

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

PO BOX 29121 ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20017

Vol. 30, No. 1 – January/February/March 2023

Have the heart Jesus wants for you

A new year begins. It's a good time to ask Jesus what he wants *for you* this year and what he wants *from you* in return. So let us turn from the old and bring in the new!

We can be more than sure that Jesus wants to give us new hearts which delight in him. He even promises to do that. "I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts" (Ezekiel 36:26). He promises us he will "remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh," as another translation puts it.

The Spirit of God dwells in us! What a promise this is for all of us, especially if we want to live a new life free of darkness and bitterness and be filled with life and love. Isn't that better than the empti-

ness of a life filled with anger and bitterness? Know this for sure: God can turn all evil and trouble in our lives into good.

St. Paul tells us that "The Spirit of God dwells in [us]" (1 Corinthians 3:16). He also tells us what is in store for us: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). This is much better than the alternative of darkness and anger, which so often take hold of us.

"Shine like lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). Even in prison, you can be a shining light of life and love. You might have a lot of changing to do, but "noth-

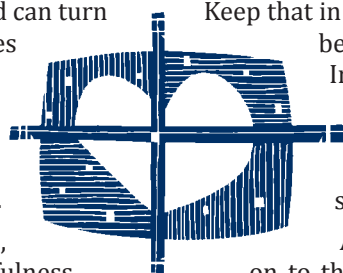
ing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

Keep that in mind and trust in it. Don't be hard-hearted and cynical.

In this new year, take courage and keep the faith. God wants the best for you. All things are possible with God.

As St. Paul writes: "Hold on to the word of life." If you do, you can be sure that you "did not run in vain or labor in vain" (Philippians 2:16). What a promise to hold onto in times good and bad, especially in times of discouragement or hopelessness in prison.

Have the heart Jesus wants you to have! A heart of life and love. What a hope this is for the new year.



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We begin the new year of 2023 with the challenge to follow Jesus and to let him change our lives. What a great opportunity we have to become new persons in the months ahead.

The change is from anger and bitterness to happiness and joy. Look to Jesus to give you the grace to change. In times of anger, rather than a harsh word or action for someone, say a little prayer for your own peace . . . and for theirs! Change comes, often slowly, but it comes.

This is God's gift to us who have been baptized into his life and love. Embrace Jesus and his life in this new year. You will see the difference it makes in your life.

Let us pray for one another.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Q&A

Say a prayer for everyone

Q. *I get angry a lot. What can I do?*

A. A good place to start is to keep a prayer in your heart for everyone. The tensions and life in prison can be very hard. And on top of that, many of us did not learn to develop and keep peaceful hearts. Our habit is often to strike out at others with anger when things bother us. This only makes matters worse.

Anger is one of the "works of the flesh" which destroy our life with God. St. Paul writes about the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. He tells us to give them up and let the "fruit of the Spirit" grow in our lives, including "gentleness and self-control" (5:22-23).

Give up anger and replace it with prayer. We know this is easier said than done! But at the heart of a peaceful spirit is a peaceful life. We have some suggestions below for you to start anew in this new year. They center on keeping a lively relationship with God in your life.

Q. *How can I live this out?*

A. Commit to the spiritual resolutions below in the new year. They will help you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and live as a temple of God. Reconfirm and recommit to them each day. At times, you will fail. We all do. But the more you follow these spiritual practices, the more you will see your life change. You will become less angry and more peaceful.

■ **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 likely not get to it.

continued on page 2

CHURCH CALENDAR

JANUARY 2023

- 1 **Mary, Mother of God**
- 2 Sts. Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen, bishops and doctors
- 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
- 5 St. John Neumann, bishop
- 8 **Epiphany of the Lord**
- 9 **Baptism of the Lord**
- 15 **Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 17 St. Anthony, abbot
- 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- 21 St. Agnes, virgin and martyr
- 22 **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 23 **Word of God Sunday**
- 23 Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
- 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
- 29 **Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 31 St. John Bosco, priest

FEBRUARY 2023

- 2 **Presentation of the Lord**
- 5 **Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 6 St. Paul Miki and Companions, martyrs
- 10 St. Scholastica, virgin
- 12 **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 14 St. Cyril, monk, and St. Methodius, bishop
- 19 **Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 22 **Ash Wednesday**
- 26 **First Sunday of Lent**

MARCH 2023

- 5 **Second Sunday of Lent**
- 12 **Third Sunday of Lent**
- 19 **Fourth Sunday of Lent**
- 20 **St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 25 **Annunciation of the Lord**
- 26 **Fifth Sunday of Lent**

Let's Talk!

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

Editor: **Mr. Anthony Bosnick**

Layout Editor: **Mrs. Joann Sullivan**

Art: **Steve Erspamer, 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.

PMLTH2301

Say a prayer for everyone

(continued from page 1)

■ **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.

■ **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 live in the truth. Together, they make up what is called a "Spiritual Discipline." Paulist Prison Ministries has a free downloadable pamphlet which you can use to help you grow in these Spiritual Disciplines. You can download the pamphlet called "Expect great things from God. Spiritual practices to help you on your journey" at www.pemdc.org/SpiritualPractices.

As you put these four simple principles into practice in your life, you will be surprised at how much your life will change. Above all, you will see your anger gradually diminish. In its place will be growth of peace and joy.

Try it in this new year.

A reminder about the corona virus.

At the time of this writing in mid-November, the coronavirus is still with us.

New varieties emerge, even as old ones seem to be getting under control. 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 tissue after use. Perform hand hygiene (hand washing with 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."

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.

And remember, as we step out in faith in the new year, keep a prayer in your heart for everyone!

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. Fabian (?—January 20, 250) + Fabian was pope in the early Church from AD 236 to 250. This was considered a long reign at that time. (Still is.) He was chosen pope when a dove landed on his head. This was taken as a sign that the Holy Spirit was indicating he was to be the next pope. Fabian served quietly and faithfully at a time when there was relative peace in the Roman Empire. However, in 250 Emperor Decius ordered all citizens to offer sacrifice to the gods. Fabian (and other church leaders) refused. He was imprisoned and martyred during the persecution. His tomb and body were lost, but found in 1915. Fabian lived faithfully for Jesus and the Church, a lesson for us in our own lives.

Feast Day: January 20

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for January/February/March 2023

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 educators:

We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.

FEBRUARY

For parishes:

We pray that parishes, placing communion at the center, may increasingly become communities of faith, fraternity and welcome towards those most in need.

MARCH

For victims of abuse:

We pray for those who have suffered harm from members of the Church; may they find within the Church herself a concrete response to their pain and suffering.

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

Give up ingratitude for Lent

By Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: Deke, I'm thinking about Lent, and I thought I could use a challenge.

Me: So not chocolate this year?

Peaches: I thought you might have something you've done in the past. Something "next level" that I could tackle.

Me: OK. I choose things that I intend to carry out forever. I don't look for 40 days then it's back to the way it was before. I like things that I can make part of my spiritual "toolbox" that will continue to make me a better, joyful, missionary disciple of Jesus.

Peaches: Yeah! That's what I'm talking about!

Me: One of the things that I did, is I gave up ingratitude for Lent.

Peaches: You mean like being ungrateful?

Me: Yes. Or put more positively, I practiced gratitude every day during Lent and every day since.

Peaches: Gratitude made you happier?

Me: Absolutely! It's the "secret sauce" for happiness! Most people wrongly imagine that once they are happy then they will be grateful. It's not true. There are people who have gotten everything they ever wanted in life and still are miserable. There are also people living in mud huts who are happy.

Peaches: How did you do this?

Me: I took a two-pronged approach. The first is very easy: every night before I fall asleep, I think of three things that happened that day that I am grateful for. And it is amazing how over time that rewires your brain to be more joyful.

Peaches: Give me an example.

Me: Oh, could be anything. Some days you get a big thing so those are easy to spot.

Peaches: They still count, right?

Me: Yes, absolutely. But most days there are no big wins or happy surprises, so you look for small things for which you are grateful. That takes some practice.

Peaches: Such as?

Me: Last night I was grateful for a phone call from a friend. I had a meal that I really like. And a warm, dry bed to sleep in!

Peaches: That's it?!

Me: Yup.

Peaches: You've got a real low bar for gratitude, Deke.

Me: Thank you. I've worked hard to develop that.

Peaches: Well, how do you develop the low bar? It doesn't seem like much.

Me: The trick is what you are comparing with. If I set my bar high like, "I'll be grateful when I'm having room service at Disney World", then I'm going to be miserable most days because I'm not going to be in Disney World most days.

Peaches: I see that, but what's the big deal about a phone call, a meal, and a bed?

Me: Just think of the people who don't get phone calls from loved ones.

Peaches: True. Plenty of them around here.

Me: Think of the people who have little or nothing to eat.

Peaches: There's millions of them around the world.

Me: And how many people are sleeping outside in the cold? Don't you get it? Compare these "little things" to the lives of millions of people and you realize you are living like a King!

Peaches: Well, that's a bit much!

Me: Really? You think King Herod or Caesar or most royalty in the history of the world had running hot water, electric lights, or indoor plumbing?

Peaches: OK. I'll give it a try.

Me: Some people who do this have a notebook that they write this down in. They look it over on their bad days to remember how fortunate they are.

Peaches: Clever! What's the second trick to this?

Me: Paying attention. Being in the present moment during the day. So, you're just walking to the chow hall for dinner. Can you feel your feet as you walk? Isn't that a miracle?

Peaches: No.

Me: What would that inmate in the wheelchair think if they could feel their feet?

Peaches: Oh.

Me: Feel your lungs breathing that fresh air?

continued on page 6



Oración para prisioneros



Paulist Prison Ministries

Servicio de

Paulist Evangelization Ministries

www.pemdc.org

PO Box 29121 • Washington, DC 20017

Oh Señor Jesucristo, Hijo del Altísimo,

Conociste la pérdida de la libertad,
al sufrir a manos de Tus captores,
aunque eras inocente.

Soportaste el dolor en el rostro
de tus familiares y amigos

que fueron testigos de tus juicios,
aunque no eras culpable.

Incluso tus seguidores más cercanos, Pedro, Pablo y los santos, en el transcurso de los siglos, soportaron cadenas, encarcelamiento y sufrimiento.

Mientras cumplo mi sentencia,
concedeme, te lo ruego, la gracia de
seguir tu camino.

- ◆ Ayúdame a **DARME CUENTA** del efecto de mis acciones, a conocer el daño que hacen a todos aquellos que han sido víctimas de mi maldad.
- ◆ Concédeme tener verdadero **REMORDIMIENTO**, incluso por medio del don de las lágrimas, por el daño que he causado.
- ◆ Muéstrame el camino hacia la **REHABILITACIÓN** y la **RESTITUCIÓN**, para que pueda pagar mi deuda a la sociedad y volver a ser digno de vivir como ciudadano respetuoso de la ley.
- ◆ Muy especialmente, Señor, permíteme **RECONCILIARME** con tu Amor Divino y tu perdón, comparecer ante tu Tribunal Eterno, y un día, entrar en el Paraíso guiado por el ladrón penitente crucificado contigo en el Calvario.

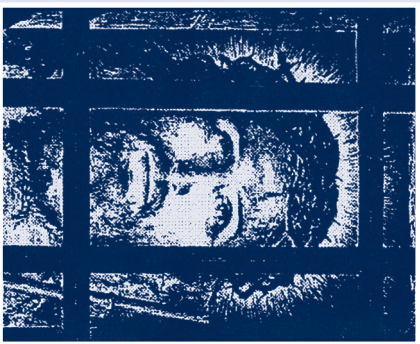
Esto te pido, inclínadome
humildemente ante Tu Santo Nombre,
por medio del Espíritu Santo,
Ante el sobrecogimiento del Eterno
Padre Celestial.
Amén.

~ Escrito por un prisionero anónimo

Usa estas líneas para tus pensamientos sobre esta oración.

[illegible]

Para bajar una copia de Oración para prisioneros visita <https://www.pemdc.org/prayer-for-prisoners/>
Se permite reimprimirla para distribución.



A Prayer for Prisoners



Paulist Prison Ministries

A Service of

Paulist Evangelization Ministries

www.pemdc.org

PO Box 29121 • Washington, DC 20017

O Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of the Most-High God,

You Yourself knew the loss of freedom,
suffering at the hands of Your captors,
though innocent.

You endured the pain on the faces
of family and friends

who witnessed your trials,
though guiltless.

Even your closest followers, Peter, Paul and Saints throughout the ages, knew chains, imprisonment and suffering.

As I serve my sentence, grant me, I beg
you, the grace to follow in your way.

- ◆ Help me **REALIZE** the effects of my actions, to know the harm done to all those who are victims of my wrongdoing.
- ◆ Enable me to have true **REMORSE**, even through the gift of tears, for the hurt I have caused.
- ◆ Show me the path to **REHABILITATION** and **RESTITUTION**, that I may pay my debt to society, and become again worthy to live as a law-abiding citizen.
- ◆ Most especially, Lord, allow me to be **RECONCILED** with your Divine Love and forgiveness, to stand before your Eternal Judgment Seat, and one day, enter Paradise led by the penitent thief crucified with You on Calvary.

This I ask, bowing humbly
at Your Holy Name,

Through the Holy Spirit,
In the awe of the Eternal
Heavenly Father.

Amen.

~ by an anonymous prisoner

(Write your thoughts on the lines below)

[illegible]

Download pamphlet at

<https://www.pemdc.org/prayer-for-prisoners/>

Reprints permitted for distribution

"The glory of God is man fully alive."

God has great plans and hopes for us. That is true for us whether we are in prison or out. But how often do we aspire for the life and joy God wants for us? Too often, we settle for mediocrity and boredom. We don't care that God has great gifts ready for the asking and taking.

The great Saint Irenaeus (c. AD 130 – c. 202), was bishop of Lyon in southeastern France. He famously proclaimed, "The glory of God is man fully alive." Pope Francis declared Irenaeus a Doctor of the Church—or great theologian and pastor—on January 21, 2022. His feast day is celebrated in the Catholic Church on June 28.

Live lives of grace here on earth. When some today quote St. Irenaeus saying, "The Glory of God is man fully alive," they instead say, "*human beings* fully alive". They do this to stress that woman are included in this as well! (This should make Peaches happy!)

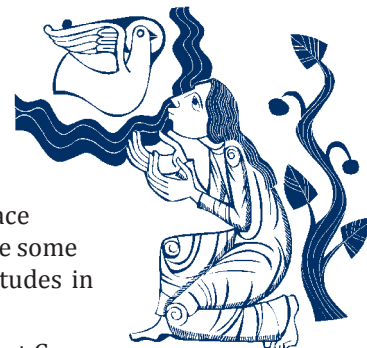
What this is saying is that God is glorified when the way we his children live reflect God's life and love here on earth. This is not achieved through our human striving, but through God's grace in our lives. *It is God's work and we cooperate with that work.* It is accomplished as we yield to grace and turn from sin. *God initiates the work, and we follow.*

But how? God helps us do this! Here are some ways that we can do that. 1) Remember that you a temple of God. 2) Live the Beatitudes. 3) Take seriously the Great Commandment to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. 4) Turn from works of the flesh and embrace the fruit of the spirit. (This list is not exhaustive, but space limits us.)

■ First, remember the words of St. Paul: "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). By virtue of our baptism into Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, and we are God's temples. Keep that in mind. Through baptism, God has washed us clean of sin and cleansed us for himself. We are challenged to live this out each day!

■ Second, strive to embrace and live out the Beatitudes. These are the eight blessings that Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:3-10). They are the blessings that

come to those striving to live humble lives following the way of God. It is not too hard to understand this. It is much harder when we actually try to do it. But God gives us the grace and sacraments to do it! Take some time to pray over the Beatitudes in Scripture.



■ Third, take seriously the Great Commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31). So, the next time you start to cuss out God or that brother or sister, *STOP and say a little prayer for them.* Ask God to give you peaceful and loving words and actions. It means changing bad habits and replacing them with good habits. It's hard, but can be done, and must be done!

■ Fourth, the works of the flesh will destroy your life with God. Turn from them with the grace of God. St. Paul says they are "obvious" and gives us fifteen examples: "immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like" (Galatians 5: 19-21). Be prepared for the these nine "fruit of the Spirit": "love, joy peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Thoughts that inspire. We hope you are inspired to want to live in a way that brings glory to God. Think and pray about these words and ask God how you can live in ways that bring him glory *and you joy.* As you do, your life will change and be more peaceful and joyful. You can rely on that.

This is the beginning of a new series of articles in "Let's Talk!" called "Thoughts that inspire." We will reflect on short passages from Scripture or other writings that can inspire us in our Christian lives. These reflections hopefully will help us enjoy our journey with Jesus and live more faithful and holy lives. Let us know what you think.

~ Anthony Bosnick

Give up ingratitude for Lent

Peaches: I get it. Others are struggling for their next breath.

Me: Right! And don't forget to look at that tree as you go by. I mean, take a second and really look at it. God went to a lot of trouble so that someone could enjoy that tree. Notice and say, "Thanks".

Peaches: Sounds good, I'll give it a shot. Lent is just around the corner. Ash Wednesday is February 22.

Me: If it doesn't work, I will cheerfully refund your misery!

Peaches: Deacon, you are one of God's special little people, you know that?

Me: Have a good Lent, P.

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

continued from page 3

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.