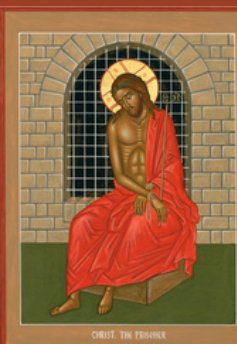


February 2024

Valentine's Day

tcpm.prayers@gmail.com

"I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."
Matthew 25:36



WHAT THE COMMON GOOD ASKS OF EACH PERSON IS TO SEE THE PRISONER AS NEIGHBOR WHO WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE.

THERE IS MORE MERCY IN CHRIST



than there is sin in us.

From Father Stan Sledz...



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent and Valentine's Day, are on the same day this year! That's because of the calculation of the date of Easter.

If I remember correctly, (according to the Roman Catholic calendar,) Easter is on the first Sunday after the first full moon in spring.

Anyhow, these two events are not necessarily in conflict. Both are, and should be, about LOVE! Granted, Valentine's Day is about romantic love, or family love. and Jesus describes us as His Spouse!

More importantly, fasting and penance are not meant to be acts of pain or done out of self-loathing. Jesus, after His Baptism by John the Baptist, went into the desert to be prayerful with His Father, which should be peaceful (and it was for Him,) and to be grateful for the Grace to overcome evil, sin, and the devil!

So the main thing for us is not to dread the practices of Lent, but pray to experience a graced time to discern our values and habits.

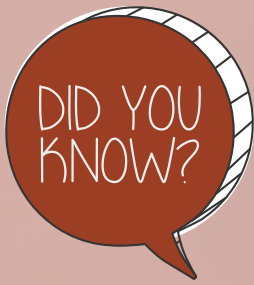
Have we been ignoring God or our Sisters and Brothers? Have we been cruel to them? Granted, acts of penance are not fun or pleasant, but they are meant to be a graced time to be honest with ourselves and keep praying to rise,, embrace, and to be embraced by our Beloved Creator and Savior! Pray to grow in Holiness!

Your brother, Fr. Stan 🙏❤️

PRAYING FOR INMATES

Pray for Connection

Part of growing in faith involves finding a community where you can grow. Pray for inmates to reach out to their chaplain's office and to other believers to find a community of Christians where they can all praise God.



Today's Valentine's Day Traditions Originated Behind Bars

ST. VALENTINE, ROMAN PRISONER

We don't know much about St. Valentine. However, various legends associated with him reveal a person who had a lot of experience with the third century Roman Empire's criminal justice system.

According to one legend, St. Valentine was persecuted for his faith and placed under arrest. A judge—or in some versions, his jailor—decided to test the saint's faith by commanding Valentine to heal his blind daughter. St. Valentine did so, and when the judge/jailor saw that his daughter was no longer blind, he immediately converted to Christianity. He also reportedly freed the other Christian prisoners in his jurisdiction.

Other legends state that Valentine continued to evangelize even after his incarceration. He reportedly officiated marriage ceremonies for Christian couples. He also assisted Christians who fled Roman persecution.

All the stories agree: St. Valentine was unwavering his faith and devotion to Jesus Christ. He was executed on February 14 sometime around the year 270 A.D.

It is said that the day he died, he left behind a note for a friend signed, "Your Valentine."

Regardless of what century we're in, incarceration has a devastating effect on families and loved ones. When permissible, it is important for prisoners to maintain relationships with their families on the outside. Prisoners who can stay connected to spouses, children, and friends are more likely to successfully return to society once their sentences end.

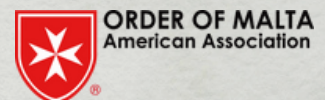


In the United States, more than 200,000 people are serving life sentences – one out of every seven in prison. The vast majority of lifers are people of color, about 30% are people age 55 and older, and an increasing number are women.

PEN PALS: RESETTling BOUNDARIES

Corresponding with a pen pal can lead to some meaningful connections and opportunities to encourage one another. Unfortunately, your letters might be the only communication your pen pal receives from anyone outside prison walls. This kind of isolation and loneliness can leave residents in a place where they slip up on the terms they signed on their application to be part of the ministry. If this happens, it can be hard to find the words to respond, or easy to feel worried about causing hurt feelings. There's no need to make anything personal. Feel free to use the following phrase: "The Order of Malta Pen Pal Ministry does not allow the discussion of personal information, romance, money requests, or the contact of residents' family, friends, attorneys, or parole officers. We'll both need to follow these rules if we want to continue to correspond."

However, as always, please reach out to Emily with any discomfort or concerns around boundaries. Send an email to tcpm.penpal@gmail.com.



O LORD, HEAR MY PRAYER, LISTEN TO MY CRY FOR MERCY; IN YOUR FAITHFULNESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS COME TO MY RELIEF.

Below are the prayer requests from insiders:

Let us pray...

- for my brother, sister, and mom who are ill.
- for Bob with Pancreatic Cancer.
- for Grandpa Donald with Cancer.
- for my daughter & her boyfriend who died from carbon monoxide poisoning when they were using a propane space heater during a house project.
- for a woman just released.
- for my wife and daughters, my mom and dad, my brother and his family, my sister and her family
- for myself as I am approaching my release in 3 weeks. For a smooth transition and courage to do God's will through it all.
- for Fr. Bob Schwartz who is in the hospital.
- for the staff at the facilities.
- for myself as I am about to be released. Finding a job, reconnecting with old friends, finding a community.
- for me as I am facing more charges. I hope and pray for the best! If and when I do get more time, I pray I make the most of it and build a great relationship with God!

Amen. Thank you for your prayers.

THINKING ABOUT STARTING A PEN PAL PROGRAM AT YOUR PARISH OR REACHING OUT ON YOUR OWN?

THIS MAY HELP...

From a Pen Pals for Prisoners participant: "The residents read our hand-written letters and also share them with others. I was pleased to know that my pen pal shared his letter with a friend who wanted to know if felons are welcome in Ireland. I told him I didn't know. Instead, I recommended titles of books and Travelogs he might read, and suggested he learn about the culture and music there. I think the pen pal program has a ripple affect on relationships and sharing. It lifts us all up. I end my letters with a bible verse and he does the same, then we pray for each other and our families. See, it does so much for our spirit and heart! All this sharing helps us to know our communication is so powerful, and God is there. Thank you TCPM for making this happen!"



It's so easy to make a difference in the lives of the incarcerated and in YOUR life too! Email Emily at tcpm.penpal@gmail.com for information on how to start this ministry at your parish, or how to get yourself a pen pal. You'll be glad you did!

Wow!

Uber is committed to criminal justice reform. The company has supported federal legislation to remove unfair legal barriers faced by individuals with a criminal record. Uber has also provided employment opportunities for former prisoners across the country by participating in Second Chance® job fairs. In addition, by partnering with Prison Fellowship to support Angel Tree teens, Uber is now extending its philanthropic reach in some states to support the children of the incarcerated by giving free Uber rides to attend several free educational enrichment programs.

Uber

ANY CATHOLIC OR CHRISTIAN SHOULD SEE IN AN INCARCERATED PERSON CHRIST'S PRESENCE, WAITING TO BE VISITED.

