



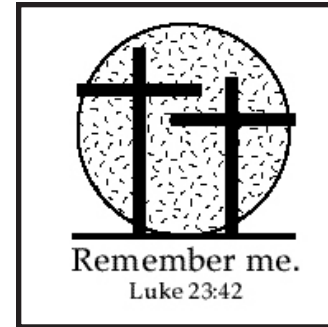
THIS DAY

DISMAS MINISTRY
P.O. BOX 070363
MILWAUKEE WI 53207

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

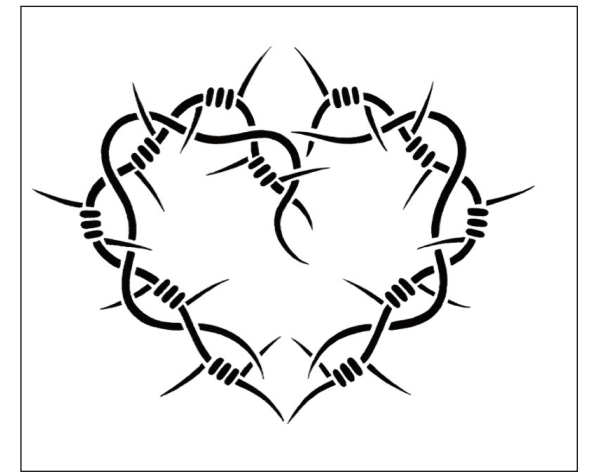
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ADVENT 2014

A NEWS LETTER PUBLISHED BY DISMAS MINISTRY
A National Catholic Outreach for Inmates, Victims, their Families and the Community.

2015 Marks the 15th Anniversary of the Catholic Bishops Statement on Criminal Justice

The past decades in the U.S.
have seen emphasis on impris-
onment, as well as the death
penalty. The Bishops felt that the
Jubilee Year 2000 offered our na-
tion an opportunity to embrace
an approach to criminal justice
that focused on *restoration*—
through *healing for the victim, re-
habilitation and re-integration for
the offender, and safety and stability for society*. As John Paul II wrote in his
July 9, 2000 Message for the Jubilee in Prisons: "What Christ is looking for is
*trusting acceptance, an attitude which opens the mind to generous decisions
aimed at rectifying the evil done and fostering what is good. Sometimes this in-
volves a long journey, but always a stimulating one, for it is a journey not made
alone, but in the company of Christ himself and with his support.*"



"For the Church, the Jubilee is precisely this 'year of the Lord's favor', a year of
*reconciliation between disputing parties, a year of manifold conversions and of
penance.*" (Tertio Millennio Adveniente, Apostolic Letter, John Paul II)
The Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 was an opportune time to revise our
nation's criminal justice system, in a way that would restore relationships
between crime victims, criminal offenders, and all of society.

The Bishops wished to reject the traditional emphasis on retribution that
manifests itself in an over-reliance on incarceration and resort to the
death penalty. They hoped instead to balance corrective punishment with
efforts at healing, forgiveness, and rehabilitation.

Fifteen years ago their statement entitled **Responsibility, Rehabilitation
and Restoration** was an attempt to foster a Catholic perspective and ap-
proach on our criminal justice system that focused on *restorative justice*.

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

Introduction - As Catholic bishops, 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 po-
larize 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 di-
alogue on crime and corrections, justice and mercy, responsibility and treatment. As Catholics, we need to ask the follow-
ing: *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, 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 years in prison
or execution of those convicted of terrible crimes). New approaches must move beyond the slogans of the moment....

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. We are convinced that
our tradition and our faith offer better alternatives that can hold offenders accountable and challenge them to change their
lives; reach out to victims and reject vengeance; restore a sense of community and resist the violence that has engulfed so
much of our culture.



Saints in Prison

Saint Agnes

Agnes was only 13 years old
when she was imprisoned. She
was executed in the year 304
A.D. because of her refusal to
deny Christ. Before this, she
had decided not to marry be-
cause she wanted to dedicate
her life completely to Christ.
After her arrest and trial, she
was sent to prison, but despite
many attempts to change her
mind, she stood by her vow of
virginity and Christian faith.
She was publicly executed by
having her throat pierced with
a sword. Like many early
Christian martyrs her witness
made a great impression. Be-
cause of her heroic example
many others believed in Christ
and began to follow the Chris-
tian way. Her feast day is
January 21.

Hearing from Christ's Body behind bars... *From Chaplains and Ministries*

"I just wanted you to know that some of the inmates at East Jersey State Prison in Rahway, New Jersey, have started to receive materials from your ministry. One inmate came up to me at Monday night Mass at the prison and he couldn't stop smiling when he talked about receiving the materials. Thank you and God Bless You."

A Ministry Volunteer

"Just wanted you to know I got the Bibles you ordered. I took the first one over to the girl who requested it in the beginning. I saw her psychologist later that day, and she said that the high point of the girl's day was getting that Bible. Just thought I'd send you a pat on the back. Thanks again." A Chaplain

"I am the acting Director of Religious Education and Youth Ministry at our Catholic church and I am requesting that our School of Religion be enrolled in the "Union of Prayer". This upcoming school year we will have the Corporal Works of Mercy as our theme. We would like to remember the imprisoned in prayer throughout the year. Also, I would like additional information on purchasing your prayer book for prisoners to provide to our local inmates." A Union of Prayer Member

"Can you imagine how happy you made us today? Thank you for the generous gift of 50 New Testaments in Spanish, the pamphlets "Why read the Bible," and 50 prayer books. We feel like we've struck a gold mine!! Thank you so much for sharing what you have with us." A Chaplain

From Inmates

"I have been reading your book you put out called Pray in the Spirit. Catholic prayers for inmates. I'm going to be a Catholic pretty soon. I like all the stuff you put in the book. I love the things the Catholics believe in. I like that the Catholics believe Jesus was Mary's only Son. Which she didn't have any more kids-true. I would like for your Ministry to send me some history information on the Catholic's religion please. The information of the Catholic's history would help me a lot to know my religion please. Thank you."

Jesse, An Inmate in Virginia

"Thank you for your recent letter. My prayers of thanks for all the wonderful gifts through Christ that you provide to many inmates. The rewards of your work await you in eternity. I would like to make one more request, please. Could you send me the Catholic Catechism so I may learn more about my faith? The more I learn about God, the more I glorify His name and spread the Word to others Thank you for your kindness."

James, An Inmate in Wisconsin

"I am a Catholic. I have been incarcerated for about a year. I have been praying really hard for all the churches throughout the world. Will you please keep me and my family in your prayers and please light a candle in honor of the Virgin Mary. I put all my trust in you. I say about seven rosaries throughout the day and other devotions. You will be a blessing to me if you could send me a rosary, prayer book, Bible and faith study courses. I have the Catholic Bible. Thank you very much."

Patrick, An Inmate from South Carolina

Thank you for Your Prayers



Dear Prayer Partner,

I hope you have no doubt that our ministry is deeply indebted to you for your prayers. We simply could not do this work without the support that prayer brings and the grace that it gains for our sisters and brothers behind bars who are struggling to put their lives in God's hands for hope and healing.

Your prayers also touch each member of this *Union of Prayer* - more than 350 other prayer partners across the country. I like to think how wonderful, mysterious our bodies are in the way that each cell serves and communicates with the millions of others, so that we live, move and carry out our plans each day.

The spiritual life is surely not different in the way that each of us, through our prayers, and the love and spirit that motivate our prayers, has a powerful, though unseen impact on the lives of others. Like Moses with his arms lifted while the Israelites did battle, you are a prayer warrior on behalf of our ministry as we labor to win minds, hearts and souls for God's kingdom.

We walk by faith, as St. Paul says, because much of the time we may not see the effects of our prayers, yet we believe that one day we will see what has been accomplished. It may be in heaven when we meet someone we did not know on earth, but they say to us with great joy, "my friend, it was you who prayed for me and gave me the strength to turn my life over to God and begin anew. Thank you for all you did for me!" As one inmate wrote

A Memorial Gift

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

Contact Dismas Ministry and request a *Memorial* folder. When you receive it, just fill it out and present it to whomever you wish. Send your gift to support 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

in his testimony on the opposite page, "*The rewards of your work await you in eternity.*"

And we *never* pray alone. We pray with one another, with those in heaven and on earth, and with our great and loving Christ whose intercession for all humanity is always being offered on our behalf.

Our most special prayer is the Eucharist, the Mass, in which we join as one great, spiritual family, thanking God for all his gifts to us, especially the gift of God's only begotten Son who was tried and sentenced like a common criminal, to intercede for us while nailed to the rough-hewn cross.

With deep gratitude for all you do for us,
Ron Zeilinger
Director.

