



Jesus and the woman at the well

## A Letter From A Catholic Volunteer

### Prayer in a Women's Prison

Dear Dismas Ministry,

First of all I'd like to thank you for the Bibles for the Indiana Women's Prison. The ladies are reading them and discussing what they've read with each other and with the volunteers this summer. Most of the inmates did not own a Catholic bible and they are very interested in the "extra" books of our bible. The Hispanic ladies were very pleasantly surprised to see Spanish Bibles. It really made them feel especially welcome in our group.

The prayer books you sent were given out by the inmates to other Catholic inmates, and it really has been an evangelization tool, because it encouraged a lot more ladies to come to mass. I've heard several ladies say they've begun to pray on a regular basis again, because of your prayer books. We give them each a nice rosary so they can pray the rosary, using the prayer books too.

I wanted to share with you on how much Dismas Ministry has made a difference in the lives of the inmates we serve. The success of our program is due in a large part to your ministry and we thank you so very much. Even the non-catholic women know of your organization, by the way. You do so much good for all of the ladies that you may never meet. I wish you could see their lives changing right before your eyes, like we do each week. Women who once felt alienated and abandoned but are now turning to seek Jesus, through the sacraments and the Living Word of God.

And I want you to know that we do continue to pray for all of you. I'm sorry you cannot see the smiles on the ladies' faces when we give them your prayer books or Bibles, and better yet, hear what they've been reading the next time they come back!

I will especially pray for you and the Dismas Ministry tomorrow during the Mass at the prison. I will ask the priest if the intention of the Mass could be offered for you.

May the peace of Christ be with you all.

Laura

Since 2000 Dismas Ministry has distributed over 147,000 copies of the inmate prayer book Pray in the Spirit, in both English and Spanish versions.

## Thank You for Your Prayers



Dear Friends,

I wish I had better news for you at the beginning of this new year. The truth is, despite our best efforts and the generosity of many, the economy seems to have had an impact on our ministry.

In 2010, after 10 years of ministry, we saw a serious drop in donations, in particular from Catholic foundations. The troubles of Wall Street impacted the investments of many foundations so that they could not provide funding as in previous years. This means that our ministry currently has less funding for our outreach to the prisons we serve. We've been forced to make some heart-rending decisions. We have had to reduce the number of scripture and faith materials requested by chaplains and local ministries who have depended on us for Catholic Bibles, prayer books and rosaries for those they serve. We have held the ground with requests from individual inmates, because they are our first priority. We see in them the face of Christ and cannot refuse their sincere requests for their own Bible to read the Word of God and its bright message of hope and mercy.

I have chosen this good news, from the lips of our Savior himself at the inauguration of his ministry for the front page of this newsletter. It expresses exactly what our ministry is all about: we have been sent to *bring tidings to the spiritually poor behind bars, to proclaim liberty to those caught in the bondage of their mistakes, their upbringing, their addictions or whatever else brought them to prison, and release to prisoners – the freedom of a child of God whether they remain in prison or are released one day. Please, my friends, storm heaven for our cause, that God will raise up generous friends to support our mission! May Mary Mother of Good Help be with us in all we do for her Son!*

Ron Zeilinger,  
Executive Director

### A Special Gift in Memory of a Loved One

Remember a loved one or special person with a gift in their name to our ministry.

Contact us to request a *Memorial* folder. Then give it to whomever you wish. Your gift will support our work in prison while you honor someone special.

To request our *Memorial* folder contact:

**Dismas Ministry**  
PO Box 070363  
Milwaukee, WI 53207

### Growth in Faith Behind Bars

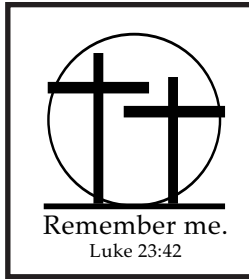
Dear Dismas Ministry,

*We are now in our third RCIA program at FPC Alderson and looking forward to ministering to the women at this federal prison. We have distributed approximately 60 Bibles and Catechisms to the women thanks to Dismas Ministries. We have been increasing the number of women attending our sessions each year and our hope is to have an RCIA class this year with about thirty women.*

*I am requesting 30 Catholic Bibles and 30 Catholic Catechisms all in English. We have several Spanish versions still in our possession, which should be enough for our group for now. I appreciate, as the women do, for your support. We have a number of women who take advantage of the Bible studies made available through Dismas Ministries.*

*Thank you for your ministry. The women that we come in contact with really appreciate what Dismas provides for their spiritual growth. It truly prepares them to enter back into society.*

—From a Chaplain



# THIS DAY

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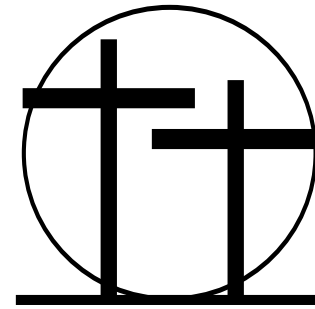
A Newsletter  
Published by  
DISMAS MINISTRY  
*A National Catholic  
Outreach for Inmates,  
Victims, Their Families,  
Those Released from Prison  
and the Community.*

**Please Note:**

If you receive a duplicate newsletter we would ask you to share it with someone who might be interested in our ministry. Thank you!

DISMAS MINISTRY is registered as a nonprofit corporation in the State of Wisconsin, and listed in the US Catholic Directory as a religious, tax exempt 501 (c) (3) organization. All gifts are tax deductible.

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Remember me.  
Luke 23:42

## The Story of 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)

# THIS DAY

New Year Issue

2011

A Newsletter Published by Dismas Ministry  
*A National Catholic Outreach for Inmates, Victims, their Families, and the Community.*

## The mission must continue...

"When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

*The spirit of the Lord is upon me;  
therefore he has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor,  
to proclaim liberty to captives,  
Recovery of sight to the blind  
and release to prisoners,  
To announce a year of favor from the Lord.'*

Rolling up the scroll he gave it back to the assistant and sat down. All in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him. Then he began saying to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4: 17-21).

Our prayer in this new year is that it truly will be a year of favor, of grace, in which we will continue to serve the face of Christ in prison.  
*(See the Executive Director's letter on the next page).*

## What Is Restorative Justice? (continued)

Summary of Previous Article: *Restorative justice is an alternative to the usual approach to criminal justice. It emphasizes the ways crime harms relationships in the community. Crime is a violation of the victims and the community, rather than a violation of the state. Offenders are accountable for the harm done and must take responsibility for their actions, and as far as possible, repair the harm caused to the victims and the community.*

### Some Basic Assumptions

- Crime is defined as an act against another person and the community, rather than against the state.
- Crime has a negative effect on the victim, the community and the offender, therefore all parties should be included in the response to crime.
- Restoration (making things right) replaces punishment for its own sake as the highest priority of the criminal justice system.
- The victim is at the center of the process, defining the harm done and how it ought to be repaired.

### How is restorative justice practiced?

- Faith communities, professional agencies, and community volunteers provide support and assistance to victims and their families, who are at the heart of this approach
- Victims have the opportunity to help shape the obligations placed on offenders for repairing the harm caused by their crimes.
- Victim/offender mediation is made available for victims who wish to participate.
- Faith communities, professional agencies, and community volunteers also provide support and assistance to the families of offenders.
- Businesses and community organizations work with offenders to reintegrate them into the community while offenders fulfill their obligations of restitution to the victim and the community.
- Faith communities sponsor support groups for offenders trying to change negative life patterns.
- Offenders leave prison with better life skills due to programs that engage them in victim/offender mediation, family group conferences, victim and community panels.
- Offenders engage in community service projects that benefit the community.
- The community provides work opportunities for offenders so that they are able to make restitution to the victims of their crimes.



Cross by an Inmate

## U.S. Catholic Teaching on Restorative Justice

"The challenge of curbing crime and reshaping the criminal justice system is not just a matter of public policy, but is also a test of Catholic commitment. In the face of so much violence and crime, our faith calls the Church to responsibility and action. A wide variety of Catholic communities have responded with impressive programs of service and advocacy. In many dioceses, Catholic Charities is reaching out to victims, those in prison and their families, ex-offenders, and others touched by crime and the criminal justice system through counseling, employment and treatment programs, as well as early intervention efforts directed towards families and individuals at risk. Yet more is needed. Our community of faith is called to teach right from wrong, respect for life and law, forgiveness and mercy."

From: *Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration*,  
A Statement by the US Catholic Bishops, 2000., p. 47.

## In their own words...

### From a chaplain:

*"Blessings! 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."*

### From a Inmate:

*"...Thank you so much for sending me a Bible. This is the first complete Bible I've ever owned, and I will be sure to remember where it came from. There are 12 people here in maximum security with me, and of them, 10 have been attending the Bible studies I've been leading. Having a complete Bible will now seriously improve our studies and allow us to grow further than we thought possible. God Bless."*