

St. Dismas Guild
P.O. Box 2129
Escondido, CA 92033

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St. Dismas Guild ~ Prison Ministry

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

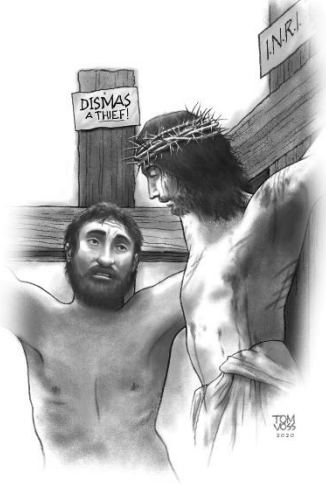
St. Dismas Guild is a nonprofit organization which provides Catholic Bibles and Bible Study workbooks, etc., free of charge, to inmates.

Donations can be made on our website www.StDismasGuild.org
or by mail, PO Box 2129, Escondido, CA, 92033.

42 years of Newsletters!

Deacon Ken Finn began writing the SDG Newsletter in May 1982!

May 2024



TESTIMONY

St. Dismas Guild,

I have many fond and happy memories of a childhood long gone. Also, are the bitter memories of an abusive, alcoholic stepfather. Being beaten was almost a normal thing to expect upon another drunken arrival when he got home in the evenings. On several occasions I was beaten so badly I couldn't attend school for weeks at a time in order to let the marks and scabs go away. At 12 years old my mother caught my stepdad with another woman, and they divorced. At some point my mom became a drug addict. Without any parental guidance I began running the streets and ended up a convicted felon at 16 years old and sent to prison for the first time. This was normal for me for several years. In 2005, I was released from prison, my third time in, on Thanksgiving Day at 23 years old. I had turned a new leaf and was attending church services weekly, holding a steady job, and had my own place to stay. I met a woman, got married, had two beautiful babies. For some reason I got back into dealing dope and guns. For three years, the longest I've been out since 16, things were good considering my illegal activities. Then on the night of January 11th, 2009 I killed someone for wrongs they had committed against me. The next day I was located by the police and ended up having a shootout in which I was shot several times. **Only by the grace of God am I still here today.** I've been here for 14 years and have reacquainted my life with God. I've been able to forget the past of my childhood and forgive my now sober stepfather. The saddest moment of my incarceration was when my mother died in February 2018. But through all I've done and been through in here I know God is always with me. **The love of Christ is the most beautiful thing anyone has, and it's this love I try to live in myself daily.** Once a hate filled and angry person, now I can look at someone and smile with sincerity. Living with a heart full of love instead of hate and anger is really helping me live through my sentence of life without the possibility of parole. Without the love of Christ, who knows where I'd be.

Respectfully, C.H.

Dear C.H.,

No matter how long I do this work, I remain amazed at how the mercy and love of God can penetrate hearts and transform lives. As I reflect on your testimony, I am reminded of that power and goodness of God, and I thank you for having taken the time to write to us.

*My heart breaks to think of the way you suffered as a child, but I know that God is giving you comfort, healing, and peace, now that you have allowed Him to draw near to you. By remaining close to Him, He can bring redemption to all suffering, and everything you are now enduring as you continue to make reparation for your failings. As Jesus instructs in **John 14:4-5** – “**Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.**” So, if you remain in Him, He will make your life bear fruit, despite your suffering.*

I hope you will remember that we at St. Dismas Guild are always praying for you. No matter what you endure behind bars, you are never alone, because God is with you, and we are with you through our prayers.

In Christ's Mercy, St. Dismas Guild

C.H. was sent a Bible, Bible Study, a Basic Catechism, and assorted pamphlets.

DOING TIME WITH JESUS

SDG,

Hello! I am not Catholic, but I still enjoy receiving the newsletter every month. I am going to start attending Mass here at the facility I am at. I would please like a New American Bible as well as the Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study. Thank you for all the hard work put forth by SDG and all the prayers said for those of us who are incarcerated.

May God Bless you, T.C.

Dear T.C.,

Thank you so much for writing to us! It is always a joy to hear from those we serve. I am so glad that the Newsletter has been a blessing to you, and even more thrilled to hear that you will be attending Mass! Should you have any questions about what you encounter there, please do not hesitate to write to us again, and we will share your questions with our Spiritual Director. I pray that you will encounter our God who is "ever ancient, ever new," as St. Augustine of Hippo says, in a deeper way by attending Mass!

Peace of Christ, St. Dismas Guild

T.C. was sent a Bible, Bible Study, and a variety of pamphlets on offer.

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Hi,

Thank you for the March newsletter. I look forward to receiving these and reading the many testimonies sent by other men describing how they are growing in their faith.

I would appreciate receiving a copy of *One Bread, One Body*.

I thank you for your ministry to us who are incarcerated. **It is my faith that helps me get through the dark times surrounded by so many who resist Jesus.** I share the newsletter with other inmates here.

You are doing good work and for that I thank you and keep the St. Dismas Guild in my prayers. – R.S.

Dear R.S.

Thank you for taking the time to write to us! It is a gift to hear from you.

Praise the Lord that He remains with us through every trial and tribulation! It heartens us to hear that you cling to Him so tightly through everything you are facing in prison. Rest assured that you are serving as a bright light for Him in dark places, and we can only hope and pray that your fellow inmates will encounter Jesus Christ through you. Keep always before you Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount: **"You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father"** (Matthew 5:14-16).

Peace of Christ, St. Dismas Guild

R.S. was sent *One Bread, One Body* – a daily scripture reading pamphlet published by Presentation Ministries

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION w/Fr. Richard

73 Books? Or 66 Books?

The Bible consists of 73 books. Some 16th century Christians who left the Catholic church, and now their descendants, only read 66 books written in Hebrew, and rejected the books written in Greek which were compiled into the bible from at least the third century: 1 & 2 Maccabees, Judith, Baruch, Wisdom, Tobit, and Sirach (Ecclesiastes). These books are in all Catholic Bibles.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church found some books to be divinely inspired and others merely human stories.

You should read all 73 books of the bible; and if you find these extra biblical books like Enoch, they may be read, but I do not take their information as being from God for my faith.

DEACON KEN'S CORNER

FROM THE LATE DEACON KEN FINN'S VERY FIRST ST. DISMAS GUILD NEWSLETTER, dated May 1982.

Shalom!

After receiving my chaplaincy training at Mercy Hospital in 1979, I began receiving requests to visit inmates at the local county jail in Vista, CA. This really opened my eyes to the need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ among inmates at all of the jails in San Diego County, as indeed every penal institution in this country. Since then, God has opened many doors in this much needed ministry.

Recently, I received a letter from an inmate who was convicted of murder and sent to state prison who related the impact of the healing power of Jesus in his life. "I think often about Vista and the work you are doing there. Those months I spent there were the toughest I've ever faced, and I want you to know that you helped me an awful lot. I especially remember the time we knelt down in that little visiting room and prayed together. I knew the Lord heard that prayer, and on that day, I knew that no matter what happened, I would come out of this a stronger person. Your prayers, encouragement, and your faith in me had a lot to do with that. So please keep up your work I know there are a lot more guys there who need you."

SACRED TRADITION

THE CHURCHES DEDICATION FOR MAY: is to **The Blessed Virgin Mary.** "For this is the month during which Christians, in their churches and their homes, offer the Virgin Mother more fervent and loving acts of homage and veneration; and it is the month in which a greater abundance of God's merciful gifts comes down to us from our Mother's throne." -Pope Saint Paul VI, *The Month of May*

A Few FEAST DAYS:

- May 1st – **St. Joseph** the Worker
 - May 3rd – **Sts. Philip and James**, Apostles
 - May 9th – **Ascension** Thursday
 - May 12th – **Ascension** Sunday
 - May 13th – **Our Lady of Fatima**
 - May 14th – **St. Matthias**, Apostle
 - May 19th – Pentecost
- ~ catholicculture.org



PRO-LIFE

"THE LOVELIEST MASTERPIECE OF THE HEART OF GOD is the heart of a mother." – *St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus*
~ *Pro-Life Articles.org*

FROM THE DIRECTOR

THANK YOU TO ALL THE INMATES who have provided their testimonies and appreciation letters over these 42 years. You have touched so many lives with your stories! **We always welcome new testimonies**, so if you have not sent us yours, please consider doing so!
The formula for a testimony is as follows:
1/3 – Your life **prior** to meeting Christ
1/3 – **How** you met Christ
1/3 – Your life **now** that you are walking with Him

May the peace of Christ be with you all,
St. Dismas Guild

