



St. Dismas Guild – Prison Ministry

March 2020

30 YEARS OF SERVICE!!!

“Lord, when did I see you ...in prison, and not help you?” Matt. 25:44

St. Dismas Guild is a nonprofit organization which provides Catholic Bibles and Bible Studies, free of charge, to inmates. Donations can be made on-line at our Website. Please be a partner and sponsor an inmate each month.



TESTIMONY

Dear St. Dismas Guild, I just received my January newsletter and read one of the testimonies, and I am moved to share some things with him and any others it may help. When I first got locked up, and for many years after, I was like most other inmates. I looked down on those who were called rapists and pedophiles. The pedophiles, especially, filled me with rage. See, as a boy I was molested by an older family member. I was also raped in an alley, once, by a stranger. I never revealed either of these things to anyone. But they did damage to me that I cannot fully express.

But God is an amazing Father! He knows Everything, and He can Fix Anything!

I met an individual about 20 years ago who was incarcerated for three counts of inappropriate behavior with a child. This man was so open and forthcoming about how he erred and the pain he felt that I simply couldn't hate him. In fact, we became fast friends.

There's much that occurred which led to that, but the short version is simply this. I came to realize that if I so badly want to be forgiven for my crimes of murder and attempted murder, then who am I to judge these folks, or anyone else, for what they've done? In the end, after 28 years of my incarceration, that man is the only person ever to get out of prison and maintain our friendship as he promised. On top of all that, it was his witness, his faith, and his example that led me to God and the Holy Roman Catholic Church!!

Just remember, we can't undo what is done. But we can choose in this moment to love rather than hate. We can choose to forgive rather than retaliate. We can choose medicine over poison. We can serve God rather than Satan.

As a victim many painful years after the fact, **I forgave those who hurt me.** Now, my best friend in this world is a man who once did to another what was done to me. Only a loving God, a Miraculous Father, could accomplish that. So, my friends, what I'm really saying is, **don't allow your past to define who you are.** Rather, serve God obediently and redefine your future. Otherwise, you may never know the wonderful blessings your Father in heaven wishes to shower upon you.

I love the writer of that special testimony because God loved you first. The slings and arrows of the Devil and his servants may still bring pain to you. The world and its people may continue to persecute you. But it is not they who choose your identity. Pick up your cross and follow Jesus. Deny yourself those unworthy desires - - and you can be named a saint in heaven. All is possible in He who strengthens me and you. Go with God, my brothers and sisters! And be loved! Love, Light, and Laughter, M.D.

What a great testimony M.D., I Love your initials, healing through the power of God's Word. We knew someone who was convicted of a sex crime who came to the Lord while in prison. He repented of his sin and when he was released, he lived a very difficult life but clung to Jesus and to the Church and people surrounded him with love. He couldn't get a job because of his conviction and eventually died. Society isn't as forgiving as believers. The believers/Christians he found in the church he clung to. He had a beautiful funeral and was buried among the

saints in a Catholic Cemetery. He died a rich man because he had Jesus in His heart and is reaping the reward of everlasting life with our Lord. Love and forgiveness are the keys to healing and yes, God is an amazing Father! He knows everything and He can Fix anything. Thank you for sharing. Always remember “You belong to God, children, and you have conquered them for the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” 1 John 4:4

DOING TIME WITH JESUS

Dear St. Dismas Guild, thank you so much for the Bible and other pamphlets you have sent. I am a member of the Legion of Mary at this institution. It is such a privilege to bring souls to Mary's Son, Jesus. I am a hospice volunteer and read the Bible and pray with the patient and visit with others in the infirmary. It is such a blessing to be able to brighten their day. It is also a wonderful opportunity to witness. There is so much darkness in this place, a little light can make a huge difference. Your newsletter and service have been that light.

Being a Christian has completely changed my life. I used to live in fear and act out of that fear. I would meet my fears with aggression and was filled with anger. Then I would act out aggressively in my anger. It was a vicious cycle. 2 Timothy 1:7-8 changed my life. I understand now that fear was a tool of the enemy and was a tool of oppression.

Praise God for releasing me from that bondage. I also have to thank the Catholic Community here for being so loving and accepting, and the St. Dismas Guild for your outreach ministry. You are all in my prayers and May the Peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. God Bless, S.D.

Dear S.D., In the Bible, God tells us “Do not be afraid”; some say it is mentioned 365 times in various forms. Fear is a natural reaction to danger, even Jesus was afraid when He sweat blood in the garden of Gethsemane. But fear is also the devil's most powerful tool when it leads us to anger and despair. To conquer fear, it is necessary to pray for the fourth Gift of the Holy Spirit, the virtue of Fortitude.

“Fortitude ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good.” (CCC 1837). In other words, courage to do what is right.

In Mark 16:15 Jesus gave this command “... Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.” Even though you are behind bars, you are proclaiming the gospel to a part of the world that is for the most part forgotten and inaccessible. Remain unafraid by uniting yourself to Mary in the Legion of Mary and by your apostolic work as a Hospice volunteer. Keep up the good works; you are an inspiration to us all.

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Dear St. Dismas Guild, Hi! I want to thank you for all your support in the literature you send me. I really appreciate you. My story is too long to write, but I was born and raised in an eastern state. I've made many mistakes. **My road to redemption has been, and still is, a long one. I repent continually. To me, repentance is a constant thing. I have to keep it going. I pray the rosary every day, not really because I want to, but because I need to. I need to follow the Church ordinances, because if I**

don't Satan will get me. I have to stay close to the Virgin Mary, and always remember Her in all I do, so that I don't do things She would disapprove of.

Every day is a struggle against Satan and the forces of evil who want to drag me down and keep me down, and then kick me when I'm down. I've hit rock bottom and the only way to go is up, up into the arms of Our Lord and Holy Mother Mary, who will accept me for their holiness not mine, because I'm not. And I love and thank them. People who hate me must not know how hard I really try. **If God loves me, I can love myself.** I am a man of many addictions. I am hated and persecuted daily because of my charges. And I would hate too, would I not change and repent. So, all those out there doing drugs, bad – Repent! I'm living proof. **If I can do it everybody can do it. YOU can change!** Keep up, Keep the Faith, the Catholic Faith. Thank you. Peace. J.M.

Dear Brother in Christ J.M., God bless you for your perseverance in admitting your sins and continued repentance and sorrow for them. You will find interior peace and many blessings through repentance.

Bad habits are overcome by good habits. Satan will always be around to tempt us, for we will always have afflictions. Don't be concerned about what other people may think of you. Your one focus should be in loving and pleasing Our Father in Heaven. Keep an eye on your own self and spiritual journey and reprove yourself rather than worry about what people may say or think of you.

*Never lose your desire for Spiritual progress while time and the opportunity still await you. God has blessed you with this time now to make reparation for your past sins. "From my necessities, set me free, O Lord." Psalm 25:17 You must pass through fire and water before you come to the place of refreshment. Unless you gain full control of yourself you will never overcome sin. This is a great time now during this Lenten season to continue on with your spiritual journey. Your past is gone, continue to move on.... And yes, **Praying the Rosary and Truly Meditating on Our Lord's Life with the Mysteries you will learn to Truly enjoy this special Gift our Blessed Mother Mary has given to us in the Rosary.** May God continue to Enlighten and Bless you on your journey of repentance. Remember this: **"I love those who love Me and those who seek Me diligently find Me."** Prov.8:17 Yours Truly in Christ...*

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION w/Fr. Richard

"My wife cheats on me regularly, sometimes with strangers, just men she meets, but it hurts even more when she cheats on me with my family members. Me and my family used to be close, but now it's awkward. And I don't know what to do. I will not divorce her; I don't believe in divorce. But what should I do about her cheating on me? Should I just accept it and learn to be okay with it?

There isn't much I can do. Whenever I talk to her about it, she says it's my fault for not being there and not being able to satisfy her. I don't know what to do."

*I cannot imagine how you feel at being betrayed by your wife with strangers and family members and being able to do nothing to resolve it because of your incarceration. **Your inability to provide physical comfort for your wife is not an excuse for her infidelities.***

It reminds me of the book of Hosea where he is betrayed over and over again by his wife as an example of how Israel betrayed the God who united Himself to them, wed them to care for them.

Please speak to the prison chaplain of everything that is in your heart. The human compassion of another to hear and to share your sufferings is very important at this time. Also speak to God of what you feel, your sorrows, your

pain, and ask for His help. "I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord." Hosea 2:19-20

PRO-LIFE

Hello, I just finished reading your newest newsletter and the pro-life section on the back... I just wanted to share with you and your readers that a group of Pro-Life Catholics pray the Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet every Monday and Thursday at 10 AM at Planned Parenthood (PPH) in Vista, CA. We have followed this PPH for over 15 years, from Oceanside to Carlsbad and now in Vista. We are here to Pray and Peacefully Protest and STAND for those who cannot stand for themselves.

Thank you for Standing for the unborn and be their voice to the world. We want to encourage all who read this to get out and join or make a group to Peacefully Pray at your local PPH or offer up prayers to End Abortion! Blessings to you and all the groups who are already doing this. Another prayer group meets at the PPH on Mission Ave. in Escondido, CA from 10:30-11: 30 am, every Thursday.

REMEMBER; We now know that when there are Prayer Warriors outside of the PPH offices their clients "No Show rate is as high as 75%", per Abby Johnson, former PPH Director.

SACRED TRADITION

THE CHURCHES DEDICATION FOR MARCH:

The month of March is dedicated to **St. Joseph**. The entire month falls during the liturgical season of **Lent** which is represented by the liturgical color purple — a symbol of penance, mortification and the sorrow of a contrite heart.

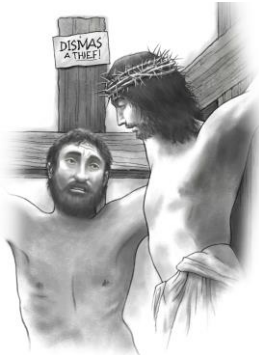
The **Solemnity of St. Joseph** is a special landmark this month in which we will celebrate the great honor bestowed upon the foster father of Jesus. And if you are Irish (who isn't), **St. Patrick's feast** is another cause for a joyful celebration.

<https://www.catholicculture.org>
The feast of the Annunciation and St. Dismas

is celebrated on March 25. Dismas is the patron Saint of Prisoners, Thieves and those condemned to Death. Writing centuries apart, two Church Fathers, Tertullian and Augustine, claimed that the three (the two thieves and Jesus) died on **March 25, the date that was designated as Dismas's Feast Day.**

The Gospel of Luke relates Jesus' conversation with the two thieves... Jesus is taunted by one thief, who challenges Jesus, **"Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us."** (Luke 23:39) But the other thief, the **Good Thief**, takes the opposite view. **The Good Thief** recognizes that Jesus is innocent and has done nothing wrong He also acknowledges that Jesus is the Messiah, by saying to Him, **"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."** (Luke 23:42) To which Jesus replies, **"Amen, I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise."** (Luke 23:43)

<https://ucatholic.com/saints/saint-dismas/> (New Artwork of St. Dismas for our Prayer Books by Tom Voss.)



Lenten Blessings, from all of us at St. Dismas Guild