



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 B. V.

To Deacon Ken and Marie, I am sorry it has taken over a year since I have picked up a pen and have written this letter. I want to thank you for the newsletter I have been received for the past year and a half. They are very inspiring to me. They've made me believe that there is hope and there is you, who does care for us very much so. I've done so far 3 years on an 18 year prison sentence. I was raised by wonderful parents who tried their best and taught my 2 brothers and I to be responsible, loving and devoted to the Church. My brothers are both law enforcement officers, both older than myself. Unfortunately I had bad influences and drug addiction to meth beginning at the age of 15. I've never been arrested sober but once I lost my father, I began using crack cocaine and meth heavily. I used my father's death as a crutch but in actuality, it was my choice, not Dads.

As I began to use more and more in the course of 4 years, I began getting argumentative toward my daughter's Mom. Then the arguments became destruction of private property, then physical; nothing close at first but pushing her down, punching her. This allowed fear to settle in her towards me. And I found myself on Denver County Jail very often due to my drug outrages, broken promises and neglecting the Lord and my daughter as well. I was always sorry, knowing my daughter witnessed all of this yelling, cursing and her poor Mother crying; and there goes Dad in handcuffs again. Broken promise toward myself, my family and God. I let Satan made Meth continue to destroy my life. I did it! I ruined my life, my relationship with my family and most importantly with my daughter. My last outrage put me in prison for 18 years. I know it's my fault. I haven't talked to my family for 3 years and I can't blame nobody but my drug addicted self.

The Lord has given me one last chance. And 18 years away from temptations, influences and bad choices is just what I need. I know now that I want to live and not die. Well, I'll close this for now and if this letter can inspire others that may be addicted to Meth or inspire others in general, please feel free to share it openly. Thank you once again and I'll be looking forward to all the inspiration of your newsletters for years to come. Take care and God bless you, Sincerely, B.V.

Hello B., I think your letter shows how much Satan is out there prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). We all need to know that the battleground is the mind. When we use mind altering drugs we can expect our minds are being changed and the source of the change is Satan. Alcohol is also a drug that attacks the mind. Scripture tells us "do not conform 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, pleasing and perfect." Drugs prevent you from renewing your mind.. Choose life. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. You can take the 18 years away from temptations and now renew your mind and conform to God's way. I encourage you to rejoice in prayer, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Bless those who curse you and bless them and do not curse them. Jesus Christ also wants you to live and that is why he paid the ransom for your soul with his blood.

DOING TIME WITH JESUS

Dear Deacon Ken & Marie, I want to say thank you for the work you all do at St. Dismas Guild. It has touched a lot of

people, as well as myself, to learn more and feel closer to God through your efforts in reminding us that we're not alone in our struggles through your newsletter and services. Thank you to all the people that share their stories in reminding us all that we are not the only ones facing these struggles.

I don't write often but I thought I'd share a story of prayer and faith. I've been gone 6 1/2 years with 10 left and during that time, my sister hasn't spoken to anyone in the family. Last year though, she started speaking to my aunt. I sent her a Birthday card in April, a thinking of you cards, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years cards with words about how family is important. I told her that if she felt angry or hurt by me, then I'll be here when she's ready but I begged her to talk to her Mother and Father. She has seen my other aunt and all our cousins and I just got a letter from my Aunt about a situation where my sister met and hugged my Mom. They cried and my sister gave Momi her number. My sister's next step is to forgive Papi for remarrying. I will be last, as well as the hardest, since I caused the divorce when I went to prison. I don't know if she'll forgive me or see me, but my prayers have come true. My family is healing out there. I won't be out there for a long time but if my family can come close together again, even without me, then I'm the happiest man alive. Thank God for His blessings, J.T.

Thank you J. for letting the Holy Spirit come into your heart and direct your actions. Scripture tells us in Matthew 5:7, 9, "blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy, blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God." Scripture also tells us about forgiveness in Matthew 6:14-15, "if you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you your transgression. I am thankful that you and your family are receiving the gift of forgiveness. It is very heartbreaking when those closest to us are separated from one another. Its like the two sons in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). It was heartbreaking for the Father that the one son would not be reconciled with his brother. We have to be on guard every day that we do not offend our heavenly Father. Praise God that your family is being reconciled with one another. "Be strong and take heart (J.) all you who hope in the Lord (Psalm 31:25).

Dear Deacon Ken and Marie, My name is William. I am an inmate in Texas. I have been locked up for over two years for a crime I am guilty of. I have just finished reading your book, Secrets of a Happy Family. It is a very helpful book and I wish I had read it many years ago. After reading the Bible many times over the past four years, I have found it would have been very enlightening to me as a Father and a Husband. Because of my crime (my action) I have lost my family. My crime was against a family member. I am now divorced and some of my children I no longer have contact with.

Since I have been incarcerated, God has used this time to develop a closer relationship with me. Well, I should say God was always waiting for me to respond. Now that I have, my life will never be the same. No matter what happens next, whether it be good or bad, God will be with me. To Him I will always turn to. Thank you for all you have done for me and all other prisoners. WL

You are very right; God is waiting for all of us to respond to him. Let him guide you on how to get your life in order. Cleanse your mind of any and all sins. He will never leave

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

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you alone. Pray for each individual that has been hurt by your actions. Ask each individual to forgive you for what you have done. Then let Jesus come into your heart and heal you and your whole family. He will give you a peace that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7). He will give you the strength to truly repent. Scripture tells us who gives us the strength in Zechariah 4:6, "Not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit says the Lord." Remember W. God is good, all the time. Meditate on Psalm 32.

Dear Ken & Marie, I know it's late but my Mom always says, better late than never, so "Happy New Year". It is now 2011. I came to prison in March of 2008 with a sentence of 25 years mandatory. That means I get no good time, it's all day for day. I was young then, well, I'm still young. I will be 26 years old this coming Sunday. The young I am talking about is the one that thinks they know everything and don't care what anybody else says or thinks. Yes, that was me. I did not take kindly to authority. But now I can tell you that kind of attitude will get you nowhere in prison or in what we "locked up" call the 'free world'. In prison, it can get you in close management (C.M.). I'm behind a door 22 hours a day with nothing to do but read, write and talk to myself or now to God!

Some humans (men and women) cannot take it in C.M. The "Authority" that are to help us, treat us like we are stray dogs and they are dog haters. They (the authority) have a saying: 'Brown against Blue', meaning they wear brown and we wear blue. They do anything to make our time a living hell. But I am thankful for C.M. because this is where I took the time to let God into my life and heart. I have not seen my Mom in 4 years but I know if she saw me now, she would be amazed at the way I act now compared to the way I was the last time she saw me. I thank her and you two (Ken and Marie) for caring and not giving up when everybody else did. Ya'll have helped me to know the Lord as my Savior! My life will never be the same. Thank you. In Faith in Christ, D.L.

D, Acts 1:8 states, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." He will bring you peace, and even in prison he will bring you joy. I believe you will be an example of what being a Christian means. D, it means being humble especially to authority, it means imitating Christ. It is not enough to just know God's words we must live it out, yes, even in prison. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives you this power. Christ died on the cross for you and He paid the ransom for your sins and my sins with His blood. Scripture tells us in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life." Romans 13:1 tells us, "Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God." Deuteronomy 30:19 also tells us that we have a choice of life or death and I pray that you choose life daily

Dear Deacon Ken & Marie,

Hi. My name is I.V. and I'm 29 years of age. I have been on the streets since I was 14, running with gangs and doing drugs; ended up being molested and raped through out my life. I even lost my son in the process and now he is up in heaven with my Lord and Savior. I have two beautiful angels, both girls. I have done a lot of wrong turns in my life and drifted away from them and my family. Now I find myself sitting in jail on a charge I didn't commit but the way I see it, I might have done something equally bad in my past and I'm paying for it now. I have decided to leave it in Jesus' hands and let Him do what He will with me. I just pray that I can make it home to make it right for my children and start over fresh and (have) the chance at a **new life**. They don't have Mass here or a Catholic Bible. Please send any and all literature you have to help me. The book that I read that

helped me the most was Victory Outreach book. I want to learn more about Catholicism with me being Catholic and all. I greatly would appreciate it. Thank you,

Dear I., I read your testimony and I wept for you and yet I sense in your words the Lord is very strong within you. He tells us in scripture, Isaiah 43:1, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine." Another scripture is Isaiah 49:15, "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. I think the Lord is saying to you, Do not be afraid, I am with you and I will not forget or leave you. I would recommend that you make an appointment with a priest and receive the sacrament of confession. I would try to spend a lot of time getting back into a relationship with Jesus. We will pray here that you choose life and not death while you are in prison and especially when you get out and go back home. I have a special prayer for you, Jeremiah 29:11, "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. God bless you.

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT –NEW LIFE

John 10:10 says, "A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that you might have life and have it more abundantly." Jesus is offering us a New Life. The Father offers new life to all. Jesus came into the world to bring life. Jesus surrendered to the Spirit during his baptism in the Jordan, and gives the Holy Spirit, as the source of New Life for his disciples. Jesus is a model for accepting the Holy Spirit, who is our helper and our strength. We have been baptized both in water and in the Spirit. Baptism in the Spirit may be a new idea for some of us. It means an ongoing and ever deepening spiritual life. It means a lifetime of graces, fruits, gifts and charisms rooted in our sacramental life.

My life changed when I surrendered to the Lord back in 1974. I was in depression, angry, bitter and resentful and very much feeling unloved. I saw myself as a victim and blamed everyone else, especially my Mom & Dad and my husband for the way I felt. While in this state not even wanting to live anymore I read the passage in the bible on love, 1 Corinthians 13. It said, "Love is patient. Love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury..." This was a powerful turning point in my life. That scripture was like a mirror showing me what I looked like. I was not patient or kind and I brooded over injuries. I saw myself for the first time as a sinner and not as a victim. I cried out to God saying to him, I don't know how to love, please help me. At that moment He flooded me with His grace, and love and forgiveness and said to me "I am going to teach you. It was nothing I did that deserved what He gave me.

From that moment on my New Life began. I believe that day while lying on my bed I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. I had a hunger to know the Lord and began to devour His Word. He spoke to me and started teaching me how to love. He became my Lord and I surrendered all in obedience to His Word.. I am a new creation. I have fallen in love with Jesus Christ and have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit my teacher and guide. I know my Father of Love because Jesus has shown him to me. I have a strong desire to tell everyone about the God who came to earth, lived, died and rose for me so I could have the abundant life. This is my new life which is available to all who come to Him and surrender.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON: 1. What is your understanding of the new life God is offering you?
2. What does making Jesus "Lord of your life" mean to you?

God bless you,
Deacon Ken & Marie