



Dismas Ministry
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A Newsletter published by Dismas Ministry
 A National Catholic Prison Ministry

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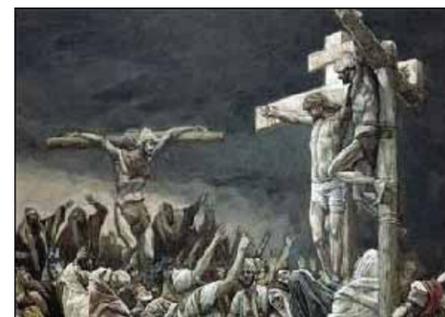
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Lent Easter 2018

"A national Catholic ministry supporting the spiritual lives and rehabilitation of prisoners."



The Story of Saint 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."

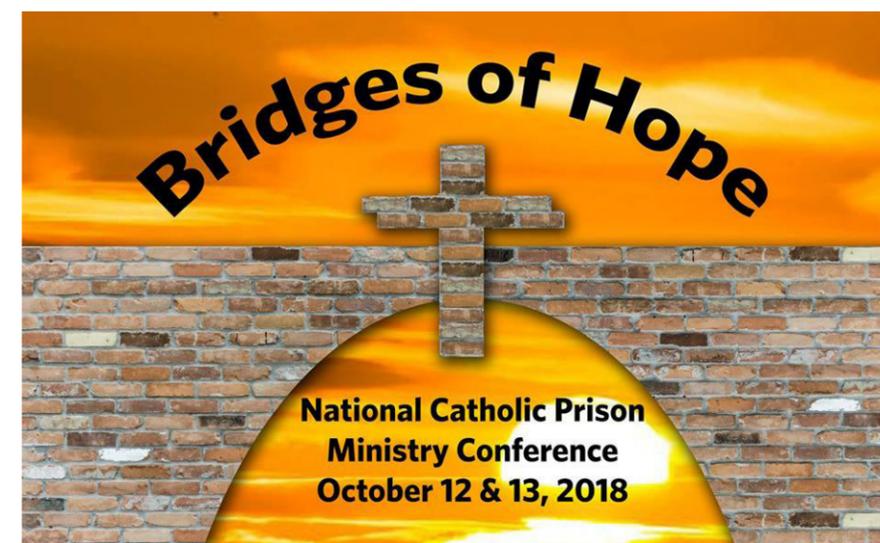
And Jesus replied, "I assure you, this day you will be with me in paradise."

Luke 23: 39-43



Honor the living or deceased with a Remember Me Memorial & Gift

To request a Memorial packet, write to: Dismas Ministry, PO Box 070363, Milwaukee WI 53207, or Email: dismas@dismasministry.org



**National Catholic Prison Ministry Conference
 October 12 & 13, 2018**

The conference title "Bridges of Hope" speaks to the need for building a bridge that provides adequate pastoral support for the incarcerated. They too are baptized members of Christ's Body and deserving of care.

Individual volunteers, and parish and diocesan ministries, are crucial in creating this bridge. They also are bridges in their own persons, bringing Catholics on the outside to an encounter with Catholics in prison.

Bridge building is a frequent theme of Pope Francis, as is encountering Christ's "least ones": "In the social and civil context, I appeal not to create walls but to build bridges. To not respond to evil with evil. To defeat evil with good, the offence with forgiveness." (February 8, 2017).

The conference keynote speaker is Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, author of the book *Dead Man Walking*, and advisor to the film of the same name.

Conference Sponsors: *Dismas Ministry, Catholic Mobilizing Network, National St. Vincent de Paul Society, and Archdiocese of Milwaukee.*
 Conference Location: *Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

From the Chaplains...

"I have been giving Spanish materials to a prisoner for a couple of years with no real effect. I gave him your faith study last week and when I saw him yesterday he was lit up after doing this study. He said, "This is really good, I want to do all of these studies you have." It made my day! Thank you for all your support. These studies have come at just the right time and are having a great effect on our Catholic and non-Catholic prisoners." A Chaplain, Tennessee Colony, Texas

"Thanks from all of us at the jail. Bibles get a lot of use around here and sometimes end up looking quite bedraggled or missing the ending! Your boxes of bibles arrived just in time, letting me put fresh pages into eager hands. Thank you for all you do to support the women and men I am so honored to serve and learn from. Peace and all good." A Chaplain, Seattle, Washington



From the Prisoners...

"Thank you for your free gift. Now I am able to nourish myself daily with God's word. It is by your generosity that many lives will be changed through Christ Jesus. May God bless your ministry abundantly for your kindness." A Prisoner, Adelanto, California

"Thank you, thank you for sending me the Liturgy of the Hours, Bible, and other materials. The Liturgy volumes have helped focus my prayers every morning and evening; it has strengthened my faith and drawn me closer to God. Thank you so much for that generous gift. Blessings!" A Prisoner, Lovelady, Texas

For more information about the conference, or to register, please visit our website: www.dismasministry.org

From Our New Executive Director

“Be still, and know that I am God.” – Psalm 46:10

Dear Friends,

In this Easter season – one of renewal – there is joy. And, there is hope.

For me, this is truly a time of celebration and appreciation to serve Dismas Ministry as the new Executive Director. I am both grateful and humbled to begin this new chapter of my life. And, I embrace the ministry to which I am called.

As a writer and nonprofit communications specialist, I have had the privilege of working with several charitable organizations in the Greater Milwaukee area. Most of my experience has been working for diverse Catholic entities that have a local, national, or international reach.

While I am new to prison ministry, I am not unfamiliar with what it means to help people in need...to remember the poor and marginalized in our midst. Throughout my career, I have been blessed to meet and speak with hundreds of people who trusted me to share their powerful stories of the human condition: physical and emotional struggles, pain, heartache, resilience, loss and grief, love and joy, and successes and failures.

It has been a privilege to connect with people in the hope that their stories would move others to make a difference. In my experience, faithful donors and friends, like you, have responded with prayerful and financial support for food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, and spiritual development for those in need.

As I begin my good work at Dismas, I think of my brother-in-law, Phil, who lived most of his adult life behind bars. His literal prison was made of concrete, steel, and barbed wire. He was also a prisoner of isolation, loneliness, and depression. His loved ones, myself included, struggled to help him, while he served time for the crimes he committed. To Phil's family, he was still a person, not just inmate number 761452.

Shortly after his third and final re-entry into society, Phil died of a drug overdose. I often wonder if his life might have been saved if he had the means to find peace through spiritual guidance and a renewed relationship with God. For Phil, and so many other men and women who are incarcerated, they need to know they are not forgotten. They need to know they remain part of our Church family, our human family.

As I begin my journey and help make a difference for everyone served through Dismas Ministry – both now and in the future – I welcome your continued partnership and friendship.

With gratitude...and peace,

Tyler Curtis

Ms. Tyler Curtis

Executive Director



“I have run the race...”

Dear Friends,

Lately, there have been two bible passages that have been on my mind: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race” (2 Timothy 4:7) and “Now Lord, dismiss your servant” (Luke 2:29).

Twenty years ago, I thought of creating a ministry to serve incarcerated Catholics and those who visit them or care for them as prison chaplains. This ministry would provide free scripture, faith and prayer resources which were urgently needed and were sadly lacking behind bars. I put together a brief survey and sent it to as many U.S. Catholics in prison outreach I could find. I asked them what this ministry should look like – what services should it provide. Their responses served as the foundation of Dismas Ministry: free Catholic bibles, prayer resources and study courses “like the Protestants have.” No national organization existed to provide these to U.S. prisoners, so the way seemed clear for such a ministry. With the blessing of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, it was recognized as a bona fide Catholic ministry. Its namesake and patron is Saint Dismas, the good thief. What better example of God's grace at work in the soul of a criminal?

In July 2000, after the very first board meeting, I had \$40 in my pocket, and the new board of directors said, “Go raise money and get it started.” So I printed stationery with a new logo and began writing to people and organizations, asking for support. I had done fundraising before, but I thought, “This is going to be hard. Giving to more attractive causes would be easier, but offering to help prisoners?!” So I turned to the mother of Jesus and said, “Mary, if you want this ministry for your Son, you've got to help!” When the first major gift of \$25,000 arrived that December, I wept with joy and gratitude. My fellow Catholics “got it” and were willing to support the spiritual needs of prisoners. Since then, Dismas Ministry has had sufficient funding every year. It has grown from its first year of serving prisoners in Wisconsin to now serving in all 50 states.

This growth has not been possible without the support of faith-filled Catholics like you who “get it” that Christ is with his “least ones” in prison and is touched by your generosity. I have loved this work. It has been an honor and a grace to serve my fellow Catholics behind bars. And I will remain as a mentor in transition for as long as needed. But I can pray with Paul and Simeon that “I have run the race” and “now dismiss your servant” because it is time for new eyes, new spirit, and new heart in leading this wonderful ministry into the future.

Please continue your generosity as I end my service as executive director of Dismas Ministry. It is time for me to complete the race. But, it is a *relay race* and I am handing the baton to a new director, Mary Tyler Curtis. She has a passion for Catholic ministry and, as of March 1, her first day, she is taking Dismas Ministry into a new year of service and beyond. Keep her, the ministry, and those we serve behind bars in your prayers.

With deepest gratitude to you all!

Ron Zeilinger

Ron Zeilinger

Outgoing Executive Director

Founder

