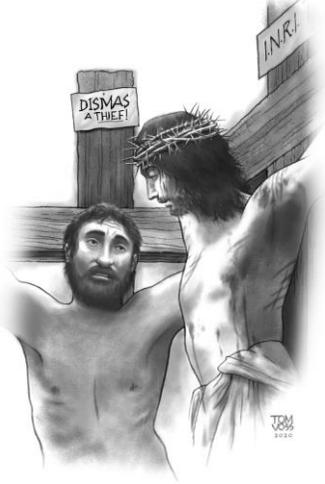


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St. Dismas Guild ~ Prison Ministry

“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 our website or by mail. Please be a partner and sponsor an inmate each month.

www.StDismasGuild.org

April 2020

TESTIMONY

Dear St. Dismas Guild, Hello! I've been receiving your newsletter for a while and it is always encouraging to read the testimonies and other articles. I pray that you are able to use my testimony and my honesty benefits someone. I was born in Ohio to a very dysfunctional family, baptized as an infant, went to Catholic school, and participated as an altar boy, committing some terrible acts - - stealing from the offering boxes and drinking the wine.

I had a lot of hate and resentment in my heart. My father was never around and I wanted so much to be like him. I was abused and molested by a neighbor and my brothers, which caused me to act out the same way toward my sister and niece because I thought that was LOVE.

My early teen years were spent in a boy's home for unruly children which did nothing but make me worse. When released, I experimented with homosexuality and drugs, and my life of crime began. It started with petty theft and progressed to armed robbery and I was arrested. After six years I was paroled where my life of crime continued, and I was sentenced to a long time. Still full of hate, I did what I wanted to, breaking every rule except escape.

All this changed in 2011. I went to a Christian service to do some business and as the preacher was reading the Word something came over me. I didn't conduct the business I was supposed to do and I realized, because of God's grace and mercy, I had a purpose in life. For the past eight years my life has truly transformed. I've been trying to receive Confirmation which is hard being in the south and not many Catholics. People actually like me now. I say my prayers and read the "Word Among Us" every morning.

Now God's goodness. In 2009 I was diagnosed with a very rare kidney disease which was kept under control with medications until last year when my kidneys shut down. Now I am on dialysis. But God is going through this with me and there is not only a blessing at the end of this journey, but there is a purpose for this. When it is accomplished, I know He will restore my health. Amen!

The moral to this whole testimony is – no matter what you have been through, have done, or thought, God has always been there with His hedge of protection and His goodness. All for God's Glory, God Bless! In Jesus' name, C.C.

*You are right C.C.; God has always been there with His hedge of protection and His goodness for you. Your testimony of how you were transformed by the power of God's Word is powerful. God's grace touched you as you listened to His Word. He knew the time you would be ready. He knows everything about you and Loves you with an everlasting LOVE. We are praying God will open the door for you to receive Confirmation. Continue to cling to Him and yes, He will restore your health. **“We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who LOVE God and are called according to His decree.” (Romans 8:28).** God is doing something new in light of this Corona Virus pandemic we are going through. Hopefully by the time you get this newsletter we will be free to worship in our churches and this will be over. We are in lock down so to say. **Isaiah 65:17** says, **“Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth. The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind.”** God bless you.*

DOING TIME WITH JESUS

Dear St Dismas Guild, I am just over two years in a six-year prison sentence. I stayed in jail most of that time waiting to be sentenced. It broke me down and I found myself lost and without hope for so much of that time, having lost much and separated from my family. Recently I was finally shipped to a prison here in Florida where I met a fellow inmate who began introducing me to and answering my questions about Catholicism. **The first time I prayed the rosary with him and others I felt so fulfilled and wonderful!**

I have started going to mass and catechism, praying the rosary daily, etc., and even though I am in prison and far from home, I am happier than I have ever been in my life to have Jesus and His mother Mary and God's LOVE burning in my heart and spirit.

I feel like I have found what I have been looking for all my life. I feel an inner peace that I have never experienced. It is like the pieces of the puzzle of my life are falling together. I have decided to be baptized and confirmed into the Catholic Faith this Easter. **And my heart is Full of Joy. I'm Excited, Honored, Humbled!!!**

I was given your address and told I could request an inmate package of prayer cards, and catechism materials, Catholic Bible and any other valuable resources you may have. I am eager to learn as much as I can. Thank you ☺
☩ and God bless! J.V

Dear J.V., "... when you seek the LORD, your God, from there, you shall indeed find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul." Deuteronomy 4:29.

Yes, through God's grace, you have found what you have been looking for all your life. God is the center of all that exists and when we open our hearts and minds to Him, we find meaning in our life. There is a longing for Him that is hard to put into words. As you draw closer to Him, you will find it easier to accept all the trials of life as the means to be with Him for all eternity.

We too are full of joy that you will be entering into the Church this Easter. "... you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone." Ephesians 2:19-20

Welcome to the Catholic Church Brother J.V.

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF SDG

The **coronavirus** has become a constant reminder to me that living a life filled with "**Faith in God**" is the best choice a person can make. I am glad I *finally* did at the age of 35.

I recall a time about 10 years ago when I was being tested for some heart problems I was having. The initial tests showed nothing that concerned the doctors. They didn't know what to do about my shortness of breath from time to time. But finally, the doctors ran a test that showed that I had a bad heart valve, and I had it since birth. They suggested I go into surgery immediately and have a pig valve installed in my heart to replace my failing human heart valve. It all happened so quickly, everyone around me was in shock and did not know what to do or say.... but they knew enough to pray for me. Similar to the coronavirus, my condition was unexpected, hard to understand and complex.

The outcome was not known for sure (although open heart surgery is usually very successful these days). My family and friends did their best to stay positive, but one friend asked me a question that I will never forget. It is a question that people are asking each other as we face the corona virus...." what happens if we don't make it through this?"

My answer always came back with a smile on my face... "I either win.... or I win bigtime!" If the doctors are successful and repair me so that I can continue living and serving God and my family...I win! But if the operation does not work out as they planned and I die quickly... I really win **BIGTIME!**

Why the win/win attitude? Because if I was to die from that operation.... **I GET TO SEE JESUS AND MARY AND JOSEPH, GOD THE FATHER, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, FACE TO FACE!!!**

That's the **BIGTIME** reward. **If you want that kind of Faith...simply humble yourself before God (talk to God a lot) ... ask for forgiveness from your sins (confess to a priest), and then ask God to heal you by increasing your Faith forever BIGTIME!** The coronavirus will pass, as will many challenges in your life. But your Faith in Jesus will never pass away... *if you just believe and never stop believing.* Amen! Deacon Mitch

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION w/Fr. Richard

"If Christ came to fulfill the Law, then what does a Fulfilled Law look like?"

To fulfill the law is to obey completely and perfectly the commandments. Now that Jesus did that, He becomes the new covenant in whom we live, move, and have our being.

Matthew 5:17-19 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the LAW until everything is accomplished. Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

CONFESSION/CONTRITION

What if we can't get to Confession? "People who cannot get to confession because of the coronavirus lockdown or another serious reason can go to God directly, be specific about their sins, request pardon and experience God's loving **forgiveness,**" Pope Francis says. Be sure to get to Confession as soon as you are able.

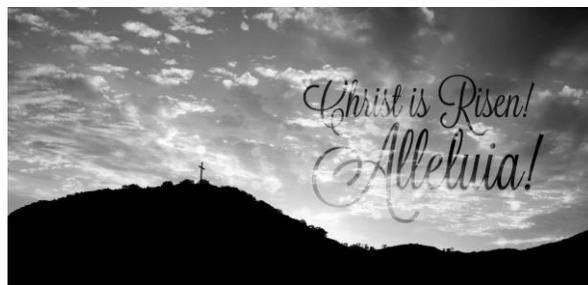
How do I show True Contrition? Pray an Act of Perfect Contrition! "Perfect contrition is **sorrow for sin** arising from perfect LOVE. In perfect contrition the sinner detests sin more than any other evil, because it offends God."

Act of Contrition - "My God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my LOVE. I firmly resolve with the help of your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen."

SACRED TRADITION

THE CHURCHES DEDICATION FOR APRIL:

The month of April is dedicated to **The Holy Spirit**. The first eleven days of the month fall during the season of **Lent** which is represented by the liturgical color purple — a symbol of penance, mortification and the sorrow of a contrite heart. The remainder of April falls during the **Easter** season which is represented by the liturgical color white — the color of light, a symbol of joy, purity and innocence (absolute or restored). www.catholicculture.org



Encouraging you to participate in our **Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study workbook**, currently in Cycle A. You can print out a lesson on our website or request a workbook.



Easter Blessings, from all of us at St. Dismas Guild ~ Peace of Christ