



A CATHOLIC MINISTRY
TO PRISONERS

Let's Talk!

A SERVICE OF PAULIST EVANGELIZATION MINISTRIES

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Is heaven your goal?

Do you have a goal for your life? If you do, hopefully it goes beyond aimlessly living another day, another month, or another year in jail. Even though you have limited options open to you, your time now is not a dead end. God has great hopes and dreams for you and for all of us. Remember, Jesus promises us, “I came to give you life, and life to the full” (John 10:10).

This applies to *all* of us, everyday, everywhere. Especially to you now in prison. Our challenge is to embrace it and run with it each day.

Do you want “life to the full”? Our answer must be, “Yes!” If we shrug our shoulders and say we don’t know or don’t care, we will not be open to the gift God gives us in Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We can all live in the hope that God wants the best for us. Life doesn’t need to be a daily drudgery, with little or no sense of hope or purpose. The articles in this issue help us focus on heaven as our goal. Without that purpose in life, what do we have? Nothing of value. No wonder life can feel so empty at times.

Seek what is above. That is the life and love of God offered to you through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Embrace that goal and live for it. It will truly change your life.

Embrace the new life Jesus has won for you through his death and resurrection. May the Holy Spirit inspire you as you read these articles. 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

Listen for and to his voice, *and say yes to it*. Some people hear it and respond. And their lives are changed, slowly but surely.

Others may not be sure, but find that when they are inclined to the voice of God, and say yes, even though they are not sure what is going on, something wonderful happens in their lives. So, remember these words of Scripture, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Psalm 95:7; see also Hebrews 3:15).

This is not rocket science! It is faith rooted in basic spiritual practices. Develop a spiritual discipline for your life that includes these practices: 1) Read the Word of God. 2) Worship and pray. 3) Take part in a community of believers. 4) Care for and serve others. (We



briefly state them here, but you can read more about them on page 2 of this issue.) Also, take a look at Deacon Dolan’s article on page 3.

We need to be attentive in our lives and listen for the voice of God. Things will happen beyond anything we can now imagine. Trust in that.

But first of all . . . make heaven your goal each day! Don’t allow boredom and indifference to God destroy you. We need to have a purpose for each day. And that purpose needs to be rooted in God’s promise that he came to give us life, and life to the full. Open your life and heart to that.

Q&A

Seek what is above

Q. Nothing seems to make me happy. What can I do?

A. The answer is Jesus. Walk with him. Talk with him. Give your life to him.

Pope Benedict XVI taught us that being Christian “is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, *but the encounter with an event, a Person.*” This Person—Jesus—gives our lives “a new horizon and a decisive direction” (*God is Love*, 1). We need to encounter Jesus.

We all face this challenge, whether we are in prison or out. When we don’t seek God—or just live for ourselves—our hearts are restless and our lives are empty. How do we end this emptiness?

Get out of the rut. To give some traction to our spiritual lives, we need to develop our spiritual disciplines. We need to make heaven our goal. Seek what is above. Below in this article, we write more about practical ideas for living the spiritual life.

Also, see the article on page three of this issue where Deacon Dolan gives ideas for “recollection . . . when we take time to unscatter our thoughts . . . and be focused and present to the Holy Trinity living in us through our Baptism.”

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CHURCH CALENDAR

JULY 2023

- 2 Thirteenth Sunday Ordinary Time
- 3 St. Thomas, apostle
- 9 Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 11 St. Benedict, abbot
- 14 St. Kateri Tekakwitha, virgin
- 15 St. Bonaventure, bishop and doctor
- 16 Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 22 St. Mary Magdalene
- 23 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 25 St. James, apostle
- 26 Sts. Joachim and Anne, parents of Mary
- 29 Sts. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus
- 30 Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 31 St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest

AUGUST 2023

- 1 St. Alphonsus Liguori, bishop and doctor
- 4 St. John Vianney, priest
- 6 The Transfiguration of the Lord
- 8 St. Dominic, priest
- 10 St. Lawrence, deacon and martyr
- 11 St. Clare, virgin
- 13 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 14 St. Maximilian Kolbe, priest and martyr
- 15 Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 20 Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 21 St. Pius X, Pope
- 22 Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 24 St. Bartholomew, apostle
- 27 Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 28 St. Augustine, bishop and doctor
- 29 Passion of St. John the Baptist

SEPTEMBER 2023

- 3 Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
- 8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 9 St. Peter Claver, priest
- 10 Twenty-Third 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
- 17 Twenty-Fourth 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
- 24 Twenty-Fifth 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 Seek what is above

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Finally, the article on page four on “Ignorance of Scripture” also gives tips that can help you get out of the rut.

This is faith, supported by basic spiritual practices. Nothing is easy, including the spiritual life. Paulist Prison Ministries reminds us of *four spiritual resolutions* to support you on your journey as you seek to make heaven your goal and seek what is above.



■ **First, read the Word of God**—the Bible—a little each day. 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. God speaks to us through Scripture.

■ **Second, 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—provide a good example of this. You can do this in prison too.

These four spiritual disciplines or resolutions can help you set your eyes on heaven. As many have found, this changes our lives and brings us much joy.

Join in the hopes and dreams of the Church

**World Youth Day
Lisbon and Fatima, Portugal
August 1-6, 2023**

Take a look at the Papal Prayer Requests on page three of this issue. You will see this request for prayer from Pope Francis: “We pray the World Youth Day in Lisbon will help young people to live and witness the Gospel in their own lives.”

The theme is biblical: “Mary arose and went with haste” (Luke 1:39). It will focus on Mary, the Mother of God, and how she did what she was asked to do by the angel of the Lord. Mary shows us that as we seek what is above we will find peace and happiness in our lives. We learn much from Mary as she points the way for us to make heaven our goal.



The first World Youth Day was held in Rome, Italy in 1986, at the invitation of Pope Saint John Paul II. This is the 37th World Youth Day. Please join in prayer for this pilgrimage that many young people will find their hearts changed and follow Jesus with joy and faithfulness.

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Prisoner Saint

St. Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941) + Fr. Maximilian Kolbe taught devotion to Mary as a way to Christ. He had great success in Poland. Then he went to Japan in 1930 with the same mission. Poor health forced him to return to Poland in 1936. Following the Nazi invasion in 1939, the Nazis arrested, released, and then rearrested Kolbe. In 1941, the Nazis sent him to Auschwitz prison. When a prisoner escaped, the guards chose ten men to die. Kolbe volunteered to take the place of one of them, a married man with young children. For three weeks, the Nazis withheld food and water. Finally they killed him with a lethal injection. Pope John Paul II canonized Kolbe in 1982 as a martyr of love.

Feast Day: August 14

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

JULY

For a Eucharistic life:

We pray that Catholics may place the celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives, transforming human relationships in a very deep way and opening to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters.

AUGUST

For World Youth Day:

We pray the World Youth Day in Lisbon will help young people to live and witness the Gospel in their own lives.

SEPTEMBER

For people living on the margins: We pray for those persons living on the margins of society, in inhumane life conditions; may they not be overlooked by institutions and never considered of lesser importance."

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

Un-Scatter Yourself

By Deacon Dennis Dolan

Peaches: Ya Know, Deke. I've been practicing that Watchfulness stuff we talked about a few months ago.

Me: How is it going?

Peaches: To be honest, hit and miss, like everything else.

Me: And like everybody else! That is the battle.

Peaches: But you know, even with the difficulty in developing those spiritual habits, I really feel like there is something deep there.

Me: That's because there is! The fact that you experience the value in the practice is a good sign that it's working. But maybe you might want to explore a different approach.

Peaches: There's another way to do this?!

Me: Several.

Peaches: Oh! Another dish on that big buffet of Catholic Spirituality that you're always talking about?

Me: Correct. So, allow me to show you this dish over here. It's called Recollection.

Peaches: OK.

Me: Recollection, in general, is when we take time to unscatter our thoughts and feelings and re-collect, (collect again) and be focused and present to the Holy Trinity living in us through our Baptism.

Peaches: "Get yourself together"! That sounds like part of what I experience when I practice watchfulness.

Me: Exactly. But there's more than the one approach of the "Jesus Prayer" that we talked about to re-collect yourself. Now, I gave you the one practiced by the Desert Fathers of using a Scripture verse.

Another approach by St John of the Cross is just to sit quietly in the presence of God. Just be intent and attentive to God being there.

Peaches: I don't just sit too well, Deke. My mind would last two seconds and be scattered again.

Me: Mine too. That's hard for me but it does work for many people. Or you could try the approach of "Centering Prayer" from "The Cloud of Unknowing" which is like John of the Cross' approach except for a prayer word.

Peaches: Explain.

Me: You sit in God's presence and whenever your mind wanders, you don't engage with that thought or feeling, you just say your prayer word and gently return to God. It's going to happen. Expect it. If you get upset with yourself, only use the prayer word to return to God. Returning to God is success.

If you must do it a hundred times, that's a hundred successes not a hundred failures.

Peaches: What's the prayer word?

Me: Anything you want. God, Love, Peace. Just don't change it. It gets stronger if you stick to one word. The word itself doesn't matter because whatever it is, you are packing it with your simple love and desire for God. So, they all work.

Peaches: What's your prayer word, Deke?

Me: Abba. It's the word Jesus used to talk to God. It means "Daddy".

Peaches: Sounds promising, Deke, but I think my problem is with the sitting still part that these practices all use. Got anything for someone with "ants in their pants"?

Me: Sure. First, remember, these can all be done on the move. In fact, I often do that when I'm walking across the compound. I can repeat scripture in my head as I walk.

Peaches: Jesus Prayer?

Me: Sometimes. Sometimes it's Psalm 70: "O God come to my assistance; Lord make haste to help me". Sometimes it's just "Abba". Sometimes, I just know God is walking with me like John of the Cross' practice or I use Brother Lawrence's Practice of the Presence of God.

Peaches: What did he do?

Me: Well, he was a busy cook in a monastery of one hundred Carmelites.

Peaches: He's running a restaurant!

Me: Exactly. So, he used his work, the task at hand, to trigger on-going recollection. Before he swept the kitchen floor, he'd ask God to help him do it for God's glory and love. He'd sweep it intent on doing a good job for God. After he was done, he'd thank God for the grace and ability to do it for him. When he turned an omelette in a pan, he would do it for God.

Peaches: I like this one! I can do this recollection!

Me: Yeah. Whether you do it in one chunk sitting or in small bits throughout the day, it works. Actually, it may be better if you do it and return to God all day long rather than do it in a 20-minute sit. Here's his book "The Practice of the Presence of God". Read it.

Peaches: It's small.

Me: And an easy read but very deep.

Peaches: Simple AND deep is as good as it gets!

Me: That's why I get the big bucks!

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

“Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”

These famous words from St. Jerome, if we take them to heart, can change our lives. They can help us make heaven our goal and to seek what is above. I have found that to be the case in my own life. And I wager that millions and millions of people across the millennia have found them to be true too!

St. Jerome (342-420) was a great bible scholar and translator of Scripture from the early Church. Jerome learned the truth of this from his own life. As a young man, he forgot his morals, pursuing pleasure with women, and ignoring God.

He wasn't happy and knew something was wrong. Finally, around the year 366, he became a Christian and his life began to change. Let's follow Jerome's example and turn to God!

Try this in your life. Do you have a favorite Scripture passage? Think about it and see how it may have brought you to a better knowledge of Christ and his love for you. Here are some examples.

✦ **Come to me.** When I was in my twenties, I knew my life was empty and I needed something. Having been raised Catholic, I sensed that I needed Jesus. I tried following him several times, but nothing seemed to change.

One day when I was reading Scripture, I came across this passage: “Come to me, all you who are weary and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Something clicked. I realized I needed to walk with Jesus and share his yoke. He would walk with me and share the load. I was not on my own, struggling through life. This passage has given me hope and joy for over 40 years now.

✦ **Faith as small as a mustard seed.** Another example comes from a young man in his early thirties. He said that he tried to follow Jesus, but didn't have the faith. One day he was reading Scripture and came across this passage: “If you have faith the

size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20).

This simple passage changed his life. He took Jesus at his word, and trusted him. He has found the faith to live the Christian life.

✦ **Life is a drudgery!** Here's another one from a young mother of three active little kids. Life is one need and challenge after another. She has taken hope from this passage: “Is not man's life on earth a drudgery? Are not his days those of a hireling?” (Job 7:1). She said that “life on earth is combat.”

Knowing that, she has resolved to walk with Jesus and take her strength from him. When she relies on him, rather than on herself, she has a new joy and strength to face life. This is something for us all to consider.

✦ **Life to the full.** Finally, this is one of my favorite passages that always gives me hope: “I came to give you life, and life to the full” (or, “life more abundantly”) (John 10:10). What a promise this is. I have relied upon it countless times when I have lost my way, and have found hope anew. God is true to his promises!

This is only a start. Do you have a favorite Scripture passage? If you do, share it with others. If you don't, read Scripture with a searching

heart. The Holy Spirit will show you a passage that is sure to bring you to a deeper encounter with Christ and experience of his life and love.

You are bound to find the truth that “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”. At the same time, you are bound to grow in the experience of God's life and love in your life.

This article continues our series “Thoughts that inspire.” We reflect on short passages from Scripture or other writings that can inspire us in our Christian lives. Hopefully, they will help you enjoy your journey with Jesus and live more faithful and holy lives. Let us know what you think.

~ Anthony Bosnick



Seek what is above continued from page 2

Free resources for prisoners and chaplains

Paulist Prison Ministries has a pamphlet to help you develop your “spiritual disciplines,” practices that will help you focus on God during your day. The pamphlet is called “Expect great things from God! Spiritual practices to help you on your Journey.” It is English on one side and Spanish on the reverse side. It can be downloaded at: www.pemdc.org/SpiritualPractices.

Also, consider our free pamphlet “How to Pray the Rosary.” It

is a handy pamphlet that teaches people how to say the very helpful prayer of the Rosary. It can be downloaded at www.pemdc.org/Rosarypamphlet

Both of these pamphlets can be printed on 8.5 “ X 11” paper, and folded into an easy-to-use trifold pamphlet. Keep one for yourself and give to others.

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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