

A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES



PO BOX 29121 ♦ WASHINGTON, DC 20017

Vol. 28, No. 4 – October/November/December 2021

Listen to Jesus and follow him

Life's all about Jesus. Really it is. So our challenge is to listen to his voice and follow him.

But we all know that in the day-to-day challenges we face, there are many times when we just feel like throwing in the towel. All of us face it. But as we continue on our daily walk with Jesus, we will face it less often.

Actually, a sign of our Christian growth is our deeper satisfaction and happiness with life. This can be your experience, too. Even in prison, where life is a challenge, you can expect to grow in happiness and sense of purpose. But you have to work on it.

After all, Jesus gives us "life and life to the full" (John 10:10). He wants abundant life for us and isn't trying to make life

miserable for us. So, listen to him and follow. Your faithfulness to this will help change your life and you will experience the life Jesus wants for you.

Take courage! Peter learned this the hard way. (But don't we all!) The disciples were on a boat on the Sea of Galilee when a storm blew up (Matthew 14:22-33). They grew afraid. When Jesus came toward them walking on the water, they thought he as a ghost. They "cried out in fear" (v. 26). Jesus said to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid" (v. 27).

He says the same to us, at every moment of our lives. And what words of hope they are. Listen to Jesus as you go through your day, and you will hear him speak words of hope to you.

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. These are important words for us on our life-



long journey with Jesus. In baptism, we receive the name "Christian." We enter into a relationship with Jesus. He gives us the sacraments to give us life and strength. He gives us companions for the journey.

Keep this truth in mind: "God so loved the world that he gave us his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (John 3:16). This is a promise to you. So keep your eyes on Jesus, listen to him and follow him. Our lives will be mighty different!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We all want to live better, happier lives. The challenge can be that in our daily lives, we often live in ways that work against that.

What are we to do? Remember that Jesus gives us life, and life to the full. Look at your life and listen to Jesus and follow him.

Also, make some good friends to help you along the way. The best friends we can have are Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They know the challenges in our lives. When we ask for their help and support, we are sure to receive it from those who care the most about us.

Remember, God transforms us—normal people, you and me. He wants the best for us. Let's do our part to receive the life he wants for us. And let's call on those special friends to help us.

Let us pray for one another.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Q&A

It pays to know the right people

Q. When I get out, how can I live a better life?

A. We often hear, "It pays to know the right people." Knowing some of the wrong people probably had something to do with your incarceration. So, thinking a bit about that, you are already on the path of those to stay away from.

So here is a tip on three people to get to know better: Jesus, Mary and Joseph! These are people you will want for your friends. So, start *now* to cultivate or build good, positive relationships with them. Let them be your friends. And keep at the center of your mind as you go through your day this little but powerful prayer, "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us."

Mary is our mother. Let's start with Mary because October is celebrated as the month of the Holy Rosary. We thus pray in a special way to Mary during October. This is grounded in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 off the coast of Greece, when the Catholic League stopped an invasion of Europe by the Muslim Ottoman Empire, saving a Christian Europe.

Pope Pius V (1566-1572) had prayed to Mary and asked Christian Europe to intercede for victory. In thanksgiving he declared that October 7, the day of victory, would be celebrated as the feast day for Our Lady of the Rosary. To this day, that feast remains, and October is celebrated as the month of the Holy Rosary.

Mary is our mother. More than that, she is our mom. So, a great friend you want to have is Mary! Make a special effort to pray the rosary this October. If you need help,

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CHURCH CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2021

- 1 St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, virgin and Doctor
- 2 Guardian Angels
- 3 **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 4 St. Francis of Assisi
- 7 Our Lady of the Rosary
- 10 **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 15 St. Teresa of Jesus, virgin and Doctor
- 17 **Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 18 **St. Luke, evangelist**
- 19 Sts. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests and companions, martyrs
- 24 **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28 **Sts. Simon and Jude, apostles**
- 31 **Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time**

NOVEMBER 2021

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

DECEMBER 2021

- 3 St. Francis Xavier, priest and missionary
- 5 **Second Sunday of Advent**
- 7 St. Ambrose, bishop and Doctor
- 8 **Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 12 **Third Sunday of Advent**
- 13 St. Lucy, virgin and martyr
- 14 St. John of the Cross, priest and Doctor
- 19 **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
- 25 **Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)**
- 26 **Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph**
- 27 **St. John, apostle and evangelist**
- 28 **The Holy Innocents, martyrs**

Let's Talk!

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Visit us at www.pemdc.org

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Thank you for your help.

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Q&A It pays to know the right people

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ask your chaplain to get you a copy of the flyer "How to Pray the Rosary" from Paulist Prison Ministries. It's English/Spanish and an easy download.

Joseph, a beloved father. St. Joseph is another friend you want to have on your side praying for you. On December 8, 2020, Pope Francis proclaimed the Year of St. Joseph. It runs to December 8, 2021. In declaring this Year of St. Joseph, Pope Francis wrote a special Apostolic Letter entitled "Patris Corde," which means "With a Father's Heart." You can easily download this 12-page letter from the web.

Pope Francis writes in that letter: "In Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God: 'As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him' (Ps 103:13)." When we know God's tender love for us, our lives are much different. We can "let go, and let God"—a popular expression among some Christians.

So, in this Year of St. Joseph, we are encouraged once again to follow the example of St. Joseph, who followed the direction God had for his life in taking Mary for his wife and Jesus as his son. Despite his fears and uncertainties, he let go of his life and let God lead him. Pope Francis wrote, "We need only ask Saint Joseph for the grace of graces: our conversion." May your friendship with Joseph grow, and may he show you the way to God and happiness.

Jesus, friend beyond all friends. Finally, we consider the friendship Jesus wants us to have with him. At the Last Supper, Jesus called his disciples his

"friends" (see John 15:15). He came to give us "life, and life to the full" (John 10:10). He laid down his life for his friends (see John 15:13). What more can we ask as Jesus opens his heart to us inviting us to "Come, follow me" (Matthew 4:19)?

Do you sense the love that Jesus has for you, or do you keep him at arm's distance?

Let him embrace you in his warm and tender love. Become his friend and follow him. He is the kind of friend who never disappoints.

As you look for a better life, make friends with Jesus, Mary and Joseph. You will find no better friends as you seek to grow in your love of God and to live a life of joy and happiness getting ready for life forever with God in heaven.

Prayer to St. Joseph. In this Year of St. Joseph, we offer this prayer which Pope Francis has given us. While it focuses on Joseph, it helps us remember as well the place that Jesus and Mary have in God's work of salvation. May Jesus, Mary and Joseph be our special friends. It really pays to know the right people!

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.*

(Pope Francis, from "Patris Corde")

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. John de Brébeuf (1593-1649) + John de Brébeuf was one of a hardy band of eight saints, all Jesuit priests, known as the North American Martyrs. They went to New France (Canada) in the mid-1600s to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. They brought many in both the Huron and Iroquois tribes to faith in Jesus, and thousands were baptized. During a long period of inter-tribal warfare, the Iroquois captured Brébeuf along with others. They held Brébeuf for a short period of time before he was subjected to great torture by red-hot hatchet blades placed on his body and then set him afire. Brébeuf died without resistance after spending twenty years of ministry in New France.

Feast Day: October 19

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

OCTOBER

Evangelization.

Missionary disciples:

We pray that every baptized person may be engaged in evangelization, available to the mission, by being witnesses of a life that has the flavor of the Gospel.

NOVEMBER

Universal. *People who suffer from depression:* We pray that people who suffer from depression or burn-out will find support and a light that opens them up to life.

DECEMBER

Evangelization.

Catechists: Let us pray for the catechists, summoned to announce the Word of God: may they be its witnesses, with courage and creativity and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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 1

No gas. No go!

Peaches: It's getting to me, Deke! I'm so "in the flesh"! I'm out of my mind!

Me: When we get like that it's because we're centered on ourselves instead of God.

Peaches: I pray!

Me: Either not enough or not often enough. Otherwise, you wouldn't be having this problem.

Peaches: So what am I going to do, Deke? I don't like this version of me!

Me: You need a "Rule" like religious orders have. People join religious communities because they want to organize their lives around spiritual development. No one does serious spiritual development "on the fly".

Peaches: I get it. I need a regular spiritual plan. OK. Get me started, Deacon.

Me: OK. First building block for a personal rule: the Word of God. . .

Peaches: "In the beginning was the Word . . ." (John 1:1)!

Me: So, for example, my practice is I get up in the morning before anyone else and meditate on the scripture readings from the Mass of the day with my first cup of coffee.

I read them slowly. If the Holy Spirit draws my attention to a word or phrase, I stop reading and think about it and talk to the Lord about it. Then I gratefully sit in the silence with it for a few minutes with my coffee. Sometimes it will raise an issue about something I'm doing or not doing, and I make a plan to work on that issue.

If a word or phrase catches my attention, then I take that little gift from the Holy Spirit and repeat it in my head throughout the day like when I'm walking the yard here and enjoy it.

Peaches: How can I do the readings?

Me: Well, I get an email of the readings every morning so I do it on my phone (there are Apps for all these practices), but I can give you a missalette with the daily readings. Some people buy their own Daily Missals so they can do Lectio.

Peaches: Lectio?

Me: What I'm describing is an ancient practice that goes back to the early Church. It's called "Lectio Divina" - Sacred Reading. Great way to start the day focused on God. It prevents "Reactive mind" and promotes "Receptive mind".

Peaches: "Receptive mind"?

Me: Being "in the Spirit" instead of "the flesh".

Peaches: My problem is that won't last long. By lunch I'll be in "reactive mind" again!

Me: Of course! That's all of us! After lunch you should read a psalm or two in the same way as you did the Mass reading in the Morning.

Peaches: Do you do that?

Me: Kinda. I pray the "Liturgy of the Hours" throughout the day. Little prayer breaks here and there. Like 15 minutes each.

Peaches: What is that?

Me: It's mostly Psalms. It's the Official Prayer of the Church. All around the world all priests, deacons, nuns, monks and many lay people are praying the same Psalms at the same times.

Peaches: Can I try that?

Me: Sure. I've got a copy I can lend you if you want.

Peaches: So that's how you stay in the Spirit all day.

Me: That and spiritual reading.

Peaches: Isn't that what we just talked about.

Me: Of course scripture is spiritual reading, but there is also spiritual reading that is not in the Bible.

Peaches: Like?

Me: The lives of the Saints. Books on different ways to pray and meditate. You know, books on contemplative practice and various approaches and points of view on relating to the mystery of God like Benedictine, Franciscan, and Jesuit spiritualities.

Peaches: Oh! The Big Catholic Buffet of Ancient Spiritual Wisdom you're always talking about!

Me: Yup! I do a few pages of spiritual reading when I get into bed. I usually fall asleep thinking (meditating) or praying (talking to God) about what I just read.

Peaches: Wow! So you've got this little rule where you re-center on God throughout the day.

Me: That's how I stay "prayed up": little reading, prayer, meditation and contemplation breaks throughout the day. Otherwise, I'm not in the Spirit.

Peaches: So this Lectio Divina/Sacred Reading is like putting gas in the tank!

Me: Yup. No gas. No go!

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

Keep walking humbly with God

Facing the racism around us, we are called to “press forward without fear” as we daily “walk humbly with God.” The U.S. bishops call us to act in ways to overcome racism by working in our churches, changing structures, seeking conversion, and educating ourselves about this issue (U.S. Bishops, “Open Wide Our Hearts”, pp. 22-25).

This is the fifth 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.” We continue to reflect on the issue of racism 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.” You can download the articles in this series, which began with the October – December 2020 issue of “Let’s Talk!” at “Paulist Prison Ministries. Newsletter Archives.”

In this article we will look at – 5) working in our churches; 6) changing structures, 7) conversion of all, 8) our commitment to life. In our last article in this series, we will look at 9) Going Forward.

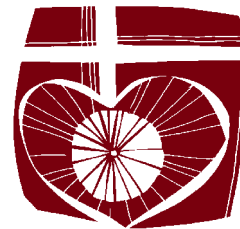
5) Working in our churches. The bishops stress that racism will not end unless all Catholics “endeavor to be missionary disciples carrying forth the message of fraternal charity and human dignity” (p. 22).

This applies to “all the faithful”. This includes priests, deacons and lay leaders. *But it also applies to you, the “person in the pew”* called to follow Christ as his faithful and loving disciples. We all have to embrace this call to understand how “racism diminishes everyone” (p. 23).

6) Changing structures. The roots of racism extend deep in the American soul and soil. Plantation life was really theft of labor of the slaves working for masters. Poor or absent schools and health care facilities stole the future from African Americans. Restrictive housing covenants prevented African Americans from living in any neighborhood housing they could afford. We are called to find ways to continue to restore what was stolen or lost.

The bishops write, “Our efforts must aim at restoring hope, righting wrongs, maintaining commitments, and thus promoting the well-being of individuals and peoples” (p. 23).

7) Conversion of all. We look around us and see that we face great challenges. We may wonder if the human heart can ever be changed. It can’t – if we rely on our own efforts. But, the bishops remind us, “God’s grace can transform even the hardest of hearts. Prayer and working toward conversion must be our first response in the face of evil actions” (p. 24).



So let us pray that *our* hearts be changed as well as the hearts of *others*. We all need conversion, to walk more faithfully with God. Let us trust that we be open to God so that he can do that good work in us. That is what life is about.

8) Our commitment to life. Racism and injustice are “an attack on human life” (p. 25). The bishops state that “racism is a life issue.” Just as the Church speaks out “against abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty, and other forms of violence that threaten human life,” she speaks out against racism as well. It, too, robs people of life.

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.” (You can download a copy, or you can order a printed copy.) It is only 27 pages and not hard to read.

We are called to “press forward without fear” as we daily “walk humbly with God.” 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”

~ Anthony Bosnick

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