

Love your  
neighbor as  
yourself

-Jesus



I want to  
accustom  
all the  
inhabitants  
...to look on me  
as their brother

-Br. Charles de  
Foucauld

January 2009

To my brothers and sisters in Christ,

I pray that this New Year will bring us all some much needed peace, hope, love, and mercy. It has certainly been a trying time for the world, but we must never forget that Christ is victorious.

In the last newsletter, I mentioned that I was volunteering with the local parish's St. Vincent de Paul. I am now off three days a week, so I devote one day, Wednesday, to working with the homeless. After much reflection and prayer, I decided to write a book about the homeless of the Gulf Coast. Everything fell into place very quickly, and I have completed all twelve oral interviews. This book will focus on allowing the homeless to tell their stories in the hope that it raises awareness, especially since there is a lack of shelters on the coast. My Uncle Francis Speltz has agreed to edit the book, but I am still looking for publishing ideas. I hope to have the rough draft completed by the summer, but we will see what God has in store.

I would also like to announce that my sister, Jeannine, is pregnant! The baby is doing well, and she's about three month along. Please keep her, the baby, and her husband Drew in your prayers.

My prediction is that 2009 is going to be a very interesting year for our nation. We are barreling into the year with a crippled economy, a brand new president, and a huge load of fear and uncertainty. This may be a call for all of us to come back to what is truly important and to remember that this life is, as St. Teresa of Avila put it, "Like a night in a bad hotel." Sure, life contains much that is wonderful, but we must also endure much that is painful. Yet, when we awake after that rough night and see the wonder of eternity, we will consider it all worth it.

In peace and love,

Matthew

Please send all  
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Prayers are needed and appreciated!  
(no postal fee required)



# meditation

January 2009

In the gospel Mass reading for January 8<sup>th</sup>, we hear the following about Jesus: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ ...and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.” (Luke 4:18-20)

Jesus is preaching in his home synagogue of Nazareth, and those who are listening to him are waiting to hear what he will say about the reading. Jesus then proclaims the truth that “no prophet is acceptable in his own country”, which is a rebuke aimed squarely at those in the synagogue. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the people live up to this truth by trying to hurl him off of the hill outside of the city. In the next town that he visits, Capernaum, the people listen with awe and, as a result, witness miracles.

All of us can be like those citizens of Nazareth. Instead of humbly accepting the rebuke from Jesus, they are quick to throw down him whom, only moments before, they “spoke well of.” Many are only too ready to follow Christ when the demands are few. Yet, when God calls them to something difficult or reveals that they must change, they are tempted to forsake Him.

Perhaps this is why the Catholic Church is often maligned in world. The Church proclaims that she holds the fullness of truth, and many aspects of this truth are hard to follow. It would be easier if a follower of the Church could choose from a variety of beliefs on difficult matters, but as St. Paul wrote, “The Son of God...was not Yes and No...in him it is always Yes.” Falsity has no place in Christ, so it is unthinkable that two opposing beliefs on a critical issue are both correct.

What is the virtue that can heal this division in our hearts? Humility. Humility is the ability to say, “I am wrong. I accept that I am wrong, but I am open to change.” It is no wonder that Jesus preached so much about the hardness of man’s heart. It is shockingly easy for us to defend ourselves when challenged, to quickly exonerate ourselves from all criticism. But is this the reaction of a mature individual? Or, does it reveal that, deep down, we don’t want to acknowledge that we may be wrong?

In the temple of Delphi, where the famous oracle resided, was carved the phrase *γνωθι σεαυτόν*: Know Thyself. In knowing ourselves, we become open to change, and all of us must change. Jesus is willing and is always ready to help us effect that change, but we must listen. And, when his challenges to us seem unbearable or go against our plans, we must soften our hearts with humility.