

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY TO PRISONERS

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

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God knows us and still loves us!

ne thing we should never forget is that God loves us. He loves us even when he knows what lurks in our hearts and lives. We all have skeletons in our closets, but despite these skeletons of sin and weakness, God still loves us.

Knowing and believing that God loves us makes all the difference in our lives. These are not just hollow words we say to make ourselves feel better. They are the truth. "God is love" (1 John 4:16). In that, he does not judge us as unworthy of him. He knows our condition and constantly calls us to himself. And so, "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Come to me! As we begin this new year of 2022, let us think about Jesus' consoling words: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We begin the new year of 2022. This year can be a new start on a positive outlook on life. A new start on joy and hope. A new start on our journey with Jesus.

Let us rededicate our lives with all their joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties to Jesus. Invite him into your life. Walk with him and talk with him. Let the fun begin! The wonderful thing is that it will!

To help you on your journey with Jesus, look at the four spiritual practices recommended in the English/Spanish article on pages 4 and 5. Dedicate yourself to them. To help you keep them front and center in your life, the pamphlet can be torn off the newsletter, folded, and referred to each day.

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

give you rest. Take my voke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Jesus in his love invites us to come to him. He doesn't say to get it all together first. He takes us as we are. He gives us all we need to live the life he offers us. What an invitation. However, he also says: "Those whom I love, I reprove and chastise. Be earnest, therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

Life is so much better with God. This is what we give up: "The works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissentions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like" (Galatians 5:19-21).

This is what we gain: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faith-

fulness, gentleness, selfcontrol" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Which do you prefer? "If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25) into a better life with God!

Give up unhealthy attachments. Let us love God with all our hearts. As we ask Jesus to join us on our walk with him, we will see that the life of faith and holiness is so much better than the life of disbelief and sin. Try it and see for yourself. Make it your resolution for this new year. Rejoice that God knows us and still loves us!

Q&A

Expect great things from God!

Q. I'm not special, just a regular person. What can I expect from God?

A. Everything! Let's start by looking at the story in the Bible of Bartimaeus, the blind man on the side of the road (Mark 10:46-52). Bartimaeus sat there begging. He heard Jesus was coming and called out to him, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me" (v. 47). As a blind beggar, Bartimaeus was an outsider, "a nothing." Yet Jesus called out to him, and healed him, saying, "Your faith has saved you" (v. 52).

Take courage! Like you say of yourself, Bartimaeus was not special either. He was a wounded man in need of something more in his life. He wasn't close to Jesus, but he knew he needed him. And so he called out to Jesus. The bystanders said, "Take courage; get up, he is calling you" (v. 49). And that's just what Bartimaeus did.

With his generous heart filled with love, Jesus asked him: "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus said, "Master, I want to see." And Jesus responded, "Your faith has saved you." Bartimaeus received his sight (v. 51).

Like Bartimaeus, we may not be close to Jesus either. But hopefully we know we need him to do something for us. So, ask Jesus and trust him to act.

Jesus calls out to us. Jesus wants us to come close to him to receive his life and love. He wants to fill our needs. Ask yourself, however, "Do I tell Jesus what I need and expect him to help me?"

continued on page 2

CHURCH CALENDAR

IANUARY 2022

- 1 Mary, Mother of God
- 2 Epiphany of the Lord
- 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
- 5 St. John Neumann, bishop
- 9 Baptism of the Lord
- 16 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 17 St. Anthony, abbot
- 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
 - 21 St. Agnes, virgin and martyr
 - 22 Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
 - 23 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Sunday of the Word of God
 - 24 St. Francis de Sales, bishop and doctor
 - 25 Conversion of St. Paul
 - 26 Sts. Timothy and Titus, bishops
 - 28 St. Thomas Aquinas, priest and doctor
 - 30 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
 - 31 St. John Bosco, priest

FEBRUARY 2022

- 2 Presentation of the Lord
- 5 St. Agatha, virgin and martyr
- 6 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 10 St. Scholastica, virgin
- 13 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 14 Sts. Cyril, monk, and Methodius, bishop
- 20 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 22 Chair of St. Peter
- 23 St. Polycarp, bishop and martyr
- 27 Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

MARCH 2022

- 2 Ash Wednesday
- 6 First Sunday of Lent
- 13 Second Sunday of Lent
- 19 St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 20 Third Sunday of Lent
- 25 Annunciation of the Lord
- 27 Fourth Sunday of Lent

Let's Talk!

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Expect great things from God!

Speak to him as your friend. Trust in him, and if your needs are truly for your own good, Jesus will answer your prayer

in a way that best meets your needs. Don't ask him to be super rich or for someone for your personal pleasure. That's not for your best needs, and it doesn't take much to realize that.

Reject the lie that you don't belong with Jesus. Be personal with him. He knows us already, and despite that, he still loves

us. Expect him to give to you just as he gave to Bartimaeus, the great outsider.

"Jesus, I trust in you." Pray these words given to us by God through St. Faustina Kowalska (1905 – 1938), and trust in God. Know that he wants to give us more. Know he wants you for himself. Surrender to him and your life will be good and peaceful. You may be an "outsider," but that doesn't matter to God.

Let us expect great things from God!

New Year's Resolutions!

Spiritual practices to help you on your journey.

Paulist Prison Ministries has a new pamphlet to help you develop your "spiritual disciplines," practices that will help you focus on God during your day. On pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter, you will find the pamphlet— "Expect great things from God! Spiritual practices to help you on your Journey"— in both English and Spanish.

While we suggest these practices for the new year, *they are for every day of the year.* Briefly stated, they are: (continued from page 1)

Read the word of God. God speaks to us through Scripture.

Worship and pray. Make Mass and prayer a central part of your spiritual life.

Be part of a community. This is the place where we live out our faith.

Care for and serve others.

This is how we show our love of God and neighbor.

You can cut or tear off this pamphlet for personal use, or download a copy at www.pemdc.org/SpiritualPractices. These spiritual resolutions help you be more aware of God's presence with you on your daily journey. The four spiritual practices recommended there will help you grow in faith and practice.

These spiritual practices will help you encounter God in your life, today and all through the year!

Prison Crowding and COVID-19

At the time of this writing in mid-November, the coronavirus pandemic is still a challenge. It has its ups and downs, depending on the location. Bad news continues that the incidence of infection is higher in prisons than outside. Crowded prisons help the virus spread quickly.

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.

Prisoner Saint

St. Jan Sarkander (1576-1620) + Jan (John in English) Sarkander lived in challenging times, when wars of religion were being fought across Europe. Traditionally Catholic areas had abandoned the Catholic faith and became Protestant. There was much dislike on both sides. Jan was married briefly until his wife died. He sensed God calling him to become a priest. After ordination, Jan was called to minister in warlike conditions in areas that had passed between Poland and the Czech Republic. Jan was falsely accused of breaking the seal of confession. He was arrested, imprisoned and tortured on the rack and with lit candles and burning feathers. He died as a martyr for the faith in prison in 1620. Pope St. John Paul II canonized him a Saint in 1995.

Feast Day: March 17

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for January/February/ March 2022

The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network encourages Catholics to prayer and action as part of the church's universal mission. The Network provides monthly prayer intentions determined by the Pope. His monthly prayer intention is a global call to transform our prayer into "concrete gestures" of service. 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.

JANUARY

For true human fraternity: We pray for all those suffering from religious discrimination and persecution; may their own rights and dignity be recognized, which originate from being brothers and sisters in the human family.

FEBRUARY

For religious sisters and consecrated women: We pray for religious sisters and consecrated women; thanking them for their mission and their courage; may they continue to find new responses to the challenges of our times.

MARCH

For a Christian response to bioethical challenges: We pray for Christians facing new bioethical challenges; may they continue to defend the dignity of all human life with prayer and action.

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

Making Spiritual Resolutions, Part 2

Soaking in Christ

Peaches: OK, Deke. I've got the Word of God as my first building block of a personal spiritual rule of life. Now onto number two!

Me: Number two is Worship. **Peaches:** So, go to Mass.

Me: Hang on a second. Let's first consider the meaning of the word "worship" for a second to understand it.

Peaches: That's the big thing you learned in college, isn't it: "define the terms"?

Me: One of the most important things. Saves a lot of wasted time and confusion.

Peaches: Proceed, Your Reverence!

Me: "Worship" comes from Old English as "worth-ship".

Peaches: Oh, I feel that! Giving worth to something.

Me: Correct! In this case we mean giving the absolute highest worth.

Peaches: Because God would be the absolute highest, best and most important thing!

Me: There you go! So, what do you think? Does that only happen at Mass?

Peaches: I want to say "No"?

Me: Right again! If we are talking about the absolute highest and best thing in existence could that be covered in an hour on Sunday? What does St Paul say?

"Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer" (Romans 12:1).

Peaches: So worship is your whole self. How you live your whole life.

Me: It would have to be! To show the highest "worth-ship" you'd have to offer your *all* and *all the time.*

Peaches: You're all for THE ALL.

Me: Right!

Peaches: So how does Mass figure in then?

Me: The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Mass is "the source and summit of Christian life" (*Lumen gentium*, 11).

Peaches: Translation, please?

Me: "Beginning and high point." The "source" is where a river begins. A "summit" is the top of a mountain. So, it's the beginning and the end. It is what you are and what you will become.

Peaches: Wow!

By Deacon Dennis Dolan

Me: But wait, there's more!

Peaches: Go ahead, Mr. Late Night Infomercial.

Me: The Mass was the last thing Jesus left us on the night before he died; his last lesson to the Apostles. One that he requested be done

until he returns.

Peaches: That's pretty deep, Deke.

Me: It keeps getting deeper. Remember when he said he would be with us to the end of the

world (Matthew 28:20)? **Peaches:** Oh! I get it! He is present in

communion!

Me: Yup. He becomes part of us and we of him.

Peaches: The Body of Christ!

Me: It's not a theory! It's a reality. *And* we become part of each other as well in receiving

the Eucharist!

Peaches: The Body of Christ!

Me: Your True Self: someone who is loved by Christ.

Peaches: You weren't kidding, Deke! It's deep all the way down!

Me: True but we are nowhere near all the way down. In the Liturgy of the Mass we are literally soaked in Christ. Think about it. Not only is Christ present to us in the bread and wine but in the Word of God. He is present in the People of God, His body, gathered. Christ is present in his priesthood in the person of the priest and in his servanthood in the person of the deacon.

Peaches: So, in the Mass, Christ is present in his Word, Body and Blood, the People of God, the Priest and the Deacon!

Dude we are like marinating in Christ at Mass!

Me: Yes, and the Holy Spirit is the "secret sauce" throughout that recipe.

Peaches: Wow!

Me: And of course, there's another level too—the Eucharistic action.

Peaches: What's that?

Me: Remember when I said that the Last Supper was the last lesson to the Apostles before he died?

Peaches: Yeah.

Me: Well, look at the action. Jesus gave thanks to God, broke the bread, gave it away and said that it was his body given for you.

Peaches: I remember.

continued on page 6



itspera

grandes cosas

de Dios!

Prácticas espirituales para ayudarte en tu camino

algunas prácticas espirituales para Todos los días es una oportunidad de acercarte más a Jesús y crecer en la fe. Así que ahora es un buen momento para volver a dedicarnos a caminar a diario con Jesús. Aquí te presentamos ayudarte. Si ya sigues estas prácticas espirituales, vuelve a dedicarte a ellas. Si no las sigues, comienza ahora. A medida que te encuentres con Dios cada día, tu vida cambiará.



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Crecer en la fe no sucede automáticamente. Tenemos que hacer nuestra parte y trabajar en ello. Muchos tra propia "disciplina espiritual". Lo principal es nacer lo posible, no lo imposible. Eso significa que si no tienes una hora en silencio al día para rezar no rás y acabarás por sentirte frustrado y fracasado. Por lo tanto, busca cultivar una vida espiritual acorde a directores espirituales recomiendan que, si queremos crecer espiritualmente, debemos cultivar nuesintentes rezar en silencio una hora al día. No lo logratu situación actual.

Las circunstancias de cada uno son diferentes. La altura de tu crecimiento espiritual afectará tus distracciones y el tiempo que tienes para estar tranquilo. Hasta tu personalidad afecta lo que puedes y debes intentar hacer. Estas son algunas sugerencias de prácticas espirituales para tu vida.

Considera estas: 1) Lee la Palabra de Dios. 2) Asiste al culto y reza. 3) Forma parte de una comunidad. 4) Ocúpate de los demás y sírvelos. Veámoslas en Una buena disciplina espiritual consta de varias partes. más de detalles.

Primero, lee la Palabra de Dios.

cha las lecturas de la Sagrada católica consta de la Liturgia de la Palabra y la Liturgia de la Eucaristía, la misa es un buen momento para escuchar Escritura. Ya que la misa Lee la Sagrada Escritura. Escu-



la proclamación de la Palabra. Escúchala y trata de recordar algo que puedas usar como guía.

rio de leer algo de la Biblia. Tal vez desees seguir las lecturas de la misa diaria. O tal vez leer lecturas de tamento), o quizás toda la Biblia. No necesitas que seas un erudito de la Biblia: solo trata de escuchar la Por lo tanto, también es bueno adquirir el hábito dialos libros de la Biblia (comenzando con el Nuevo Tesvoz de Dios.

Lee lentamente y reflexiona acerca de lo que has leído. Pide al Espíritu Santo que te guíe e ilumine. Escribe en un cuaderno algo que te llame la atención. Guarda tus notas de oración en privado.)

Segundo, asiste al culto y reza.

Asiste a misa. La Eucaristía es zón y la mente abiertos, con el gran sacramento de vida y amor. Participa con el corael deseo de encontrarte con lesús y aprender de él, crecer en él, dejar que él te sane.



lugar para poder hablar con Dios. Es mejor poco La liturgia es una vez a la semana y dura una hora o menos. Por lo tanto, además, dedica un momento cada día a la oración personal. Reserva tiempo y un tiempo que ninguno. Si es posible, también lee la Escritura durante este tiempo.

Tercero, forma parte de una comunidad.

importante formar parte de Cuando Jesús llamó un nos daba un ejemplo. Es grupo de seguidores conocidos como sus discípulos, una comunidad.



Una comunidad puede ser

un aliento y apoyo en momentos difíciles. Puede ciones positivas. Una comunidad de creyentes es un lugar donde vivimos nuestra fe, para que no sea algo que está solo en la cabeza. Tiene que estar en nuestro corazón y en nuestras acciones, también. ser gente con quien hablar y crecer, que ofrece rela-

Cuarto, ocúpate de los demás y sírvelos.

Esto está íntimamente ligado tros solos. Hay que ocuparse también. Busca maneras de al número tres de arriba. Nuestra fe no es para nosode los demás y servirlos hacer esto.



Un encuentro personal con Cristo.

te ayudan a encontrar a Jesús, y esto te ayudará a crecer espiritualmente. Encontrar a Cristo significa significa sentir su presencia en tu vida. Sabrás En el centro de estas prácticas espirituales está el 'encuentro personal con Cristo". Todas estas cosas aprender acerca de él, pero igual de importante, cuando esto está sucediendo.

Que estas prácticas te traigan bendiciones especiales en tu camino. Espera grandes cosas de Dios.

Download pamphlet at www.pemdc.org/SpiritualPractices

great things from God!

to help you on your journey Spiritual practices

now. As you meet God each day, your yourself to them. If you aren't, begin these spiritual practices, rededicate to help you. If you are already doing ourselves to our daily walk with Jesus So now is a good time to rededicate closer to Jesus and to grow in faith Every day is an opportunity to grow life will change. Here are some spiritual practices



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Develop your "spiritual discipline."

seek to build a realistic spiritual life that suits your and you'll just end up frustrated and fail. Thus discipline." At the heart of this is that we try to spiritually, we should develop our own "spiritual directors recommend that if we want to grow need to do our part and work at it. Many spiritual Growing in faith doesn't happen automatically. We for prayer, don't attempt to do that. It won't happen mean that if you don't have an hour a day of quiet do what we can, not what we can't. By this they present circumstances.

try to do. Here are some suggestions for spiritual and the time you get for some quiet. Even your tual growth will affect the distractions you face practices for your life. personality will impact what you can and should Everyone's circumstances differ. Your level of spiri-

serve others. Let's take a look at them. and pray. 3) Be part of a community. 4) Care for and Consider these: 1) Read the Word of God. 2) Worship A good spiritual discipline consists of several parts

First, read the word of God

of the Liturgy of the Word and every Catholic Mass consists to hear the word proclaimed. Mass provides a good time the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Scripture being read. Since Read Scripture. Listen to



remember afterward to guide you. Listen to it and try to pick up something you can

need to become a Bible scholar; just try to listen to It is good to develop a daily habit of reading the ment), and perhaps the entire Bible itself. You don't books of the Bible (starting with the New Testaings. Or you might want to work your way through Bible. You might want to follow the daily Mass read-God's voice.

strikes you. (Maintain the privacy of your prayer down in a notebook, if you can, something that Holy Spirit for insight and understanding. Write Read slowly and reflect on what you read. Ask the

Second, worship and pray.

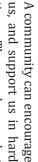
and learn from him, grow in open heart and mind, with and love. Participate with an is the great sacrament of life him, and be healed by him. the desire to meet Jesus Attend Mass. The Eucharist

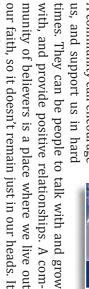


place when you can talk with God. A little such during this time as well. time is better than none. If possible, read Scripture of personal prayer each day. Set aside a time and for an hour or less. Thus, in addition, have a time For most people, the liturgy is at most once a week

Third, be part of a community.

be part of a community. ple for us. It is important to ples, he was setting an examfollowers known as his disci-When Jesus called a body of







Fourth, care for and serve others.

ways you can do that. ing others as well. Look for is about caring for and servisn't just about ourselves. It ber three above. Our faith This follows closely on num-



A personal encounter with Christ.

know when this is happening. experiencing his presence in your life. You will learning about him, but just as important, it means you grow spiritually. Encountering Christ means things help you to meet Jesus, and that helps "personal encounter with Christ." All of these At the heart of these spiritual resolutions is a

on your journey. Expect great things from God. May these practices be special blessings for you Open Wide Our Hearts, Part 6

Sharing in the life of God

Much is at stake for all of us regarding the sin of racism, especially in the United States. Racism has plagued us as a people and a nation since the first slaves were brought into the Virginia colony in 1619. Even after the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865, which freed slaves, the human welfare of the released slaves did not change significantly. The after-effects are still felt today.

Facing the racism around us, the U.S. Catholic bishops remind us of the great life to which we are called with God. And thus, we are called to go forward, seeking ways to promote the equality and dignity of life for all people, including African Americans.

This is the sixth and final article in our series on racism. We are following the guidance given by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in their 2018 pastoral letter against racism called "Open Wide Our Hearts. The Enduring Call to Love."

Going Forward. Prudent people know that we can't overcome racism by beating ourselves to death over the issue. While that *might* be a desire to an awakening awareness to the evil of racism, it gives us little help in changing our hearts and minds. We need something more.

St. Pope John Paul II wrote to the whole Church in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (in English, "The Gospel of Life"). Here he wrote that "each person is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God' (EV, n. 2)".

Our calling is a great one: God wants us to share his very life with him. Because of that, we can't fool around with evil and sin. We need to recognize the dignity of each person, no matter of what race, economic status, or national background. In God's eyes, we are all called to the same dignity that flows from our being his sons and daughters.

In Jesus, the Lamb of God. The U.S. bishops write that "We are all called to that great life, to the communion of heaven where 'a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue [stand] before the throne of the Lamb' (Rev. 7:9)" (pp. 25-26). As we seek to overcome racism, we need changed hearts, transformed by the Holy Spirit and the grace of God. A change of heart is primarily the work of God in us.

Jesus teaches us that central to the life of God is love. "God is love" (1 John 4:16). The bishops quote St. Paul: "Your every

act should be done with love" (1 Corinthians 16:14). This is our challenge as we seek

to overcome racism. It is a work of God in us, transforming our hearts and minds. Let us pray that *our* hearts be changed as well as the hearts of *others*.

The bishops write: "We pray that the reader will join with us in striving for the end of racism in all its forms, that we may walk together humbly with God and with all of our brothers and sisters in a renewed unity." They continue, "There is no place for racism in the hearts of any person; it is the perversion of the Lord's will for men and women, all of whom were made in God's image and likeness" (p. 26). This is another way that all of us can share more deeply in the love and life of God.

We all need to learn the way of the Lord Jesus and walk in it. One place to start is by reading the bishops' 2018 pastoral letter "Open Wide Our Hearts." (Google, USCCB Open Wide Our Hearts to download a copy.) It is only 27 pages and not hard to read.

Let us pray together in the words the U.S. 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"

This is the final article in our series on racism. If you want to read more on the Church's teaching on racism, you can download a copy of "Open Wide Our Hearts" on the internet.

 \sim Anthony Bosnick

Soaking in Christ

Me: I think he was also doing a demonstration of his whole life for us to follow. He's saying, "See this bread? This is me. This is my life. First, I thank God for it because it's his gift to me. Then, I break my life open and give it away to feed others.

Peaches: "Do this in memory of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24).

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continued from page 3

Me: Or, as we deacons close each Mass with, "Go to love and serve the Lord and one another."

Peaches: And we're back to St Paul!

Me: Pretty cool, huh?

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

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