

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.*

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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

Detention of Immigrants (Excerpt)

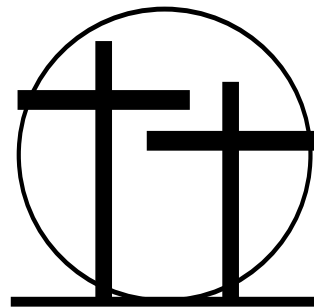
We bishops have a long history of supporting the rights of immigrants. Therefore, the special circumstances of immigrants in detention centers is of particular concern. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) uses a variety of methods to detain immigrants, some of them clearly inappropriate, such as placing detainees in prisons with convicted felons or in local jails where conditions are deplorable.

Recently enacted laws have resulted in the tripling of the number of non-citizens incarcerated and awaiting deportation, including women and minors.²⁰ Now the INS is required to detain and deport immigrants who have committed an offense in the past, even if they have served a sentence for that offense and are now contributing members of society. Many of these people (an estimated five thousand out of the estimated twenty thousand immigrants under INS detention) spend months or even years in detention centers because they are refused repatriation by their countries of origin. Others languish because they are victims of an overwhelmed INS bureaucracy. These lengthy stays place considerable hardship on other family members living in the United States or in their country of origin, many of whom have depended on the income of the person incarcerated.

Additionally, new rules allow for "expedited removal" of those seeking asylum—a process whereby INS officials turn away those fleeing persecution in their home countries. Those not quickly returned are placed in detention centers for weeks or even months until they receive an asylum hearing. *(To be continued)*



Artwork by an Inmate



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

Saints in Prison

Peter and John, Apostles

Chapter 4 of Acts of the Apostles relates how Peter and John were arrested for preaching about Jesus. They said: *"It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard."* After threatening them, the leaders released them. Chapter 5 tells how the high priest and his group *"laid hands on the apostles and put them in jail. But during the night the angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison, led them out and said: "Go, and tell the people everything about this life."* When arrested again they said, *"We must obey God rather than men."* At this the leaders wanted to kill them, but Gamaliel advised: *"Let them go. If this is of human origin it will destroy itself. But if it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them."* They flogged Peter and John, ordered them to stop speaking of Jesus, and released them. They left rejoicing that they could *"suffer for the sake of the name."*

This Day

Spring

2014

A Newsletter Published by Dismas Ministry

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

Pope Francis meets with prison chaplains

October 24, 2013
(Romereports.com)



Pope Francis speaking to prison chaplains

When Pope Francis met with and welcomed the members of the National Convention of Italian Prison Chaplains, he highlighted their work in showing God's mercy and providing hope to people who need it most.

The Pope also said that during brief moments on Sundays when he is free, he calls prisoners in Argentina. Those conversations, the Pope added, make the him question *"why him and not me?"* But he also said that *"those conversations bring me closer to the prisoners."*

The Pope also said to the chaplains present:

"Recently, you spoke about a justice of reconciliation, but also a justice of hope, of open doors and horizons. This is not a utopia. It can be done!"

During his brief remarks, the Pope went on to say that God is close to everyone, including prisoners. He added *"No cell is so isolated that it keeps God away from them."* Pope Francis also asked the chaplains to convey his greetings to all of the prisoners. He said that he prays for them, so that *"they may positively overcome this tough period in their lives."*

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

"I really appreciate your donation of Catholic prayers for our Hispanic inmate population of more than 800. All the prayers in the convenient pocket size are very meaningful and inmates are so thankful for your concern for their spiritual welfare. God bless you and your ministry not only during these holy days but PARA SIEMPRE!! (always)" Catholic Chaplain, NM

"I just wanted you to know I got three of Bibles you ordered (a special Bible for young women). I took the first one over to the girl who requested it. I saw her psychologist later that day and she said that the high point of the girl's day was getting that Bible. I just thought I'd send you a pat on the back for finding these. Thanks again." Chaplain, Wisconsin

"The Bibles arrived today and once again, I thank you so much for your help and the ministry you have chosen. I cannot imagine how much the over all value of your efforts will bring to the men and women who will be the beneficiaries of your generosity. May God bless you in abundance for your ministry" Catholic Volunteer (New York)

"I want to thank you and all your volunteers who help with Dismas Ministry. Words cannot express how much the men think of you and all you do. God bless you all!" Catholic Deacon (West Virginia)

"Your wonderful gift of 48 English and 60 Spanish Bibles arrived yesterday. This gift of the compassionate and loving Word of God will comfort our incarcerated brothers and sisters." Catholic Sister (Texas)



Inmates

"I would like to express my gratitude for the gift I have received. This week I received my first Bible and it has given me a new outlook on life. Everyday I read the word of the Lord and I pray. I strive daily to become a better person and rid myself of the poor habits I gathered over the years. I have you and the Lord to thank for the guidance I receive." -An Inmate (Wisconsin)

"This type of ministry is such a wonderful thing. More often than not those of us who are (unfortunately) incarcerated have nothing. To have such a comprehensive study Bible is a blessing bordering on a miracle. I will endeavor to use these to help teach and spread the peace of Christ to my fellow inmates." Inmate (Georgia)

"Never can I thank you enough for the education I received from your wonderful lessons. Being a veteran of many other Bible study lessons, none can compare to the quality of yours. The clarity of thought and guidance in application was both rewarding and refreshing! When I placed the test pages in the mail I have mixed emotions - gladdened by the completion, yet a sense of loss as the lessons fill a void. Simply, they bring me happiness. Again thanks so much!" Inmate (location undisclosed)

"I just received a Bible that was donated through you. Thank you very much for making the effort to make Bibles available and allowing a sinner such as myself to receive such a precious gift." - An Inmate (Wisconsin)

Thank you for Your Prayers



Dear Friends,

As a disciple the formula that we are to take to mind and heart, and follow after the master is a simple one. To love Jesus is to love those he loves. And as our Pope, Francis, has been reminding us again and again, the ones who are the special focus of his love are the poor, the sick, the weak and underprivileged and the outcasts of society.

In so many ways the incarcerated represent each one of these groups of people. Inmates are poor, powerless, often have mental illness and emotional challenges, as well as deep, unhealed wounds in body, mind and spirit from the experience and knowledge of what they have done to others and themselves. As a result of the poor choices they have made they are locked up and kept out of sight from the rest of society.

The haunting parable of the final judge who gathers humanity before him provides us with the question that stretches our vision and our love as a disciple: "Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, naked or sick or in prison?"

To love as Jesus loves, to see with the eyes of Jesus those who are in need as our brothers and sisters, and members of His own body, takes an effort that is often beyond our natural capability. That is why it is called supernatural grace. We couldn't pull it off otherwise without God's help, without the wind beneath our wings that the Holy Spirit gives us.

St. Francis of Assisi met a leper along the road in the early days of his conversion, and instead of giving him a few gold coins got off his horse and went up to him and embraced him. He told his brothers that

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

what was once difficult and repulsive became sweet and joyful. God calls us and stretches us to do things we never thought possible, whether it is seeing inmates with fresh eyes, or our neighbor next door or a family member as made in the image of God.

I want to thank you once again, on behalf of my fellow workers in this ministry, both staff and volunteers, and all those we serve behind bars, for your wonderful prayers.

You are the wind beneath our wings as you offer our prayer to God, interceding for this ministry which would not go forward one inch without the grace of God to help and guide us. Thank prayer partners for your unseen gift to us!

By the grace of God,

Ron Zeilinger

Ron Zeilinger,
Director

