



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES



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Think big. Jesus is calling you!

Believe it or not, Jesus is calling you to be part of the work of sharing the Good News, even—and especially—while you are in prison! It is easy to get so down on ourselves that we only see our failures and don't think this is possible. But start by accepting God's call to follow him and spread the Good News! The rest will come.

New life for us all. This is the message of the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible: "The word of the Lord continued to spread" (Acts 13:49; see 14:7). The whole story of Acts is about the spread of the Good News of the victory of Jesus over sin and death. —About the new life he has for us. Through the faith of the disciples, the Good News spread from Jerusalem, a city at the edge of the known world at the time, all the way to Rome, the heart of the Roman Empire which ruled the world.

The Gospel continues to spread today. For example, it is experiencing astounding growth in large parts of Africa. That's the big picture. The other picture is that it can spread through *your* word and kindness to friends and families, in *your* prison or jail, to the world around *you*.

Instruments in God's plan. Wherever we are, we are part of this work. Baptized into Christ, we are empowered for great work. As "a people of his own" God calls us "out of darkness into his wonderful light" to work with him to bring the saving Good News to others (1 Peter 2:9).

We often find it hard to believe that God wants to use us to join him and do his



work. But when you come to know Jesus, you know it is true. Look around you and ask yourself if the Good News is needed there! Our challenge is to follow Jesus and be transformed so that we can receive his life *and* share it with others.

Think big. Accept Jesus' call to you. Have hope. Don't give up. God wants to use you. It takes time, but Jesus is the good shepherd and guardian of the flock (see John 10:11-16). Do not fear. Practice the virtues of faith, hope and charity. Know that Jesus has come to give us life to the full (John 10:10). This is our hope!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of the challenges we face in our life with God is that we often don't think big enough! When it comes to faith and our relationship with Jesus, we too often think small. We have to remember that Jesus is the reason for all we do. And we can trust him.

That is pretty hard to think about if we haven't been doing it. But ask Jesus to help you trust him. When we begin to do that, we see glimmers of light that let us know it is all true. And when we see glimmers, we are open to more. And before we know it, our faith is growing in ways we never expected.

Let's call on Jesus and trust him. We will see great things happen in our lives. More peace. More joy. More happiness. Give it a try.

Let us pray for one another.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Q&A

Have no fear. God is with us.

Q. What are we to do in these times to remain strong?

A. These are trying times for many people. And scary too. During times like these—but really always—let us remember, "God is with us."

Jesus is our Immanuel, "God with us." In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah declared: "The Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

Before Jesus was born, the angel of the Lord told Joseph in a dream that the child to be born should be named Jesus "because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). In Jesus, "God is with us" (referring to Isaiah 7:14).

A plan to follow. And so, in all times, and especially in trying times like these, with COVID-19 affecting so many, let us remember that God is with us. Certainly, we must be prudent and cautious and follow the health guidelines. But we also need not be overwhelmed by fear, for God loves us and is with us.

That is the truth our Christian lives are based on. But we must remain rooted in this truth. On our part, let us turn to our four spiritual resolutions and commit once again to the spiritual practices that give us life and hope.

- First, read the Word of God—the Bible—a little each day, and pray and talk to God about what you are reading. (See the article on page 4 of this issue which goes into that in more detail.)

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CHURCH CALENDAR

JULY 2020

- 3 St. Thomas, apostle
- 5 Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 11 St. Benedict, abbot
- 12 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 14 St. Kateri Tekakwitha, virgin
- 15 St. Bonaventure, bishop and doctor
- 19 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 22 St. Mary Magdalene
- 25 St. James, apostle
- 26 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 29 St. Martha
- 31 St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest

AUGUST 2020

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

SEPTEMBER 2020

- 3 St. Gregory the Great, pope and doctor
- 6 Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 9 St. Peter Claver, priest
- 13 Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross
- 15 Our Lady of Sorrows
- 16 Sts. Cornelius, pope and Cyprian, bishop, martyrs
- 20 Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 21 St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist
- 23 St. Pius of Pietrelcina, priest
- 27 Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 29 Sts. Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Archangels
- 30 St. Jerome, priest and doctor

Let's Talk!

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Thank you for your help.

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Q&A Have no fear. God is with us.

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• Second, we need to worship and pray. If your prison has a Catholic Mass, attend it if you can. And more than attend it, pray it and let it touch your heart. Also, have a time of personal prayer each day. At Mass and in your private prayer, talk with God and listen to him. He will guide you and give you hope.



• Third, be part of a community of believers. Don't be a "lone ranger." Other faithful disciples of Christ can be a great support in helping us be more faithful too.

• Fourth, care for and serve others. As we are aware of the needs of others, our hearts are opened and we experience the love of God in a deeper way. The most faithful followers of Jesus—the Saints—continually provide the example of this.

So don't become fearful and anxious, but remember that God is with us. You will see a big difference in your life.

Q. How can I keep safe during the coronavirus pandemic while I'm in prison?

A. Crowded quarters are hot spots for the spread of the coronavirus. Prisons are crowded quarters. Here is some guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which can help you keep safe. Your prison has likely also distributed guidelines to help you stay safe. Pay attention to them.

Some background. The CDC states: "The 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic is a pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2

(SARS-CoV-2). The disease was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei, China in December 2019." A pandemic is widespread occurrence of a disease over a large region or the world.

Symptoms of COVID-19.

The CDC reports that symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell.

The disease is spread through human-to-human transmission via respiratory droplets.

Prevention tips include: Avoid close contact with sick individuals. Frequently wash hands with soap and water. Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Practice good respiratory hygiene: Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Use the nearest waste receptacle to dispose of the tissue after use. Perform hand hygiene (hand washing with non-antimicrobial soap and water, alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic handwash) after having contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.

If you have access to a computer, check out this link for more information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. Or you can google: "Center for Disease Control Coronavirus."

During this time let us pray for one another. On page 4 is a prayer from the Catholic Bishops of the United States.

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Prisoner Saint

St. Edith Stein (1891 – 1942) + St. Edith Stein is a German martyr of the Holocaust. Edith was a Jewish philosopher who converted to Catholicism and became a Carmelite nun. She was drawn to the Catholic faith by reading the spiritual works of St. Teresa of Avila. Edith taught at a Catholic school but had to give that up because of Nazi laws against the Jews. Her religious superiors sent her to Holland for safety. But the Nazis invaded Holland, and she and her sister Rosa were later arrested. It is believed they died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz concentration camp on August 9, 1942.

Feast Day: August 9

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for July/August/September 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 Pope 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: *Our Families:* We pray that today's families may be accompanied with love, respect and guidance.

AUGUST

Universal: *The Maritime World:* We pray for all those who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families.

SEPTEMBER

Universal: *Respect for the Planet's Resources:* We pray that the planet's resources will not be plundered, but shared in a just and respectful manner.

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 3

You better shop around

By Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: So, Deke, all the ins and outs of this spirituality stuff is fascinating, but let me ask you a practical question: "How do I do this? Give me some roadmaps."

Me: OK. Let's do "*People, Places, and Things*". . .

Peaches: Deke, you're starting to sound like you're in the program!

Me: Occupational hazard of prison ministry—and a great blessing for my own spirituality too, by the way!

Peaches: Ok, so "People" . . . ?

Me: I meet someone. I experience their spiritual witness . . .

Peaches: Witness?

Me: The way they "walk the walk"—their attitudes, actions, reactions.

Peaches: OK.

Me: So I'm attracted to that. I want what they've got. We hang around. We talk. "How do I get that?"

Peaches: And they just tell you?

Me: Truly spiritual people are happy to share. This is most important in their lives. It's given their lives meaning. They get that other people want to be happy too.

Peaches: So what happens next?

Me: Bring you to a prayer or meditation group. Invite you to join them working at some soup kitchen, food pantry or group home.

Peaches: So you're invited into their circle or group?

Me: Yes. Which is one of the most critical decisions we make: Who do we hang out with? That will either raise you up or tear you down.

Peaches: True that.

Me: So there you are. *People, Places, Things*. You met a person who shared their places and their things. In this example the person introduced you to other people like them, a place of service, prayer and ministry.

Peaches: OK, so how do I pick out a person as my way in?

Me: Personally, I always find that Jesus' advice is the best place to start: "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7:16). Find a person who is doing something for free on a regular basis for someone else who is not related to him or her.

Peaches: That's the "fruit"!

Me: Yup. They get IT. They get what Jesus is talking about and they are not just talking

about what Jesus is talking about! "Be doers of the word and not just hearers" (James 1:22). They are acting on it. That shows you what someone really believes.

Peaches: So that means, I could ask like any of these people who volunteer in here—like the volunteers who run Bible Study!

Me: Sure. There will no doubt be some very spiritual people among them, but check them out. Unfortunately, there are also some who are sadly just "religious talkers." Bible Study and religious classes can be a great place for "religious talkers."

Remember your spirituality is "where the rubber meets the road." It is how you DO life! It effects your attitudes, what you do with your time, how you vote, where your money goes, who you hang with, etc. But remember even if you find a spiritual person, their personal spirituality may not fit you.

Peaches: I don't follow.

Me: OK. Two Bible Study volunteers both doing good work, but one has a Benedictine spirituality and the other has a Franciscan spirituality. Which spiritual approach will fit you? It may be one or the other or perhaps neither! Shop around! Try a spirituality on. See if it fits.

Peaches: What about "Places" or "Things" as a way into a Spiritual life?

Me: They're easy. A "Thing" could be simply a book you read, a sermon you hear or a movie you see, and so on. The "Place" avenue into spirituality is generally that someone notices a good work and thinks, "I should do that too!"

As they're doing this work they start to notice other people doing it. Then they start to ask the same kind of questions as before, "What makes this person tick?" and eventually they find out and one door opens to another door and then another door. You just follow the bread crumbs left by the Holy Spirit. Before you know it—boom! You are now spiritual! And spiritual in a way that fits you and will support you through your life!

Peaches: Sounds like no matter what door you start with it comes down to meeting a spiritual person.

Me: I think so. No one ever became a real Christian without first meeting a real Christian in my experience.

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

"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."

Let the Bible change your life

Last fall, Pope Francis surprised the Church by proclaiming the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time the "Sunday of the Word of God." He did this to highlight for Catholics the importance of Scripture in our lives and in the life of the Church.

Pope Francis made this proclamation on September 30, 2019, the feast of St. Jerome (c. 347 – 30 September 420). St. Jerome was the early church Father who translated Scripture into Latin, the common language of the time. It was St. Jerome who wrote that "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."

We celebrated the Sunday of the Word of God for the first time on January 26, 2020.

Why? . . . To grow spiritually. Pope Francis established this celebration because he wants Catholics to focus on how important Scripture is for our spiritual lives. We need to pray when we read Scripture, for that way "God and man talk together" (St. Ambrose, quoted in Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, para 25). You know this to be true when you read Scripture, pray over it, and let it change our heart. If you don't pray and reflect on Scripture when you read it, it is often a dry and boring experience.

We are encouraged to pray when we read the sacred words so that we can hear God's word to us. Pope Francis put it this way: "Jesus Christ knocks on the door through Holy Scripture; if we listen and open the door of the mind and heart, then it enters our life and stays with us" (*Aperuit Illis*, para. 8).

Paulist Prison Ministries's short pamphlet "In Touch with God's Word. How to Read the Bible" reminds us that "A primary reason for reading Scripture is to grow spiritually, not just to gain information." That is the point Pope Francis makes when establishing the Sunday of the Word of God.

Read Scripture every day. Pope Francis also says that reading the Bible should be a spiritual discipline every day of the year. Those who do it know what a difference it makes in their lives.

This is what one prisoner wrote to us about the importance of reading Scripture in his life: "For me the Scriptures are lessons in humility, lessons in the natures of man and GOD plus the relationship between us. For me the Bible is the greatest of maps towards salvation. Like 'The Way,' it's a loving highway to heaven with the Holy Spirit encompassing my soul and guiding me down the road of life in ways that are new and pure at each and every bite of what is (like the Eucharist) the Bread and breath of LIFE." ("In Touch with God's Word," p. 12).

Do you need a Bible? Paulist Prison Ministries makes Bibles available to prisoners through prison chaplains. We also make them available to individual prisoners when you write to us asking for one. (Use the address on page 2 of this newsletter.)

Bibles and shipping are expensive. We may not always be able to do this, but we try. If you have a family member or friend who can get a Bible for you, ask them to do that. Pay them back by praying for them daily.

Also, with many prisons not accepting visitors at the time this article was written, we do not know what the situation will be later this summer when this issue hopefully arrives. If chaplains and relatives still can't visit, hold this request for later.

A personal word from Pope Francis to all of us: Become a better follower of Jesus. Reading Scripture is about changing our lives for the better. This prepares you for life now, and in the future, hopefully when you are released.

So take this word from Pope Francis to heart: "Listen to the Holy Scripture to practice mercy: this is a great challenge for our lives. The Word of God is able to open our eyes to allow us to leave the individualism that leads to suffocation and sterility, while also showing us the way to sharing and solidarity" (*Aperuit Illis*, para. 13).

Scripture points the way to New Life. Let us read it and pray about what we read. We will be changed. Really!

~ Anthony Bosnick



Have no fear. God is with us. *continued from page 2*

Covid-19: A Prayer of Solidarity

For all who have contracted coronavirus,
We pray for care and healing.

For those who are particularly vulnerable,
We pray for safety and protection.

For all who experience fear or anxiety,
We pray for peace of mind and spirit.

For affected families who are facing difficult decisions
between food on the table or public safety,
We pray for policies that recognize their plight.

For those who do not have adequate health insurance,
We pray that no family will face financial burdens alone.

For those who are afraid to access care due to immigration
status, We pray for recognition of the God-given dignity of all.

For our brothers and sisters around the world,
We pray for shared solidarity.

For public officials and decisionmakers,
We pray for wisdom and guidance.

Father, during this time may your Church be
a sign of hope, comfort and love to all.

Grant peace. Grant comfort. Grant healing.
Be with us, Lord.

Amen.

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.

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