



St. Dismas Guild

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

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TESTIMONY

By K.A.

Dear St. Dismas Guild, First and foremost, I'd like to thank Deacon Ken and Marie for the testimonial newsletters that I have been receiving over the years. These newsletters have helped me realize that the hardships of others are a lot worse than my own. Through paying close attention to the grief in the words of my fellow Christians, I've learned to open up my heart to the pain and afflictions of others. I've come to have a type of love for my fellow brothers and sisters that I've never experienced before. I thank my Lord and Savior for blessing me in such a manner and for teaching me how to love others in the same way that His law states His people should. Over this last month, I've opened my heart up completely to my Lord and His Spirit and He has literally spoken to me on more than one occasion and I must say, I've never felt so much contentment or peace in my heart or life. My past life was so riddled with substance abuse and violence that I thought I'd NEVER be able to stop living according to my fleshly desires since my heart was so hardened. My Lord has truly made me a people person; people are so drawn to me now that it is overwhelming. Even my family tends to want me around; my Lord's grace has moved mountains for me. Therefore, I must stay in His Word and stay in fellowship with other Christian brothers and sisters. That is why I'd like to ask if St. Dismas Guild could bless me with a Bible Study course and other Catholic literature so that I may continue sharing the Word and my Lord's Kingdom with other Catholics and new Christians. If my request is possible, thank you so very much. God Bless!

K.A., You truly have been blessed by our Lord. When you can come from a destructive life as you had, we can see that it is only the power of God who can transform you. Turning to Him and allowing Him to mold and melt you and make you into a productive useful instrument for His honor and glory is what has happened in your life. Yes, people want to be around you because they want to be around Jesus and He it is they see in you. Yes, your right, you must stay in His Word and stay in fellowship with like minded people. You have been transformed by the renewal of your mind. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect". God bless you.

DOING TIME WITH JESUS

Dear Deacon Ken and Marie,

First let me thank you for your unselfish devotion to the love, care and hope you give everyone of us inmates inside of these prisons. I've just received the latest newsletter and I can hardly express in words the joy it has given me to receive such an inspirational piece of wisdom. I refer to the letter from T.T. in which you give your reply of repentance. I know in my heart that even though I am in pain being locked inside and away from my children, they are in much more pain because I am not there with them because of my selfish acts. The emotions that I release at night when I'm locked in and can take off my 'prison mask' are so heart rending and unbearable. But through the wisdom and power and love of God, I pull through every day knowing His light shines on myself and my family and through love and hope and living the way of the Lord we will be eventually reunited and can live and prosper as a family once again.

Through my selfish acts, I've been taken away from my precious, innocent children. But I believe it is all in God's plan to put me here for these 2 short years to help me get off that destructive road that Satan had started to lead me down and to show me the light and put me in touch with loving and caring people such as yourselves to help get me on the 'right path' again and live in God's glory forever and ever. Thank you again so very much for helping me in my fight against evil. I shall be forever grateful. Sincerely, R.T.

R.T., it is good that you are sharing those painful emotions with the Lord. He tells you that His grace is sufficient for your needs (2 Cor. 12:9). Stay with Jesus every moment in your day and remember the best way to be healed is to praise and worship Jesus Christ. Remember, the Spirit that lives in you is greater than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). It is not God's plan that you are in prison, it was your plan that landed you in prison. It is God's plan that you look to Him for the strength and desire to repent. That means to change your thoughts and your mind. Renew your mind (Romans 12:2) AND PUT ON THE MIND OF Christ (Philippians 2:5-11). The Holy Spirit lives within you and will help you to be healed and also to heal your family.

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Deacon Ken Finn and Marie Finn, Hello. I have been locked up for three years now for being a felon in possession of a firearm. I have a sentence of fifteen years and eight months. I live with HIV and Hepatitis C. I also suffer from mental health problems. My spirits are pretty low. I had some problems with one of the Mexican gangs the other day. People annoy me a lot and I just want to be away from them all. I live in a three man cell; only locked down during count and night time hours which is cool but I want to be away from everyone. I think about if it would be better if I was locked down in my own cell all the time.

I believe in God and that He sent Jesus Christ to earth to die for my sins and then He arose again later to sit at God's side. I just have a really hard time thinking positive and doing good. I don't pray much anymore. I just feel empty and lost. I keep turning away from God. I want to be good and do what's right. I can't seem to do just that though. I'm always back pedaling. It frustrates me greatly. A fellow inmate gave me one of your newsletters. It uplifted my spirits by reading it. So I decided to write you. I know what I'm seeking. It is God. But can I keep from straying like I always do. I seem to fail at what I do. Can't stay dedicated. I can feel the devil and his evilness interrupting my thoughts everyday. I let him drag me down all the time and I'm sick of it. It's destroying me. I don't know how much more of it I can take. I need a lot of help. I am sick of prison life and the absurdity of it all. These places are a haven for evil. I'm surrounded by it all day. It's driving me insane.

I have problems with remembering what I read, so it dissuades me from reading the Bible. Also, I don't understand much of it. I really don't know what to do. I need help. I can't find the strength to pursue Christianity even though I know it to be the true path to God. If you can possibly help me, please do. Also, could you please send me a Catechism? I am also interested in Fr. Harold P. Paulsen's book, "When I Was in Prison" and "You Visited Me". I don't have the money to buy them. I'm trying to order them through our Library Loan system. Let me know if you have any insight on dealing with my problems. What I really need is someone to talk to. Someone I can trust. I tried that with a fellow inmate but he talked about what I told him to others. I don't know if it turned out for better or worse. Thank you for your time. Take care and my God bless you. Sincerely, D.N.

Hello D, Yes, you can change and yes, you can be healed and no, God does not want you all alone with no one to share the Good News of hope in Jesus Christ. Do you not know that your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body (1 Cor. 6:19-20). It is true when you were baptized, you received the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and your body became the Temple of God. The battleground is your mind. You keep it cleaned up by constantly thinking of and saying whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious (Philippians 4:8). Keep doing this, learn to memorize this scripture and you will defeat the devil. I will be praying with you.

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Dear St. Dismas, I am going to be paroling soon in about 60 days and I'm at a loss as to what to do. I know in my heart I want to stay out of prison but my life is so hard and going to be full of difficulties. I don't think I'm going to be able to stay out very long. I want to change and change my life, come to God, and commit my life to Him. I just don't know how. I am not very close to my family anymore so I don't really have a support group. I'm asking for any advice you can give me on becoming a moral law abiding productive citizen. I've been locked up for most of my life. I can't do this anymore but I need help so I'm asking if you could send me some of the small prayer cards that I can carry with me in my wallet. I would especially like one of the Virgin de Guadalupe if it's possible. I once again thank you for everything you people do for us inmates. It's a blessing from God. Sincerely, A.C.

*A.C. we think our future and we speak our future. You need to start thinking positive thoughts and speaking positive words. Satan cannot read your mind. Prayer is the most powerful weapon in existence. Remember that the fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful. First you confess your sinfulness then you repent which means change from your sinful words and actions. That is what it means to become a righteous man (James 5:16). My beloved brother in Christ, if anyone among you should stray from the truth and someone brings back a sinner from the error of his ways he will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. A.C. when you say you can't change yourself you are absolutely correct. When you ask the Holy Spirit to help you change, it will then happen. When God is within you, you stop being a loser and become a winner in Jesus Christ. Enjoy your freedom and remember, **if you remain in Jesus' word, you will truly be his disciple and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:31-32).** Find the closest Catholic Church, go to confession and get involved in the parish. You will find the truth in the church.*

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Hello, at church today, I was given your info so I can request some things from you that will help me in my spiritual walk as I am really, really lost right now. I need a bible and I would very much like to start bible studies if you can provide those for me. Also, I am really struggling with a lot of hate as I don't know how to forgive people for what they have done and are doing to me with evil intents to make me suffer. So if you can help me by sending things that will lift my spirits out of all this hate I am dealing with to bring my mind to a better place. I would be most grateful. Please pray for me that I may find peace because as soon as I awake--when I can sleep--my mind goes directly to thoughts of my rape while being drugged and then these people had me sent to prison for 10 years on top of everything. How do I get past this as it is eating me up inside? Thank you for listening and thanks for any and all help. Mr. T

Forgive Mr. T. forgive, the Lord is near, have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make all of your requests known to God. Then the peace that passes all understanding will guard your heart

and mind in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7). Mr. T., read this scripture before you go to sleep and read it when you wake up. When you change your thoughts, your mind will become healed and life will become good for you because of your prayer. Repent and believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will send you our book on Overcoming Sexual Abuse. God bless you.

RECEIVING GOD'S GIFT

What is the gift we are asking to receive? It is the gift of the Holy Spirit. He tells us to ask and we will receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened. God will give us the gift of new life in the Spirit. In order to receive the new life God is offering us, we must turn away from those things which block our relationship with God and accept Jesus as our Lord. We have to turn towards God and obedience. The word repentance refers to this change of direction. Turn away from sin turn to God. Repentance involves: 1. Honesty, 2. Humility, 3. Renunciation, and 4. asking forgiveness for what we have done. We must specifically turn away from non-Christian religions, spiritualism, witchcraft, occultism, sexual intercourse outside of marriage, adultery, homosexual acts, murder, robbery, shoplifting, cheating (business deals, on exams), lying, slander, drunkenness, getting "stoned" on drugs. Those who have committed serious sins need sacramental confession in order to complete their process of reconciliation. In order to receive the new life God is offering to us, we must ask him for it in faith, expecting to receive it because he wants us to have it and he promised he would give it to us. Faith means relying on what God has said (Matthew 14:22-33). If you are unable to get to confession to a Priest, say a good act of contrition and as soon as you come in contact with a priest attend the sacrament. Next month we will have a commitment prayer for those who would like to receive the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Questions to reflect on: 1. What do we need to do to receive the new life God is offering? 2. Do you believe God is willing to forgive us and establish new life within us?

TEACHING

There are certain questions that seem to be nagging at us more and more as we go through life. It seems not to be much difference even if we are in a prison of our mind, marriage or one that has real bars on it. Do you have past memories that continue to hurt you? Do you feel there is something holding you back from being the person God created you to be? Has unforgiveness kept you in chains? Do you really believe that God wants to set you free? He wants to heal you right where you are right now. However, we can never be completely free and healed until we forgive: **Forgiveness is the foundation for all healing.** Many times unforgiveness is also accompanied by hate, resentment, revenge, anger and bitterness. Many physical ailments such as arthritis, high blood pressure, stomach problems, colitis, or even heart problems. Unforgiveness can bring all these areas on to any one who refuses to forgive someone who has hurt them. **Saying I can't forgive is translated to I will not forgive.** Forgiveness is a choice of victory, unforgiveness is a choice of defeat. The only way we can become a victor is to stop being a victim. I find that I need to go to a place that is really quiet, where I can be alone and really talk and pray to God. I ask Him first of all to forgive me of my sins and as a believer I take the authority that the Lord has given me and I renounce all the negative forces that Satan has sent against me. I ask the Holy Spirit to reveal these to me so that I can forgive with the strength that comes from Him.

He is Risen – Alleluia May the Lord bless you as you receive His love and forgiveness. The message of the Cross is for you. That message is that you have been forgiven and set free by the blood of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' love, Deacon Ken & Marie