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THE BROTHER-TO-BROTHER

Disciple

A MEN'S MENTORING MINISTRY DEVELOPING A SOUND FOUNDATION OF CATHOLIC FAITH

FORGIVENESS: A Living-out of Our Christian Faith and Identity



Welcome to the first edition of *The Brother-to-Brother Disciple*, the new-look newsletter of Brother-to-Brother Ministries.

Our hope is to make this an informative and useful tool to help our readers grow in their faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.

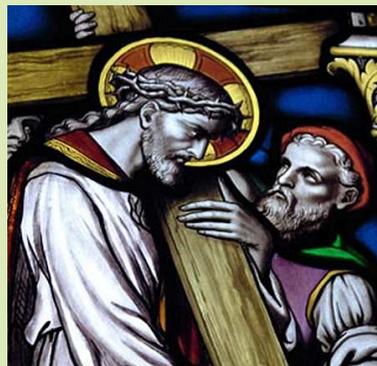
What is Brother-to-Brother Ministries about?

We are a Catholic evangelization ministry dedicated to evangelizing Catholic men. Our mission is to form men in their Catholic faith and provide them with the knowledge and skills to help them form other men in their Catholic faith. We do this through:

1. A one-to-one discipling process that utilizes the Bible and time-honored Catholic resources.
2. Workshops where we help men understand what it means to be an active Christian leader and teach them the one-to-one discipling process.

By Rick Lentz

As children, we are taught to ask our siblings and friends for forgiveness when we do something to wrong or hurt them and to say, "I forgive you," when they wrong or hurt us. As we grow older and reach adulthood, we forget what we learned as children, and instead we learn to hold grudges and to neither say, "I'm sorry," nor "I forgive you."



For Christians, this attitude of unforgiveness and holding grudges is unacceptable in God's eyes and can have negative eternal consequences for our souls. I realize that this seems a harsh statement, but Jesus' teaching on this matter is very clear.

In **Matthew 6:9-13**, Jesus gives us the Lord's Prayer. In the prayer, we ask the Lord in verse 12, "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." The only commentary Jesus makes concerning the prayer occurs in **Matthew 6:14-15**, where Jesus explicitly states what verse 12 means. A careful reading of verse 15 tells us that the Father will not forgive us if we do not forgive others. When we couple **Matthew 6:15** with **Revelation 21:27** which states, "Nothing unclean will enter it (heaven)," we see that if we do not forgive, we are unclean and therefore cannot enter heaven.

THE MIRACLE OF Mentors

By Rick Lentz

In June 2004, Karen and I lost our youngest son, Kevin, in a tragic accident. A few weeks later, the Holy Spirit prompted me to ask Steve, the leader of an ecumenical Bible study I attended, if he would mentor me one-to-one. Steve replied that the Holy Spirit was prompting him to ask me to enter into a one-to-one relationship. On 31 July 2004, Steve and I began a Christian mentoring relationship that continues today.

God used Steve to teach me how to mentor other

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men one-to-one and encourage me to step out of my comfort zone and become a Christian mentor. In fact, within two weeks of starting to meet with Steve, God brought the first man He wanted me to mentor into my life, Dennis Speer. Actually I should say, "Back into my life," because Dennis and I had been friends for eight or nine years, but had not been in contact for over two years.

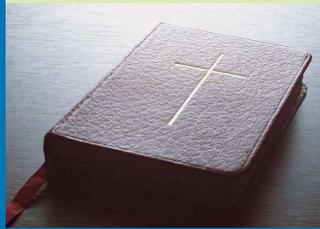
After re-connecting at a Christian business men's luncheon, we met for lunch a couple of days later. Dennis shared what had been going on in his life over the past two years, and I shared the story of Kevin's death with him, and how Steve was mentoring me on my faith journey and helping come to grips with my grief. Then Dennis asked if I would be willing to mentor him on his Catholic faith journey. This was the start of a Christ-centered relationship that would eventually lead to the founding of Brother-to-Brother Ministries in June 2007.

What is the point of all this? When we are open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, He will provide what we need to grow in our faith and to help others grow in their faith. Often it is through these relationships that God unfolds His plan for our lives; a plan that we never expected, and that is the real miracle.

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So what are we to do when a tragic event happens in our lives, especially when a loved one is killed, or we ourselves are seriously injured by the actions of another? We are to take our anger, grief and pain to the Cross and ask our Lord to help us forgive so that He can heal us! That is why Jesus taught us to pray that the Father forgive us as we forgive others: it is necessary for *our healing!*

I know from personal experience that with God's help I was able to forgive another and bring healing and peace for the other and for me.



The Sacrament of Penance

By Rick Lentz and Jim Arlien

There are days on our journey toward God when we do the regrettable and wound ourselves, others and the Church though sin (CCC 1422).

Thankfully, God established the Church as a hospital for sinners. Through Christ, in His Church, the Father awaits our cooperation to heal and restore us through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

This sacrament "is a 'sacrament of conversion' because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion" as the first step in returning to the Father from whom we have strayed by our sin (CCC 1423). It is called the "sacrament of Penance" because it consecrates our steps of conversion, penance and atonement (CCC 1423). It is also called the "sacrament of confession," because the disclosure of our sins to a priest is an essential element. Confession is our acknowledgement and praise (cf. Psalm 32:5) of God's holiness and mercy toward sinful man (CCC 1424).

Through the priest's absolution God grants us pardon and peace; thus, making this a "sacrament of forgiveness." Finally, it is called the "sacrament of Reconciliation," because

it imparts to us the love of God who has "reconciled us to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:20) and because we are to also be reconciled to our brother (Mt. 5:24) (CCC 1424). The priest is God's minister of this sacrament and is there to help us know that we are forgiven and to remind us that we have the grace to win the ongoing battle against temptation.

Where does the priest get this authority to forgive and absolve us in God's name? From Christ when He gave the apostles His power and authority to forgive and retain sins (John 20:22-23). As St. Paul says, "all this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

We urge you to frequently take part in this beautiful sacrament so that you may be healed and forgiven so as to become "a perfect and living sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1).

True Freedom is the process of surrendering ourselves to God's will and grace, and discovering to our pleasant surprise that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. True wisdom begins with trust and a reverential awe for the Lord's sovereignty over us. It is an offering of ourselves as slaves to Him. The grace of God helps us, then, to not only identify our strengths and weaknesses, but to transform our weaknesses into strengths. It is the wise man of God who surrenders himself in this Christ-like way. This is freedom indeed, and the heart of Catholic spirituality.

Friendship

By Jim Arlien

Prayer is one of God's great gifts to mankind: a gift of relationship that is necessary to live life to the fullest. It is an *encounter* where a perfectly good God seeks to have a dialogue with us. We are to listen for what God has to say about our concerns and responsibilities. In all of our experiences in a busy life we can hear God and respond to this personal encounter in love. This is a life-long path that is diverse and no single method or path is the same for everyone. The Catechism of the Catholic Church makes reference to prayer as "gift", where God seeks us, and we then "thirst for him" with a spirit of humility (CCC 2559-2561). But the Catechism presents us with the view that it is man and his *heart* that prays. The heart is the place of encounter where God resides. Despite being sinful, man retains a desire for God. The Catholic Church teaches that the life of prayer is a habit of being in God's

presence and in communion with Him because of the grace of Baptism. The Catechism legitimately speaks of man in search of God, but not necessarily man in search of himself. There is a *revelation of prayer* where God calls man first and reveals himself to man. Prayer, like love, is not a selfish thing in the sense of using it as a means to an end. It is marvelously unselfish in that loving friendship with God and neighbor should be the end.

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