



St. Dismas Guild

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

www.stdismas.org October 2009

TESTIMONY

By
D.D.

Dear Deacon Ken & Marie, I want to write you to thank you for your Sept. newsletter. The prayer of Padre Pio (St. Pio of Pietrelcina) is especially helpful to me at this particular point in time. The facility that I am currently at has no Catholic Service to speak of. It's been like this for two years now. The Chaplain says that it's because there are no willing Priest or Volunteers that want to come in here. I've been meditating and reading my bible daily and trying to live the way a monk would in a monastery. I miss so much the sharing of the sacraments (especially the Eucharist!)



That's why the prayer of St. Pio is so helpful to me right now. It's the first thing I read upon waking. I go through times in this spiritual journey when I question God's existence or rather whether if He is listening to my prayer. This only happens however, when I'm either not getting my way or I'm refusing to accept the things I cannot change. But then I'm reminded of Saints like Padre Pio and the stigmata he carried for most of his life, I'm amazed that he would need to be reminded of our Lord! I read his autobiography a few years ago and was amazed to learn how this Saint lived and how God worked in his life.

I want to also thank you for sending "The Bread of Life" bible study. I'm kinda confused on how to study this type of bible study and right now I'm just not doing anything with it. Maybe you could send me some suggestions on how to approach this type of study? What I would really appreciate from you is information about if and how it would be possible for me to receive information on a possible vocation such as Deaconship. What does it entail? Is there anyway I could pursue this while in Prison?

I've taken and completed other Catholic Bible Studies such as the Knights of Columbus Bible Study and currently "Eternal Life, Fr. John A. Hardons Home Study Course". You see, Deacon Ken, I'm 54 years old. I've been in Prison now for 15 years. I see the Parole Board every 2 years and I've been denied parole 4 times now. It's been my own fault. I'm not a "career criminal", I'm a recovering alcoholic who committed my offense in a drunken rage. Thank God I didn't kill anyone but I did injure a perfect stranger in what would be considered a fight in a bar. The main reason I've been denied parole is because of my past inability to adjust to Prison life. I haven't had a drink of alcohol to speak of in more than 15 years and yet emotionally the past 15 years have been the worst of my entire life.

I've been on all types of different psych medication (currently I'm off all medication), spent a great deal of my prison time in Psych Units and I'm currently in a Maximum Custody Facility. I have no assaults on my record (In the past my weapon had always been my mouth and tongue - James 3:5-8). Please pray for me on this for help from God to control my tongue. As I mentioned earlier in this letter I try to conduct myself in activities that I think a monk in a monastery might do. I've just recently started this with a renewal not before seriously tried. Before my morning meditation I say the rosary after reading either from my bible or some other inspirational material. I try to carry this practice out of my cell when dealing with other prisoners and staff. I'm confined to my cell 23 hours out of a day. I don't have a T.V. or radio so I read...A LOT! I do have access to a General Library as well as the Chaplains Religious Library. Still, it's extremely difficult sometimes to keep my mind busy and not dwell on the monotony of Prison life.

By the Grace of God I try to stay in the day and not allow myself to dwell on the past or future. Well, Deacon Ken, I'll close for now. I hope I haven't overwhelmed you with my ramblings. Please keep me in your prayers and please respond when you can. God Bless you and your wife and your ministry!



Dear D., It is His grace that reveals His existence to you, you did not choose Him, He chose you to bear fruit (John 14:16). You have a humble and teachable spirit.

You ask how you are to approach the bible study, well, first by praying asking the Holy Spirit to teach you what he wants you to know. You want to learn how to live your life the way God has revealed to you through His Word. Then you read the questions and look up the answer with the scripture given at the end of each question. Read all the scriptures and the commentary. This study is to help you develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

D., You are right the tongue can get us in a lot of trouble. What comes out of the mouth is what is stored in the heart. Read what Jesus says in Matthew 12:33-37, by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned. Its helpful when having trouble controlling the tongue to be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (James 1:19). As far as going into ministry, the call comes from God and is confirmed by the Church. If you have been baptized, you have already been called to be priest, prophet, and king. Being in a cell 23 hours a day is tough for anyone. You have chosen to take the lifestyle of a monk. Your reading praying and talking to God will only strengthen you for the day of your resurrection into heaven. God sees your heart and He loves you and loves having all this time with you. You have chosen to sit at the feet of God. When you pray you talk to God when you read and meditate on scripture God talks to you. You have chosen the better part. May God bless you and continue to enlighten you.

DOING TIME WITH JESUS

Dear Deacon Ken, I hope you are well and staying strong. I have transferred to a Max B Facility. It is supposed to be a step down from a Max A. I am finding it much more strict though. But I thank Jesus for bringing me here anyway. Maybe I need more discipline in my life. I just reached the age of 50 years young. I am not grown up yet. I hope to be old when that happens. I have seen God at work in my life in the years that I have been behind the wall. I am happy for that. God has been teaching me to trust Him and let go of my rebellious thoughts and actions. God is showing me that revenge is up to him "not me". This is a hard truth to swallow in a place like prison. Most of the time I pray now for those people who hurt me instead of trying to hurt them back. This seems to alleviate stress among other things. I guess God knew what he was doing when he wrote the bible.

I do miss the last facility I was in. They have a church there named, you won't believe this, St. Dismas. A real nice big old stone built Church, with a great Priest and Deacon. The Church was built by prisoners back in the 1930's.

I received a bible study cycle C from you years ago, and I am hoping to get the next cycle from you and any other Christian material to help me along with my walk with the Lord, if you have any to give that is. The word and prayer changes people. Thank you so much Deacon Ken. Again I hope you are well. By the way the newsletters I get from you bless me and I always pass them on. Thanks again. In His Love, Respectfully, B.F.

St. Dismas Guild: Catholic Evangelization through Scripture and ministry to the prisons.

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Dear B., God disciplines those He loves. Hebrews 12:5-7 says "My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he acknowledges." Endure your trials as "discipline"; God treats you as sons. For what "son" is there whom his father does not discipline?" It's powerful you have seen God work in your life. You also have a humble and teachable heart and spirit. Cycle B of the Bible Study is on its way to you. We have said it before, that is, you can make prison into a seminary where you learn God's way to becoming holy or a cemetery where you go to die. You have chosen to make it a seminary where you are learning and healing. God bless you in your walk with the Lord.

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Dear St. Dismas Guild, I want to thank you for the letters you sent me. And also the Bible and the Pamphlets of the Catholic Faith. I've been a Catholic all my life. I'm 38. The stories in the letters you send me really touch my heart, and give me faith and hope to keep going on. My situation may not be as serious as some of the others. I am doing time for selling drugs. Which I made a mistake and realize it was wrong. I am serving 3 to 6 years. Now I am trying to start my life over. I look forward to going home, and be with my family, that is so important to me. When I read the letters you send me, I realize I am not alone, so please keep sending them.Sincerely, G. G.

G.G., To prepare you to go home we suggest each evening you ask yourself the following questions: How did God help me today? What did He teach me? Where did I see God today? This may be difficult but know He is there with you. These are what we might call an examination of conscience. This is not easy to do in prison but ask the Holy Spirit to help you. Start the day looking for ways God is helping you during the day and what He is trying to teach you. Start to journal or write down your thoughts or answers to those questions. This will equip you when you leave prison to always be able to recognize God's presence. God rose from the dead and left us His Spirit who reminds us of all He did and said. He is alive and is here to strengthen us in this journey towards our heavenly home. May God fill you with His peace.

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Dear Deacon Ken & Marie, Thank you for everything! This past Sunday was my 24th Birthday. For a few days prior to my birthday, I was stressed, depressed, anxious and overwhelmed. After some time of thinking, I came to realize how self-centered & greedy I have been throughout my life. Everything that I have ever needed I've had. My family, my friends, my bible and most importantly God. Only recently I have taken the opportunity to know, learn and live God. I'm glad I have had this chance! I have come to realize that He has a plan for me, that my old way doesn't work. So on my birthday I was flipping through versus and He took me to Ephesians 4:28, it hit me like a ton of bricks. That through Him I have a chance to do something for others, which I would like to do! I'm up for parole this month, and I am not worried whether or not I leave. It's in His plans, He will guide me in what to do. I trust Him. He led me to you, which I'm sure is not wrong. Thank you for everything that you have done so far and are going to do. It is all very much appreciated by myself and many many others! If possible I was wondering if I could get the next cycle (C). I'm enjoying cycle B. It seems to make stuff easier! Once again thank you for everything! Thank you & God bless, P.F.H.

P., thank you for your letter. Happy Belated Birthday. Recognizing self centeredness is a big breakthrough in a persons life. It opens the doors for healing. We are all self centered and need God to change us to be other centered. Only with the grace of God can we think of others as superior to ourselves. Read Philippians 2:1-11 to see how Jesus shows us to have the same attitude that is ours in Him. We all need to learn how to empty ourselves. Ephesians 4:28 is a great scripture. It says, "The thief must no longer steal, but rather labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with one in need." Your right, it is only through Him we can do for others. You have really released your burdens and accepted whatever His plan is for you. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know well the plans I

have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future full of hope." You are on our list to send Cycle C when it comes in from the printer. Thank you again for writing and God bless you.

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Ken & Marie Finn, I wanted to drop a few lines to say that I received the Bible Study you sent me "The Bread of Life". Thank you very much for the study. I also received a newsletter as well. I must say during this rough time I am experiencing I have found a sense of peace from reading the Bible and doing your study. It has been helpful to keep me on the right track and the right frame of mind. I'm trying to change and this material is helping me. Thank you again. L.A.

L.A., Peace is His gift to you. When you have that inner peace you truly have connected with God who is all loving, all caring, and all present. He is the Lord of lords, the King of kings, all worthy of praise, honor and glory. When you really come to believe that you have the peace that no one or no circumstance can take away from you. Praise God for giving that to you.

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Hi St. Dismas Guild, I pray that this letter finds you basking in the Grace and Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I would once again like to thank you for your kindness and understanding. I am quite aware of the fact that life is not getting any easier out there and we, all inmates and free people, must strengthen ourselves in prayer and in faith. God has revealed so many things to me. I have been incarcerated 13 years now and will be released next year May, 2010. From the very first day my sister said to me, "Stand strong in your faith, study the word of God and believe that you are not alone, because God will always be with you."

I have had bad moments, but no bad days. God has placed good people in my life. I know that this is not the end of the journey. The day I am released will be a new beginning...I pray that I never forget how you St. Dismas Guild have given me and many others hope along the way. Thank you D.B.

D.B., Your sister is a wise woman. Thank you for sharing and telling us that we have given you hope along the way. May He continue to fill you with faith, hope and love.

UPDATE

BECOMING A STRONG WOMAN OF GOD CONFERENCE WAS A HUGE SUCCESS. THE TALKS WERE POWERFUL. GO TO OUR WEB-SITE AND SEE HOW YOU CAN OBTAIN THE TAPES. (www.stdismas.org)

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www.40daysforlife.com www.40daysforlife.com/sanmarcos/

We are thankful for all your support, spiritual, emotional, physical, financial, and most especially for those who labor to help us get our materials and newsletter out to those in need. Thank you and my God bless you abundantly.

Your brother and sister in Christ,

Deacon Ken & Marie