

THIS DAY

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A Newsletter
Published by
DISMAS MINISTRY
*A National Catholic
Outreach for Inmates,
Victims, Their Families,
Those Released from Prison
and the Community.*

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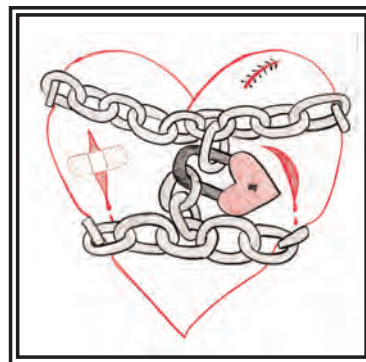
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Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice

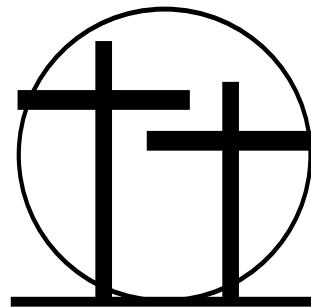
A Statement of the Catholic Bishops of the United States, November 15, 2000

Crime and the Catholic Community (Excerpt)

Our response to crime in the United States is a moral test for our nation and a challenge for our Church. Although the FBI reports that the crime rate is falling, crime and fear of crime still touch many lives and polarize many communities. Putting more people in prison and, sadly, more people to death has not given Americans the security we seek. It is time for a new national dialogue on crime and corrections, justice and mercy, responsibility and treatment. As Catholics, we need to ask the following: How can we restore our respect for law and life? How can we protect and rebuild communities, confront crime without vengeance, and defend life without taking life? These questions challenge us as pastors and as teachers of the Gospel. Our tasks are to restore a sense of civility and responsibility to everyday life, and promote crime prevention and genuine rehabilitation. The common good is undermined by criminal behavior that threatens the lives and dignity of others and by policies that seem to give up on those who have broken the law (offering too little treatment and too few alternatives to either years in prison or the execution of those who have been convicted of terrible crimes). New approaches must move beyond the slogans of the moment (such as "three strikes and you're out") and the excuses of the past (such as "criminals are simply trapped by their background"). Crime, corrections, and the search for real community require far more than the policy clichés of conservatives and liberals. A Catholic approach begins with the recognition that the dignity of the human person applies to both victim and offender. As bishops, we believe that the current trend of more prisons and more executions, with too little education and drug treatment, does not truly reflect Christian values and will not really leave our communities safer. *(To be continued)*



Artwork by an Inmate



Remember me.
Luke 23:42

The Story of St. Dismas

One of the criminals hanging in crucifixion said: "We are only paying the price for what we have done, but this man has done nothing wrong."

He then said, "Jesus, remember me when you enter upon your reign."

And Jesus replied, "I assure you: this day you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23: 39-43

Prayer of All Saints

Let us pray that the prayers of all the saints will bring us forgiveness for our sins.

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, today we rejoice in the holy men and women of every time and place.

May their prayers bring us your forgiveness and love.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

This Day

Fall

2013

A Newsletter Published by Dismas Ministry

A National Catholic Outreach for Inmates, Victims, their Families and the Community.

Saints Who Were in Prison



Sir Thomas More, Chancellor
by Hans Holbeing

Thomas More (1478-1535) was a good husband and father, had a sense of humor, and a pleasant personality. He also was a successful lawyer, scholar and writer, and his talent won both the friendship and recognition of King Henry the Eighth of England. Eventually, the king appointed him to the post of Lord Chancellor - the highest position in the government. It was a great honor and Thomas served with fairness and justice.

What at first seemed like a dream-come-true turned into a nightmare that cost Thomas his life. Eventually, the king decided to divorce the queen because they had no children. He desperately wanted a son to succeed him as king. When the pope refused to dissolve the marriage, the king declared himself head of the church in England, divorced the queen and took a new wife. When citizens were asked to make an oath of loyalty to the king as the head of the church, using his knowledge of the law, Thomas claimed the right to remain silent and retired from public life, resigning as Chancellor.

Nevertheless, he was summoned to back to court and jailed in the Tower of London, where he remained in solitude for 15 months. During that time the king's representatives visited him in prison or summoned him to their offices, and mercilessly pressured him to change his mind. His house and property were even seized, and as a result, his family was reduced to poverty. Through it all, even though it pained him to see his family suffer on his account, Thomas remained loyal to his belief that the church was founded by Christ and had been entrusted to Peter's successor, the pope.

Eventually, he was brought to trial, accused of treason and despite a brilliant self-defense, was sentenced to death by beheading on July 6, 1535. Before he left the courtroom he remarked to the judges: "May we all meet merrily together in heaven." Because he was weak from being in prison, he had difficulty climbing the steps to the execution scaffold. As he was given help he joked, "Help me up; but as for my coming down, I will shift for myself!" Before he died he declared his faith in Christ and his church, calling himself "the king's good servant, but God's first." Saint Thomas More's feast day is June 22.

Hearing from Christ's Body behind bars...

Chaplains and Ministries

"Once again I bring you the heartfelt thanks of many, many women at the correctional institution for women. We received your most recent box of Pray in the Spirit prayer books, and they are going like hot cakes! I am even getting request from women who are not Catholic - in an environment which is still very skeptical of Catholicism. The value of your ministry is invaluable. We are blessed and deeply grateful to be on the receiving end of your good works. We pray for you each Saturday, when our Catholic community gathers for the Eucharist. May you be blessed in abundance and the good that you do be multiplied beyond measure." - A Catholic Sister and Chaplain (Louisiana)

"Some time ago we received your pocket-sized book of prayers for inmates. I was wondering if you could help us out again. I am requesting 100 prayer books and 100 Bibles in Spanish. Thank you for your wonderful ministry to inmates and to all of us in pastoral work in jails and prisons. We are a nonprofit working within the county adult detention facility. This facility houses 800 inmates. Gratefully." - A Catholic Sister (Illinois)

"Thank you for your generous donation and continued support of incarcerated men, even through these difficult economic times. We appreciate your steadfast generosity. We work hard to put your donations to good use. The men here make a point of praying for those who see and know that good comes from unlikely places, like prison. You are in our prayers." - A Catholic Chaplain (Washington)

"I am a chaplain at a large medium/maximum security state prison and we presently have approximately 1500 men, many of whom have expressed a sincere hunger for the gospel. Thank you for remembering us in your outreach" A non-Catholic Chaplain (South Carolina)



Inmates

"Thank you - I love my new Bible, especially the insightful and thoughtful commentary. Thank you and bless you for your ministry." - An Inmate (New Jersey)

"Reading and studying the prayer book gives me a larger and better hope for the future, and helps knowing others have been in this position before. It was a huge blessing, thank you." An Inmate (Louisiana)

"I like to thank you for teaching me how to open my heart to God. When I get out I will be a better person with God by my side. Keep up the great work - you made me a believer." An Inmate (Nevada).

"Thank you very much for the Bible and prayer book. I have been reading them daily and they have brought me enjoyment and peace of mind and spirit. I appreciate it very much. God bless you." An Inmate (Mississippi)

"You have no ideas how helpful something such as the Bible study program helps me with my stay. I am grateful." An Inmate (Wyoming)

"I am just coming into the faith and I need all the Bible study help I can get." An inmate (Texas)

Thank You for Your Prayers!



Dear Friends,

Suddenly, it is the end of summer. The days are a little shorter and the crickets are singing in the garden that is giving the last of the harvest.

As we look back over the past few months, this is a time of gratitude for so many graces given to us at the hand of our bountiful and loving Creator.

In June we ended our ministry's fiscal year and tallied the donations we received during the past 12 months. According to the directive of our board of directors, whatever funds we had raised by June 30 became our new fiscal budget for the coming year beginning July. Each year we are able to gather enough funding to continue our ministry and provide what is needed to the many inmates and chaplains who contact us daily and weekly asking for Bibles, prayer books, rosaries, Catechisms of the Catholic Church and the study books used in our Bible, faith and prayer correspondence courses. It is an honor and a grace to be able to provide these precious aids to their faith and to know that we are touching many hearts and souls.

We are deeply grateful for the backbone of this ministry which is composed of your prayers behind all the business of our daily efforts. We are strengthened and encouraged by the fact that you are praying for our ministry, like Moses who held his arms up while the Israelites battled their enemies.

Your intercession is both real and one of the profound mysteries of the Body of Christ, touching lives you do not see because they are behind bars. Yet, your faith gives you the vision to see these women and men as still valuable in the eyes of God who loves them with an infinite love.

A Memorial Gift

Honor the memory of a loved one or honor a special person with a gift in their name to our ministry.

Contact Dismas Ministry and request a *Memorial* folder. Then fill it out and give to whomever you wish. Send your gift to support the work of Dismas Ministry as you honor the person you name.

To request a *Memorial* folder write to:

Dismas Ministry
PO Box 070363
Milwaukee, WI 53207

or email:
dismas@dismasministry.org

I cannot say it enough - we depend on your prayers of intercession to ask God to bless our humble efforts. In truth, we are fellow sinners ministering to others who have sinned publicly and are paying the price. So we need prayer to guide us, strengthen us and give us the wisdom and faith to be messengers bringing hope where there is a great shortage of it behind bars.

We wish you to know that not a day goes by that we do not express our thanks to God for all of you and your faithful prayers for us. We could not do this work without you because it is a spiritual work that requires God's grace above all. I often recall the words of the beautiful hymn *Earthen Vessels*. That is truly what we are - simple vessels who are blessed beyond measure to serve Christ on earth in the persons of the imprisoned.

With gratitude for your prayers,

Ron Zeilinger

Ron Zeilinger,
Director

