

# 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  
please let us know your exact address.  
**Thank you!**

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corporation in the State of  
Wisconsin, and listed in the  
*US Catholic Directory* as a  
religious, tax exempt 501  
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All gifts are tax deductible.

## Letter from an apostle in prison

Dear Friends of Dismas Ministry,  
My name is James. I am serving a 26 year sentence for voluntary manslaughter. I have been in prison since 2001 and will not be eligible for release until 2023. I was raised Catholic, attended church each week, but unfortunately I made some bad decisions and involved myself in activities that clouded my judgment. At the beginning of prison I struggled with attending Mass and a relationship with Christ. I was dealing with a lot of pain, frustration and confusion-there was the feeling that I was not worthy of God's love.

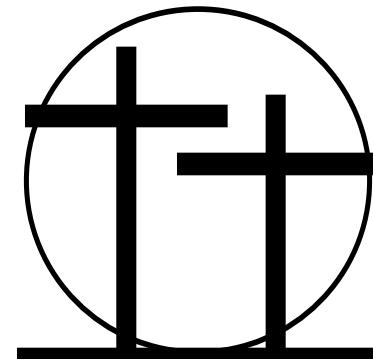
I have since re-entered the church, rebuilt my broken relationship with Christ and been actively involved with the church and ministry within the institution. I have, with the help of Dismas Ministry, been reaching out to my fellow prisoners. I have been able to minister to many Catholics coming into the system; men that are lost, seeking understanding, meaning and guidance; men that are hungry for the Word of God. I have seen first hand these men that were in such despair brighten up. When I presented them with the Word of God, it is His presence that heals, inspires and encourages.

It is important to maintain the ministry behind these fences, to reach our fellow Catholics. In the position that we are in, we can reach many that have gone astray and need direction. I know that I have come extremely far in my own walk and have a strong testimony that many can relate to. I know that if I could change within these walls with the help of Jesus Christ, they can as well. Ministry is happening in a place that seems cut off and almost forgotten by society. However, it is with the help of outside organizations like Dismas Ministry that makes a lot of ministry possible. Without their support many of us would not have those essential tools that we depend upon. I pray the peace and love of our Lord be with you now and forever.



Inmates joining in prayer

Sincerely, James



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

### Our Lady of Perpetual Help Students Join Our Union of Prayer

Recently the "School of Religion" at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Carrollton, Georgia requested to join our Union of Prayer. Their director wrote: "This upcoming school year we will have the "Corporal Works of Mercy" as a theme. We would like to remember the imprisoned in prayer throughout the year. I am requesting that our School of Religion be enrolled in the Union of Prayer." Thank you to our new members for their prayers! Anyone interested in joining our Union of Prayer is welcome. Simply write to enroll.

# This Day

Summer

2012

A Newsletter Published by Dismas Ministry

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

## Blessed are you! Matthew 5: 3-11

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

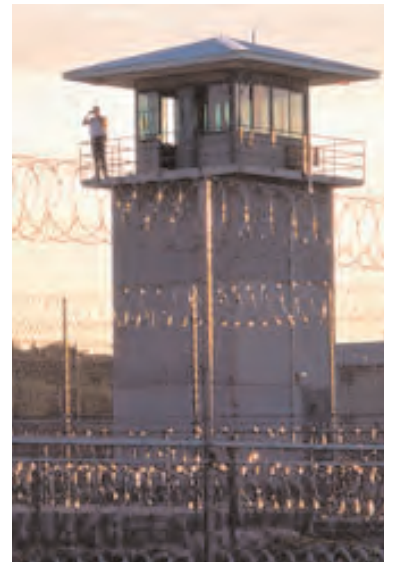
*Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward will be great in heaven."*



*"I watch in hope for the Lord"*  
Micah 7: 7

In thinking about a cover story, we decided that "The Beatitudes" are the best news we can share with you in this issue of our newsletter. It is God's revelation of his inside-out, upside down way of viewing life, and how we can expect the unexpected of God, just when we think that our life is routine, going according to plan (our plan), and that God is doing what we think He should be doing. But these *Beatitudes*, along with Mary's *Magnificat*, are a sure reminder that God is already doing whatever God has in store for each person, or society, or the world – or the church. Our job is to try to catch up to God however, wherever He has gone ahead of us. We have a saying at Dismas Ministry, "There's no avoiding God's will!" And why would we? What good would come of resisting or contradicting God's will? Compared to God's sovereign majesty and perspective on life, we truly are creatures with limited sight and understanding, but with hearts that can be taught to trust in Infinite Love. May God's will be done...on earth as it is in heaven.

# Hearing from Christ's Body behind bars...

## Chaplains and Ministries

"Today we received 100 rosaries from your ministry. On behalf of the offenders here at the correctional center, I would like to thank you for your most generous gift! We will make these rosaries available for offenders who want one in our Chapel reception area and during Sunday Mass services. Thank you for your continued support of the offenders here and throughout Missouri; I know first hand that the offenders truly appreciate all that you do for them. May God continue to bless your ministry." -A Missouri Chaplain

"Thank you for the wonderful inspiration that you are and for helping us minister to the inmates of south Mississippi. We would not be able to do what we do without your help." -Biloxi Prison Outreach

"I am the volunteer Catholic priest that is serving three state correctional facilities. I have had numerous requests from inmates for Bibles, prayer books, Bible study materials and faith study materials. This is not a budgeted item for the diocese and I am crossing diocesan boundaries to visit and serve in those prisons. I am easily serving 300 inmates and could put to use 50 English and 20 Spanish items. Over the past six years, my deacon and I have been purchasing Bibles and catechisms when we can. Any assistance you can provide will help." A Catholic Priest Volunteer

"Thank you for responding so quickly to my inquiry, you are a gem. We just came back from the state prison. We have an execution tomorrow and it certainly affects the inmates and staff. It was a very somber service. Thank you for your prayers-be assured of our continued prayers for Dismas Ministry."

-An Arizona Ministry Volunteer



## Inmates

"I recently received my copy of 'Pray in the Spirit' and I thank you. Now I see taht there is a correspondence course on the Catholic Bible. I would very much like to enroll. I am at the crossroads of my life. I believe I am in jail because I turned away from the Lord. How can He protect me if I won't allow Him in my life? I've been reading the Bible a lot and I'm already starting to change. The desire to drink seems to have left me completely, I never think about it. Studying the Bible and learning more about the Lord can only be the right thing to do. Please send what I need to get started." -An Inmate

"I am currently in an honorary unit. It is a faith-based program that is geared toward becoming a better person through the teachings of Jesus Christ. I have seen your address on the door of our library and seen others doing your Bible studies. When asked about them I was told with a smile on their faces and a light in their eyes taht the studies are a big factor in knowing about the scriptures. I am writing you this letter with a prayer, in hopes of obtaining this Bible study myself, plus asking for a New American Bible and maybe a rosary. God bless you." - An Inmate

"You wee so gracious to send me the New American Bible. I just can't thank you enough. I have finally found some peace and comfort and I owe it to our Savior and you also at Dismas Ministry. I am trying very hard to learn and get a deeper understanding of God's words. I feel myself growing more spiritually everyday and I know the Catechism of the Catholic Church would really benefit me. I have no other way ot receive this nor do I have any way to pay for it, but I definitely would put it to good use. I would be so grateful. Please pray for me as I will pray for you. Your friend in Christ." - An Inmate

## Thank you for Your Prayers



Dear Friends,

It has been only a short time since Sr. Lois Justen died, and she often comes up in our conversation. And her prayers and memory remain with us. Back in 2008 when I first asked her to become a volunteer with Dismas Ministry she responded: "It is truly my privilege to help with the ministry. I'm humbled and grateful that you asked me." It also was a privilege to work with her and to witness her love for God's incarcerated friends.

Sr. Lois loved the *Beatitudes* and it's clear that she tried to live them each day—even if she was not always successful. No doubt arising from her own experience she wrote these words to an inmate :

"Please know that you are special to God. You made a poor choice which you thought would never happen again. God forgives us over and over again for every mistake we make. According to the Bible, God also forgets our mistakes! Our God is merciful, forgiving and forgetting. St. Francis used to say, 'Let us begin today, for until now we have done nothing!' A new day! A chance to start over!"



Her words are a wonderful reminder that, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

On another note, Sr. Lois often shared her dream that someday our ministry would have a *farm*. Her eyes would get a bright, excited look as she described how people coming out of prison could spend some time there, and it would be a wonderful way for them to "de-program" from prison life, enjoy animals and growing things, as

## 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**

a way to find healing in God's creation as they prepared to re-enter society.

I never denied the possibility of her dream. I simply would look down at the frail power-house standing next to me holding onto her walker, and say to her, "Yes, Sister, it could happen. Anything is possible with God, of course." And she would say with eyebrows raised and her eyes twinkling, "Yes, it could happen!"

Whether it will happen someday, I do not know but I believe that it is possible because God is capable of anything, whether it is a place for healing or *the healing of the heart that takes place anywhere* we are. We already are blessed beyond measure, because we have so great and good a God who is merciful and, as Sr. Lois reminded, forgetful. Each day is a new day. Each moment is a chance to start over. It is said that saints are not people who never fall. But they are people who get up and return to God right away.

Blessings for a merciful new day!

*Ron Zeilinger*  
Ron Zeilinger, Director