

Prisoners Questions Answered

Answers are given to the following questions:

- 1) Can I make it in the free world after 20 years in prison?
- 2) Can alcoholism and drug addiction ever be completely overcome in my life?
- 3) Can a convicted child molester ever lead a normal life?
- 4) Can a parolee be expected to defend and practice his Catholic faith while living in a non-Catholic halfway house?
- 5) Can a prisoner ever overcome the bad feelings he has toward his family and friends who never wrote or visited him while he was in prison?
- 6) How can I believe in God's love for me, or trust in him? After serving as a model prisoner for 12 years, and praying all that time for parole; then, I was denied the parole I had worked and prayed for so hard. How can I now believe in Jesus Christ as my best friend who wants me to succeed in life?
- 7) Will I ever find relief from the terrible feelings of guilt which haunt me? I killed a man. I confessed my sin and received the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Catholic Church. Has God really forgiven me for my terrible crime? What's wrong? Will peace of mind ever be possible for me?
- 8) Would it be wrong for a prisoner to think of himself as a monk and try to live the intense monastic life of prayer and study while in prison?
- 9) How can I help another inmate who is being abused, mocked, insulted and tormented verbally by other prisoners in the dayroom of my wing in prison? We do spend a lot of time in dayrooms with 50 or more inmates. Some of these inmates are troubled, mentally ill, violent and dangerous. I'm trying to lead a good Christian life. What can I do to make things better?
- 10) My cellie is a Muslim. How should I, as a Catholic, respond to his practice of his faith? Should I honor his prayer? Can I share a meal with him?
- 11) Is it against my faith to smoke while I am in prison?
- 12) I have very little space in my cell for my books and possessions. What books or kind of books should I acquire?
- 13) At Sunday Masses in my church at home, we always took up a collection and received Holy Communion in both species, Precious Blood and Body of Christ. At Holy Mass in prison, we have no collections and never receive the Precious Blood. Is this practice correct according to the teaching of the Catholic Church?

1) Prisoner worried. Can I make it after serving a 20 year sentence in prison?

Prisoner asks "Can I make it in the free world? Will my past be held against me for the rest of my life? I'm scared. I will be leaving prison in two months. I'm 37 years old now. I've been in prison since I was 17 years old. I've never held a job. I can't stand the thought of ending my life in prison if I don't make it in the free world."

Answer: God is always anxious to forgive you and help you to make a fresh start in life. There are also some people in this world who would like to help you if they have a chance to do so. You may or may not meet such people.

Whether other people help you or not, you can have a good life. A good life depends on what you do, not on what other people do for you, or to you. You can always count on God helping you to live at your best.

You must take the help offered to you in the Catholic Church: worship as much as possible at Holy Mass; follow the good moral teaching of the Church; participate in The Sacrament of Reconciliation(confession) often; never stop studying your Catholic faith; study the New Testament in order to know how to be the best friend you can be to Jesus Christ in all circumstances of life.

Live one day at a time at your best and don't worry about tomorrow. The best tomorrow possible will come to you when you put all your attention and energy into living today as a friend of Jesus Christ. St. Augustine said, "The past is gone forever." Don't worry about it. You can learn from it but you can't relive it. No one can know what the future will bring so don't worry about that either. All you own and all you can ever do anything about is the present moment.

Pray every day. Don't hesitate to cast your cares upon the Lord; he loves you and wants you to have the best life possible. Self-pity will destroy you. Pity others as Jesus does; above all be merciful by praying for others, encouraging others to do good, helping others to do better, etc. You can do it.

2) Can alcoholism and drug addiction ever be completely overcome?

Prisoner asks: After failing so many times in Alcoholics Anonymous and other programs for drug addiction to overcome my addiction to alcohol and drugs, and spending half of my life in prison; can I, even with the help of God, ever lead a normal good Christian life?

Answer: You can have a wonderful life. Better even than if you never had suffered from alcohol and drug addiction and many years in prison. You should now be capable of having understanding and compassion for those, not only who have suffered in the same way that you have, but the sick, the elderly, the poor and all others who are suffering in any way.

You must not only feel sad and cry for those who are suffering. Rather you must show mercy by praying, comforting, consoling and helping others to overcome whatever is causing them to suffer. By being merciful, you are cooperating with Jesus Christ, God who is merciful love; and in this way, you yourself will be healed and strengthened to fight the good fight against the things

that are ruining your life.

No one will ever completely overcome their addictions so that they can ever again take one little drink with their friends, etc. You should think of alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, etc. as deadly poisons. You can't just say no to drugs and alcohol. That is necessary to start but not sufficient to keep you on the straight and narrow free of the desire for another drink or smoke or fix.

Alcohol or drugs are not at the heart of the problem. The bodily appetites for food, drink and sex must be disciplined if we are to enjoy the good life that God leads us to in Jesus Christ.

*"He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them **deny themselves** and take up their cross and follow me.'" (Mark 8:34)*

*"To the weak I became weak, so I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may **win** it. **Athletes exercise self-control** in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9:22-27)*

All of the bodily appetites are related. For example, when a prisoner once told a priest that he had spent much time in prison for his addiction to cocaine, the priest told him that he also was not able to live a good moral life sexually. The prisoner then responded, "How did you know that? I was arrested in a bordello." All humans are afflicted with a damaged human nature. There is an ongoing never-ending conflict between flesh and spirit in everyone.

Everyone has a free will. He can either choose to satisfy his hunger and thirst for the heavenly spiritual things of God, or he will be caught up in seeking worldly things to satisfy the bodily appetites, the senses and emotions. Mercy love and truth are what every human yearns for, and the more he has possession of them the more he will enjoy the enduring peace and joy of Jesus Christ, which the world cannot give or take away.

"Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the spirit, you will reap eternal life from the

spirit." (Galatians 6:7-8)

Though the spirit may be willing the flesh is weak and self-destructive; inclined to seek what will give immediate pleasure and gratification to the bodily appetites, senses and emotions.

"Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the spirit, and what the spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you're led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Other works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:16-21)

Saying no to drugs and alcohol is necessary, but only a good beginning. Nature abhors a vacuum. We can never do nothing. We are either doing good or doing evil. The more any bad habit has taken hold of our lives the harder we must work to make good habits to replace the bad habit.

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but if finds none, then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So will it be also with this evil generation." (Matthew 12:43-45)

The actions we must take to gain control over the flesh and its unhealthy desires for alcohol and drugs, etc. are prayer, fasting, and charity, in the form especially of mercy love. We must never stop working with these actions which always give us the needed help of God to save us from our self-destructive inclinations of the flesh. This is what it means to live by the Spirit and by right reason. The more we work at this the more we will possess the indestructible peace and joy of Jesus Christ.

3) Can a Convicted Child Molester ever lead a normal life?

Prisoner asks: Will I ever be able to live a peaceful, happy, fruitful life in a friendly rather

than hostile environment? I am a sex offender, a child molester who is doing everything possible for me in prison to be capable of living a good life in the eyes of God.

In prison, I must lie about my crime to other prisoners. My life would be in danger if they knew the true nature of my crime.

What can I expect from other people when I leave prison? The state of Texas now is sending a postcard to every home within a two-mile radius of the offender's home. The postcard tells the offender's name, includes his or her picture, outlines the offense, and includes the sex and age of the victim. I am a leper. I can't live near a school or teach and work with children. Is it possible, even with God's help, to ever again be able to live a happy, peaceful, fruitful life and be accepted by other people as a decent citizen who they don't feel threatened by; but who they can believe is a desirable and good neighbor?

Answer: Yes, you are badly handicapped; but with God's help, and in Christ's way, with patience, you can have a happier, more peaceful, more fruitful life than you ever had before.

"But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance." (Luke 8:15)

"Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers." (Romans 12: 12-13)

"My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for testing. Set your heart right and be steadfast, and do not be impetuous in time of calamity. Cling to him and do not depart, so that your last days may be prosperous. Accept whatever befalls you, and in times of humiliation be patient. (Sirach 2: 1-4)

"Those who are patient stay calm until the right moment, and then cheerfulness comes back to them. They hold back their words until the right moment; then the lips of many tell of their good sense." (Sirach 1:23-24)

You must come to know God, in the most sincere and intimate way possible, in order to have the good life he wants you to enjoy. The way to know God most perfectly requires that we become one with him as his humble and merciful servants. In the spiritual life, being humble is strength not weakness. In the Old Testament, the humble, poor, lowly, disadvantaged, handicapped are

always favored by God.

"Those who fear the Lord prepare their hearts, and humble themselves before him. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, but not into the hands of mortals; for equal to his Majesty is his mercy, and equal to his name are his works." (Sirach 2: 17-18)

Jesus Christ is God who shows us how man is to have the most intimate, friendly relationship with God; and in his humanity, he is meek and humble.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2: 5-11)

For us to have the sincere and fervent desire necessary for the change of heart and openness of mind required to accept the revelation of God, we must become humble and childlike, truly believing that our understanding and our way of living is a failure and others like us are failures also. Then we can look to Jesus, and recognizing the truth (becoming humble) about ourselves, will be open and receptive like little children to the Truth which is God.

"All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12)

"He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you,

unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18: 2-4)

"At that time Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants;" (Matthew 11:25)

When we become one in spirit with Christ by being humble, he generously bestows his grace in us which helps us to become fully alive in his love and truth.

"Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the Scripture says, 'God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'? But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" (James: 5-6)

The more humble we are and the more like trusting little children we become in all circumstances of life the more we will realize that God is always in control and if we trust him completely we will never have cause for anxiety or worry.

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:5)

When we are in trouble and nothing seems to be going our way, no one seems to understand us or be able to help us. Then we feel friendless, alone in the world and lonely. Maybe no other human understands us, but God does. Jesus Christ who is God, in his humanity, found no human comfort or understanding as he agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.' Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.' Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became

like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.'" (Luke 22:39-46)

Loneliness can be overcome. When we love God so much that he is everything to us, we are happiest when we are able to be alone and fully attentive to him. Are we not delighted to be alone with our wife, mother, father, family and friends who we love deeply? The more we love someone the more we enjoy being alone with them to enjoy them with no distractions. We must and we can deepen our love relationship with God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and live in their Spirit of Love and Truth, the Holy Spirit.

Copy the great Saints who have enjoyed the love of God in their lives on earth. Those who love God the most always experience the love of God most. That is the way it is with Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ; and with Jesus himself who always is and always was God before he took his flesh and blood from Mary, during his life on earth, and now living more fully the glorified life in heaven.

Alone with Mary when Jesus was dying on the cross, his fear being overcome by his love for Jesus, was St. John the Evangelist. The other apostles, overcome with fear, were nowhere to be found. St. John is the only writer in the New Testament to describe himself as the one Jesus loved. He would know the love that Jesus had for him most because, of all the apostles, he had shown the most love for Jesus by remaining with him and his mother, Mary, at the cross.

"And he said to them, 'Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. For to those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.'" (Mark 4:24-25)

We are all meant to be great people of prayer which means that we love Jesus Christ and experiencing his love for us, as St. Mary and St. John do, delight in every opportunity we have to give our full attention to God in the great conversation of love we call prayer.

4) Parolee Wonders How Best to Defend and Practice his Catholic Faith While Living in a Non-Catholic Halfway House?

Parolee asks: what can I do to defend my Catholic faith and not become discouraged while living in a Protestant halfway house where well-meaning people, who I realize that it wouldn't do any good to argue religion with, are constantly attacking my Catholic faith?

Answer: you must now make a great effort to live your Catholic faith as an adult. That

means you must **take the initiative**, and with little or no support from others, study and practice your Catholic faith as much as possible.

Participate in Holy Mass every Sunday, if at all possible. Find time every day to meditate and pray the Rosary. This is a wonderful way to meditate on Scripture; to think often about God and keep him in your mind and heart.

Discipline yourself. Have specific times scheduled every day for prayer and study. You can't do anything if you don't discipline yourself and do what you must whether you feel like doing it or not. The most beneficial discipline possible will be experienced by taking up the cross willfully every day the way Christ did the Father's will, when it was more difficult for him than anything we will ever be called upon to do.

"Then he withdrew from them about a stones throw, knelt down, and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done.'"(Luke 22:42)

We do want you and all men in prison to turn things around and have the best life possible. The **best life** anyone can live in this world is a **committed, dedicated and most highly disciplined life motivated by love** as Jesus teaches us most powerfully, in the way he overcomes all evil, by the way he takes up his heavy cross and dies for us.

5) Can a prisoner ever overcome the bad feelings he has toward his family and friends who never wrote or visited him while he was in prison?

Prisoner asks: Will I ever be able to overcome the anger and even hatred I feel for my wife, my family and my friends who don't write to me or visit me while I'm in prison?

Answer: You can overcome all the bitterness you feel toward them, and experience God's love working in your life; if you do it in the way Jesus teaches it, by his actions as well as his words. As St. Paul would call it, **the foolish way of Christ** is to pray for those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you, love your enemies.

True followers of Christ **take the initiative** to make something good happen. Someone has to make something good happen in this world, whatever others are doing. Christ always does good and always intends good for others no matter how they treat him. What we must understand is what Christ teaches most powerfully when he takes up his heavy cross(heavier than anything we will ever be called upon to carry) and suffers greater rejection, injustice, more bad treatment and mental and physical pain in every way than we'll ever have to endure. Nothing can make him hate or even make him angry.

We must learn from Jesus Christ and believe that the sinner hurts himself by his sin more than anyone else can ever hurt him. **Jesus always pities the sinner.** He knows that **the sinner**

hurts himself more than anyone else ever can hurt him.

"When they came to the place that is called the Skull , they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'" (Luke 23:33-34)

If we only get caught up in **self-pity** when others do wrong, then we hate them or become angry with them. In responding this way, we deprive ourselves of God's merciful love in which we find life itself.

"Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also." (1 John 4:20-21)

As soon as we begin to feel angry we must quickly pray for those who are upsetting us so we don't sin ourselves by even beginning to hate them.

"Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil." (Ephesians 4:26-27)

Nothing that anyone could ever do could make Jesus hate him. God shows us in Jesus what we must do as humans to continue to live in his love. In God there is no hate, only love. What we should try to embrace in our lives is the approach that Jesus shows us; always pity the sinner. If we understand this and are serious about following Jesus as closely as possible; then, if we ever stop living in the love of God by hating anyone for any reason, we should look in the mirror and call ourselves stupid.

If we lose the best friend we can ever have in life who is God, our perfect, patient lover, then we have become the sinner who is to be pitied; because by our sin(hate) we have turned away from God, who is truly the greatest good we can ever enjoy in life.

6) Can I believe in Jesus Christ as my best friend after being denied parole?

Prisoner asks: How can I believe in God's love for me, or trust in him? After serving as a

model prisoner for 12 years, and praying all that time for parole; then, I was denied the parole I had worked and prayed for so hard. How can I now believe in Jesus Christ as my friend who wants me to succeed in life?

Answer: Jesus never promised us success in any worldly way. Instead he offers us the way of the cross which is the way to overcome all suffering and difficulties of life; and benefit from them, by facing them with him; and in his way, becoming like the crucified Christ who overcame all evil including the greatest evil that man faces in life, which is death. The real success produced by our way of life, that God wants to see us experience, is to become like Christ, having the ability to overcome all obstacles to peace and happiness for ourselves and for others.

"But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh." (2 Corinthians 4: 7-11)

"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

7) Will I ever find relief from the terrible feelings of guilt which haunt me? I killed a man. I confessed my sin and received the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Catholic Church. Has God really forgiven me for my terrible crime? What is wrong? Will peace of mind ever be possible for me?

Prisoner asks: Will I ever find relief from the terrible feelings of guilt which haunt me? I killed a man. I confessed my sin and received the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Catholic Church. Has God really forgiven me for my terrible crime? What is wrong? Will peace of mind ever be possible for me?

Answer: God has certainly forgiven you for that crime. Jesus came to save, not to condemn. He is always anxious to forgive the repentant sinner.

"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with

you, so that you may be revered. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his Word I hope;" (Psalm 130:1-5)

"And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you today you will be with me in Paradise.' (Luke 23:41-43)

To overcome guilt or any bad feelings, looking for distractions or just trying to think about other things won't do the job. If that's all we do to overcome our feelings of guilt, we will only come back to thoughts and bad feelings which will have increased rather than diminished. To be successful in overcoming the guilt that fills our minds and hearts, we must do good, study and practice our faith intensely; work hard at being merciful and forgiving; pray constantly for God's help and protection and meditate everyday(rosary and Angelus prayers), etc.

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but it finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So will it be also with this evil generation." (Matthew 12:43-45)

Something you may do which has helped other prisoners to feel much better about themselves is to write to the wife, the parents and the children of the man you killed; and ask them to forgive you. In some cases, the victim's families have forgiven the murderer, visited him in prison; shown compassion for the prisoner and friendly relationships have developed. You have nothing to lose. Try it! Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

8) Would it be wrong for a prisoner to think of himself as a monk and try to live the intense monastic life of prayer and study while in prison?

Prisoner asks: Would it be wrong for a prisoner to think of himself as a monk and try to live the intense monastic life of prayer and study while in prison?

Answer: Every follower of Christ has been **called to seek the kingdom first**. We are called to **be in this world but not of this world**. Monks are people who take this calling very seriously and do everything in their power to seek, to find and to keep God in their hearts and minds living

their lives prayerfully, deliberately and studiously drawing closer to God in love at every moment as much as possible.

If you have a cellmate, don't try to do anything to make him uncomfortable. Don't flaunt your religion, preach or try to look holy. You will have quiet moments alone in which to pray and study. If you are very serious about your relationship with God, you can't help but edify your cellmate, arouse his curiosity which will give you an opportunity to share your Catholic faith.

Some prisoners in Ad Seg(solitary confinement) are living intense, serious Christ- filled religious lives of prayer and study. If you are sincere; walking the walk and not just talking the talk; you will be noticed, respected and even admired by many guards as well as prisoners.

It is good for a prisoner to try to live the monastic life in prison. This is the most beneficial and fruitful way for a prisoner to live while in prison; and be most well- prepared to live a good Christian life after his release from prison.

9) **Prisoner asks:** How can I help another inmate who is being abused, mocked, insulted and tormented verbally by other prisoners in the dayroom of my wing in prison? We do spend a lot of time in dayrooms with 50 or more inmates. Some of these inmates are troubled, mentally ill, violent and dangerous. I'm trying to lead a good Christian life. What can I do to make things better?

Answer: In prison, we must never lose sight of Christ's advice to his fervent followers.

"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16)

In other words, before you interfere with anything or give advice to anyone, you must be(innocent) walking the walk with Christ and not just talking the talk. However, you must not be naïve. You must have some understanding(wise as the serpents) of the criminal(sinners) mind.

You must also be prudent, courageous, and practicing your faith, but not foolhardy. As followers of Christ, we can always do something to effect change and make things better in every situation. You can **befriend the inmate being picked on by others**. You can make an effort to give him a friendly greeting at every opportunity. You may be able to do other acts of kindness to him. You can always pray for him; and you should always pray to God for guidance and help to be effective in dealing with him, and with those who are causing him trouble.

In dealing with those who are treating this man poorly, you might **look for some among them who carry Bibles and often quote scripture**. Tell them in a nice way that they're not showing a good example of what a Christian should be when they do anything or say anything to make another person miserable. You might also take your Bible and **try to influence them with some Bible quotes**.

"And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"
(Matthew 25:40)

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."
(Matthew 5: 6-9)

Don't argue with those who are not inclined to listen to you. Be diplomatic, be prudent; above all, be charitable. You are attempting to do a great work of charity when you try to help another Christian to follow Jesus Christ more effectively. Do it the way Jesus teaches us to do it.

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one." (Matthew 18:15)

10) My cellie is a Muslim. How should I, as a Catholic, respond to his practice of his faith? Should I honor his prayer? Can I share a meal with him?

Prisoner asks: My cellie is a Muslim. How should I, as a Catholic, respond to his practice of his faith? Should I honor his prayer? Can I share a meal with him?

Answer: You must seriously study and understand your Catholic faith in order to live well in close quarters with someone of a different religious persuasion, especially a non-Christian. Never do anything to deny or compromise your faith. You should allow him to pray in his way and he should allow you to pray in your way. Don't ever argue with him about religion. Be kind and respectful toward him always, whether he does the same for you or not. There should be no harm done in sharing a meal with him as long as it has no religious significance. We, as Catholics, committed to ecumenism must try to live the gospel and be good neighbors to everyone, whatever their race, sex or religious preference may be, without compromising our Catholic faith.

11) Is it against my faith to smoke while I am in prison?

Prisoner asks: Is it against my faith to smoke while I'm in prison?

Answer: You shouldn't do anything to harm your health. While it may not be opposed to any specific law or precept of the Catholic Church, it is wrong for you to oppose any law of the state or rule of your prison enforced by lawful authorities like prohibitions against smoking, unless that law is immoral. For example, the law of the country may permit abortion; but we, as good Christian Catholics, must not perform, assist, or cooperate with an abortion.

12) I have very little space in my cell for my books and possessions. What books or kind of books should I acquire?

Prisoner asks: What books or type of books should I acquire to occupy the small space I have in my cell for my books and possessions?

Answer: You should acquire books which you would benefit most from reading and which you would most enjoy reading many times. Great spiritual books in the following order, as space allows, are recommended for your collection. "The New American Bible"(preferably the New Catholic Answer Bible), "The New Jerusalem Bible", "Liturgy of the Hours" (preferably the four volume set), "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas a Kempis, "The Confessions of St. Augustine", "My Way of Life" (St. Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologica simplified) by Farrell and Healy, "Butler's Lives of the Saints", "The Catechism of the Catholic Church", "The Way of Perfection" by St. Theresa of Avila, "True Devotion to Mary" by Montfort, books by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and Thomas Merton.

NOTE: Obtain property papers for all Bibles, spiritual books, study materials and rosaries so you won't lose them during shakedowns. It may not be enough for you to keep them if you only have your name written in the Bibles and books that are precious to you.

13) At Sunday Masses in my church at home, we always took up a collection and received Holy Communion in both species, Precious Blood and Body of Christ. At Holy Mass in prison, we have no collections and never receive the Precious Blood. Is this practice correct according to the teaching of the Catholic Church?

Prisoner asks: According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, are we being shortchanged at our Holy Masses in prison by not being permitted to make an offering or receive The Precious Blood for Holy Communion?

Answer: Everything with our worship in prison is as it has to be, and none of the differences you cite are opposed in any way to the defined teaching of the Catholic Church. What could inmates put into the collection basket that would help the Catholic Church? Prisoners are not allowed to possess money.

Inmates are not allowed to smoke, possess or drink alcohol in any prison. Priests can only

consecrate wine(Jesus Christ consecrated wine at the Last Supper which was the first Holy Mass) and the effects of alcohol remain after consecration.

Priests must be permitted to take a small amount of wine into a prison in order to celebrate Holy Mass. They must consecrate bread and wine in order to have a valid Holy Mass. The prison will permit only the priest to consume the Precious Blood.

The Catholic Church teaches that those who receive the sacrament under one species only are not deprived of any grace necessary for salvation. The whole Christ is received in the one species. Notice how the priest, after distributing holy communion, carefully brushes even the smallest particle of the Body of Christ from the paten into the chalice and then pours water into the chalice over the fingers which touched the paten. Then he drinks the water containing the particles from the chalice. Next he carefully wipes the chalice clean with a purificator. He is showing special concern for every particle of The Body of Christ because of our Catholic belief that even the smallest part of anything consecrated at Holy Mass contains the whole Jesus Christ.

Sometimes a person handicapped by an illness may be able to receive only half or even only a quarter of the consecrated host for Holy Communion. That person has received as much in that way as anyone has received in both species at Holy Mass.

Receiving the Precious Blood at Holy Mass is for sign value only. No more of Jesus Christ is received than when a prisoner receives only The Body of Christ for Holy Communion in prison.