



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

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Slow down, think and pray!

We would all be happier if we took time each day—and throughout the day—to seek the face of God. He calls us to do this through his Son Jesus. When we do, we discover God's kindness, love and compassion for us. Too often, we think of Jesus as the God of punishment, rather than the God of love.

Jesus calls to us: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matthew 11:28-29).

Slow down, you're going too fast! To seek the face of God, we need to slow down. We need time to think about God and to pray. Here are some suggestions that can help.

■ Have a time for prayer each day. Make a space, if you can, in a quiet time and place. Pray the "Our Father." Pray the "Hail Mary." Just talk to God from your heart. You will be surprised at how a hectic life can become calm and peaceful.

■ Another good practice is to say a short prayer like the "Jesus Prayer": "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." This ancient prayer has helped millions of struggling, lonely, angry, and helpless-feeling people find God and experience his life and love. You can say this prayer at any time during the night or day, in quiet or noise and distraction. Give it a try.

■ Another good practice is to read some Scripture each day. A good way to do this is to read one of the readings from daily Mass. These are short enough so

that you don't become discouraged by length. As you do this, you will be united with millions of Catholics around the world reading and reflecting on the same passage. Some are in prison or jail.

The God of love calls us to himself. If you want happiness and peace, accept Jesus' call to come to him. You are in for a big surprise, an inner peace that comes from God alone. Make that a special goal in this time when we celebrate Jesus coming to us as an infant at Christmas.

Seek the face of God. What a gift you will be giving yourself.



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Jesus changes our lives. He takes us from darkness to life. He brings us hope and joy where there is grief and anxiety. Jesus makes all the difference in our lives.

Those who invite Jesus into their lives know this new reality. They also know that spiritual and personal change do not happen overnight. Because of the bad habits we all have, it can take a lifetime! But do not despair. Just get started. Each and every day, ask Jesus into your life and walk on the journey with him.

These last months of the year take us on a great spiritual journey. Read about it in this issue and embrace the grace for new life God is giving you!

Let us pray for one another.

Father Frank DeSiano, CSP
President
Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Q&A

Christ in you, the hope for glory!

Q. One of my friends has been telling me about Jesus. Things are happening in my life that never happened before. Any thoughts?

A. Let's look at what St. Paul wrote to the Colossians (1:27-28). He wrote that God has chosen "to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory." *You have met Christ, and he changes our reality.*

When that happens, the things of the flesh gradually fade away, and the things of the Spirit grow in us (see Galatians 5:19-23). Our minds need to be healed and our habits need to change, so it is a slow process. "Flesh" means not only sins involving our bodies, but any sin of selfishness. "Spirit" means giving up selfishness to live for God.

With God's grace, we can fight like mad against the flesh and grow. Or we give in to sin, and continue our fruitless and empty lives.

Jesus is our Lord and Savior, brother and friend. We need to remember the truth that "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). And the truth is that *God is for us*. So trust in God's grace to strengthen you and give you peace and hope. This applies everywhere, but especially in prison.

Jesus is our Lord and Savior. He is our brother and friend. This is the truth that makes all the difference in the world for us. As you rely on it, things will happen in your life like you probably have never experienced before.

Remember, Christ is in you; he is the hope for glory!

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CHURCH CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2022

- 1 St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, virgin and Doctor of the Church
- 2 **Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 4 St. Francis of Assisi
- 7 Our Lady of the Rosary
- 9 **Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 15 St. Teresa of Jesus, virgin and Doctor of the Church
- 16 **Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 17 St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr
- 18 **St. Luke, evangelist**
- 19 Sts. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests and companions, martyrs
- 23 **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28 **Sts. Simon and Jude, apostles**
- 30 **Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time**

NOVEMBER 2022

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

DECEMBER 2022

- 3 St. Francis Xavier, priest
- 4 **Second Sunday of Advent**
- 7 St. Ambrose, bishop and Doctor of the Church
- 8 **Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
- 11 **Third Sunday of Advent**
- 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe
- 13 St. Lucy, virgin and martyr
- 14 St. John of the Cross, priest and Doctor of the Church
- 18 **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
- 25 **Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)**
- 26 St. Stephen, the First Martyr
- 27 **St. John, apostle and evangelist**
- 28 The Holy Innocents, martyrs
- 30 Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Let's Talk!

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Visit us at www.pemdc.org

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Thank you for your help.

PMLTH2204

Q&A Christ in you, the hope for glory!

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An ending and a new beginning

Christ is King. These last months of the year 2022 hold many treasures for Catholics. We finish Ordinary Time and celebrate the feast of Christ the King, now called "Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe" on November 20. This great feast was first added to the Catholic liturgical calendar in 1925 by Pope Pius XI. It is now celebrated the last Sunday of Ordinary Time. It reminds us that Christ is our King, not secularism or any civil forms of government like communism or fascism.

The new Church year.

The first Sunday of Advent is the first day of a new Liturgical (or church) calendar. It begins a four-week period of preparation for the birth of Jesus at Christmas. Advent begins this year on November 27 and continues for four weeks into December.

Advent is not a time to *celebrate* Christmas, but a time to *prepare* our hearts for Christmas. Keep your mind focused on the words of the prophets, and on John the Baptist, and on our Blessed Mother. We hear important words from/about both during Advent. Advent ends with the start of the Christmas Vigil on the evening of December 24.

The glorious Christmas Season. Some people jump the gun and begin to celebrate Christmas right after Thanksgiving. Consequently, they are ready to end Christmas after the presents are opened and dinner is over on Christmas day.

Catholics, and some other Christians, celebrate the season of Christmas, this year ending on January 9, 2023, the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord. During that time, we also celebrate the won-

derful solemnities of Mary, the Mother of God on January 1 and the Epiphany on January 8. The first readings at Mass come from the First Letter of John, which is truly inspiring.

Celebrate this long Christmas and enjoy it. We have some fun days ahead of us.

Covid is still a concern

The covid virus is not going away with the swiftness medical personnel had hoped for. As we write this in late August, "COVID-19 infections in the U.S. continue

to rise, with omicron BA.5 causing an estimated 82% of cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)." While this is the dominant strain, health officials continue to monitor other strains

as well. "Omicron is a variant of COVID-19. BA.5 and BA.2.75 refer to as subvariants or strains of omicron." If you have web access, you can check this out using these search words, so something similar: "COVID-19 variant BA.5 is dominant strain; BA.2.75 is being monitored."

The long and short of this is that we are not out of the woods yet. Bad news continues that the incidence of infection is higher in prisons than outside. Crowded prisons help the virus spread quickly. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer the following advice to help keep is 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.

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Prisoner Saint

St. Eulalia of Mérida (d. 304) + Born in Spain in the last decade of the third century, Eulalia of Mérida was likely named after St. Eulalia of Barcelona, another martyr saint of Spain. Little is known of her, except that she was tortured and burned to death in 304 during a time of intense persecution. The 12-year-old Eulalia was arrested and imprisoned and taken to a local judge. It is believed she argued with the judge for forcing Christians to worship false gods. At first he was amused and tried to flatter her in the hope she would leave things alone. When she didn't, she was brutally tortured, but never gave up her faith. She is one of the glories of the Catholic faith in Spain.

Feast Day: December 10

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

OCTOBER *For a Church open to everyone:* We pray for the Church; ever faithful to, and courageous in preaching the Gospel, may the Church be a community of solidarity, fraternity and welcome, always living in an atmosphere of synodality.

NOVEMBER *For children who suffer:* We pray for children who are suffering, especially those who are homeless, orphans, and victims of war; may they be guaranteed access to education and the opportunity to experience family affection.

DECEMBER *For volunteer not-for-profit organizations:* We pray that volunteer non-profit organizations committed to human development find people dedicated to the common good and ceaselessly seek out new paths to international cooperation.

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

Fight the Grinch

by Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: Well, Deke, no parties for me! No fun. No presents. No Christmas dinner with the fam. Nope. Merry freakin' Christmas!

Me: "In a van down by the river?"

Peaches: This is not funny. Christmas in prison sucks!

Me: Or it could be a great blessing, Your choice.

Peaches: Man! Really?! How is it that there's always a blessing with you?! Deacon, you are the most optimistic person I've ever met! You're like that chick, what's her name? Poly...something?

Me: Pollyanna?

Peaches: That's the one!

Me: Well, I'm not like Pollyanna nor am I an optimist. Optimism is based on progress. That you see things moving well and you therefore think that it looks like we will continue down that road. I don't think things are necessarily going well.

Peaches: Well then, what is your deal, Deke?

Me: I'm a person of hope, Peaches. Hope is based on my faith in God and the unstoppable coming of his Kingdom on earth. It's one of the three theological virtues essential for a Christian: Faith, Hope and Love.

Peaches: OK. So, you're hopeful. How does that take the suck out of spending Christmas in jail?

Me: Remember the Grinch?

Peaches: The cartoon? Yeah, the Grinch steals all the presents, decorations and food, but the Whos still have a great Christmas. What about it?

Me: That is the exact situation that you are in and you are "Cindy Lou Who"! Incarceration is the Grinch. Your stuff is gone but you too can decide to have a beautiful Christmas.

Peaches: So, it's about attitude? "God writes straight on crooked lines"?

Me: Pretty much everything is always about attitude, for sure. You know, I've got a lot invested in you, P. You've taken in a lot of the great, ancient, Catholic wisdom tradition over the years. You've got the tools. How can you find a blessing in this cross? Start with what we as Christians are actually celebrating on Christmas.

Peaches: The Incarnation: God became one of us.

Me: So, we are not celebrating a festival of commercialism and overindulgence?

Peaches: No. That's all beside the point except to the extent that the party we throw,

the presents we give, and the big meal are an expression of love.

Me: So, it's a spiritual reality that is being celebrated?

Peaches: Yes, and you're right we don't really need all that stuff to do it.

Me: OK. So, give me some things you could do to be joyful on Christmas that you've learnt here over the years.

Peaches: Well, the first thing you always stressed was using Advent to prepare. Meditating and praying over all the special readings that we have the month before Christmas.

Me: Perfect starting point.

Peaches: Then I could read the Infancy stories at the beginning of Matthew and Luke's Gospels.

Me: Also, the prologue to John's Gospel and Colossians.

Peaches: Yeah, then I could do some Ignatian meditation where after I read about the stable, I can imagine myself there and ask "What do I see? What do I hear? What do I smell?"

Me: Smell that straw!

Peaches: I could decorate my cell a little.

Me: Yeah! You are very good with braiding those old ramen soup wrappers!

Peaches: I could invite a few of the usual suspects to decorate with me. We could sing, have a potluck and make a manger.

Me: We get plenty of Christmas magazines. You could make a manger for your cell out of the pictures.

Peaches: Yeah, Deke. I can have Christmas in my heart.

Me: You've got Christ in your heart year-round so why not? You'll also have Christ in your mouth at Mass on Christmas day!

Peaches: OK. But exactly how is this a "blessing"?

Me: Someday, you will be released. You will have a lifetime where all the Christmas hoopla is back in full force going 90 miles an hour! But if you grab this opportunity to have a deeply spiritual Christmas, the hoopla will never again be the most important thing. Even while the entire Christmas circus swirls around you, you will always have a deep and focused spiritual Christmas forever. That's the blessing God is offering you in this.

Peaches: Wow. Merry Christmas, Deacon!

Me: Merry Christmas, Peaches!

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

Be not afraid. Open wide the doors to Christ.

These were the first words spoken by Pope John Paul II (pope from 1978–2005) when he was installed as pope. They have inspired countless people since that time, setting Catholics and other Christians on the path to Christ. They challenge us to grow in the life and love of Jesus as we journey with him to the Promised Land.

These words sound like they were in the heart of Pope Francis, our current pope, when he proclaimed the Year for Dante on March 25, 2021. The purpose of this year is to help us embrace Jesus and become “little Christs”. In the tradition of the Church, they promote “our divinization” where we become holy (*Splendor of Light Eternal*, 6).

Where am I going when I die? When we began this series of articles in April of this year, we didn't know what the response would be. But as often happens, it touched the heart of a prisoner, in this case a female in New York State. After reading Part I of this series, she wrote us the letter that follows. This is her reflection:

“As I read the article, ‘The Love which Moves the Sun and the Other Stars’ on Dante, it made me think, ‘Where am I going when I die?’ Being incarcerated gives you time to really think and seek God’s face. I asked myself, ‘How did I get here? How can I change my circumstances for the better?’

“In my Spiritual walk with God each day, I read the word, listen to the gospel and just worship him. I pray several times a day just to get through this type of prison purgatory. My care for others, while I’m here, is to pray for them and know who Christ is and how He’s changing my life even in this dark purgatory time.

“I am a prayer intercessor and I pray for other’s needs, standing in agreement with them. Just like Jesus said, ‘For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them’ (Matthew 18:20).

“Through Dante’s ‘Divine Comedy’, through hell, purgatory, and heaven I see here in this prison many women with so much pain and suffering. This environment is a purgatory prison for all.

“The choices that I made or we make in this life either lead us to heaven or hell. Prison is a time out (purgatory), we can continue on the path of destruction (not changing) which leads to hell or choosing to change by surrendering to Christ and following Him so we can make it to heaven.

“Like Paul says in Philippians 3:13-14, ‘Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, and press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.’

“For everyone born of God overcomes the world’ (1 John 5:4).

“Thinking of Dante’s journey—My past was hell, incarceration is a purgatory, and my current life in Christ will lead me to my Promised Land to freedom and Paradise in heaven with Christ in the end.

“God will continue to use me as His vessel as a prayer intercessor and to let others know who Christ is and what He’s done for me. God’s word says: ‘The brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness shine like the stars for ever and ever.’ (Philippians 2:15)

“I will continue to be a shining light in this purgatory as God directs my path out of this prison to the light that leads to freedom, shining like the stars in the universe.”

~ A prisoner in New York State



On a journey with Jesus. This prisoner is already on a journey with Christ. She is engaged in spiritual practices that we frequently recommend in *Let's Talk!* She prays, reads

Scripture, and is involved with other prisoners and their needs. These are elements of the spiritual disciplines we encourage you to follow in your spiritual lives.

We all need help on this journey. Pope Francis wrote: “Dante can help us to advance with serenity and courage on the pilgrimage of life and faith that each of us is called to make, until our hearts find true peace and true joy, until we arrive at the ultimate goal of all humanity:

“The Love which moves the sun and the other stars” (*Splendor of Light Eternal*, 9).

When we began this series, we wrote that if anyone experienced some good things from it, we would send their response to the Papal Nuncio in Washington and ask him to send them to Pope Francis. We will do that now. Thank you to this prisoner in New York for sharing her experiences with us.

This is the final article in this series on Dante.

~ Anthony Bosnick

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.

Q&A **Christ in you, the hope for glory!** *continued from page 2*

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 anti-microbial soap and water, alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic handwash) after having contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.

A plan to follow. In these times, let's remember that Christ is in us, the hope for glory. 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.