

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

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Stop. Look. Listen.

Some of us may recall signs at railroad crossings that warned: “Stop. Look. Listen.” If we fail to heed them, we can face some serious issues. Like one of my high school classmates who had the rear end torn from his car when he plowed ahead, ignoring the sign. He survived, but faced serious consequences from the police, the railroad, and his father!

Same with us in our spiritual lives. Too often, we plow ahead in our lives, ignoring the signs around us. We, too, need to “Stop. Look. Listen.” God may be trying to get our attention, but we are totally oblivious. Really, God is *always* trying to get our attention. How much we miss because we aren't paying attention!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Some wonderful celebrations are coming! On April 6, the Easter Triduum begins Holy Thursday evening and continues through Good Friday and the Easter Vigil on April 8. Then Easter begins with the Vigil Mass on April 8 and runs for fifty days until Pentecost Sunday on May 28. Easter is fifty days of celebration, all focused on Jesus.

The Church sees these days celebrating Jesus' victory over sin and death through his Passion and Resurrection as the center of our faith. And as the Church celebrates, she wants us to join in heart and soul.

So, embrace the new life Jesus has won for you, and celebrate. Ask the Holy Spirit that the articles in this issue will deepen your faith and understanding. Follow Jesus each day and become the new person he wants you to be!

Let us pray for one another.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

■ **Stop.** As you go through your day, take some time to stop what you are doing and turn to God. We need to stop because our minds are often on things that pull us from God and his desires for our lives.

■ **Look.** Look around you and see what is happening. Are there people who need a word of hope? Or are there situations where you may be the source of trouble, or where you can be the person needed to help people out and provide positive input.

■ **Listen.** Take time, even if it is just for a brief moment, to listen to what God may be telling you. There are many competing voices: the voice of God, your own voice, or the voice of the devil. Choose God.

Have hope. God has wonderful hopes



for our lives. When we Stop, Look, and Listen, we are more likely to be attentive to those things he is calling us to accomplish. *This is even possible while you are in prison.*

God does not want this to be empty time for you. He wants it to be a time with a purpose.

Jesus says, “I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved” (John 10:9). He has promised us “life and life to the full”, life “more abundantly” (John 10:10). But to experience that life and to accomplish what God wants for our lives, we need to follow him.

This means we need to Stop, Look, and Listen. As we do, we will find life in abundance! Give it a try.

Q&A

Jesus, I Trust in You

Q. What is Divine Mercy?

A. Divine Mercy is God's loving mercy for us. It is centered on the truth of how much God loves us. He wants us to know his life and love given to us through Jesus. Unfortunately, we sometimes think God wants to “get us” and punish us. It is a temptation from Satan to think that God wants to make us live in the misery of our sin.

Jesus calls us to come to him and to rest in him. The wonderful thing is that as we turn to Jesus, we experience his love, which changes our hearts. Try it and see if that is not the case with you too. If our hearts remain hard and closed to him and we do not seek his loving forgiveness, we may find ourselves in eternal darkness. *But this is not God's desire for us.*

You may have come across the “Divine Mercy Devotion”. The devotion includes several practices. Among these are the Hour of Mercy, prayed at 3:00 pm daily, to reflect the time Jesus died and won us our salvation. Also is the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, some simple prayers uniting us more deeply to the mercy of God. And each year we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, which is the Second Sunday of Easter, this year April 16.

Devotion to Divine Mercy is rooted in the visions that Sr. Faustina Kowalska (1905—1938) had in February 1931. *Jesus appeared to her* and asked her to spread knowledge

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CHURCH CALENDAR

APRIL 2023

- 2 Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
- 6 Holy Thursday
- 7 Passion of the Lord (Good Friday)
- 8 Holy Saturday
- 9 Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord
- 16 Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday
- 23 Third Sunday of Easter
- 25 St. Mark, Evangelist
- 29 St. Catherine of Siena, virgin and doctor
- 30 Fourth Sunday of Easter

MAY 2023

- 1 St. Joseph the Worker
- 2 St. Athanasius, bishop and doctor
- 3 Sts. Philip and James, apostles
- 7 Fifth Sunday of Easter
- 14 Sixth Sunday of Easter
- 18 Ascension (in some places celebrated May 21)
- 21 Ascension of the Lord
- 26 St. Philip Neri, priest
- 28 Pentecost Sunday
- 29 Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church
- 31 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

JUNE 2023

- 1 St. Justin, martyr
- 3 St. Charles Lwanga and Companions, martyrs
- 4 Most Holy Trinity
- 5 St. Boniface, bishop and martyr
- 11 Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)
- 13 St. Anthony of Padua, priest and doctor
- 16 Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
- 17 Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 18 Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 21 St. Aloysius Gonzaga, religious
- 24 Birth of St. John the Baptist
- 25 Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 28 St. Irenaeus, bishop and Martyr
- 29 Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles

Let's Talk!

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

Editor: **Mr. Anthony Bosnick**

Layout Editor: **Mrs. Joann Sullivan**

Art: **Steve Erspamer, SM**

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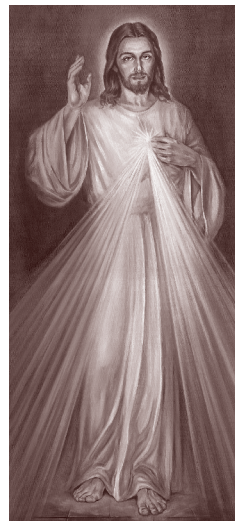
Q&A Jesus, I Trust in You

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of and devotion to his Divine Mercy. She did this with much struggle. Pope St. John Paul II promoted this devotion, and it is now deeply rooted in the life of the Church. Pope John Paul also canonized Sr. Faustina a Saint on April 30, 2000.

On the image of the Divine Mercy which Jesus revealed to St. Faustina are the words (in English, originally in Polish): "Jesus, I Trust in You." Make these words part of your prayer. (See the article on page 4 of this issue for some ideas on how to do that.)

For more about the Divine Mercy devotion, visit: <https://marian.org/divine-mercy>.



Q. Where does "Jesus, I Trust in You" come from?

A. Jesus gave this short prayer to Sr. Faustina. In the image of the Divine Mercy revealed by Jesus to Sr. Faustina in 1931, two rays of light come from Jesus' heart. In her Diary, Sr. Faustina writes: "The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls. . . . These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross."

Sr. Faustina also writes in her Diary that Jesus told her, "I promise that the soul [person] that will venerate this image will not perish. I also promise victory over enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I myself will defend it as My own glory" (*Diary*, 48).

The image of the Divine Mercy is

widely known today and is found in many churches and homes. It is widely venerated throughout the world. If you have access to the internet, search for "Image of Divine Mercy." Or you might ask your chaplain or a visitor to help you get a copy.

Q. One of my friends says Jesus is our brother. Really?

A. There are many titles for Jesus, which reveal different dimensions of the mystery and reality of who he is. You can google "Names of Jesus" and find over a hundred names. Here are just a few: Savior, Redeemer, Bread of Life, Lord, Son of the Living God, Beloved Son, Holy One of Israel . . . Brother. If you have access to the internet, see what you can find.

This is what Jesus says about being our brother. "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? . . . [W]hoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:48-50).

When we do the will of God, we are living as brothers of Jesus. That is the truth being shared by your friend, and is what we need to strive for. When we come to know Jesus as our brother, we strive not to reject anything that he is. As our brother, we share in his family and have a loving relationship with him.

Like a brother, we should trust Jesus and grow in friendship and fellowship with him. This makes all the difference as we seek to journey with him through life.

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. Vitus (c. 290 – c. 303) + Vitus is a native of Sicily and a martyr of the early Church. He likely converted to Christianity at the age of 12 through the influence of household servants. His gift of conversions and miracles made him well-known. At one time, he prayed for the exorcism of an evil spirit in the emperor's son. When Vitus refused to sacrifice to the gods in thanksgiving for the cure, he was accused of sorcery. Arrested and imprisoned, he was tortured along with others. He was later freed and died shortly after, at the age of 12 or 13. Vitus has inspired many across the ages. The nervous system disorder "St. Vitus Dance" is named after him, as is the great cathedral in Prague in the Czech Republic.

Feast Day: June 15

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for April/May/June 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.

APRIL

For a culture of peace and non-violence: We pray for the spread of peace and non-violence, by decreasing the use of weapons by States and citizens.

MAY

For church movements and groups: We pray that Church movements and groups may rediscover their mission of evangelization each day, placing their own charisms at the service of needs in the world.

JUNE

For the abolition of torture: We pray that the international community may commit in a concrete way to ensuring the abolition of torture and guarantee support to victims and their families.

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

Watchfulness

By Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: Deacon, I've got a problem.

Me: Only one today?

Peaches: Funny. It's actually kind of a big on-going thing. It's my mind.

Me: What's wrong with your mind?

Peaches: Ever feel like your mind is out of control?

Me: Sure!

Peaches: Really? You too?! Deke, I've got stuff in my head that I don't want there!

Me: Of course. All of us do.

Peaches: Never used to bother me before. So, explain that.

Me: When the devil's got you, this is just business as usual. You don't even notice but once you've begun your spiritual growth, it doesn't fit and your conscience is saying, "Hey, let's clean up this mess now". After all, at its most basic level, spirituality is made up of two things: *thoughts* and *feelings*. What's the difference between an angel and a devil? Thoughts and feelings. What's the difference between a Saint and a sinner? Thoughts and feelings.

Peaches: OK, so what do I do about it?

Me: Fortunately, you are not the first Christian to wrestle with this problem. We've learned a few things.

Peaches: Tradition?

Me: Yup! Good ol Gospel Research and Development! And surprisingly, this particular R and D on the mind goes back to the very early days of the Church.

Peaches: OK. Break it down for me.

Me: Well, the Desert Fathers and Mothers were hermits who left life in the empire behind and lived for Christ in the desert. They were the first monks. So, alone in the desert, your mind was as much a problem as surviving was! They spent a lot of time watching their thoughts and feelings and comparing notes with other nearby hermits. It's called "Watchfulness" (Mk. 13:37).

Peaches: And?

Me: They discovered patterns. They saw the toxic thoughts and feelings coming out of nowhere into their heads. They found this pattern: A thought or feeling would suddenly come in (provocation). They noticed if they engaged it by thinking about it (dialogue), considering it, etc. it got stronger. Next, they found themselves agreeing with it (assent). Then the emotions kicked in and joined the dialogue and finally they would do it (act). Now, this is also

the way good thoughts, feelings and actions operate. It's the same process but they were concerned with the bad thoughts.

Peaches: OK, so provocation, dialogue, assent, emotion, action.

Me: Yes. Now remember, these monks are receiving the sacraments, praying, meditating, and acting like good people. That's why they got into this next level about thoughts and feelings. Even though they were not doing bad actions (sins), they knew Jesus said the battle was inside. You deal with anger. You don't wait until you're ready to murder someone! (Mt. 5:21-22).

Peaches: OK. They are good Christians. Prayed up and living right and they've figured out the pattern the mind uses so what did they do about this inner spiritual warfare?

Me: Well, they also learned that you must knock this thing out right away at "provocation". Especially before the emotions join the party!

Peaches: Makes sense. Cuz once you go—you're gone!

Me: Exactly! It can still be done, but it is so much more difficult.

Peaches: Give me an example.

Me: OK. Someone insults you.

Peaches: Provocation! They are provoking you!

Me: Right. And at this point there is no fault or sin for you. The fault is theirs. So, Immediately, the Desert Fathers would answer (in their minds) with scripture.

Peaches: No dialogue then?

Me: Right. No entertaining it. No justifying your hurt feelings. No emotions. Just scripture which they may have to repeat in their heads until they are back in control.

Peaches: Why scripture?

Me: Because they noticed that is how Jesus dealt with the devil when He was tempted in the desert (Mt. 4:1-11).

Peaches: That's right! Jesus quoted verses from the book of Deuteronomy!

Me: Now, Jesus used appropriate verses that showed the devil's fantasies were against God's will, but you can just have some all-purpose ones in your back pocket like the Desert Fathers and Mothers generally did.

Peaches: Tell me some.

Me: The Western monks used, "O God, come to my assistance. Lord, hurry up and help me" (Ps 69:2; 70:2).

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Turn your cussing into prayer!

When I was growing up, one of my neighbors, a woman named Lucille, would sometimes start to swear and say “Jesus.” She’d look around and see that she was surrounded by kids and would change her cuss words into a simple prayer: “Jesus, . . . Mary and Joseph, pray for us!”

We’d all laugh a bit, but instead of cussing, she ended up saying a little prayer!

What is the big deal with cursing and cussing? We should avoid both of these. Cursing is deliberately wishing evil or misfortune on someone else. As followers of Christ, we should be wishing good, not evil, on others.

Cussing is defined as language that is “profane or obscene” and shows no respect for the godly or for other people. We use expletives or swearing when we are mad. *They tear down rather than build up. And it is building up that we need.* None of us needs to be torn down any further than we already often are! Too much cussing wears everyone down. It’s like living in a dumpster.

And besides that, cussing often involves using God’s name in vain. The second of the ten commandments is, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God, in vain” (Exodus 20:7). If you are really trying to live a new life in God, it is worth trying to honor this commandment! Keep yourself out of the dumpster!

Making prayers out of our cussing. When you think about it, a lot of our cussing takes the name of Jesus in vain. Here are some examples of ways to change using Jesus’ name in vain into a prayer.

- We have already mentioned, “Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us!” Just a little more on this. You might add, “Help me live for you.” Or, maybe, “Cleanse my soul.” Another fun way of saying this is, “Wash my mouth out with soap!” Take your pick. Whatever you do, make it a prayer.
- Here is another example. My little grandson heard his mother say “Jesus” when she burnt her hand working in the kitchen. He had heard his father, a fireman, say “Jesus, light of the world” when he hurt himself working with tools. So, my grandson added, “. . . light of the world” to his mother’s “Jesus” and made a prayer. To this, you might add: “light my path,” or “guide me.” There are lots of ways to turn this into a simple prayer.

- How about this when you take Jesus’ name in vain, say, “Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” This prayer comes to us from the ancient Church, and is often called the “Jesus Prayer.” It is inspired by scripture in Luke 18:13: “O God, be merciful to me a sinner.” The words to this prayer can vary. You might just pray: “Lord Jesus, have mercy on me.” You can repeat this prayer throughout the day, especially when you are stressed, fly off the handle, and lose your temper.



You can see that there are many ways to turn your cussing into prayer. Here are a few more phrases you can think about: Add, “Be a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). Or, “make my garden grow.” Besides doing this when we use Jesus’ name in vain, we can also make a prayer of using God’s name in vain.

The simple point of this is to stop the useless and destructive cussing and make your words into a prayer.

Thoughts that inspire. The purpose of all this is simple. Make your life into a prayer that leads you to holiness. God wants great and wonderful things *for* us and *from* us. It often starts with the little things in our lives, like the words we use. Get out of the dumpster. This is a gift God wants for you. As you make it a practice of praying instead of cussing, your life will change and you will be more peaceful and joyful. You can rely on that.

This article continues our series of articles 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

Watchfulness continued from page 3

Peaches: That is all purpose!

Me: And the Eastern monks preferred. “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me” (Lk. 18:13).

Peaches: Power of the name of Jesus!

Me: Yep. You could also find your own like “Love one another” (Jn 13:34) or “love your enemies” (Mt. 5:44). But they picked one and

stayed with it. Not changing it made it stronger.

Peaches: Wow! Tradition rocks!

Me: There’s no prize for re-inventing the wheel!

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

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