



CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY
FOR THE INCARCERATED
FROM THE ORDER OF MALTA,
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION

The Serving Brother

SPRING 2012
LENTEN EDITION

A Message to the Serving Sisters and Brothers from Cardinal Seán O'Malley

Achieving freedom through Christ

My first homily as a priest was almost my last. As a newly ordained priest I was assigned to prison ministry in the Washington, D.C. area. My first occasion of preaching was to be at a Mass for the inmates.

I was absolutely beside myself in terms of what to say. After praying about the matter I went to the friary library and took down a book on preaching. The author advised new priests to develop a sense of their congregation's concerns and to preach into their horizons.

It was then that I had an inspiration. I decided that I would preach about great escapes in the Bible, to prompt a greater interest in the Word of God among the inmates. I preached about Daniel in the lion's den, the seven young men in the furnace, and St. Paul being lowered over the wall of Damascus in a basket.

I must say I had the congregation's full attention. Unfortunately, that night seven men escaped from the prison, which led me to expect that I delivered my first and last homily. Blessedly, the authorities and my superiors agreed to give me a second chance.

The good news for all of us is that

Jesus is always ready to welcome us, or to welcome us back, no matter where we are or what our circumstance. He has broken the bonds of sin and death so that we can share in the gifts of His freedom and His peace. We all have the opportunity to experience a new beginning in Christ, following His plan for our lives, the path that leads to meaning and happiness.

We can achieve a greater understanding of God's presence in our lives and His will for us when we take time for prayer, time to be with the Lord and to allow Him to be with us. We are called to be disciples of Christ, always learning more about the Lord and seeking opportunities to serve as a witness to His love, for the good of others.

May Jesus' gift of new life and His promise to be with us always be a source of strength and peace for you. Be assured of my prayers for you and your loved ones and know that your intentions will all be remembered at my celebration of Mass. ✠

Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., has served as the Bishop of the dioceses of St. Thomas, VI; Fall River, MA; and Palm Beach, FL. He was appointed Archbishop of Boston in 2003, and named a Cardinal in 2006.



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Mr. Roman J. Cieciewicz, KMOB
Delegate of Communications

Address Correspondence to:
The Order of Malta
1247 Kilborn
Ottawa, ON K1H 6K9



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A Spiritual Message from Father George

God's love is greater than your crime

I wear a silver medal of St. Dismas, “The Good Thief.” He is considered the patron saint of prisoners because – like the prisoner Jesus – he was condemned and put to death by the authorities of his time.

In the Catholic Chapel at San Quentin, we have the original painting of St. Dismas that you see printed in this edition of The Serving Brother. The man who painted it is still here on California's death row.

We don't know much about “The Good Thief.” The name Dismas, (like the name Gestas for the “not-so-good” thief crucified with him) is not in scripture. Christians probably gave them these names long after they died. Stories about people in the Bible have always been popular, and sometimes the stories are only loosely based on actual events in the Bible. For example, there is a wonderful legend about how Dismas as a young man met Mary and Joseph as they fled for their lives to Egypt with the newborn baby Jesus. The legend says that he intended to rob them, but seeing they were poor like him, he felt pity for them and let them go. His act of mercy prompted Mary (in some versions of the story, the baby Jesus himself!) to tell him he would be rewarded one day for his mercy.

Since he ended up being crucified, an execution used only for slaves and the most despised criminals, we can probably assume he was not a regular church-goer. Chances are he had led a very sinful and selfish life. But despite all that, his simple acceptance of Jesus at the end of his life, in the middle of his execution, no less – was enough to guarantee him Salvation and his place with God in heaven. He is a good example of how salvation is not based on our good deeds, but rather our salvation is a free gift from God. We can't earn our way into heaven, and we don't have to: Jesus did that for us. All we have to do is accept his gift of love and forgiveness.

Surely if he could get into heaven, so can you. It's so simple really; God's love is already with you. All you need do is say Yes to Jesus Christ and let him begin to transform your life.

The story I wrote in this edition about St. Dismas is an example of what Saint Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuit order, meant by “using our imagination in prayer.” God gave us our imagination, so it is good. We can enter into the Gospel stories anytime we want

Mass readings for the spring

WEEK	MON	TUES	WEDS	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
Feb 27-Mar 4	Lv 19:1-2, 11-18 Mt 25:31-46	Is 55:10-11 Mt 6:7-15	Jon 3:1-10 Lk 11:29-32	Est C:12-25 Mt 7:7-12	Ez 18:21-28 Mt 5:20-26	Dt 26:16-19 Mt 5:43-48	Gn 22:1-2, 9a-18 Rom 8:31a-34 Mk 9:2-10
March 5-11	Dn 9:4b-10 Lk 6:36-38	Is 1:10, 16-20 Mt 23:1-12	Jer 18:18-20 Mt 20:17-28	Jer 17:5-10 Lk 16:19-31	Gn 37:3-4, 12-13a 17b-28a Mt 21:33-46	Mi 7:14-15, 18-20 Lk 15:1-3, 11-32	Ex 20:1-17 1Cor 1:22-25 Jn 2:13-25
March 12-18	2 Kgs 5:1-15b Lk 4:24-30	Dn 3:25-43 Mt 18:21-35	Dt 4:1, 5-9 Mt 5:17-19	Jer 7:23-28 Lk 11:14-23	Hos 14:2-10 Mk 12:28-34	Hos 6:1-6 Lk 18:9-14	2Chr 36:14-23 Eph 2:4-10 Jn 3:14-21
March 19-25	2 Sm 7:4-16 Rom 4:13-22 Mt 1:16-24a	Ez 47:1-12 Jn 5:1-16	Is 49:8-15 Jn 5:17-30	Ex 32:7-14 Jn 5:31-47	Wis 2:1a, 12-22 Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30	Jer 11:18-20 Jn 7:40-53	Jer 31:31-34 Heb 5:7-9 Jn 12:20-33
Mar 26-Apr 1	Is 7:10-14; 8:10 Heb 10:4-10 Lk 1:26-38	Nm 21:4-9 Jn 8:21-30	Dn 3:14-20, 91-95 Jn 8:31-42	Gn 17:3-9 Jn 8:51-59	Jer 20:10-13 Jn 10:31-42	Ez 37:21-28 Jn 11:45-56	Mk 11:1-10 Is 50:4-7, Phil 2:6-11 Mk 14:1-15:47
April 2-8	Is 42:1-7 Jn 12:1-11	Is 49:1-6 Jn 13:21-33, 36-38	Is 50:4-9a Mt 26:14-25	Ex 12:1-8, 11-14 1 Cor 11:23-26	Is 52:13-53:12 Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9	Ez 36:16-28 Rom 6:3-11	Acts 10:34a, 37-43 Col 3:1-4 Jn 20:1-9
April 9-15	Acts 2:14, 22-33 Mt 28:8-15	Acts 2:36-41 Jn 20:11-18	Acts 3:1-10 Lk 24:13-35	Acts 3:11-26 Lk 24:35-48	Acts 4:1-12 Jn 21:1-14	Acts 4:13-21 Mk 16:9-15	Acts 4:32-35 1 Jn 5:1-6 Jn 20:19-31
April 16-22	Acts 4:23-31 Jn 3:1-8	Acts 4:32-37 Jn 3:7b-15	Acts 5:17-26 Jn 3:16-21	Acts 5:27-33 Jn 3:31-36	Acts 5:34-42 Jn 6:1-15	Acts 6:1-7 Jn 6:16-21	Acts 3:13-15, 17-19 1 Jn 2:1-5a Lk 24:35-48
Apr 23-29	Acts 6:8-15 Jn 6:22-29	Acts 7:51-8:1a Jn 6:30-35	1 Pt 5:5b-14 Mk 16:15-20	Acts 8:26-40 Jn 14:6-10	Acts 9:1-20 Jn 6:52-59	Acts 9:31-32 Jn 6:60-69	Acts 4:8-12 1 Jn 3:1-2 Jn 10:11-18
Apr 30-May 6	Acts 11:1-18 Jn 10:11-18	Acts 11:19-26 Jn 10:22-30	Acts 12:24-13:5a Jn 12:44-50	1 Cor 15:1-8 Jn 13:16-20	Acts 13:26-33 Jn 14:1-6	Acts 13:44-52 Jn 14:7-14	Acts 9:26-31 1 Jn 3:18-24 Jn 15:1-8
May 7-13	Acts 14:5-18 Jn 14:21-26	Acts 14:19-28 Jn 14:27-31a	Acts 15:1-6 Jn 15:1-8	Acts 15:7-21 Jn 15:9-11	Acts 15:22-31 Jn 15:12-17	Acts 16:1-10 Jn 15:18-21	Acts 10:25-48 1 Jn 4:7-10 Jn 15:9-17
May 14-20	Acts 1:15-17, 20-26 Jn 15:9-17	Acts 16:22-34 Jn 16:5-11	Acts 17:15, 22; 18:1 Jn 16:12-15	Acts 1:1-11 Eph 4:1-13 Mk 16:15-20	Acts 18:9-18 Jn 16:20-23	Acts 18:23-28 Jn 16:23b-28	Acts 1:15-26 1 Jn 4:11-16 Jn 17:11b-19
May 21-27	Acts 19:1-8 Jn 16:29-33	Acts 20:17-27 Jn 17:1-11a	Acts 20:28-38 Jn 17:11b-19	Acts 22:30; 23:6-11 Jn 17:20-26	Acts 25:13b-21 Jn 21:15-19	Acts 28:16-20, 30-31 Jn 21:20-25	Acts 2:1-11 1 Cor 12:3b-13 Jn 20:19-23

in our imagination, making the people and the stories come alive for us. We believe God often works through the gift of our imagination to help us know Him better.

This story is not meant to be interpreted as true, and is only scriptural insofar as it describes the last words between the Good Thief and Jesus. The

other details I made up to create a story that hopefully might capture a little of what the Good Thief's life was like.

The important thing to take away is that no matter what, as long as we have breath in our bodies, it is not too late to change, to find healing, forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ. ✖

Father George T. Williams SJ, Editor of The Serving Brother, is Chaplain of San Quentin State Prison. Opened in July 1852, San Quentin is the oldest prison in California, and houses over 6,000 men, including more than 700 on death row.

“I too was crucified on Golgotha...”

A story by Father George

People call me the “Good Thief,” but I’m not so sure about the “good” part. My real name is Dismas. I want to tell you how after a lifetime of selfishness and pain, when all seemed lost, I found forgiveness and mercy from God.

When I was 7 years old, me and my brothers were sold into slavery. We were split up and I never saw them again. I suffered years of hard work and cruelty. No one cared for me or helped me, and I learned to take what I needed whenever I got the chance. I was angry and bitter, and closed my heart to others because inside, I was so hurt and so alone.

When I was 15 years old I escaped. A gang took me in, and we worked the desert roads, robbing travelers. I met my friend and partner Gestas on the road going from Jerusalem toward Egypt, and learned a lot from him.

Late one night we started out to rob a man traveling at night with his young wife. They were scared, like they were running away from something bad even before they saw us coming. I saw they had nothing, and then realized the girl had a sleeping newborn baby in her arms. Gestas wanted to steal their donkey, but I stopped him. I knew the baby would never survive the desert. I never forgot the eyes of the girl – she seemed to see into my very soul and she said to me, “God will bless you one day for this.” I laughed at the thought.

For the next thirty years I went on,

stealing and using people. I was full of hate, and my life was lonely and empty. No drink or drug could fill the emptiness in my heart.

When Gestas and I got arrested for the last time, we were in Jerusalem. It was just before Passover, and the city was crowded with visitors, a thief’s paradise! But as luck

would have it, the cops grabbed us in the marketplace red-handed. We knew the punishment was death.

It was Thursday night when they threw us in jail. And then later, they threw this Jesus of Nazareth in with us – he had been badly beaten.

First thing in the morning they led us out to the street. But the crowd ignored us, and was shouting at Jesus: “Crucify him!”

The guards made us carry our crosses up the hill, to the place called The Skull where they made a public show of the crucifixions. It was hot and the wood cut into our shoulders.

When we reached the execution place, they kicked us to the ground, stretched our arms out and tied them to the crossbeam. A guard knelt on my arm and hammered a long nail through my wrist into the wood. It hurt like I was on fire! He did the same to my other wrist and then my feet. And when they lifted my cross upright, I could hardly breathe.

The crowd mocked Jesus. It didn’t surprise me when Gestas started in on him: “Hey, if you’re really the Son of God, save yourself, and us too!”

I looked over at Jesus. His blood covered the cross like paint, and for the



Original painting in San Quentin Catholic Chapel by Fernando Caro

first time in my life I felt like someone was getting a worse deal than me. I said, “Shut up Gestas! He’s innocent, not like us – we’re getting what we deserve.”

Jesus looked straight at me, with a look of acceptance and kindness, what I now realize was love. I felt all my loneliness, shame and hatred drop away, like chains broken. It was like all the suffering in my life had led me to Jesus and this moment. All at once I felt the power of God’s love and forgiveness. He had

loved me all along; I was just too blinded by my hurt to see it.

I said “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!”

Gasping for breath, Jesus said to me: “Dismas, I tell you; today you will be with me in paradise!”

And I died that day, a free man. ✠

By imagining the details behind Scriptural stories – as in this fictional retelling of Dismas’ story – we can realize greater insights about the meaning and relevance of the Gospel to our lives.

Message of the Divine Mercy from Dr. Bryan Thatcher

Jesus, Have Mercy on Me!

Is it ever too late to receive God’s mercy? I remember as a child reading about St. Therese of Liseaux (“the Little Flower”), and how she wrote about a condemned sinner named Pranzini. This man had continually refused God’s mercy and it seemed would die as unrepentant; she prayed for him and asked God to give her a sign of Pranzini’s repentance to encourage her. As Pranzini was walking up the steps to the guillotine, he suddenly turned to the priest beside him and grasped and kissed the crucifix before him! God’s mercy flowed to Pranzini; her prayers had been answered.

The “Good Thief” to the right of Jesus at the crucifixion also was a recipient of God’s great mercy at the end of his life on Earth. Scripture tells us that there was a criminal on either side of Jesus being crucified; the one on the left, the rulers, the soldiers, and many of the crowd mocked Jesus as he died on the cross. But it was Dismas who said to the other criminal, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power.” And he said to him,

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Lk 23:40-43)

Many of us go through life thinking that are sins have been so terrible, so numerous, and so heinous that we could never receive God’s mercy. But the message of Divine Mercy tells us that His mercy is endless, unfathomable, and ours for the asking. He told St. Faustina, “the greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My mercy.” (Diary, 723)

Try not to look back and try not to look too far forward. Stay in the moment, and, as St. Paul writes, let us try to keep our eyes on the finish line. God never gives up on us, so let us never give up on ourselves.

Do not doubt God’s mercy, and take comfort in the words, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.” (Jn 3:16) ✠



Bryan Thatcher, MD is the Director of the Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy, 10016 Park Place Ave, Riverview, FL 33569 (877)380-0727 eadm@marian.org



Christ Leaving the Praetorium Painting by Gustave Doré (French, c. 1873)

Participate in our Order's rich heritage in this May's annual pilgrimage to the shrine at Lourdes

The Order of Malta's 54th annual international pilgrimage to Lourdes will take place 2 May – 8 May 2012. In excess of 6,000 order members, malades and volunteers from some 35 countries attend annually. They all join in prayer and procession to honour the shrine where, 154 years ago a fourteen-year-old girl named Bernadette Soubiroux received visions of the virgin Mary.

Since then, the site has become one of the most visited religious shrines in the world. Pilgrims come from every corner of the globe to seek peace and succour, in a place where the sick are surrounded by love and care and every pilgrim, whatever his need, is aware of the serenity of the environment. Pope John Paul II visited Lourdes in August of 2004 and had made Marian piety one of the centerpieces of his papacy.

As Knights, Dames and volunteers of the Order of Malta, the Lourdes pilgrimage reminds of our duty to our lords the sick, and fulfills our commitment to participate in this, one of the

Order's greatest works. The role of pilgrimage and the care of those who undertake Christian pilgrimage has been central to the ethos of our Order from its beginnings, and thus provides members with a direct link to our very foundations so many centuries ago.

Even if you cannot leave the prison physically, you can still make this pilgrimage in spirit, with your prayers offered up by the faithful in your name at Lourdes. All you need to do is pray about what healing you or a loved one needs, and then mail your prayer requests to us by April 26th. Your letter will be presented to God at the very spot where the Virgin Mary appeared to St. Bernadette. Mail prayer requests to:

The 2012 Pilgrim-In-Spirit Program
c/o The Knights and Dames of Malta
105 Park Street
Waterloo, ON N2L 1Y3

You can also join in a deep communion with your fellow pilgrims by saying the rosary each day of the journey, from 2 May – 8 May.

What is a Serving Brother?

The Order of Malta is one of the oldest institutions of Western and Christian civilization. During its early history as a military force, the Knights of Malta required the support of many helpers. One such group of helpers was known as "Serving Brothers."

These men assisted the Knights when called to fight, and also served the Chaplains in tending to the sick. While not members of the Order, they fully embraced its values and lifestyle. Anyone may spiritually participate as a Serving Brother or Sister by actively participating in the life of the Roman Catholic Church, including regular attendance at worship services, keeping up with seasonal bible readings, saying the rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet, studying our Faith and staying true to the admonitions of our Lord Jesus Christ, guided by the teachings of the Church.

An introduction to the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta (SMOM)

The SMOM is an international religious order recognized by a decree of Pope Pascal II in 1113. Led by the Knights of Justice who are professed Friars, its Grand Master holds the rank of Cardinal. Most of its 13,000 Knights and Dames are not under vows, but are devoted to developing their spirituality, serving the faith and caring for the sick, poor and outcast.

The influence of the Order in Canada dates back to the colonial era, when several Knights inhabited Acadia and New France. The first Governor General of New France, Huault de Montmagny, was a professed knight of the Order. The Canadian Association was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation by federal charter on January 27, 1953.

Give your brain a workout!

Sudoku Puzzle

		5		7	2			
1				6	3		4	
	7				8	5		
		9		5		4		
6		3				1		5
		8		3		2		
		1	7				5	
	6		3	4				1
			6	2		8		

Sudoku Directions – Fill each square with the numbers 1-9. No number can appear twice within the same row, the same column, or within the same frame of nine squares.

ANSWERS ON BACK PAGE

Brain Teasers

Take the letters ERGRO. Put three letters in front of it, and the same three letters behind to form a common English word.

The letters in the words WESTERN VIDEO can be rearranged into the name of a famous singer. Who?

Peter picked one pepper more than Paul. Pat picked one pepper more than Pam. Peter and Paul picked 10 more peppers than Pat and Pam. Peter, Paul, Pat and Pam picked 60 peppers. How many peppers did Peter pick?

A man died, leaving \$10 million to his widow, 5 sons and 4 daughters. Each son received twice as much as each daughter, and the widow received three times as much as any son. How much did the widow receive?

The Church Without Walls Program

The SMOM founded the Jerosolimitan Nuns in 1585 in Valleta, Malta, where the community thrives to this day. Joining hands with the Knights and Dames of the Order throughout the USA and Canada in seeking to serve you, these holy women invite you to pray with them throughout the day.

Based on Toronto time, the Sisters pray at 1:45am, 5:15am, 7-8am, 9:00am (Rosary), 12:10pm and 2:30pm. If you miss these times, complete the Mass Readings

as you can, knowing that the “Nuns of Malta” – and a growing group of Serving Sisters and Brothers – are praying with you and for you.

You may also send prayer requests to:

The Mother Prioress
 Jerosolimitan Nuns
 Saint Ursula Monastery
 Saint Ursula Street
 Valletta VLT 1235
 Malta EU

An Easter Message from the Nuns of Malta

Dear Friend,

Believe it or not, Easter is near! This is a great occasion, even if it may not feel that way right now. Maybe you don’t often think about God – or maybe you even blame Him for the difficult circumstances that you are in. But we’d like to put forward an idea for you to consider. Maybe it will open the door, to let a little light shine in your life – the light which you are seeking.

We ask that you try to stop looking at the “side of the coin” which you now see, but rather flip it over to see the other side. Give yourself time to take a good look at that other side, as it can have engraved images which you haven’t noticed before. Just so, give God a chance this year and it could truly be a New Year for you. He would love to show you things which so far you haven’t paid attention to. Things which may make a huge difference in your life.

Perhaps for the first time you may taste His true love. Maybe so far you have desperately sought such love in others and found nothing. You see, God is truly different, truly the opposite of those who may have abused you and helped to get you into the hell you may feel that you are in.

In Easter, His death and resurrection mean that He cares enough about us to open the gates of Heaven for us. Yes, the

gates of Heaven! Do not, dear friend, think that Heaven is not for you!

We at the Monastery of St. Ursula, in the heart of the capital city of the island of Malta, are daily praying for you to make a safe journey Home. For that is what Heaven is: our Heavenly Home, which Christ opened for us through the price of His blood.

Should you wish to share your thoughts with us, we look forward to hearing from you! Until then, HAPPY EASTER to you and to those whom you love! ❄️

Sr. Christine Maria Vella & the Sisters of the Monastery of St. Ursula, Malta

Puzzle solutions

(1) Underground
 (2) Stevie Wonder
 (3) 18
 (4) \$3 million to the wife, \$1 million to each son

4	8	5	9	7	2	3	1	6
1	9	2	5	6	3	7	4	8
3	7	6	4	1	8	5	9	2
7	1	9	2	5	6	4	8	3
5	4	8	1	3	7	2	6	9
2	3	1	7	8	9	4	1	7
6	8	2	3	8	9	4	1	5
9	6	5	9	6	8	9	6	4
8	6	7	3	4	5	9	2	1
9	5	4	6	2	1	8	3	7