

ANNUAL REPORT
FY 2014-2015

Dismas Ministry



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General Overview:

Since the year 2000, a Jubilee Year, with its scriptural theme of “*setting captives free*,” Dismas Ministry’s main focus has been to serving on behalf of the Catholic community as a national prison outreach. A survey of the Catholic ministry field indicated that no similar outreach in materials and service existed at that time. Since its inception, Dismas Ministry’s free Catholic scripture, faith and prayer resources continue to provide for the needs of prison chaplains who are without funding. The ministry’s outreach also includes many local Catholic prison ministries and the inmates for whom they wish to provide adequate pastoral care. Many of these Catholic initiatives also lack the means to obtain the spiritual materials inmates need to live a full spiritual life as baptized members of Christ’s Body.

This past year Dismas Ministry celebrated 15 years of service to inmates. November 15, 2015 also marked the 15th anniversary of the US Catholic Bishop’s document Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration, which states, “*There should be no prisons, jails, or detention centers that do not have a regular and ongoing Catholic ministry and presence.*” Dismas Ministry has been working to help make this directive a reality.

Service in All Fifty States:

In the period of service from 2014-2015 Dismas Ministry continued to fulfill its mission by serving hundreds of Catholic inmates in U.S. jails and prisons. Beginning with July 2013, the ministry began and has continued serving inmates located in all 50 states.

Ministry Network:

Dismas Ministry also continued to build a database of those Catholics involved in prison ministry across the country who contacted it for assistance. This database now includes over 1200 Catholics in prison ministry. This network is a significant tool that supports the pastoral assistance inmates need. From time to time they contact our ministry about their wish to convert to the Catholic faith, or their desire to receive the sacraments. Often, inmates do not know of any local Catholic ministries who can help them. Utilizing this network helps make a pastoral connection on their behalf by informing a local ministry representative who then can visit the inmates and respond to their needs.

Home Mission Assistance:

Several dioceses in Dismas Ministry’s outreach are regarded by USCCB standards as home missions, that is, Catholics are few in number and providing adequate pastoral care is a challenge. This is even more urgent with regard to indigent Catholic inmates who sometimes make a heroic effort to practice their faith in non-Catholic situations. The ministry’s free Catholic scripture, faith and prayer resources are invaluable in these cases.

Free Distribution Program:

The ministry’s unique scripture, faith and prayer resources are distributed without cost to inmates and chaplains in various ways. Some items are distributed directly to inmates when they request them in writing. Items also are provided to prison chaplains to distribute when requested by inmates. Non-requested distributions of resources are discouraged by our ministry in order to avoid disrespect or waste. Chaplains are most cooperative in that respect. This is especially the case with rosaries; chaplains are asked to ensure that inmates actually pray with them and not wear them as bodily decoration.

The ministry’s free resources for inmates are distributed as follows:

a) *directly to inmates* - in response to their own letters, or reply postcards (sent to chaplains and local ministries to give to inmates) for individual requests as needed,

b) *indirectly to inmates* - in response to requests submitted by the *chaplains* bulk amounts of items requested are made available to inmates in their facilities. Oftentimes, the chaplains are not Catholic but care for the needs of Catholic inmates in their charge. Items also are provided in large and small shipments to many local Catholic volunteers throughout the country to have on their pastoral visits.

Distributing Dismas Ministry's resources involves the restrictive regulations of county jails, detention centers as well as state and federal prisons. Each prison may have its own requirements to follow. At times, these regulations present obstacles that slow or eliminate the spiritual resources needed by prisoners. However, our ministry staff persistently and respectfully communicate with the correctional staff in order to cooperate with the various regulations. Staff see to it that *authorization forms* and *gift receipts* are enclosed in each parcel to avoid costly returns. The ministry's goal is to have its materials ultimately reach inmates and provide the spiritual resources they need.

Comprehensive Study Resources:

During this period continued to provide its unique Catholic correspondence courses for prisoners: God With Us: A Catholic Bible Study, and A Reason for Hope: A Catholic Faith Study, and a third study course, Pray Always: A Catholic Study of Prayer for Inmates, a unique resource for inmates that focuses on the origins of our Catholic prayer tradition: *Prayer in the Old Testament (Part 1)*, *Prayer in the New Testament (Part 2)*, and how prayer has developed through the Christian centuries, *Prayer in the Catholic Tradition (Part 3)*. In this way, the parallel for all four sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are covered for prisoners (*Creed, Sacraments, Morality and Prayer*). All study courses are provided in Spanish versions as well. A special outcome of the prayer study course was an increase in awareness by prisoners of the *Liturgy of Hours*. As a result, there were prisoner requests to obtain either the one-volume *Christian Prayer* or the four-volume *Liturgy of Hours*. Prisoners are now joining the Catholic community in praying this universal work of the Church.

Extent of the Outreach on Inmates:

Because of the isolation and seclusion of prisons themselves, it is difficult to track and evaluate the impact of the ministry's outreach. However, one way is to keep records of the amounts of items distributed annually. This information indicates how the ministry's has responded to specific prisoners' needs. A reply postcard solicits comments from the inmates who received a parcel ; this has been helpful as a measuring tool. Prisoners' replies are recorded as testimonials, and provide valuable information in their own words on how they were impacted by the resources they received and put to use in their spiritual lives.

Dismas Ministry continued to make progress throughout the past year in fulfilling its mission as a national Catholic prison outreach. Its services have been provided to thousands of Catholic inmates, as these figures show:

- **Bibles:** the total number distributed in both English and Spanish paperback Bibles (in both medium and large print versions) was 12,930,
- **Prayer Books:** the total number distributed in both English and Spanish versions was: 11,736 .

Feedback from the Recipients of Service-Inmates and Chaplains:

This report includes only a few samples of gratitude from those who received our ministry's services. We are pleased to share their feedback. It indicates how Dismas Ministry's services are being received and used by them:

From Prisoner Recipients:

“Thank you so much for the bible studies. They have truly expanded my relationship with Jesus Christ, my Lord. I'm looking forward to the next study! God Bless you all & your ministry.” Texas

“Thank you for the material that you have sent me. I am using the material to better understand what God's plan is for me. I also use to strengthen me and encourage me as I continue to study the word of God..”
Arkansas

“I received a daily prayer book and am using it every single morning as I start my day. Before I was not able to this. I now (not that I wasn't as all before) feel full in God's Holy Spirit. Thank you all so much. You have made a difference in my life! God Bless!” Georgia

“The prayer book you sent has helped me to guide my daily prayers in offering to Christ. It gives me a guidance on how to pray, what prayer to say when in times of disorientation and desolation.” California

“We now have and are building a Catholic group here at the prison. I am a “Johnny Appleseed for Christ” and I am spreading what gifts I received among fellow Catholics! Thank you so much for your help!” Florida

From Chaplains and Ministries:

“ We want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generous gift of Catholic Bibles for our ministry to the inmates in the AZ State Prison here in Florence. They arrived last night and when the UPS man delivered them, we all rejoiced in God's goodness through Dismas Ministry! We will continue to pray for you and the work you are doing, and we treasure your prayers for us. We can't wait to begin to make them available at our services next week! God bless you and your partners.” A Catholic volunteer in Arizona

“My wife and I are grateful for your prayers. We have committed the Dismas Prayer to memory and we pray it often during the day. And I spend two hours each Monday at our local jail. What a blessing it is to pray in fellowship with these men. I know the Lord is present when we meet and pray. What a mighty God we serve! I can never thank you enough for the help you have given. And the men I meet with thank you too. ”
A Catholic volunteer in South Carolina

“Thanks for the prayer books and all the support you so generously give. Your service is greatly appreciated, not only by me and other volunteers of our diocese, but those who actually receive our gifts to them. I always try to let them know there are good people out there who care about them, ones who donate to make this possible. Many blessings to you and all. Thanks again” A Catholic volunteer in West Virginia

“Thank you for all you do to support the women and men I am so honored to serve and learn from.”
A Chaplain in Washington

“I Am Beautiful” Women Inmates Project:

This project, funded by an individuals and foundations published, with the help of women inmates in all the womens' prisons across the country, yet another edition of I Am Beautiful-Volume 5. This book contained selected writings and art from women in U.S. prisons who have endured and survived abuse in one or more of forms. Flyers were sent to the 89 women's prisons, and the responses were collected and edited by our staff and volunteers. Final copies were sent to all contributors as well as the chaplains of the 89 prisons to be included in the libraries of the women's facilities.

Correctional Training:

Dismas Ministry continued to provide its training resource for Catholics planning to engage in prison ministry: “*Messengers of Hope-Catholic Correctional Ministry Training Resource*” with accompanying DVD. This has proved to be a useful resource in promoting and preparing for prison ministry. Several dioceses now use this resource for their training purposes: the *Diocese of Charleston, SC, the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Diocese of Arlington.*

Families of the Incarcerated:

Two years ago our ministry published a special resource that was compiled from contributions by family members with a loved one in prison. The results were revised and published as a significant resource for people in that same situation and who need support and guidance. The book is entitled Keeping Hope: A Resource for Families of the Incarcerated. The *Introduction* was written by Dismas Ministry’s own board member, Amalia Molina who along with her husband was an ICE detainee for 18 months while separated from their children. The resource for families was co-published by Visual Dynamics Publishing of Alpharetta, Georgia. During the “World Gathering of Families” in Philadelphia during October 2015, our ministry had a booth to promote the book and distributed 80 copies while speaking directly with many attendees who had a loved one in prison.

Catholic Networking:

The database of contacts in what our ministry calls *Catholic Ministry Network* show how the ministry’s services also were provided to Catholic prison ministry coordinators and volunteers the 50 states served. This constantly growing list contains contact information for priests, sisters, deacons and lay people carrying out correctional ministry in their areas of the country. These contacts enabled our ministry to connect inmates needing pastoral or sacramental care with a local Catholic contacts to provide onsite visits. This has been especially important in non-Catholic areas of the country where Catholic inmates feel isolated from their faith community. The Catholic ministry contacts in this network number over 1,200 priests, deacons, sisters and lay people.

Union of Prayer:

Dismas Ministry invites and benefits from the spiritual support of the members of its Union of Prayer, who are the prayer warriors on behalf of the ministry, the incarcerated and one another – many of whom are family of inmates. This Union grew from 405 to 475 in the past year. with members from around the United States who promise to pray regularly for our mission and for one another,. Prayer is the foundation of what we strive to do in Christ’s name, and is the Source of the grace needed touch the lives of the imprisoned.

Patronage of Mary:

Since its beginning in 2000, Dismas Ministry has taken Mary the mother of Jesus as its patroness. Her own Son was arrested, imprisoned, judged and publicly executed as a criminal, therefore her patronage is vitally important to our outreach.

Sources of Support

July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015

Individual Donors	\$80,753.78
Inmates (5)	\$47.00
Churches-Catholic	\$5,492.05
Organizations	\$621.05
Nonprofits	\$685.00
Businesses	\$240.04
Religious Orders: <i>(Major contributors)</i>	\$23,075.00
• Daughters of Charity Ministries	\$500.00
• Dominican Sisters of Springfield	\$3,000.00
• New Melleray Trappist Abbey	\$500.00
• Premonstratensian Fathers	\$5,000.00
• School Sisters of Notre Dame	\$5,000.00
• Racine Sisters of St. Dominic	\$8,000.00
• Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi	\$1,000.00
• Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia	\$3,000.00
• St. Francis Sharing Fund	\$500.00
Dioceses	\$2,378.00
Major Foundations <i>(Major contributors)</i>	\$87,908.57
The Guadalupe and Lilia Martinez	\$20,000.00
Bunting Management. Fund	\$11,659.00
Stephen & Mary Birch Foundation Inc	\$10,000.00
Goldammer Foundation	\$250.00
Koch Foundation	\$15,000.00
Raskob Foundation for Catholic	\$10,000.00
Brotz Family Foundation	\$500.00
Sensient Technologies Foundation, Inc.	\$10,000.00
Acta Foundation	\$10,000.00
Orscheln Family Foundation	\$500.00
Anonymous Foundation 1:	\$15,000
Anonymous Foundation 2:	\$45,000
<i>Our Sunday Visitor In-kind Grant</i>	<i>\$5,000.00 (for books)</i>
Total Contributions:	\$266,200.00