



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

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Our hearts are restless

We know this when our lives feel empty and we hope there is something more. The truth is that there is something more. This is because God gives meaning to our lives.

How can that be? St. Augustine wrote, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” Augustine, who lived long ago (354 – 430), knew we are made for God. He didn’t always know that. At one time he was as restless as we are. This famous quote is from his “Confessions” (1.1.1), the story of his life, and much more, where we learn about his emptiness and his search for meaning.

But then he found God. And he came to know that God made us for himself. Then everything made sense and Augustine began to live a new life.

A new life? We are made for God. This is not a popular belief in our time.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We all know that funny and painful feeling when something is missing in our lives. This happens when our hearts are empty and are searching for something more. That something more is Jesus, whether we know it or not. Whether we admit it or not.

For many people, that’s not popular in our world today. Perhaps that is the case with you. But as you invite Jesus into your life and heart, you will find meaning and fulfillment, even while you are in prison or jail. Invite Jesus in. Talk with him and walk with him each day. You will find the truth that you have a friend in Jesus.

Write to us and let us know what you discover.

Let us pray for one another.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

But really, it has always been hard for people to accept we need God and that we find our peace in him. In all times, and certainly in our time, it has often been a struggle for people to “let go and let God.”

Jesus tells us this: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, whoever believes in me will never thirst” (John 6:35). He is not talking about physical hunger and thirst. He is talking about the restlessness in us. He is talking about meaning in our lives.

Listen with an open heart and mind.

In our life journey, sometimes we recognize God. Sometimes we don’t. But one thing is for sure, if we want to experience God’s presence and his peace, he will give us that gift. It is ours for the asking. For our part, it takes humbling our hearts

and opening our lives to him. But we can’t fight him and deny him at every turn.

As we open ourselves to God, little by little we will sense his presence and his love for us. We will find the something more we are looking for. We will see for ourselves that when we rest in Jesus, our hearts find peace and we find meaning in our lives. Even in the worst of situations. Even in prison.

Try it and let us know what you find.



Q&A

What a friend we have in Jesus

Q. What is this about a “personal relationship with Jesus”?

A. This is a life-giving and heart-felt relationship with Jesus. Some call it “a living and intimate relationship” with Jesus. It is. For some Christians, however, a personal relationship with Jesus consists of praying to him and *maybe* going to church on Sunday. For some it is a one-time experience. But there is more.

Catholics in particular call it an “encounter with Christ” which is *ongoing*, not simply a *one-time* experience. It is a journey through life, walking, talking and following Jesus’ lead through the ups and downs of daily life. They accept the call and challenge to follow Jesus and try their hardest to live as he did. When we have this type of relationship with Jesus, it is no wonder that we come to realize what a friend we have in Jesus.

An encounter with Christ requires consistency. This includes: • We seek to talk with him in prayer each day, and throughout the day. • We read Scripture and attend the Mass. • We live in community with other followers of Jesus. • We care for and help others, especially those in need. In all this, our hope is that we follow Jesus and live what he teaches us.

Encountering Jesus is not a “Jesus and me” thing. It is about Jesus, *us*, and others in fellowship with him. It is not a one-time thing, but every day and life-long. We need to change through our friendship with God. God calls us and wants to use us. We follow as best we can, and the Holy Spirit guides us. Remember, Jesus said: “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain” (John 15:16).

We have our marching orders. Let’s say yes to Jesus, follow him, and receive “life to

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CHURCH CALENDAR

JULY 2021

- 3 St. Thomas, apostle
- 4 Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 11 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 14 St. Kateri Tekakwitha, virgin
- 15 St. Bonaventure, bishop and doctor
- 18 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 22 St. Mary Magdalene
- 25 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 26 Sts. Joachim and Anne, parents of Mary
- 29 Sts. Martha, Mary, Lazarus, holy women and men
- 31 St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest

AUGUST 2021

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

SEPTEMBER 2021

- 3 St. Gregory the Great, pope and doctor
- 5 Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 9 St. Peter Claver, priest
- 12 Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 13 St. John Chrysostom, bishop and doctor
- 14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross
- 15 Our Lady of Sorrows
- 16 Sts. Cornelius, pope and Cyprian, bishop, martyrs
- 19 Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 20 Sts. Andrew Kim Taegon, priest, and Paul Chong Hasang and companions, martyrs
- 21 St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist
- 23 St. Pius of Pietrelcina, priest
- 26 Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 27 St. Vincent de Paul, priest
- 29 Sts. Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Archangels
- 30 St. Jerome, priest and doctor

Let's Talk!

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Q&A What a friend we have in Jesus

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the full" (John 10:10) as Jesus promises. We will bear much fruit in our lives.

A real-life example of a transformed prisoner

Thomas A. Tarrants spent 10 years in Mississippi State Penitentiary in the 1960's. He had been convicted of serious crimes that stemmed from his commitment to the "Cause." In his case it was racism and hatred of Jewish people and African Americans. His heart was hardened in hate and violence.



His is a life-long story of conversion to Christ, and the development of a personal relationship and commitment to Christ that continues to this day. After his conversion and release from prison, Tarrants has spent the last 50 years in service to Christ in Christian ministry. He did not lose his faith after he left prison because it was deeply rooted in him and a community of believers supported him daily in his faith.

You might find these words from Thomas Tarrants helpful: "When we embrace God's purposes and plans with the obedience of faith, he is glorified and blessed. When we ignore or reject them, we suffer loss. . . . But God is not a demanding taskmaster; he is a loving and gracious Father who forgives and restores those who repent and return to him. He also gives us new chances to embrace his purposes and plans for our lives" (p. 185).

For more about Tarrants' life, you can read his autobiography "Consumed by Hate. Redeemed by Love" published in 2019 by Nelson Books. Perhaps a friend or family member can order it for you, or your chaplain may help you find a copy. It is just 200 pages and is easy reading.

President Biden's Prison Reform Goals

President Joe Biden has extensive proposals for prison reform. At the heart of the plan are several core principles. We will look at four principles now and come back to them in future issues. (See: joebiden.com/justice/)

President Biden's first principle is to "reduce the number of people incarcerated in this county while also reducing crime." Focusing on the high number of people incarcerated for drug use, Biden believes that "they should be diverted to drug courts and treatment." Federal spending on drug-related incarceration would decline under this proposal. The funds saved "should be reinvested in the communities impacted by mass incarceration."

Secondly, President Biden proposes that the criminal justice system "root out the racial, gender, and income-based disparities in the system." Citizens of color should feel safe on the streets of our neighborhoods. At the same time, law enforcement officers should be safe while on duty. Both sides must be considered, which will take much thought and review.

Third, Biden believes that the criminal justice system "must be focused on redemption and rehabilitation." Those who are incarcerated should have the opportunities to develop skills and opportunities for improvement, which will help individuals and the economy.

Finally, President Biden believes that "No one should be profiteering off of our criminal justice system." This proposal focuses on for-profit prisons and looks to eliminate them for federal crimes. The profit motive reduces quality prison programs in the desire to increase profits.

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Prisoner Saints

The Scillitan Martyrs (died AD 180) + During a time of Roman persecution, these holy Black Christians from North Africa—seven men, five women—refused to renounce their faith in Christ. The *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* gives this account: "Speratus . . . claimed for himself and his companions that they had lived a quiet and moral life, paying their dues and doing no wrong to their neighbors. But when called upon to swear by the name of the emperor, he replied 'I recognize not the empire of this world; but rather do I serve that God whom no man hath seen, nor with these eyes can see.'" They refused to reconsider their decision and were then put to death by the sword.

Feast Day: July 17

Pope Francis' Prayer Requests for July/August/September 2021

Each month the Pope entrusts prayer intentions to the Apostleship of Prayer, his Worldwide Prayer Network. His monthly prayer intention is a global call to transform our prayer into "concrete gestures" of service. It is a monthly action plan mobilizing us to join together to build a more human and caring world.

In addition to the monthly requests below, the Pope at the beginning of the month offers a second prayer intention for his immediate concerns, a "last minute" intention to get us out of the "globalization of indifference." Your chaplain or volunteer may be able to get this request for you.

JULY

Universal: *Social friendship:* We pray that, in social, economic and political situations of conflict, we may be courageous and passionate architects of dialogue and friendship.

AUGUST

Evangelization: *The Church:* Let us pray for the Church, that She may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace and strength to reform herself in the light of the Gospel.

SEPTEMBER

Universal: *An environmentally sustainable lifestyle:* We pray that we all will make courageous choices for a simple and environmentally sustainable lifestyle, rejoicing in our young people who are resolutely committed to this.

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

Black Catholics, Part 3

Holiness has no color

Me: By the way, speaking of Black Catholics . . . Did you know that there are currently six black American Catholics up for sainthood?

Peaches: Really?!! Seems like a lot!

Me: I'm not sure of how many there are total on the current list of all Americans up for sainthood, but six black Americans would be "punching above their weight" numerically, that's for sure!!

Peaches: Well there are what? 70 million Catholics in the U.S.?

Me: Yeah, about that . . .

Peaches: And 2 million of that number are black?

Me: Correct.

Peaches: Then six is a very good number!

Me: It is, but don't be so surprised! Black people have been part of the Church since the beginning. In Acts of the Apostles (8:26-40), St. Philip the deacon baptizes the treasurer of Ethiopia! Remember?

Peaches: Right! He would be black wouldn't he?!

Me: Yup. And of course there are many black saints already! Ever hear of St. Augustine?

Peaches: "The" St. Augustine?

Me: Yup. Doctor of the Church, and arguably the greatest theologian in the history of the Church.

Peaches: Again, didn't ever cross my mind.

Me: He was an African, after all. And so was his mother.

Peaches: St. Monica! The patron saint of mothers!

Me: That's right.

Peaches: Wow! Name some more, Deke.

Me: St. Martin de Porres, you know him. St. Anthony the Great, father of all Christian monks.

Peaches: He was like the first Christian monk, right?

Me: Correct! There's a whole bunch going back to the early church. Ever hear the names Felicity and Perpetua?

Peaches: Sounds familiar, but . . .

Me: It's in the Mass! In one of the Eucharistic Prayers!

Peaches: So tell me about these Americans that are now up for sainthood, Deke.

Me: Well, great and holy people all of them. Many of them having to overcome being enslaved and all had to overcome racism in and out of the Church.

Peaches: In the Church?!

Me: Well, not officially. But with over a billion members . . .

Peaches: Ya got some of everything, even racists!

Me: These are the six black American Catholics for sainthood:

Fr. Augustine Tolton, born a slave and ordained 1889 as the first black priest in the United States. He studied in Rome.

Mother Mary Lange and **Mother Henriette Delille** both founded black orders of sisters who nursed plague victims. They also founded the first schools for black girls, orphanages and old age homes and they did this in slave states during slavery!

Then there are two laypeople: **Pierre Toussaint** of NYC and **Julia Greeley** of Denver, both great workers of charity to the poor often using their own money. Blessed Pierre was the "hairstylist to the stars" and the elites in early 1800s New York City. Julia was a nanny. They are both the only laypeople buried in the cathedrals of New York and Denver.

And finally, my favorite is **Sr. Thea Bowman** who was an educator, anti-racist activist, and a missionary in Mississippi. She only died in 1990 so you can still see her in video! She was beautiful inside and out! I still remember her smile!

Peaches: Cool.

Me: Saints are models for us to imitate and these people were extraordinary. You should read their stories.

Peaches: You are always telling us to read the lives of the saints but I just might in this case!

Me: A good place to start is always with the saints that we identify with: the ones who are like us.

Peaches: Well, Deke, Black Lives Matter and apparently Black Souls Matter too!

Me: True, that. That's another reason that racism is a sin because holiness has no color.

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

To read more about these six candidates for sainthood, see "Black Catholics on the Road to Sainthood" (Ed., Michael R. Heinlein, Our Sunday Visitor Press, 2019).

Walk humbly with God



We are called to “press forward without fear” as we daily “walk humbly with God.” We need to act in ways to rebuild relationships, to heal our communities and “shape policies and institutions toward the good of all” (U.S. Bishops, “Open Wide Our Hearts”, p. 16).

This is the fourth article in our series on racism. We are following the guidance given to us 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.”

As we wrote in earlier articles in this series, racism is a burning issue because of the racial strife in the U.S. last summer and previous years. Also, the year 2019 marked the four hundredth anniversary of the introduction of slavery in English-speaking America in the Virginia colony. Slavery is part of our heritage, and so too is racism.

Walk humbly with God. The Bishops see racism as “a moral problem that requires a moral remedy—a transformation of the human heart—that impels us to act.” They give us eight areas to focus on: the first four are below, which we will focus on in this article. (In our next article we will take up the last four – 5) working in our churches; 6) changing structures, 7) conversion of all, 8) our commitment to life.)

1. Acknowledging sin. Racism is a sin. The Church teaches that (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 1935), although not always. In “Open Wide Our Hearts,” the U.S. Bishops wrote: “Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice. They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love” (p. 1; see also pp. 17-18).

And so, we are called to recognize the sin of racism in *ourselves*, in *the Church*, and in *our communities*. We need to look at our lives, examine our consciences and ask the Holy Spirit to show us racist attitudes or practices we embrace. Repent of these and seek the sacrament of confession. And we need to look beyond ourselves to be vigilant when it comes to racism.

2. Being open to encounter and new relationships. As we encounter Jesus—for racism can best be recognized and dealt with through spiritual means—we need to ask him to change our hearts. And we need to let our hearts grow to embrace people of other races and ethnic groups. There is nothing better to overcoming racism than through friendships with people.

The Bishops teach: “[W]e need to engage the world and encounter others.” We need to talk with and be with “those we would not ordinarily seek out” (p. 19). It is amazing what getting to know other people can do to change our hearts and minds.

“Enemies” have become friends by coming to know others.

3. Resolving to work for justice. “Open Wide Our Hearts” calls us to act on what we are coming to understand and see. Some action comes from our own personal decisions to treat people with respect and dignity (pp. 19-20). In addition, when possible, we are called to work for just laws that overcome discrimination at all levels of public life. In the age of the internet and email, this is not difficult, unless your level of incarceration has restrictions on this.

The Bishops also teach: “We affirm that participating in or fostering organizations that are built on racist ideology . . . is also sinful—they corrupt individuals and corrode communities” (p. 20). Think about what this means in your situation.

4. Educating ourselves. Rather than being passive regarding racism, we need to be active and learn of ways racism corrodes our lives and the public square. Through our encounters with others and through our own personal study, we can become more aware of the issues involved and how we can make an impact (pp. 21-22).

One place to start is by reading the Bishops’ 2018 pastoral letter “Open Wide Our Hearts.” (Search “USCCB Open Wide Our Hearts” to download a copy.)

Now we are called to “press forward without fear” as we daily “walk humbly with God.” Let us pray together.

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”

~ Anthony Bosnick

What a friend we have in Jesus *continued from page 2*

These four goals for reform will take much work and commitment. We will cover more on these goals as they reach legislative action.

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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