



# St. Dismas Guild

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

[www.stdismas.org](http://www.stdismas.org) June 2011

## TESTIMONY

By  
Michael

What brought me back to the Catholic Church after being away 60 years is a mystery I am still trying to unravel. I was retired from a successful sales career and as a citizen soldier. During my working years I managed to guarantee myself a comfortable retirement, but never regularly thanked God for those blessings. Yet, more and more I was feeling that life had become an endless slog through a dark, deepening, and thickening swamp. I was feeling heavy from a lack of motivation in a post-retirement job going nowhere. I also no longer attended the Mormon Church to which I had converted almost 30 years prior. I went out the door to work in the morning by inertia, came home like a rubber band in the evening to hide until the next day. I was really beginning to dislike the sunrise. My life was in reverse. My wife had moved out over a year before but lived nearby. The company I worked for was going through serious financial issues. My job was no longer fun. And I was having problems with a very difficult, unpredictable new boss. To cap it off, I suffered a panic attack at work during a counseling session with him. I began to feel physically in a way that frightened me. But I really had no one to turn to. At least, that is what I thought.

While driving home from work that day, I heard what I later realized was the Holy Spirit telling me to get inside a church. If I did, he promised, all else would begin to be revealed gradually in time. I knew that the Mormon Church would not be open, but it wouldn't have mattered anyway. Then I remembered that Catholic Churches are usually open from early morning until late evening and early night. In retrospect, I know now that very few times over the years did I ever "hear" God speak to me through the Holy Spirit. Like Ivory Snow, 99 & 44/100 percent of the time I was so involved in worldly matters that I was totally desensitized to any divine intervention. It happened to others but not to me. But that was soon to change.

I stepped into the sanctuary of a neighborhood Catholic Church which I had not regularly attended since 1953. In August 2011 I sat down in the pew of the first Catholic Church I had been in for almost 60 years. I just sort of let it melt around me for the next hour. And I was home! The surroundings were warm, familiar, welcoming. With the soft, morning light coming through the stain glass windows, I felt as if I was inside a rainbow. Since then God has spoken to me countless numbers of times during the liturgies at Mass, prayer, Bible Study, times of contemplation, and through others to instruct me. He's been waiting 60 years also and, man, does he have a lot to say to me. I have to stay focused now to hear and obey his messages.

That is how I came to die in this life and be reborn in a new life; that is how I was resurrected; that is how I, finally, without battle or regret, learned what it meant to do His will and not mine. Nine months later, after almost 60 years of apostasy, I celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation on Easter Vigil this year.

What has it all meant? There is so much time to recover and so much to know that It is all a bit like trying to get a drink of water from a fire hose. Where I felt in the past that to give myself up to Christ was to lose my freedom, I found just the opposite was true when I did. In obeying the will of Jesus Christ, I really don't have to concern myself with how to think, feel, or behave in any given situation. When I gave myself to Him I also gave him my wishy-washy, indifferent attitudes about current critical issues, like

abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage. A man of no conviction for most of my adulthood, I stand for something now.

I am far freer to hear Him, to serve as He wants me to serve, to prepare myself for his judgment. I am learning that to be a bold Catholic is to be a Catholic, a warrior for the cause that Christ died for, our redemption and life everlasting.

Lastly, now that I have given up my will fully to Christ, I notice that the difficult, profane, diabolical things in my life are disappearing. They cannot exist in an atmosphere of sanctifying holiness which belief in Jesus gives me. I also notice that the friends I am making are divine, prayerful, brothers and sisters to Christ himself. Daily I hear, not just read, God's words of love and encouragement and it prepares me to hear more. I attend the Bread of Life Catholic Bible study at my parish. It has confirmed in me a mortal life of constant conversion and perpetual penance. And for all this I am almost certain that God made me wait these 60 years so that when I stepped into the sanctuary that August morning, I would not waver; he would go on to give me the spiritual stamina and strength to take on an enormous responsibility-rescuing my soul to work at his side for the common good.

*Michael, having panic attacks are very frightening. They affect not only your mind but your body as well. It truly is amazing how God took you at your lowest point and touched your heart in Church. You are a temple of the Holy Spirit and as we prepare to celebrate Pentecost we recognize more and more the work of His Spirit in our lives as you have. Pentecost is the day the Holy Spirit was poured out upon His disciples to give us power to go out and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, His love and forgiveness. Philippians 4:6 tells us, "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God." Thank you for sharing your testimony*

## A Testimony For Christ

By Bill

I have life in Christ and through His great mercy, He continues to modify me daily as he Eucharist's my spirit with His body, blood and word. What is most amazing is the amount of change He has accomplished in this sorry sinner. I was born to loving Christian parents who both worked to support our family, leaving the secular world to raise me in complete self centered hedonism. It took me the longest time to listen to Jesus' patient voice and see through His eyes how my self proclaimed "nice guy" was really a fear laden, injured soul desperate for God's love and truth. My obedience to our Lord's commands was made fruitful when I enrolled in Deacon Ken and Marie Finn's BREAD OF LIFE bible study (it's all there in black and white) and learned to "leap in faith" with openness to the Holy Spirit. As anyone who knows me can attest, I am truly a work in progress. But my own dryness and dark distraction are flaking off to a new skin of courageous determination to meet the cross, embrace God's gifts of grace, and forge ahead through the portal that Jesus has flung open. God's powerful Holy Spirit dwells within me, has set me free and hungers to do the same for all who believe. We can all choose to witness His glory! I have written this humble truth.

*Great testimony Bill, we love the new you!*



WE RECEIVED A COUPLE OF LETTERS FROM INMATES FROM SEVER

AL  
STATES  
WHO

## DOING TIME WITH JESUS

EITHER WERE PERSON-ALLY AFFECTED OR HAD FAMILY WHO WERE SERIOUSLY AFFECTED BY THE TORNADOES, FLOODS

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

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AND FIRES. WE WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS.

Dear Deacon Ken and Marie,

First, let me say thank you. I really enjoy reading your newsletter. I have been in prison for 5 years and I still have 5 more years to go. I am supposed to be confirmed as a Catholic on Pentecost Sunday but I'm having second thoughts on becoming Catholic. I wrote a simple letter home to my Mother and I asked her a simple question. Why do I feel like I am receiving more of the Holy Spirit at Catholic Mass than I can at a Protestant Church service? I got a response back from my Mother who at one time was Catholic but she walked away from the Catholic faith. Part of my Mom's letter really confused me. She is trying to tell me that there is no purgatory but I was able to find a lot of scriptures on purgatory and here is something else that my Mom is trying to say about the Catholic faith. She is saying that the Catholic Church that she was at for 18 years told my Mother because she married a divorced man, (my Father) that me and my brother were bastards. Is that true? I did talk with one Deacon at the prison and he said that the Catholic Church would not say something like that and one other question – does the Catholic faith teach on salvation? I just need some more advice. I want to make sure that I'm making the right choice. May God bless and keep you and Marie in His care. Sincerely, JB

*Dear JB, I pray that you will complete your confirmation on Pentecost Sunday. You are experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit is showing you that Christ is present not only in the Holy Word, the Holy Eucharist. The Mass was instituted at night before on the cross. His words were "Take and eat, this is my body," and then from the Chalice, "Drink from it, all of you..." These are not my words but Jesus'. Read Chapter 6 of John and hear how he describes what I just wrote. Look at John 6:66, "As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him." Jesus had just been talking about the Holy Eucharist, eating His body and drinking His blood. In verse 55 Jesus states "For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him." Wow! We can receive His body and His blood every day of the year. We become one with him.*



*You are correct in stating that the scripture shows proof of Purgatory in both the old and New Testament. The Catholic Church is not in evidence of calling children bastard, that's because it teaches that all who believe in His Son become His children. God is our Father, Mary and the Church are our mother and all who believe in Him are our brothers and sisters. Baptism is needed by all of us to be called into heaven. Yes, the Catholic Church teaches on salvation. Jesus is our salvation and He teaches us much about who He is and what He does. Simply, He suffered and died on the cross to pay the ransom for our sins. He left us His Holy Spirit to have the power to defeat evil. He tells us that He will never leave us in His Gospel of John. Stay close to the Lord in our bible study. I pray that your Mom will join you in the Catholic Church and find healing from past hurts. God bless you.*

St. Dismas Guild,

I wrote you a few weeks ago requesting information about saint Demetrius. I received it and would like you to know that I found it very enlightening and to thank you. It had special significance in knowing that "gladiators" were composed of slaves and prisoners and convicts under the Roman system. I always knew that Christianity was outlawed and many were persecuted and imprisoned in that time period, but nowadays, we seem to have the misconception (in prison) that Christianity is a religion for the passive. This is quite a stumbling block for a lot of inmates I come across,

especially since it's false. Many of the saints, like Demetrius, were especially emboldened by the grace of God and faced evil courageously.

I received your newsletter tonight as well. It's a sad fact that it takes many of us (especially myself) to personally experience the destructive power of evil to hate it and turn from it. When I read testimonies like the one from D.N. (the HIV prisoner) on the one hand, I hate to hear what he's going through. On the other hand, look at his hatred of evil now that he sees it up close and personal. The good is that it will cause him to abandon a destructive path to nowhere and just love God for being God, pure and lacking any evil. It always recalls Prov. 3:22 "Whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; and he punishes the ones he calls his sons." Thinking like that, I feel I'm especially blessed that I am constantly condemned and punished every time I commit myself to wickedness. Conversely, all those great sinners and gangsters that everyone thinks are so lucky because they always escape punishment – I think to myself – they're really the unlucky ones because there is absolutely nothing to make them turn from their wickedness and experience the love of Christ. You ever heard "God loves a broken heart"?

God bless y'all & take care, CH

*Thank you C for your point that whom the Lord loves, He disciplines; and He punishes the ones He calls His sons. You stated you are blessed. You feel that discipline because you have experienced there is absolutely nothing to make you turn from your wickedness and turn to repent and experience the love of Christ but His loving hand upon you. God loves a broken heart is stated clearly in Psalm 34:19, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed." God bless you.*

Dear Deacon Ken & Marie,

I pray that your ministry continues to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all for salvation so the end can come. (Matthew 24:14) Friends, you mentioned "repent" before, because we sin, meaning we break God's law. (1John 3:4) Why do we keep breaking God's law by not resting and worshipping God on the Sabbath (our Saturday?) Is not this the fourth commandment of Exodus 20:8? Saint Peter, whom we built the Catholic Faith upon, was a Jew who obeyed God's Ten Commandments including the fourth by keeping the seventh day of the week holy. According to scriptures, God never blessed or sanctified the first day of the week, Sunday. Are we to listen and obey the Holy Spirit speaking to our conscience – or are we to disobey God for the sake of tradition of men and church? Forgive me if my questions appear to be offensive. In the spirit of Christian love, I approach you and wish you the best. I leave you with Christ in me. GF

*Dear G, The Roman Catholic Church celebrates Sunday, the first day of the week, as a day of Sabbath. We celebrate Sabbath on Sunday because Jesus died on Friday and rose early Sunday morning. His resurrection gave us a complete total new beginning which we call salvation. Today almost 350,000,000 people celebrate Sunday as the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week. There are only a few Christian denominations who still celebrate "The Sabbath" on Saturday. I hope this explanation will help you in your own time of worship to our beloved Savior our Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit giving God all glory. God bless you.*

## UPDATE

**LIGHT WEIGH** is coming to St. Mary's. The Light Weigh Bible Study DVD series will have an Orientation on Thursday evening, June 9, 2011, 6:30PM at St. Mary's in Room 10.

**BENEDICTUS** – Ministry for Men – June 25<sup>th</sup> – 8AM-11:30AM – Champagne Village, 8975 Lawrence Welk Dr, Escondido – Go to [www.stdismas.org](http://www.stdismas.org) Link-Benedictus for more information.

Your brother and sister in Christ, Deacon Ken & Marie