



St. Dismas Guild

March 2019

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

PO Box 2129, Escondido, CA, 92033 – www.stdismasguild.org

Last month we sent 142 Packages and 4,000 Newsletters,
Free of Charge, because of your generous support.
Thank you for helping us continue to spread God's message of Mercy and Love!



TESTIMONY

I was baptized at birth and confirmed at 14 but was never, really, Catholic or even Christian. My mother was a non-practicing Catholic and considered herself a free-thinking Christian: dad converted to Hinduism in college. By 18, I was an atheist, A and B student in high school, Dean's honor list in college and suicidally depressed. When the Colt 45 misfired, it convinced me that I could do nothing right, not even kill myself.

I turn to secular assistance and not only sought psychological help but studied psychology and became a behavior therapist. Soon I was married, had two wonderful children, was very successful in my position as an educational psychologist, and was still depressed and anxious. I now had skills to mediate these symptoms, but the pain remained like a relative who had overstayed their welcome. Medications helped some but had disturbing side effects.

I turned to an ever-increasing number of activities to distract myself from my misery. I threw myself into helping family and friends which made me feel loved by those I helped and loathed by those whom I opposed. I was not a man to cross at the time. I was vindictive, living by the motto, "forgive everyone, but forget nothing." My bitterness was projected as bilious rancor into my personal relationships. I turned to addictive behaviors, and collecting things soon became collecting pornography. My father's drug of choice was now my own and I was a pornography addict.

My arrest at age 42 was a shattering event in my life, family and friends. I was left destitute, friendless, totally alone. It was at this lowest of points, considering suicide again, that I discovered something wonderful. I was not alone, and never had been. God had been there all the time, by me, with me, in me, and for me. For the first time, I turned to Him and surrendered my will to His divine plans.

I knew that the Catholic Church could not possibly be the 'right' one, so I studied the Protestant Bible and took many different Bible study courses. I found that, by reading for one hour a day, I could read the Bible from cover to cover four times a year. I did this for several years. As I completed course after course, I realize that no one seem to agree on what the Bible said. Every denomination seemed to have a different reading on the same text and often the reading I had was not the same as the 'correct' answer in the course.

Many certificates later, and after numerous arguments with jail house ministers and Bible study mentors, I concluded that the only denomination I could join would be called the Church of Malcontents. I stopped attending services and studied on my own. This proved to be a poor decision, as I became isolated and my support group diminished. A friend invited me to attend mass with them, and for reasons that can only be explained as supernatural, I agreed.

I was home! Father Matthew was a man of great intellect and deep spiritual awareness. He heard my first confession in nearly 40 years and the experience was nothing short of miraculous. After 2 years, Father

Matthew retired, and I again withdrew from services and turned to Catholic TV. I was then moved to a new prison and Catholic TV turned out to be a wonderful transition from the old Community to this new one. I am now in the process of becoming more and more involved with the Catholic community at this prison.

For the first time in my life, I can say that I am in remission from my depression. For the first time, I can openly admit that I was molested as a child (having nothing to do with the church) and that my depression came, not from the molest, but my family's disbelief. I have forgiven my molester and my family, and this time I forgot as well. I have studied, and continue to study, the catechism which I understand and submit to. I pray the rosary almost daily. Much like Jonah, I tried everything to avoid doing His will and He still blessed me and brought me home.

Dear P.W., Your testimony is so powerful in seeing how much God loves you and how His hand is upon you. It was God's hand that prevented that Colt 45 from misfiring, "And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those He has given me but raise them up at the last day" John 6:39. It was God's hand that Healed you of depression and anxiety. It is God's hand that is Healing you of addictive behavior. Healing is a process and it takes time. It was God's great Love for you that drew you into repentance and confession of your sinfulness. Admitting you are a sinner and in need of a Savior directed you to the Mass, where Jesus is alive and where the scriptures continue to teach you and mold you into His likeness. Thank you for sharing your testimony that shows clearly how God is with us even in our bad decisions drawing us to Himself. Jeremiah 29:11

DOING TIME WITH JESUS

Dear St. Dismas Guild, Before I start -- thank you, Our God, for people like you. I read the Basic Catechism and it touched my heart to be that follower of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and Our Mother of God, Mary, who loves us dearly.

In the picture of Mary on the Basic Catechism she looked so real that I see her blush red and tears come down her face. I love her like I love the Father and Son of the Mother of God whom I love with all my heart. Thank you for sending me the understanding of a true Christian. Sincerely, C.L.C.

Dear C.L.C., When Jesus, the creator of the universe died on the cross, He had no material possessions... no money or house, and even His clothing was divided up between those who crucified Him. But there was one thing precious to Him, His Mother. In His great love, He gave this precious gift to us. Mary loves and intercedes for us as only a mother can and in turn, all she asks of us is to "Do whatever He tells you" John 2:5. Holy Mary, Mother of God, (and my mother) pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

SACRED TRADITION

THE CHURCH'S DEDICATION FOR MARCH

2019: The month of March is dedicated to St. Joseph. The Solemnity of St. Joseph is a special landmark in which we will celebrate the great honor bestowed upon the foster father of Jesus. The first five days of March fall during the liturgical season known as **Ordinary Time** which is represented by the liturgical color green. The remainder of the month falls during the liturgical season of **Lent** which is represented by the liturgical color purple — a symbol of penance, mortification and the sorrow of a contrite heart. As we continue our journey "up to Jerusalem" during the month, three prominent ideas are proposed for our contemplation by the liturgy of Lent: The Passion and Resurrection of Christ, Baptism and Penance. (catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/overview)

POPE FRANCIS PRAYER INTENTION:

Evangelization – Christian Communities

That Christian communities, especially those who are persecuted, feel that they are close to Christ and have their rights respected.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

By Fr. Richard

Can you explain to me what "Advent" and "Lent" are, and what all of the "Holy Days" are and the meaning of each one of them?

Advent means "the coming" to us of our God. We celebrate it for 4 weeks in anticipation of Jesus' birth at Christmas and his being shown to us at the Epiphany. At the same time, we celebrate that Jesus will come again on the last day as He promised.

Lent is a variation on the word length, that is the lengthening of daylight hours in Spring. It is the season of 40 days of Penance in imitation of Jesus' 40 days of prayer and fasting in the desert before He began His public ministry. While this time united Jesus more closely to the Father and ministry, it also purifies us from our sins. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends just before the Lord's supper Mass on Holy Thursday.

The 3 holy days of the sacred triduum (3) are Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. During this time, we celebrate that Jesus established the new covenant to take away sins and to clothe us with resurrected bodies so that we could live with God forever in heaven.

He established this covenant in the classic biblical way. Man eats a meal with God, the apostles with Jesus. A blood sacrifice is offered, this time the body of Jesus and not just an animal. We are commanded to do this in His memory. The proof that the covenant is valid is the Resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday.

FAMILY MINISTRY

"Whatever you do for your family, your children, your husband, your wife, you do for God. All we do, our prayers our work our suffering, is for Jesus." Mother Teresa

Living in today's culture, I am always seeking ways to bring Jesus into the daily moments of my children. Whether a family member had a good day at school or a bad day, whether someone hurt their feelings, or they hurt someone else's feelings, we talk about the day, give thanks and also ask for help. As we say our nightly prayers together, we each say one thing that we are sorry for and ask for Jesus's help in the next day.

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

www.stdismasguild.org . PO Box 2129 Escondido CA 92033

Two simple questions help us end our day: What did I do TO Jesus today? What did I do FOR Jesus today? We then say the Act of Contrition prayer.

PRO-LIFE

For some reason #ShoutYourAbortion has become a popular hashtag on Twitter and so I decided to join the discussion with my #ShoutYourAbortion REGRET Story!!! - Unfortunately, I've had 3 abortions...

REGRET #1 I was engaged at 17, got pregnant and His mother told me what to do, she didn't ask me/us, she just said, this is what you will do! Needless to say, we didn't stay together. I proceeded to numb myself with drugs and alcohol...

REGRET #2 9 yrs. later - pregnant again, I thought, I know what to do, I've done this before, it's legal right? But a little harder this time to get up on that table and "remove a clump of cells" or so I was told. I wondered why it was so hard this time. Maybe my conscious was waking up...

REGRET #3 6 months later, I'm pregnant again! I've done this before, it's legal right? But much harder this time! I asked the nurse and the Doctor how they could be doing this, it didn't seem right! "Just lay back and look at the ceiling" - I stared at 2 crossbeams - the cross of Christ, I ignored Him... He wasn't allowed in my life at this time. How could He be after all that I had done?

But my conscious was fully awake now! I had done horrible things in my life. I soon met my husband to be, but I was ashamed of myself and would not let him love me. We started attending mass together and I started RCIA classes, and was baptized, and confirmed into the Catholic Church on March 25th – St. Dismas Feast Day! All my sins washed away... but I had survivors' guilt and punished myself for almost 30 years. It was very hard to bond w/my children. A few years ago, I finally attended a post abortion healing retreat and found relief, but I had to tell my adult children my regret/shame and ask for their forgiveness! I am healing but will ALWAYS REGRET taking the lives of my children. ~ S.S.

Dear S.S., God does not make mistakes. When He created man and woman His first order was to, "be fruitful and multiply", Genesis 1:28. The scars or regrets that you carry will be with you the rest of your life as Jesus scars were with Him when He showed them to Thomas after the resurrection. Men and women are coming together every day creating, with God, new life and all life is precious to Him no matter what the circumstances of the pregnancy. We are so blessed to have a God that Loves us so much He came to save us from all our sins and leaves us His own life within us at our baptism. "You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is within--the Spirit you have received from God." 1 Corinthians 6:19

RESOURCE

ST. DISMAS FEAST DAY - March 25th

Patron Saint of Prisoners.

"The Penitent thief" also known as the "Thief on the Cross" or the "Good Thief", is an unnamed character mentioned in the Gospel of Luke who was crucified alongside Jesus and asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom.

St. Dismas, pray for us...



St. Dismas
"The Good Thief"
ca. 33
Memorial - 25 March