



REMEMBER ME

DISMAS MINISTRY
P.O. BOX 070363
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A Newsletter
Published by
DISMAS MINISTRY
*A National Catholic
Outreach for Inmates,
Victims, their Families,
the Released from Prison,
and for the Community*

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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

REMEMBER ME

Easter 2015

A NEWS LETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF DISMAS MINISTRY
A National Catholic Outreach for Inmates, Victims, their Families & the Community.

Pope Francis Announces A Jubilee Year of Mercy

Rome, March 13, 2015 (CNA/EWTN
News)

During his homily for a Lenten
penitential service, Pope Francis
announced an extraordinary Ju-
bilee to start at the end of the year.
It will be dedicated to a theme
close to the pope's heart: *mercy*.

"Dear brothers and sisters, I have thought about how the Church can make clear
its mission of being a witness of mercy," the Pope told attendees of his
March 13 penitential liturgy in St. Peter's Basilica.

"It's a journey that starts with a spiritual conversion. For this reason I have de-
cided to declare an Extraordinary Jubilee that has the mercy of God at its center.
It will be a Holy Year of Mercy."

The biblical passage for the Holy Year's theme is from Luke 6: 36, in
which Jesus tells his disciples, "Be merciful as your Father is merciful."

"I am convinced that the whole Church will be able to find in this Jubilee the joy
of rediscovering and making fruitful the mercy of God, with which we are all
called to give consolation to every man and every woman of our time," Francis
said, and entrusted the Holy Year to Mary, Mother of Mercy.

The Jubilee, also called a Holy Year, will open on December 8, 2015 – the
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception – and will close November 20,
2016 with the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.
The official announcement of the Jubilee will take place on Divine Mercy
Sunday, the Sunday after Easter, with a public proclamation in front of
the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica. In ancient Hebrew tradition, the Ju-
bilee Year was celebrated every 50 years and was intended to restore
equality among the children of Israel by providing opportunities for
those who lost their property and even their freedom to regain them. *The
Pope's theme of mercy and the Jubilee call to set captives free is a perfect fit for
our prison ministry and our celebration of 15 years as Dismas Ministry!*

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prayers and a contribution to our work. Also, please look around your own community to see what re-
sources are available for those who are being released, and if they come to your church, welcome them to
your faith community.

In closing I would like to share with you what one of our ministry contacts wrote recently: "I am reminded
of those who are spending this holy season in confinement, and of those called to minister to them. Recently I was
greeted and hugged by a former inmate who came to my church on Sunday and reminded me of when I brought com-
munion services to his prison. I rejoiced with him at his release but mostly at his continuing faith in God. Now I see
him at Mass every weekend and each time I thank God for helping him stay faith-filled during his incarceration. I am
sending a small contribution for the wonderful work your ministry does for those who are put away, forgotten, feared
and disowned by our society. I am grateful that Dismas Ministry is there to help these souls. May God continue to
bless your work." (Inés)

Please pray for our sisters and brothers about to be released, and please keep an open eye to someone
who may be coming to your parish as a new member in need of a welcome.

In the joy of the Resurrection,
Ron Zeilinger
Director.

A Memorial Gift

Honor the memory of a
loved one with a gift
in their name to
Dismas Ministry.

Contact us to request a
Memorial folder. When you
receive it, fill it out and
present it to whomever you
wish. Then send your gift to
support the work
of Dismas Ministry in honor
of the person named.

To request a Memorial folder
write to:

Dismas Ministry
PO Box 070363
Milwaukee, WI 53207

or email:
dismas@dismasministry.org

From Christ's Body Behind Bars

From Chaplains and Ministries

"Thank you very much for the generous donation of two boxes of Catholic New Testaments. Your donation came at a critical time for us. We have been working on the third extension of our contract, which means we have had to extend last year's fiscal budget for over six months. We are so grateful for your support of our ministry. The detainees here are very grateful for their New Testaments. They provide spiritual support, peace and solace in a very difficult time of their lives. Thank you for making that possible." A Catholic ICE Chaplain, Arizona

"It is a beautiful thing to see how the Hispanic inmates have been so well incorporated into the Catholic prison community. The Hispanic brothers read one of the readings in Spanish for the Mass and Communion services. And at Christmas, the readings were done in English and Spanish, as were the hymns. The Spanish speaking men participated in the Stations of the Cross too, and let me know that they understand English pretty well if it is spoken, even if they cannot speak it. They appreciate the effort the Catholic community has made to reach out to them. Thank you again for the prayer books and rosaries. We will continue to pray for your ministry. You reach into the inmates' cells and every day life in a way that we cannot. The men found the Stations of the Cross in the prayer book you sent and plan to do the Stations on Good Friday afternoon, when we cannot be there. In a way, you are there, when we cannot be." A Catholic Volunteer, Oregon

From Inmates

"The prayer book has helped me in my daily prayers, in my offering to Christ. It gives me guidance on how to pray, what to say when in times of disorientation and desolation." An Inmate, California

"Thank you for everything! I'm at a very low point in my life, and just knowing there are ministries and people out there who still care about people like me gives me a whole new faith in the world! Once again, thank you and bless you all!" An Inmate, North Carolina

"Thank you for the material that you sent me. I am using it to better understand what God's plan is for me as I study the Word of God." An Inmate, Arkansas

"Thank you so much for the Bible studies. They have truly expanded my knowledge of the Bible as well as enhanced my relationship with Jesus Christ my Lord. I am looking forward to the next study! God bless you all and your ministry." An Inmate, Texas

"I am new to the faith and will soon be doing RCIA upon parole. Your materials will go a long way to helping me build a strong relationship with Our Lord and Mother Church." An Inmate, Oregon

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A Message from the Director

"Like a tree planted near living water whose leaves never fade" Psalm 1:3



Dear Friend of Christ in prison,

I want to share with you in a very personal way. Over 3 years ago I received a phone call from my sister saying: "Well, Ron, your nephew is in prison. Will you please pray for him and can you help him?" In just a few seconds, what had been a ministry "for others" suddenly touched my family. I now had a loved one behind bars! I don't recall if I ever shared this before, but I have mentioned it in various interviews in the past. I wouldn't say I was comfortable sharing this personal news but it was important for others to hear it. The truth is, anyone of us could have a relative or friend behind bars. In fact, given the amount of people in prison in the United States, it's a good bet that someone sitting with you at Sunday Mass has or knows of someone who is incarcerated. We just don't talk about it a lot. It's been said of families of inmates, "They have a sentence of their own."

I have visited my nephew many times since that phone call, sitting in the waiting room, then passing through security before entering the visiting room. There is a feeling of common sharing with the others who are going through the same process on visiting day. We are all in it together. I'm proud of my nephew and the progress he's made during his incarceration, which will finally end this June when he is released. He has read the Bible, stayed out of trouble and taken whatever classes and training were available.

When he is released he will be blessed with a loving family that will welcome him home with open arms, and help him with a place to stay and with finding a job – all the pieces necessary to land his feet on the ground and get another chance to start life over. Not everyone who is released will be so fortunate, however. Many hit the streets alone, without resources – with just the clothes on their backs. Their chances of survival and beating the odds are slim. Many return to prison – something referred to as "recidivism" or the revolving door of prison.

Re-entry is full of dangers for the women and men who either have no one to help them or who sometimes return to situations that are not healthy for them. As the challenges and obstacles mount they may turn to drugs or alcohol to temporarily alleviate their inner pain and the nagging sense of failure. Release calls for tremendous inner strength.

Awhile ago I accompanied someone who was released. He seemed to be off to a great start. He got his old job back, found an apartment and with the help of our ministry managed his rent, groceries, a bed and a supply of bus passes so that he could get to work. However, he did not make it because he lacked life-skills and his former drug use kicked in again as things began to fall apart.

No one person or organization can do everything. In the face of so many needs, our ministry's role is a spiritual one. We strive to give inmates a strong, spiritual foundation that instills in them their value in the eyes of God. Our hope and prayer is that they will be like the biblical "tree planted near living water whose leaves never fade" (Psalm 1:3) as they rely on God and not the judgment of others. They need a strong foundation on which to build their house, so that when the rains and challenges of release come, they can withstand and not collapse. Please continue to support them with your (Continued on page 4)