



Father Walter Ciszek - An Example for All

by Mary Lynch



Rev. Walter J. Ciszek, S.J.

PRAYER FOR A FAVOR THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF FATHER WALTER CISZEK, S.J.

Almighty God, we love, adore and praise You as our Creator and Loving Father. Look with compassion and mercy upon us. Hear our prayer in this time of special need and through the intercession of Father Walter Ciszek, grant the following favor if it is Your Holy Will.

(Mention the Request)

Most loving God, accept our gratitude for hearing this prayer. May the knowledge of the virtues and holiness of Father Walter be recognized and known to provide a lasting example to draw sinners to reconciliation and to lead souls to sanctity.

For You are our God and we are Your people and we glorify You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Please inform the Prayer League of any special favors from Father Walter Ciszek.

At this tumultuous time in the history of our nation and of the Catholic Church, perhaps it would be well for us to recall the life of an exemplary American priest, Father Walter Ciszek.

A native Pennsylvanian, Father Ciszek was born and reared in the community of Shenandoah, a small town southwest of Hazleton, on November 4, 1904.

His boyhood was a mix of scrapes and spirituality; thankfully, his spiritual nature prevailed and in 1928 he entered the Jesuit Order. Nine years later, following a papal request for priests to serve the faithful in Russia, he was ordained in the Russian Byzantine Rite and assigned to the USSR, only to be arrested soon afterward by the Soviet secret police on the preposterous charge of espionage.

His sentence was severe even by Communist standards: five years of solitary confinement in Moscow's notorious Lubianka prison where he underwent endless interrogation, threats, indoctrination "sessions", and promises as empty as the austere cell to which he was confined. Following his internment there, he was transferred to a Siberian slave-labor camp where for another ten years he endured the rigors of that hostile climate, grinding physical labor, and the everyday misery of prison life.

To be discovered performing his priestly duties meant instant reprisal—more likely death. Yet, in stolen moments, he heard confessions, counseled and consoled any and all who sought him out. Whenever possible, he managed to offer the sublime comfort of Holy Communion. On more than one occasion as he sat cautiously on the edge of his cot with his back to the door and the camp guard, he withdrew crusts of bread accumulated from the meager prison fare, and silently consecrated them into the Eucharist, slowly and carefully administering each sacred particle to the last communicant.

In 1963 when he was finally released and returned to the United States via a prisoner exchange arranged by Robert Kennedy, he was interviewed by a media eager to learn how he survived the deprivation and pain of those long years; he answered typically, "I felt I had learned much during those years of hardship and suffering that could be of help to others in their lives." It was God's plan for him and he readily embraced it.

When asked how he was able to come through his ordeal without so much as a twinge of bitterness or ill feeling, he said simply, but profoundly, "I never forgot that I was a priest."

In this hour of anguish when a wounded clergy struggles to right a terrible wrong, let us look to the sacrifice of Father Ciszek and take heart. In our need, let us borrow from his store of faith in the providence of God's purpose and from the quiet courage with which he served and graced the priesthood's holy call.

*Father Walter Ciszek
Day 2010
October 17, 2010*



REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MARCH 6, 2010 MEETING

The meeting began with Prayer for the Cause of Canonization of Father Ciszek.

Msgr. Bocian asked the group to review the minutes regarding membership on the Board for the co-postulators; he felt that there was a need to clarify whether ex-officio members would be voting members of the Board.

The minutes were approved with Donna Hinkle making the motion and all others present seconding that motion. The December Report from the Board was also approved.

Elaine Cusat gave a report on Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable for the checking account as of December 31 for the year 2009.

That was followed by a good-news report of an unusual week for donations to the prayer league. A thank-you note from Elaine Cusat was read and flowers were presented to the Board in gratitude for sympathy expressed upon the death of Elaine's mother, Cecelia Chyko.

The date for the annual Father Ciszek Day celebration will be October 17, 2010; a letter will be going to His Excellency, Bishop Barres, regarding principal celebrant and homilist for the occasion.

The group agreed to continue the practice of the Fr. Ciszek anniversary Mass. It could be scheduled for St. Casimir Church; Msgr. Flanagan will also schedule it so children of Trinity Academy could attend at Annunciation Church that day, if weather should be inclement.

Sr. Doris reported on an article about Fr. Ciszek to be published in the special Easter issue of the WORD among us; an article by Fr. Peter Cameron, OP printed in the February 2010 issue of MAGNIFICAT; and a chapter of a book by Archbishop Jose Gomez, Men of Brave Heart: the Virtue of Courage in the Priestly Life, published by OSV Press.

Msgr. Bocian informed the Board of amendments to the by-laws for updated registration of incorporation with the state of Pennsylvania. He also presented changes of wording in the "Guidelines and Instructions for Forming a Local Chapter of the Father Walter Ciszek Prayer League."

The Board discussed procedures for recommending new members to the Board of Directors, and for maintaining membership as Associate Directors.

Msgr. Bocian will schedule one Mass each month for members of the Prayer League; Father Sable offers Mass at 4PM every 3rd Tuesday of the month.

The meeting closed with a prayer and was followed by lunch in the convent.

"For/From the Friends of Walter Ciszek, S.J."

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By Rev Thomas J. Sable, S.J.

The Wheat and the Weeds

Jesus uses parables taken from every day events and locations. I don't think that there are many residents of Scranton, where I live, who are familiar with the joys of wheat or a wheat field unless it's ordering wheat toast instead of white at Chick's Diner. There are many residents of Scranton, however, who are familiar with the anguish of weeds. A weed in a general sense is a plant that is considered by the user of the term to be a nuisance, and normally applied to unwanted plants in human-made settings such as gardens, lawns or agricultural areas, but also in parks, woods and other natural areas. More specifically, the term is often used to describe native or nonnative plants that grow and reproduce aggressively. The dandelion is a weed but it makes a fine green in salads. Weeds may be unwanted because they are unsightly, or they limit the growth of other plants by blocking light or using up nutrients from the soil. The morning glory has beautiful flowers but it chokes other plants. Weeds also can harbor and spread plant pathogens that infect and degrade the quality of other plants. Weeds may be a nuisance because they have thorns or prickles. The thistle is considered a weed but it is used to make shampoo and soup in Europe. Some weeds cause skin irritation when contacted, such as poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac.

Wheat is much more useful. Wheat is a worldwide cultivated grass. Wheat is the second most produced food among the cereal crops; Wheat grain is a staple food used to make flour for leavened, flat and steamed breads; cookies, cakes, pasta, noodles and couscous; and for fermentation to make beer, alcohol, vodka or biofuel. Wheat is planted to a limited extent as a forage crop for livestock, and the straw can be used as fodder for livestock or as a construction material for roofing thatch in some countries.

It's hard for us to tell who is the wheat or the weed today. Father Walter Ciszek explains our modern day difficulties: "There are moments of crisis in every life, moments of anxiety and fear, moments of frustration and opposition, moments sometimes even of terror. The Kingdom of Christ – that kingdom of justice and peace, of love and of truth – has not yet been achieved here on earth; it has begun, but much remains to be done before it can reach its fullness and all creation will have again been made new according to the mind of the Father. Evil still exists alongside justice like the cockle among the wheat, hatred alongside love, the good with the bad, the sinner along with the saint. None of us, then, can escape the tensions of this imperfect world – neither sinner nor saint, good or bad, the weak or the strong, the healthy or the sick, the learned or the simple, the dedicated or the indifferent. Only by a lively faith can a man learn to live in peace among the tensions of this world, secure in his ability (with God's help) to weather the crises of life, whenever they come and whatever they may be, for he knows that God is with him." (*He Leadeth Me*, p. 200 Doubleday, 1973 edition.)

We hear in this parable of Jesus that *only God* is to judge; we human beings are not to. It is God's responsibility for making the final judgment calls. You and I are unable to judge the quality of the hearts of those around us, which are true and which are false. God knows the heart and God makes the call based on God's reading of the heart.

Father Walter Ciszek's Spirituality as seen by his sister – *Sister Mary Evangeline*



Introduction

This presentation of my brother's spirituality will merely be an account of his manner of sharing God with me, but at the same token, will take in my observations of him as teenager, adult, and finally as a Jesuit priest. I hope that through the medium of ordinary language I may give as complete a report as possible accrued from his conversations with me, his letters to me (Incidentally, I had destroyed all his personal spiritual letters previously written to me when I had learned in 1947 that he was supposed to have died in Siberia), and finally as I saw him during his different stages of life. I definitely feel the limitations of human expression in discussing his actions, especially those of spiritual nature, yet the only recourse I have is to handle the matter in a human way. There is no doubt that others, especially learned theologians and philosophers could offer a finer literary portrayal. My main support will stem from my reliance on the Lord for providing recollections of events and actions as they actually happened in my brother's days; and now as I am in my upper decades to be able to relate them with a more mature interpretation. Then, too, Father Walter's relationship with me had been more intimate than with any other member of the Ciszek family, so his disclosures to me were more plentiful. Moreover, the fact that I was a member of a religious Community opened a more favorable path for communication. Besides, I needed his advice, his help, and his fine example of living as a true religious.

Ciszek Family Life Background

Without question, a background of the Ciszek family is necessary, since the influence of it has left definite imprints on each and every member in the group of offspring. Both parents came from Poland and both were of poor stock. However, they brought with themselves staunch Christian faith when they ventured to settle in the United States in the mining town of Shenandoah, Pennsylvania. Strong faith and unique adherence to the things of God made their married life one that paid gratifying dividends.

Both father and mother exercised Christian virtues in bringing up the children. In the first place, they gave us a true concept of God – which they did more by example than by frequent preaching. They imbued us with a high regard for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, reception of the Sacraments, and observance of the commandments of God and the precepts of Holy Mother Church. Besides, they were fully convinced that God had given them thirteen children only as an investment – the interest being the eternal salvation of each child entrusted to their care.

Thank God, not one of the children from teenage days to their last day on earth, had ever betrayed the Lord by confiscating their Catholic faith or by committing some grievous scandal: the influence of their parents kept their faith and practice of morals in continuous growth and strength. One of the nephews (almost in my own age bracket) stated that the grandparents and his own parents had given the entire family a heritage of strong Christian faith that surmounts the highest financial inheritance.

Our parents created a climate of sensible freedom and joy in family living despite our having to abide by certain restrictions. The latest time for rising was eight o'clock in the morning. Meals were had at a specific time unless one was held back by some outside assignment. No one ever stayed away from Mass on Sunday for the very reason that this was the proper thing to do; our parents had explained that God was best glorified at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We all had a strong love for one another, and this family affection never waned. Each member of the family performed home duties; truthfully, we performed our tasks at times with reluctance, but never did we leave our job assignments undone. All this was possible because obeying our parents was built on faith, love, and mutual understanding, so that the genuine and loving rapport between parents and children never reached a state of sinful disregard of orders coming from either father or mother. Of course, there were minor infractions regarding obedience but they never took on contempt of parental orders.

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Father Walter's Father

Our father had set an example of living a life of love for God, family, and neighbor. He was especially generous in supplying us with all that we needed, but it was a generosity devoid of giving unreasonably expensive gifts, fancy clothes, or excess money allowance. Our food was plentiful and nourishing, and that paid off in good health and a long life. We were well clothed but we acquiesced to the fact that we did not have to be clad in the latest fashions. Our spending allowance was kept at a sensible level, but when unforeseen needs arose, we had access to the money box. It was, however, understood that you reported your need of extra money to either parent. The wonderful benefit of this was that since you were never questioned about the amount you took from the money box, you learned to be honest in gratitude for this privilege. I can vouch that not a single one of the Ciszek offspring did any cheating on this score. More than this, the beautiful virtue of honesty stayed with the Ciszek children for life. Even those who chose marriage have always shown outstanding honesty in money matters and in being truthful. The lesson struck home in particular fashion with the three who chose religious life - Father Walter, Sister M. Conrad, and Sister Evangeline. I feel assured that their vow of poverty never suffered any infringements. No "constitution for religious" could have taught a greater lesson with regard to honesty than that gleaned from our parents.

Our father was also most generous with the neighbors. Our telephone, the only one in the area, was freely used by those who had any need for calling, and the car was a means of conveyance for any emergency of the neighbors. When the depression years began to take a heavy toll, Mr. Ciszek bought his tenants food and even cancelled rent payments. Yet, best of all, it was edifying to see our father on his knees at prayer time, and also to note his unfailing presence at Mass each Sunday and every holy day of obligation.

Father Walter's Mother

Our mother, who attended Mass daily as a Third Order Franciscan member, not only zealously performed her domestic duties but also was the one who gave us the fundamentals of spirituality by example as well as through instruction. She taught us to employ our time on earth well by frequent recourse to prayer, avoidance of evil, and above all by practicing love of God and neighbor. For instance, when sudden death reached one of our neighbors who was very hostile with a man in our block, and who used countless ways of hurting him, our mother brought us

together and explained the necessity of forgiveness in the slights and distress that would reach us from others in the future. At the same time, our mother told us not to condemn anyone who died, for one never knows how he responded to God in his last moments. Her lessons and her example stayed on - advice from both father and mother is often quoted by family members as well as by the children of the Ciszek offspring who married - Grandpa and Grandma continue to live on in their descendants.

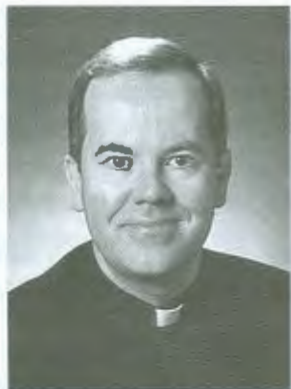
In Memory of

Metropolitan Basil Schott, O.F.M. died on June 10, 2010 from pancreatic cancer. Metropolitan Basil M. Schott was the fourth Metropolitan Archbishop of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh and head of the Byzantine Metropolitan Church sui iuris of Pittsburgh. On May 3, 2002, Pope John Paul II appointed then-Bishop Basil, Bishop of Parma, as the Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh, succeeding the late Metropolitan Judson. Metropolitan Basil was enthroned at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Munhall, Pa., on July 9, 2002. Metropolitan Basil was born on July 21, 1939 in Freeland, Pa., the son of the late Mary (Krusko) and Michael Schott. Baptized in St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Freeland, PA., he spent his early teen years in Hazleton, Pa., where he attended St. John Byzantine Catholic Church. He attended St. Mary Byzantine Catholic School in Freeland, and St. Gabriel High School in Hazleton. Metropolitan Basil entered the Byzantine Franciscans novitiate on August 3, 1958 and was professed on August 4, 1959. Bishop Stephen J. Kocisko, bishop of Passaic, ordained Metropolitan Basil to the priesthood on August 29, 1965 at the Holy Protection Monastery in New Canaan, Conn. Following his ordination, he served in numerous offices within the Byzantine Franciscan Community and the Order of Friars Minor in general. Among the offices he held are: hegumen, protohegumen, director of formation, director of novices, director of vocations, custodial councilor, custodial treasurer and spiritual assistant for the Secular Franciscans. He is well-remembered for all his pastoral ministry in parishes in the Hazleton - Sugarloaf area. In January of 1988, Father Basil was appointed a member of the General Visitation Team, by the minister general of the Order of Friars Minor, to conduct visitations for various Franciscan Communities in the United States. He had served as chaplain to the Holy Protection Monastery, Byzantine Nuns of St. Clare in North Royalton, Ohio, and Holy Annunciation Monastery of the Byzantine Carmelite Nuns in Sugarloaf, Pa. He also taught in the religious education department of Byzantine Catholic High School in Parma, Ohio. Immediately prior to his appointment as third bishop of the Eparchy of Parma in 1996, Metropolitan Basil served as Hegumen of Holy Dormition Monastery in Sybertsville, Pa. In the Eparchy of Passaic, he also held the office of Syncellus for Priests and Religious and was a member of the Presbyteral Council. On May 3, 1996, then-Father Basil was named Bishop of Parma. His episcopal ordination and enthronement took place on July 11, 1996 at St. John the Baptist Cathedral in Parma, Ohio. As Bishop of Parma, he shepherded the diverse and widespread eparchy with a gentle and steady hand. His kind manner and care for his flock endeared him to his clergy and laity.

Father Walter J. Ciszek Prayer League Welcomes

New Bishop of Scranton, Pennsylvania

Joseph Charles Bambera is the bishop of Scranton. He was born in Carbondale, son of Irene and the late Joseph Bambera and is a 1974 graduate of St. Rose of Lima High School. In 1978, he graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a degree in art history and a minor in chemistry. He originally thought of entering dental school, but says that while participating in the campus ministry program at Pitt, his interest turned toward the priesthood. He was ordained a priest in 1983 and was enthroned as the bishop of Scranton in April of 2010. He serves as the spiritual leader of 350,000 area Roman Catholics.



A former chair of the diocese's presbyteral council, regional dean and tribunal judge in addition to five pastorates, he quit Bishop Martino's curia in 2007 to return to parish life. Two years later, three weeks after the roof of one of his parishes caved in, Bambera re-emerged as Rigali's pick to run the diocese during the vacancy, after the resignation of Bishop Martino. He also served as president of the Board of Pastors at Bishop Hafey High School and Bishop O'Hara High School, and as defender of the bond for the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Scranton from 2003 to 2009.

New Bishop of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Most Reverend Joseph P. McFadden was born in Philadelphia on May 22, 1947, the son of Thomas and Ellen (Griffin) McFadden. He attended Saint Thomas More High School for Boys from 1961 to 1965. Following high school, he went to Saint Joseph University and majored in Political Science. He graduated in 1969 and taught at West Catholic Boys High School. In 1976 Bishop McFadden entered Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary to study for the priesthood and was ordained a Deacon in 1980 and assigned to Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Secane. On May 16, 1981 he was ordained a Priest in the Cathedral Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul by His Eminence John Cardinal Krol. Bishop McFadden received a Master of Divinity Degree on completion of his studies at Saint Charles Seminary graduating Summa Cum Laude.



In June of 1981, he was assigned the Parochial Vicar at St. Laurence Parish, Highland Park. In 1982 he was appointed Administrative Secretary to Cardinal Krol and held that position from 1982 to 1993. On May 29, 1991, he was named an Honorary Prelate to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, with the title of Monsignor.

In 1993, Bishop McFadden was named by Cardinal Bevilacqua to be the first President of Cardinal O'Hara High School, Springfield, PA. During his tenure as President, the school's enrollment increased from 1540 students to 2000 students and he helped to initiate the innovative computer "Laptops for Learning" program in the school.

In 2001, Bishop McFadden was appointed Pastor of St Joseph Parish, Downingtown, where he ministered until his appointment as Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia in June 2004. Bishop McFadden was ordained to the Episcopacy by Cardinal Justin Rigali on July 28, 2004.

Father Walter Ciszek
Day 2010
October 17, 2010



Raffle tickets - See Insert for more information

Points to Ponder

passages taken from the book, *He Leadeth Me*, by Fr. Walter J. Ciszek, S.J.

by Kathy Prieto

How easy it is, in times of ease, for us to become dependent on our routines, on the established order of our day-to-day existence, to carry us along. We begin to take things for granted, to rely on ourselves and on our own resources, to “settle in” in this world and look to it for our support. ... We don’t have to desire much of the things of this world- to be enamored of riches, for example, or greedy or avaricious- in order to have gained this sense of comfort and of well-being, to trust in them as our support- and to take God for granted. It is the status quo that we rely on, that carries us from day to day, and somehow we begin to lose sight of the fact that under all these things and behind all these things it is God who supports and sustains us (pg. 21).

- *Do I fully understand that every breath I take is completely dependent on if God allows it?*
- *Establishing daily routines is good. It helps order the day and provides structure for important things like prayer. Do I thank God for the ability to establish this routine and not take for granted the status quo of my day?*
- *If my routine gets disrupted, do I thank God for the opportunity to show him I won’t give up or become frustrated- and do the best of my ability regardless of the disruption?*

Gradually, too, I learned to purify my prayer and remove from it the elements of self-seeking. I learned to pray for my interrogators,...I learned to stop asking for more bread for myself, and instead to offer up my sufferings... (pg. 56).

- *Do I offer up my daily sufferings and inconveniences to God ? Or do I dwell on the fact that they are bothering me?*
- *Do I pray for the persecuted Christians in China, the souls in purgatory, the person running for public office? If so, do I pray for them with as much zeal as I pray for myself? Instead of having 2 cups of coffee in the morning, what about just having 1 cup and offering up that small mortification (not having the 2nd cup) for them?*
- *Do I ask Mary to help purify my prayer?*

In a democratic society, freedom quite often suffers from its abuse by others.... In a totalitarian state, on the other hand, freedom suffers from lack of exercise, for the laws are stringent, the penalties severe, and authorities themselves curtail the rights of citizens (pg. 159). Ultimately, the only absolute freedom we have resides in man’s free will. And that freedom was given to us by our Creator, essentially, so that we might freely choose to love and serve him. It is in choosing to serve God, to do his will, that man achieves his highest and fullest freedom (pg. 158).

- *In the United States of America, certain citizens are denied their right to life by another’s “freedom” to choose. These citizens “suffer from its abuse by others”. What can I do regarding this?*
- *We have the right to vote and have the freedom to exercise that right. Do I take this for granted? Do I actually vote?*
- *Do I research the issues and candidates to see who would be the best at fulfilling God’s will for His people? Do I consult a catholic voter’s guide when making my decision regarding candidates (can contact your local diocese for one, ask your priest, or find one on line provided by reputable catholic organization).*

DECEASED - Jeanine Bobish, Michael Flanagan, Joseph McAndrew, Most Rev. Bishop Basil Schott, Rev. Fr. Richard Schware, John Anczarski, John Sherman, Jack Spotts, Rita Godlewski, Joanne Buczek, Rose Chesla, Joseph Keszowski, Estelle Markus, Gloria Sipowitz, Joe Yanasheski, David Collins, Edna Perez Moore.

HEALTH - Richard Allgower, Rev. Msgr. Mark Giordani, Mary Ann Selvocki, Jules Stremba, Felix Bermejo, Dorothy Burkot, Martha Dardenio, Craig Birkby, Marlene White, Agnes Ferguson, Michael Hashin, Bill Fonslick, Chet Gratkowski, Christine Lenhart, Marian Straubel, Tina Dixon, Timothy Smock, Felicidad Abalos, Christine Lesher, Robert Haugh.

SPECIAL INTENTIONS - Mary Zentkovich and friends, Mike McGrath and Family, Dan McGrath and Family, Ruth McMahan, Regina and Jeff, Charles Butcher, John Tran, Coyle Family, Christopher Afonso, Ted Kowalski.

For all whose names were previously on our list, but who are still in need of our prayers; for all those who have requested prayers of the League; for all those who are praying through the intercession of Fr. Walter Ciszek; and for all who need our prayers.

DONATIONS: Anonymous

MEMORIALS: In memory of Elizabeth Gaydos Ciszek by Jane Miliotis

Notes from Sister Doris

The article on Father Ciszek in the Easter issue of The WORD Among Us, "The Priest Who Died Three Times" by Louise Perrotta, has generated a considerable amount of interest in Father Ciszek's cause. We have had numerous inquiries, and even some orders from new parts of the U.S.A., as well as from scattered sections of Canada. One letter from a prisoner delighted us with his firm commitment to keep praying for Father Walter's cause until he gets canonized. Another person thanked God for Fr. Walter's intercession regarding a matter that was of serious importance to their family. Certainly, we are witnessing a surge of interest in the prayer cards and in Fr. Ciszek's books.

We are sincerely grateful to Kathy Prieto who, from her home in Connecticut, has again provided us with a meditation for this issue. We are also pleased to publish an article on Fr. Ciszek by Mary Lynch, which contribution was submitted about five years ago, but was never published in our newsletter.

We found a quite lengthy and very interesting account of Sister Evangeline's recollections of her brother, Fr. Walter Ciszek's spirituality, and have decided to publish it in installments over the next few years beginning with this issue—we feel sure that you won't want to miss any of the future issues, and that might assuredly motivate some members to be up to date with their membership dues. After this issue, we'll be eliminating those whose mailing labels read "0209", since they have already received issues beyond that year.

For those who are somewhat confused with our markings on the mailing labels: "0209" shows that one was paid up for the year 2009; and "0210" indicates that one is paid up for all of the year 2010 (1/2 of '10 means just that, a person has paid for one-half of 2010). With postal rates always on the rise, we find it difficult to keep sending the newsletters to those we haven't heard from recently.

As always, we are very happy when our members get others to join the Prayer League; we thank those who have done so during the past few months and we ask God's blessings upon you.