely on him. Your life will be different, for the better.

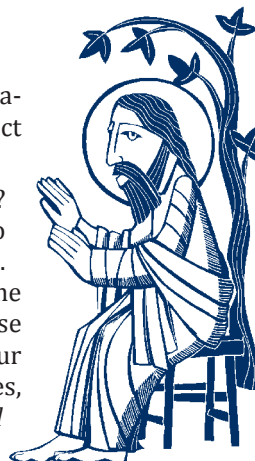
Let us pray for one another.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

He is generous beyond our imaginations, more than we would ever expect or hope for.

Should this give us hope, or what? Of course it should! God wants us to succeed. He wants us as his followers. He wants to give us “life and life to the full” (John 10:10). That is his promise and that is what we should expect. Our calling *is not* to live dark and lonely lives, but to live in the life and love of God *and to share that with those around us.*

We have to do our part! In the same letter to the Romans, Paul tells us, “Sin must not reign over your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires” (Romans 6:12). For most of us, this is a long road to travel. But walk it we must, if we want to experience the promise of life and love that is ours through Jesus.



Every New Year we offer spiritual practices that help us build and grow in the life Jesus offers. You will find them on page 6 of this issue. Some of you may have already seen these resolutions from past years. Whatever your situation, take some time

to review them and to live them. This will not be a fast fix. Change in our lives can take a lifetime!

Let us make this our prayer: “Lord Jesus, help me to yield to you and live in grace, love and joy. May my acts, words and thoughts be about you. Help me to do what you would do.”

Q&A

Sharper than a two-edged sword!

Q. Why do you tell us it is so important to read scripture every day?

A. Scripture (“the word of God”) speaks for itself on this: “The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

We add this: “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction and for training in righteousness, so that the one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Reading scripture is so important because it helps us to grow as Christians and walk more faithfully with God each day. We read scripture because it teaches us how to live. It is the word of God to his people, *to us*, which teaches us, corrects our wrong ideas and actions, and trains us in living out our faith (“training in righteousness”). It cuts to the core in our lives, and brings clarity to uncertainty and doubt to a person with an open mind and heart, and makes clear the rights and wrongs in our lives.

This is a life-long process. Rome was not built in a day, as the saying goes, and neither are our Christian lives. So daily, we turn to the word of God and seek to listen and talk with God. *Prayer should be part of our scripture reading.* The Church teaches us: “Let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred scripture so that God and man may talk together. For ‘we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine sayings’” (Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, 25).

continued on page 2

CHURCH CALENDAR

JANUARY 2020

- 1 **Mary, Mother of God**
- 2 Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, bishops and doctors
- 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
- 5 **Epiphany of the Lord**
- 12 **Baptism of the Lord**
- 17 St. Anthony of the Desert, abbot
- 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- 19 **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 **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Sunday of the Word of God
- 28 St. Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor
- 31 St. John Bosco, priest

FEBRUARY 2020

- 2 **Presentation of the Lord**
- 5 St. Agatha, virgin and martyr
- 6 St. Paul Miki and Companions, martyrs
- 9 **Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 10 St. Scholastica, virgin
- 14 St. Cyril, monk; St. Methodius, bishop
- 16 **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 22 **Chair of St. Peter**
- 23 **Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 26 **Ash Wednesday**

MARCH 2020

- 1 **First Sunday of Lent**
- 8 **Second Sunday of Lent**
- 15 **Third Sunday of Lent**
- 19 **St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 22 **Fourth Sunday of Lent**
- 25 **Annunciation of the Lord**
- 29 **Fifth Sunday of Lent**

Let's Talk!

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

Editor: **Mr. Anthony Bosnick**

Layout Editor: **Mrs. Joann Sullivan**

Art: **Steve Ersamer, 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: prisonministry@pemdc.org.

Thank you for your help.

PMLTH2001

Sharper than a two-edged sword!

(continued from page 1)

If we want to grow in our faith and in holiness, we need to read scripture. And while doing that, we need to pray so that we enter into a life-giving conversation with God.

Q. What is the Sunday of the Word of God?

A. This is a new celebration in the Catholic Church established by Pope Francis just recently (on September 30, 2019). Pope Francis considers the celebration, study and spread of the word of God so important for the life of individual Catholics, families, and for the Church, he has established an annual celebration of the word of God. It is the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time and will be known as the "Sunday of the Word of God." This year it is on January 26.

Pope Francis makes it clear that the Bible is meant for all people, not just for a few. In the document establishing this celebration, he says it belongs "to those called to hear its message and to recognize themselves in its words." (The document is *Aperuit illis*. All quotes below are from it.) Thus, we are to hear its message and recognize that it applies to us. Have you ever felt that the parable of the Prodigal Son (see Luke 15:11-32) was written just for you? This is what Pope Francis means when he says that we sense that the message of scripture is for us personally. We recognize this more clearly when we read scripture and reflect on it, talking to God in prayer as we read and reflect.

Pope Francis says that this is not just our work. It is the work of the Holy Spirit

speaking to us through scripture. "Without the work of the Spirit, there would always be a risk of remaining limited to the written text alone." The Holy Spirit helps us to see *more* in scripture, to think more deeply about the words, to see how they apply to our lives.

Finally, reading and listening to scripture should lead to change in our lives to help us care about others and seek to be merciful toward them. He writes, "the great challenge before us in life: to listen to Sacred Scripture and then to practice mercy." God's Word, says Pope Francis, "has the power to open our eyes and to enable us to renounce a stifling and barren individualism and instead to embark on a new path of sharing and solidarity."

These are all good reasons to read scripture every day!

Q. How can I be more faithful to reading the Bible and praying with scripture?

A. To start with, we recommend two things. First, get a Bible and read it. If you don't have one, talk with your chaplain and see if you can get one. Paulist Prison Ministries provides Bibles for prisoners through prison chaplains. Second, ask your chaplain for a copy of the short booklet, "In Touch with God's Word. How to Read the Bible." This is also available to prisoners through Paulist Prison Ministries.

Because of limited space here, we can't go into more detail. But with a Bible and a copy of the pamphlet mentioned above, you should be well on your way to

continued on page 4



Prisoner Saint

St. Vincent (died c. 304) + The deacon Vincent is the first Christian martyr of Spain. In 303 A.D., the Roman emperor Diocletian began persecuting Christians. Eventually, nearly 3,500 suffered torture and death. During this time, the Roman authorities arrested and imprisoned Vincent. While in prison, they subjected him to many and great tortures. They offered him his freedom if he would renounce Scripture and burn the sacred texts. Vincent loved the word of God in Scripture and refused. His torturers then tended his wounds to prolong his life for more torture. Before that began, Vincent died in his faith. The example of his faithfulness under torture strengthened the Church in Spain. His example especially inspires many Hispanic and Portuguese people to this day.

Feast Day: January 22

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for January/February/March 2020

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:

Promotion of World Peace: That Christians, followers of other religions, and all people of goodwill may promote peace and justice in the world.

FEBRUARY

Universal:

Listen to the Migrants' Cries: That the cries of our migrant brothers and sisters, victims of criminal trafficking, may be heard and considered.

MARCH

Evangelization:

Catholics in China: That the Church in China may persevere in its faithfulness to the Gospel and grow in unity.

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

The Big Catholic Buffett, Part 1

It's a big world and a big Church

By Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: Arghh!!!

Me: Trouble in Paradise, P?

Peaches: My cellie is so annoying! She never misses a chance to needle me about being Catholic!

Me: Oh. What is it this time?

Peaches: Today it's, "The Catholic Church is so narrow-minded."

Me: That's often what people say when they disagree with someone. Doesn't necessarily make it true, but there could be some truth in it.

Peaches: What?! You agree with her?!

Me: No. I don't think the Church is at all narrow-minded. In fact, quite the opposite; we are very broad-minded. How could we have over a billion current members from all different nations, cultures and continents if we really were narrow-minded?

Peaches: OK, then what is she talking about?

Me: Well, in my experience, it also depends on what you mean by "broad-minded." To me, "broad-minded" means you are open to new input. To other people it means you never come to a conclusion! It's generally when they don't agree with your conclusion or decision on an issue that they say you're "narrow-minded."

Peaches: Well, with the billion members from all over we must be getting a huge amount of new input.

Me: We are but being in the "ultimate truth" business, we are very slow to come to conclusions. Sometimes it takes centuries before we can come to a point and have all these people on board and on the same page.

Peaches: I don't know, Deke. She's not the only one who says it. I've heard it before. Are you sure we're not narrow-minded?

Me: I am sure. Of course, there are narrow-minded individual Catholics, some of whom could even be a Bishop or a Pope.

Peaches: Explain that.

Me: The Church lives through centuries. It entertains the questions of people from everywhere on the planet and throughout history. While the European bishops are dealing with a question of ordaining women, the African bishops are dealing with questions about witchcraft.

Peaches: No way!

Me: Yep. Right now at the same time as we speak!

Peaches: That is quite a spread all right.

Me: And it's a big Church! Another reason people think we are narrow-minded is that just like in this example they don't have the whole picture.

Most good, practicing Catholics have a very limited view of the Church. They know their parish. They don't usually even have much of an awareness of their diocese, never mind the universal Church. They don't know much history, either.

Peaches: True.

Me: The Catholic Church is a great spiritual Buffet. It is piled high with all kinds of gospel foods and most people only eat the one thing in front of them. They don't even walk around the buffet.

For example, did you know that there are 23 separate Catholic Churches on this buffet?

Peaches: Huh?!

Me: Separate Churches with their own bishops, language, culture, worship and spiritualities.

Peaches: Like what?

Me: Ukrainian Catholic Churches, Melkite Catholic Churches.

Peaches: I've seen those! They're with us?! How does that work?

Me: We are all united to the Pope and we all agree on the important stuff, but we respect other's different approaches and situations. And, as a Catholic, you are free to attend Sunday Mass and receive communion in those churches and attend their programs.

Peaches: Wow. That's actually very broad-minded, isn't it?

Me: It's a big world and it's a big Church.

Peaches: Makes sense. Why would God have a narrow-minded Church to tackle such a complicated world?

Me: Of course, the real problem here is that some people actually think God is narrow-minded because he too comes to conclusions they don't agree with.

Peaches: Why didn't you lead with that? That's a short answer to my question.

Me: Well, sometimes it's nice to take the scenic route.

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 5

Sent on mission!

The Great Commission! Our call as followers of Jesus is to go and make disciples. As his disciples we are called to bring others to him. This is what Jesus tells the apostles at the end of his earthly mission (see Matthew 28:18-20). He calls us to be part of his work on earth to spread the kingdom of God. This is called "The Great Commission" and we are part of it. At all times! At all places! Across the ages! Even in prison! Now!

For this to happen, we cannot be passive as disciples, leaving the work of discipleship to others! This is an attitude or condition that really plagues Catholics. Consequently, few of us accept the challenge to think about our faith, how it changes lives, and how to share it with others. If you look around you, I think you will agree that many would benefit from changed lives! Hopefully you have. I know I have.

Assuming you agree, let's see what that means for us.

Accept God's call. Look at the table in this article. So far in previous articles in this series, we have looked at the first three points. Now we will look at the fourth. The U.S. Bishops put it clearly: "Evangelization leads disciples to accept God's desire to send them on mission." In other words, we accept God's desire for us *to go forth as missionary disciples*, wherever we are.

This likely doesn't make too much sense to us if we don't have a very active faith, if we are passive in our faith. Signs of a passive faith: We don't go to Mass when we have the opportunity. We don't pray daily, except maybe when we want something. We have never really gotten into reading the Word of God. We aren't too interested in being part of a community of faith or helping others in need.

Take a look at the article on page 6 of this issue: "Spiritual resolutions to help you grow in faith". The spiritual resolutions discussed there help us grow in faith and become missionary disciples. Think about them and commit yourself to them. In very quiet ways, over time, your life will change and you will grow in the desire to be a missionary disciple.

Where is Jesus sending us? Pope Francis tells us: "There are no borders, no limits: he sends us to everyone." *You can see then that you can be a missionary disciple, even while you are in prison.* Think of who the "everyones" are in your life. People around you in prison. People who visit you. People you have hurt and

who don't want to be part of your life. Pray for them all, that God will open their hearts and open yours!

Pope Francis puts it this way: "We become missionary disciples when we take our encounter with Jesus Christ out into the world." This is the world we live in.

There is a lot of fruitful ground in prison for missionary disciples. It isn't easy, but Jesus doesn't say it is. But it is life-giving. As he said, "I've come to give you life, and life to the full" (John 10:10). *You* are that living instrument who helps bring his life to others.

Pope Francis says this as well: "In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples" and do not "need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love."

The road to mission. First, baptism. If you are not baptized, talk to your chaplain to see if there is a Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) available in your prison. Or if you are being released, look for a Catholic Church with an RCIA program. (Just about every Catholic Church has one.) Take this seriously. Seek baptism, and all the sacraments of initiation in the Church: baptism, Eucharist, confirmation. Seek to become an active member of the Church.

Second, no formal training is required! But being a missionary disciple does require growing in faith. And growing in faith happens as we live out the spiritual resolutions in our lives. Again, see the article on page 6 of this issue.

As a disciple of Christ, you are given the great commission. You are sent on mission! Accept the call.

~ Anthony Bosnick

This is the fifth 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.**



Sharper than a two-edged sword!

continued from page 2

develop a daily practice of prayerful reading and reflection on scripture.

It is a spiritual discipline that will likely help change your life. It has already done so for countless others.

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.

2020 Calendars Available

New 2020 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.



Tell the Prisoners I Pray for Them

Pope Francis Speaks to Prisoners

These words below are from Tell the Prisoners I Pray for Them, an English/Spanish collection of 18 prayers and meditations from Pope Francis to prisoners. They are taken from his talks and visits to prisons. They are intended to encourage prisoners who walk the challenging path of reform, struggle with isolation, face fear and uncertainty, and seek answers about God.

Take some time to read them prayerfully and ask the Holy Spirit how they apply in your life.

Look to Jesus: He is our Strength

"... I want to share with you what I do have and what I love. It is Jesus Christ, the mercy of the Father. Jesus came to share the love that God has for us. For you, for each of you, and for me. It is a love that is powerful and real. It is a love that takes seriously the plight of those he loves. It is a love that heals, forgives, raises up, and shows concern. It is a love that draws near and restores dignity."

The Lord Is Not Outside the Cell

"... I am praying to the Lord and to Our Lady that you may be able to get through this difficult period in your lives in a positive way, that you may not become discouraged. The Lord does not remain outside, he does not remain outside your cells, he does not remain outside the prison; rather, he is inside, he is there. ... No cell is so isolated that it is shut to the Lord, none. He is there, he weeps with you, he works with you, he hopes with you, his paternal and maternal love reaches everywhere. I pray that you open your heart to his love."

Following Jesus Behind Prison Walls

"Now I want to first of all thank the Lord for your commitment to following him, and for your effort and suffering within the prison walls. Let us continue to trust him, he will give your heart hope and joy! We cannot follow Jesus on the path of love unless we first love others, unless we force ourselves to work together, to understand each other, and to forgive each other, recognizing our limits and mistakes. We must do works of mercy, and with mercy! Putting our heart into them. Works of charity with love, with tenderness, and always with humility. ..."

To Allow Ourselves to be Looked at by God, who Loves Us

"It is more difficult to allow God to encounter us than to encounter God, because we always resist. The God who loves us, who is capable of understanding us and forgiving our mistakes. The Lord is a master at reintegrating people. He takes us by the hand and brings us back to society and the community. The Lord always forgives, always accompanies, and always understands; it is up to us to allow ourselves to be understood, to be forgiven, and to be accompanied. I wish that for each of you this time may not be wasted but that it be a precious time, when you ask and obtain this grace from God. ..."

Prayer

"Peter and Paul, disciples of Jesus, were also prisoners. They too lost their freedom. But there was something that sustained them, something that did not let them yield to despair; that did not let them sink into darkness and meaninglessness. That something was prayer. ... They prayed and they prayed for one another. These two forms of prayer became a network to maintain life and hope. And that network keeps us from yielding to despair. It encourages us to keep moving forward. ..."

Donors, family and friends of prisoners can send *Tell the Prisoners I Pray for Them* via donation directly to prisoners, or donate copies which will be sent to prison chaplains who will distribute them. For more information, visit: www.pemdc.org/freeresources/prison-ministry/prisoner/



Excerpts from *Tell the Prisoners I Pray for Them*, by Pope Francis, Copyright © 2016 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Paulist Press, Inc., New York/Mahwah, NJ. Reprinted by permission of Paulist Press, Inc. www.paulistpress.com.

Meet Jesus every day on your journey

Spiritual resolutions to help you grow in faith

In 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 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 even 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 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.

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

Spiritual Resolutions

A good spiritual discipline consists of several parts.

1. Read the Word of God.
2. Worship and pray.
3. Be part of a community.
4. Care for and serve others.

