



Prison Report

NEWSLETTER OF PARTNERS IN EVANGELISM PRISON MINISTRY

Survey—First Time Ever!

Survey of Prisoners Who Receive *The Word Among Us*

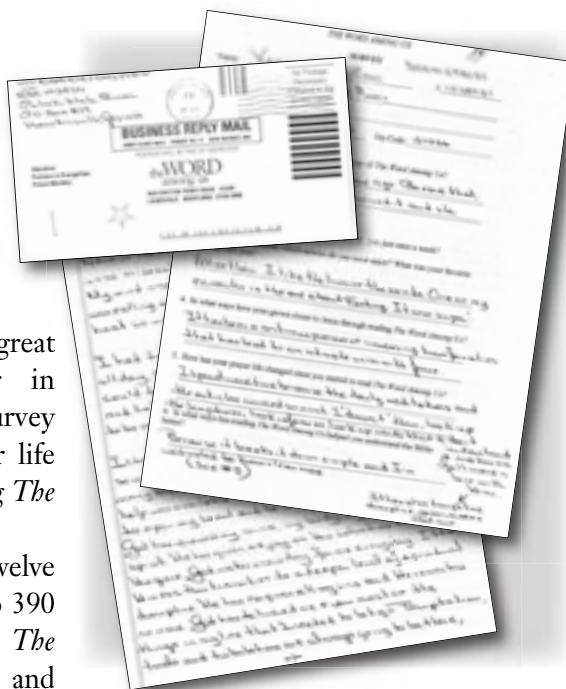
By Angela M. Burrin

“It has given me one!” What a great response Dennis—a prisoner in Massachusetts—gave to the survey question, “How has your prayer life changed since you started reading *The Word Among Us*?”

In April I sent a survey of twelve questions personally addressed to 390 Catholic prisoners who receive *The Word Among Us*. I was surprised and encouraged to get a response rate of 30% (or 115 replies) to a voluntary survey.

The Holy Spirit’s Tool! The first question we asked was how these readers got their first copy of *The Word Among Us*. Not surprisingly, we learned that 40% of the respondents received it from their chaplain, and 9% received it from another prisoner. The other 51% received theirs from a dad, a caring aunt, a grandmother, a Jewish chapel worker, a Protestant chaplain, or an Episcopal friend. Others found it in a trashcan, on a bookshelf, or lying around in the dorm.

Sixty-five percent of the prisoners who responded said that they have been getting *The Word Among Us* for more than five years. Janet in Pennsylvania has been receiving it for 15 years!



It was good to learn that others with long-term sentences have been getting the magazine for so long. Partners has just began serving the other 35%, who have been receiving *The Word Among Us* for 2 to 4 years.

Reading *The Word Among Us* Every Day! But as we all know, it is one thing to receive a magazine and another thing to read it! We were excited to learn that 82% read the meditations every day and 14%, every few days. Paul in Massachusetts cuts out all the prayers at the end of the meditations and reads them every day! Moreover, 30% of respondents indicated that they not only read it alone but that they use it again as part of a bible study meeting, worship group, rosary service, or as part of the homily at Eucharistic services.

Evangelism behind bars! It was very heartening to learn that 15% of the prisoners surveyed are also looking for ways to evangelize using *The Word Among Us*. Angelo in Illinois wrote, “In this prison we are all isolated, but I read the stories out loud over the wing for other inmates to hear.” Others pass it onto spouses, loved ones, and friends during prison visits or by mail.

***The Word Among Us* Works!** But I’m saving the best news until last! What we most wanted to learn from the survey is how the Holy Spirit is using *The Word Among Us* as one of the tools to bring prisoners closer to God.

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SUMMER GIFT!

Only \$96 provides for 8 new prisoners!

This year we are trying to add 1,000 new prisoners to the 25,000 who already receive *The Word Among Us*.

Your summer gift of \$96 will provide a daily visit of God’s Word to 8 prisoners—for a total of 2,920 daily visits! That’s only 25¢ a day!

If you send a \$96 donation you will receive a free copy of *Praying with St. Vincent de Paul*.*

Your donation of whatever amount will be gratefully received.

*Free book is available to US donors only.

Prisoners Witness About God's Love

I Was Rescued by God!

By Candyce a prisoner in Arizona

Thank you for the opportunity to receive *The Word Among Us*. I'm very grateful. I start my day by reading it.

Before coming to prison this second time, I was a broken lost soul. I hated myself, the world, and almost everything in it. I was a drug addict. I had left my husband and young daughter. Long before, I had been abandoned by my mother and siblings. All I was living for was the drug high to medicate my pain of neglect, abuse, and abandonment. Cocaine and marijuana were my life. I was homeless and prostituting myself. I sold drugs and myself. I started praying to God to help me. I quit using marijuana after thirty-two years. I then cut back from a hundreds-of-dollars-a-day cocaine habit to about twenty-to-forty-dollars a day. I'd been a cocaine addict for twenty-eight years.

I'd nearly quit drugs. But one night

I was depressed and lonely. I went back to the street, prostituting and selling drugs again. I knew that the area where I was selling drugs was "hot." Yet I went back to it. I walked right up to where I knew police were watching my activity. I was arrested and sentenced. I was rescued by God that night.

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Since being in prison I have reaffirmed my faith in God and my religion. I have had many outpourings of the Holy Spirit. God has done wonderful things within me and for me. I have learned to love myself and others. I have heard from my eldest daughter, who is now eighteen. After ten years without each other, we are starting a

new relationship all over. I'm receiving education and vocational skills. I'm training to work in the print industry. I operate a cutter at the prison's print shop. I'm now drug-free and working on becoming nicotine free! Every day I can't wait to bring the gospel alive to others. I've become a totally new creation in Christ. And God isn't done with me yet!

P.S.: When released, I want to bring the gospel to addicts, prostitutes, and the homeless.

Your Word is a Lamp to My Feet!

(Psalm 119:105)

By Dale, a prisoner in Saskatoon, Canada

Before I found the Lord Jesus I was lost. I hurt people and I would steal from them. When I say, "steal," I would steal their spirit and put fear in its place. This was my way of life. I thought if I hurt them first, they wouldn't have the chance to hurt me.

When I started to believe in Jesus I thought everything would be better, but it wasn't. What Jesus decided to do was to show me my sin. Then he taught me how to repent. I felt great

after I repented and asked the Lord Jesus into my life! I began to read the Bible and started talking and telling everyone about Jesus. I was on fire. But after a while I felt as though the Holy Spirit had left me. But the truth be known, the Spirit was still with me. As I continued reading the Scriptures, I came to see what Paul went through and how he felt when he was going through his journey.

I now thank God everyday for sending Jesus to die for me and for giving me new life. If you ask me what does Jesus mean to me, I would answer, "Jesus is my Savior, my hope, and my way." David says it best: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).



Partners in Prayer

FATHER—We pray that *The Word Among Us* will continue to bring prisoners to the knowledge of your love, forgiveness, and plan for their lives.

JESUS—We pray for children who have a parent in prison. Be close to them. Protect them from drugs, alcohol, and gangs. Provide them with a loving home. Reunite estranged parents and children.

HOLY SPIRIT—We pray for all victims of crime. Comfort those who have lost loved ones. Heal those who have been injured physically or emotionally. Give your grace to those who are unable to forgive.

MOTHER MARY—Intercede with us for all prisoners preparing to be released. May the precious blood of your Son, Jesus, protect them. May they all find caring Christians to befriend and mentor them as they reenter society.

Sponsor a Prison Program

Partners in Evangelism would like to invite you to join our “Sponsor a Prison” program. When you sponsor a prison with the card at your right, your monthly gift of \$10, \$20 or \$40 will guarantee that Catholic inmates receive solid Catholic guidance during their years in prison.

Currently, *Partners in Evangelism Prison Ministry* is sending nearly 25,000 prisoners *The Word Among Us* each month.



YES, I will help meet the spiritual needs of my brothers and sisters in prison.

I will sponsor a prison, helping 10 prisoners for \$10 per month.

I will sponsor a prison, helping 20 prisoners for \$20 per month.

I will sponsor a prison, helping 40 prisoners for \$40 per month.

Please accept a one-time donation in the amount of \$ _____

Yes, send me a free copy of *Praying with Saint Vincent de Paul* (VP)

(Sorry, free book is available to US donors only)

I wish to receive a 100% tax deduction on my donation instead of the book.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

I want to charge my first month's sponsorship or my one-time contribution to my:

Visa

MasterCard

Discover

Amount \$ _____ Card No _____ Exp. Date ____/____/____

Signature _____

MAIL TO:

USA: Partners in Evangelism, 9639 Doctor Perry Rd., #126, Ijamsville, MD 21754

CANADA: Metanoia Outreach, ATTN: Partners in Evangelism, Box 1107, Station F, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2T8 (This will insure a tax-deductible receipt for checks only)

(Summer 2005)



Dear Friend,



I am so pleased to be able to share the results of the survey Partners sent to prisoners who receive *The Word Among Us* free every month (see page 1). I'm sure you will agree with me that they are very encouraging! Prisoners are not only reading *The Word Among Us*, but they are sharing it and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform their lives through it. When you read the remarkable responses, remember that this ministry is only possible because of *you*. Every dollar that you send extends our ministry to more and more prisoners. I am confident that, with your help, we will be able to reach our goal for the end of this year of serving an additional 1,000 prisoners—for a total of 26,000 prisoners!

But let's not keep the good news from this survey to ourselves! I invite you to show the results of this

survey to your family, friends, and even your parish's pastoral council. Perhaps they are looking for a way to respond to Jesus' words, "I was in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25:36). Why not share with them how Richard has been blessed through reading *The Word Among Us*: "I've learned that being a Catholic means more than just going to Sunday Mass." It would be wonderful if they too would become partners with us in our outreach by giving a one-time donation of \$96 or joining our Sponsor a Prison program (details above).

Now let me share a blessed experience! At the beginning of May I flew to Texas to meet with Rocky, a man on death row in Livingston. Rocky and I have been pen pals for two years. Although our backgrounds are very different, as soon as we started talking we found much in common—especially our love for our families and the Lord. We spoke for nearly four hours! Rocky is a man who has accepted God's

forgiveness and now wants only to serve God. I was uplifted by how he is living each day by the power of the Holy Spirit. What an intercessory prayer warrior!

One of the many impressions I had from that meeting on death row is the part played by pen pals and volunteers in the lives of prisoners. Rocky spoke often about those who are helping his spiritual growth. If you interested in becoming a pen pal to a prisoner, I encourage you to contact the Restorative Justice Office of the Catholic Diocese of Lansing, Michigan, at 517-342-2469. Please call me with questions about other volunteer opportunities.

Please continue to pray daily for prisoners who need so desperately to know God's love and forgiveness. Hearts are converting to Jesus! Sinners are becoming saints!

Your sister in Christ,
Angela M. Burrin
Director
www.partnersinevangelism.org

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!

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When you send a \$96 donation you will receive a free copy of *Praying with St. Vincent de Paul*. As this book is valued at \$12, for tax purposes, you will be entitled to an \$84 tax deduction.

www.partnersinevangelism.org

Partners in Evangelism

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21754



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The Word Among Us

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Conversion. Repeatedly prisoners tell me that they would not have come back to God if they hadn't been incarcerated. Steve in New Jersey wrote, "I now know that God forgives all my sins—however bad—if I ask him."

Forgiveness. Chaplains tell me that forgiveness is a big issue with prisoners. Armando and Jeff in Florida shared, "Learning to forgive has been a major turning point in my life." "I have forgiven my father who left when I was born and still doesn't talk to me."

Prayer life. Praise God! *The Word Among Us* is helping prisoners to grow closer to Jesus and to pray daily. Pearce in Virginia wrote, "I know now it is OK to talk to Jesus as a friend." Jason in Michigan shared, "Jesus is more real, more human, and

not just a historical figure. I want to be like him."

Reading the Scriptures. "The Bible was once a bookshelf oddity, rarely read. Now it is a first resort on a daily basis," shared Justin in Georgia. Isn't that great! God's *love letter* is being broken open to prisoners, and for this we are grateful. Or in the words of another prisoner, "*The Word Among Us* has opened my heart to the Scriptures."

Catholic Formation. Sadly, the majority of prisoners have had little—if any—ongoing formation in the Catholic faith. How encouraging to read these responses: Richard in Nevada wrote, "I've learned that being Catholic means more than just going to Sunday Mass." Paul in North Carolina wrote, "We don't have a Catholic priest here. *The Word Among Us* is the main source of Catholic doctrine."

Hope! I was delightfully surprised that it is the personal testimonies in the magazine that touch the prisoners most and bring them hope. Here are just two beautiful comments: "The witnesses show me how if God has worked in the lives of others and gotten them through troubles, he can help me too." "The witness stories give me hope that I can grow closer to Jesus."

Living as a Christian. Repentance is, of course, all about changing our lives. Angelo in Illinois wrote, "It has helped me to get away from the 'tough guy' image and be more of a sincere person." Roy in New York wrote, "I now make better decisions."

Just one more quote! Mike in Iowa wrote, "Through *The Word Among Us* I know now that God loves me. Also that God has a plan for my life, which is a beautiful thing!"