

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

PO BOX 29121 ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20017

Vol. 27, No. 4 – October/November/December 2020

Keep your eyes on Jesus

We have all faced it. Life can be hard. And discouraging. A lot of the time. Is there a way out? Yes, there is, even while you are in prison. The answer is, as you go through your days, to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the “leader and perfecter” of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). And follow him.

In Scripture, we read that the apostles while in a boat, were “tossed about by the waves.” They became “terrified.” Peter briefly put his trust in Jesus and began to walk on the water toward him. But then Peter became fearful and began to sink (Matthew 14:26-30).

Lord, save me. Peter trusted at first. But when he took his eyes off Jesus and

became fearful, he began to sink. Sounds a lot like us at times. When Peter called out to Jesus to save him (v. 30), Jesus did. This is a good lesson for us.

We too are often walking with Jesus, but then take our eyes off him. Something else attracts us. Instead, we look to all the things of the world that we think will save us or give us happiness and joy.

Stop now for a moment and think of the things that have gotten you in trouble. By now, we should know what these things are that don't save us. Many of those things that may have temporarily given us pleasure eventually spin out to nothing.

Remember, God is gathering a people to himself, for the glory of his name. You are part of that ingathering. God wants you



for himself. He wants you to know his life and love (John 10:10).

Nothing can separate us from God's love. God's

love for us is so great that *nothing* “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39). Keep that in your hearts.

And keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. When you fail, get up, dust yourself off, and continue on with him. The more you do this, the more you will know the love and good that God has for you. And the more you do it, the easier it will become. Live in the victory of Christ. Even while you are in prison.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One thing we should always remember is that it is all about Jesus. He should be the center of our lives and thoughts. He should be the heart of our dreams. When our lives are about Jesus, everything else falls into place.

We may have started late in our desire to follow Jesus. No matter when we start in life, the goal is to keep going. So, we say, “Keep your eyes on Jesus,” even if you are just beginning to do this now while in prison.

Have hope. Have courage. Jesus is with you. Be open to him and listen to him. Sure, you will fall. We all do. Even the Saints. But they knew—and hopefully we do as well—to get up and start again.

With this issue, we head down the home stretch of 2020, a very unusual year! In this time left, let us have hope and keep our eyes on Jesus. You are bound to see some wonderful things.

Let us pray for one another.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Q&A

God loves us and is with us

Q. How do we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus?

A. Draw from the vast treasure of Catholic spirituality. It takes work, but it pays off. This is a day-by-day effort. It centers on our wanting *and* deciding to follow Jesus each day. If we don't make the effort, it is likely we won't see change in our lives. If we do make the effort to keep our eyes on Jesus and follow him on our journey each day, we will begin to see change. Slowly. Little by little.

Let's go back again to our four spiritual resolutions. Reconfirm and recommit to them each day. At times, you will likely fail. We all do. But the important thing is to get up and continue on. Here are our four spiritual resolutions:

- **First, read the Word of God**—the Bible—a little each day, and pray and talk to God about what you are reading. Set aside some time each day to read Scripture. If you don't set time aside, you will not likely get to it.
- **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, take part in 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.

continued on page 2

CHURCH CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2020

- 1 St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, religious
- 2 Guardian Angels
- 4 **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 7 Our Lady of the Rosary
- 11 **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 15 St. Teresa of Jesus, virgin and doctor
- 17 St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr
- 18 **Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 19 Sts. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests and companions, martyrs
- 25 **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28 **Sts. Simon and Jude, apostles**

NOVEMBER 2020

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

DECEMBER 2020

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

Let's Talk!

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Visit us at www.pemdc.org

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Thank you for your help.

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Q&A God loves us and is with us

continued from page 1

- **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. Look around you, you can do this in prison too.

These are four simple ways to help you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Decide to do it for a month. You will be surprised at the change in your life in even that short time. That's how we set off on new life. If you want that life, go for it.

Q. *Praying is hard for me. What can I do?*

A. Prayer is hard for everyone. One prayer form that might help you to pray is the Rosary. Since October is the Month of the Holy Rosary and October 7 is the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, this is an especially good time to pray the Rosary.

Why do we recommend the Rosary?

- Because it helps us think about God.
- It brings us into touch with Scripture and biblical truths.
- It softens our hearts so we can care for others.
- It gives us words to say.
- It unites us to the Church, where millions of people pray the Rosary, many of them daily.

Learn to pray the Rosary. There are lots of resources that can help you learn this prayer. (Check the internet if you can.) These basic instructions can help you get started:

1. On the crucifix, make the sign of the cross and then pray the Apostles' Creed. ...
2. On the next large bead, say the Our Father. ...
3. On the following three small beads,

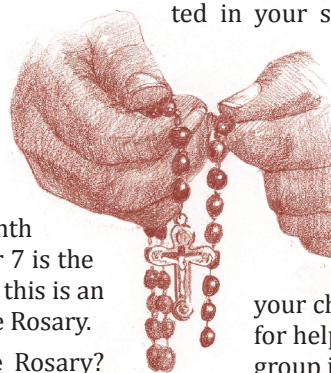
pray three Hail Marys. ...

4. On the chain, pray the Glory Be. ...
5. On the large bead, meditate on the first mystery and pray the Our Father.
6. Then pray a Hail Mary on each of the following 10 beads, ending with the Glory Be.
7. Repeat steps 5 and 6, four more times.
8. End with the "Hail Holy Queen."

If you need a Rosary and it is permitted in your situation, write to Paulist

Prison Ministries (at the address on page 2) and we can send you a simple Rosary. This prayer is another way that helps us to see and believe.

You can also ask your chaplain or other prisoners for help and pray the Rosary in a group if it is permitted.



A reminder about the corona virus.

The coronavirus pandemic is still a challenge. Crowded prisons help the virus spread quickly. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer the following advice to help keep safe. Your prison probably also has guidelines. Pay attention to them.

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

continued on page 4

Prisoner Saint

Bl. Rupert Mayer (1876 – 1945) + As a young Jesuit priest, Fr. Mayer collected food and clothing for the poor and helped the unemployed find jobs. He later served as a chaplain in World War I and received the Iron Cross for bravery. His army service ended when a grenade shattered his leg and it was amputated. Returning home, Fr. Mayer was a popular preacher and friend of the poor. He was also a vocal opponent of Hitler and the Nazis. To silence Mayer, the Nazi imprisoned him three times. The Nazis moved him to a monastery so that he would not die a martyr in prison. Fr. Mayer died months after the war ended while saying Mass on November 1, 1945.

Feast Day: November 3

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

OCTOBER

Evangelization.

The Laity's Mission in the Church: We pray that by virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the Church.

NOVEMBER

Universal. *Artificial Intelligence:* We pray that the progress of robotics and artificial intelligence may always serve humankind.

DECEMBER

Evangelization. *For a life of prayer:* We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.

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 Buffet, Part 4

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Oh, the places you'll go!

Peaches: So, are we done with the big Catholic Buffet of ancient spirituality and wisdom now?

Me: Nope. Actually, never! We've just scratched the surface.

Peaches: Well, I'm only doing a 20-year bid here, Deke, so . . .

Me: OK, but let me just direct your attention to one other area of the Buffet that you can explore when you get out – places!

There is a wide range of places that offer different opportunities to grow in faith that your average Catholic does not make full use of.

Peaches: Why not?

Me: Well, like any other group of people, 80 percent are on automatic pilot at best. Some of them attend Mass regularly (although many don't even do that!), but that's it.

There is another 20 percent or so that actually live their faith beyond weekly Mass attendance in other ways. This group makes use of other Catholic places beyond their parish.

Peaches: Ah! The 80/20 rule you talk about! So, what's keeping them from exploring these other places?

Me: Basically, apathy. They are not active disciples. They are satisfied with whatever level of participation they have now.

Peaches: But they shouldn't be?

Me: Well, how much God do you want? How much Resurrection in your daily life do you need? A smidge or a truckload?

Peaches: I feel you.

Me: This is why Pope Francis is continually calling us to be active missionary disciples, not couch potato passive members.

Peaches: Like meetings?

Me: Yes. Get up! Get out! Go meet! And here you and I are not talking about meeting people outside the Church like Pope Francis is saying. We are talking about encountering new people *within* our own Church.

Peaches: Why can these places enrich us?

Me: Because "one size does not fit all"! Going to Mass at your parish is "one size fits all". Mass is the thing that Jesus left us to do all together, but there are still different needs to be met for different individuals with their different gifts. That's what these specialized Catholic places can do in various ways.

Peaches: OK. I'm interested now. Break it down for me.

Me: Let's see . . . there are *monasteries* and *hermitages*.

Peaches: I can go in those?

Me: "Encounter", remember? They offer Mass,

retreats, programs. Part of the "encounter" is you could meet the monks or nuns. They are friendly. You could learn something. That would raise your faith and spiritual vision right there!

Peaches: Our friends either bring us up or bring us down!

Me: And they have websites for you to check.

Peaches: Cool!

Me: There are *retreat houses* and *shrines* that offer group retreats or directed (individual spiritual coaching) retreats. You know, you meet a lot of good and holy people on retreat just as an added plus.

Peaches: Yeah. I'd imagine retreats are kind of a "jerk proof zone".

Me: Then there are local *Catholic colleges* and *Newman Centers* at public colleges. You may like their Sunday Mass better and they offer many interesting programs.

Peaches: Check the website, right?

Me: There are also *soup kitchens*, *shelters*, *nursing homes*, *hospitals* and *Catholic Charities*. You could volunteer there. Meet spiritual people. Learn and deepen your faith.

Peaches: What would I do at places like that? I'm not a nurse or social worker.

Me: Talk to the people they serve? Answer phones? Smile? Go and find out. They need lots of people to do lots of things.

Peaches: I can see that.

Me: Then there are "*apostolates*" which are stand-alone apostolic works. One example is the *Kino Border Initiative*. They work with refugees and asylum seekers on our southern border. That involves all kinds of things.

Peaches: Hey, I speak Spanish! I could definitely do that! But how do you know about this stuff? How would I find it?

Me: Read your parish bulletin. That's where they announce programs and opportunities in your diocese. You could also ask your Catholic Chaplain to bring in an old *Kennedy Directory* or *Catholic Almanac*. Look up your diocese and it lists everything in your diocese or nearby diocese that are in your area.

Peaches: Ummm, Deke? *You* are my Catholic Chaplain.

Me: Yeah, those books are over there – bottom shelf on the right.

Peaches: See! That's why you make the *big* deacon money!

Me: Yeah, well if you ever "encounter" that "big money," I'll split it with you!

Deacon Dennis Dolan is a retired chaplain from York Correctional Institution in Connecticut.

Open Wide Our Hearts, Part I

Racism. America's original sin

What a world we live in! So many joys and hopes. So many griefs and anxieties. The story of our lives. The sin of racism is part of this conflicting story.

The year 2019 marked the four hundredth anniversary of the introduction of slaves in English-speaking America, in the Virginia colony in 1619. They arrived by accident in a shipwreck. It started out bad and hasn't gotten much better since. Some call the introduction of slavery to what became the United States, "America's original sin". That's a fair assessment.

With this article, we are beginning a multi-part series on racism. The inspiration for the articles comes from "Open Wide Our Hearts. The Enduring Call to Love." This is the 2018 Pastoral Letter Against Racism issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops." (We will refer to "Open Wide Our Hearts" in this article as OWOH.)

Sharing the love of Christ. The Church and her members are called upon to reflect and share the love of God with all people. As followers of Christ, we are children of God who are called to love with the love of God. Jesus teaches us, "This is my commandment, love one another as I love you" (John 15:12).

Racism rejects this love. Rather than loving all people equally, a racist person "holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard" (OWOH, p. 1). This is a sin because it violates justice and reveals "a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of other persons offended" (p. 1).

Racism corrupts the soul. The US bishops write that "many positive changes . . . arose from the civil rights movement" and thus some people believe that racism is no longer a problem. But the events of the past few years and this summer indicate that it is still a curse plaguing our society (p. 4).

Thus, the bishops write: "Racism still profoundly affects our culture, and it has no place in the Christian heart. This evil causes great harm to its victims, and it corrupts the souls of those who harbor racist or prejudicial thoughts. The persistence of the evil of racism is why we are writing this letter now" (p. 4).

Conversion of Heart. The sin of racism calls us to "a genuine conversion of heart." This type of conversion calls us to reflect in our own lives to see where we still harbor and display racist thoughts and actions. Most of us still harbor these thoughts and actions in either subtle or overt ways. It is helpful for all of us to examine our lives to see examples of these sins and to ask God's

forgiveness and to turn from them.

The bishops continue: "Conversion is a long road to travel for the individual. Moving our nation to a full realization of the promise of liberty, equality, and justice for all is even more challenging. However, in Christ we can find the strength and the grace necessary to make that journey" (p. 4).

We all need this conversion. Pope Francis tells us that none of us should think it is not needed for him or her (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 3). All of us need ongoing conversion. And so in the coming issues of *Let's Talk!* we will follow the guidance of the US Bishops and reflect on the words of the prophet Micah and allow them to help us to examine our hearts regarding racism.

Micah prophesied: "You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to *do justice* and to *love goodness*, and to *walk humbly with your God*" (Micah 6:8).

As the bishops say, this conversion of heart regarding racism requires effort and humility. Let us pray that we will allow the Holy Spirit to bring us to repentance and conversion of heart. May we open wide our hearts so that as followers of Christ, we will love all people with the love God has for us.

Let us join in the prayer which the US bishops have given us:

A Prayer for Repentance and Conversion of Heart

Mary, friend and mother to all, through your Son, God has found a way to unite himself to every human being, called to be one people, sisters and brothers to each other.

We ask for your help in calling on your Son,
Seeking forgiveness for the times when
We have failed to love and respect one another.

We ask for your help in obtaining from your Son, the grace we need to overcome the evil of racism and to build a just society.

We ask for your help in following your Son, so that
prejudice and animosity will no longer infect our minds or
hearts But will be replaced with a love that respects
The dignity of each person.

Mother of the Church, the Spirit of your Son Jesus
warms our hearts: pray for us.

From: "Open Wide Our Hearts"

If you want to read more on the Church's teaching on racism, you can download a copy of "Open Wide Our Hearts" from the internet.

~ Anthony Bosnick



Q&A **God loves us and is with us** *continued from page 2*

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.

A plan to follow. In these times, let's remember that God is with us. We must be prudent and cautious and follow the health guidelines, but also not to be overwhelmed by fear, for God loves us and is with us.

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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