



Remember Me

“A National Catholic Outreach supporting the spiritual lives and rehabilitation of prisoners.”

Sharing Gifts of Faith and Hope



Kate Nava, Dismas Ministry Board Member

By Tyler Curtis

One of four children born to a DuPont chemist and stay-at-home mother, Kate Nava's faith journey was grounded in the Catholic tradition.

After earning a business degree from the University of Oregon, she worked for various airlines which included international assignments. Throughout this experience, she became fluent in Spanish and more culturally aware with a Mexican spouse while raising their two sons.

“My strengths boiled down to Catholicism, a global world view, and appreciation of higher education. Working full time in Los Angeles and commuting to the Bay area at night, I

earned an MBA at Notre Dame de Namur University, now aligned with Stanford,” she added.

Retiring early from American Airlines gave Kate the opportunity to carve a new and different career path in the nonprofit sector. She worked in fundraising at four Catholic universities in succession: University of Notre Dame du Lac, Marquette University, Mount Mary University, and Our Lady of the Lake.

For Kate, the best opportunity presented itself when she began teaching GED Prep and Microsoft Certification at two pre-parole facilities (for men and women felons) in the Texas town where she lives. Her favorite class – Changes – prepared individuals for the outside. In reflecting on this experience, she said: “Deep in my DNA, I knew that faith, hope, acceptance, and realization of God's love will be the true and only game changer for these brothers and sisters.”

Kate's work on the “inside” broadened her scope of the realities of prisoners and their families. And, she learned that a large majority of her students were quite intelligent and eager to learn. ...continued on page 4

**“God's love
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and only game
changer...”**

From the Chaplains

“We are fans of Dismas Ministry and are thankful for the work you do for our brothers and sisters in custody. We are also working with our returning citizens in East St. Louis (www.obkministry.org) and continue the legacy of Fr. Chris Reuter, OFM, who was the first recipient of the St. Dismas Award (after his passing away in 2018). God bless all of you in ministry to those at the margins of society.”

Lou Slapshak,
Diocese of Belleville
Coordinator of Prison
Ministry

“I was in prison and you visited me”

~ Matthew 25:36



From the Director

Dear Friends,

A servant leader always strives for the greater good and supports the needs of others. It is a privilege to work alongside and learn from such role models.

Even in the smallest acts of kindness, there are ripple effects and opportunities to pay it forward. In providing Catholic faith materials to prisoners, and the chaplains and volunteers who minister to them, we help open a path to hope and healing for everyone affected by their incarceration.

When you support Dismas Ministry, you lead from the heart. Your prayers and financial gifts help us help others. YOU are a model of service to us. Thank you for inspiring me and our team. Our mission continues...because of you.

With gratitude,

Ms. Tyler Curtis
Executive Director

The Person Behind the Posts

Have you visited Dismas Ministry on social media? Have you enjoyed any of our Friday Funnies or Word Wednesday posts?

We want to introduce you to Juliann Joerres (pictured right), our Marketing and Communications consultant (the person behind the posts).

Juliann has shared her skills and knowledge with Dismas Ministry in many ways over the last 20 years. She helped create Dismas Ministry's website back in 2004, and launch our presence on social media.

A high-energy, tech-savvy, and creative marketing entrepreneur, Juliann has worked in marketing, communications, creative design, donor relations, and business development in the nonprofit sector throughout her career. She holds a bachelor's degree in professional communications from Alverno College, and a master's in business administration from Cardinal Stritch University. Her husband, Dr. Mark Joerres, works as a school principal in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Together, they have four adult children and three adorable grandsons. Juliann also works as a fitness instructor at the Wisconsin Athletic Club, teaching spin & yoga classes, and she is involved in different ministries at St. Mary Church in Hales Corners, WI, her home parish.

"Many years ago, Ron Zeilinger (founder of Dismas Ministry) asked me to help with a few creative projects. I thought I'd just create a flyer or two and be on my way, but God had other plans for me and this ministry. Twenty years later, a fresh perspective, and an unexpected purpose, I am but an instrument in His hands," shared Juliann.



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Humble Servant of God: Paul J. Caruso

As a young man, Paul Caruso, working as a professional actor, performed with touring companies throughout the United States and parts of Canada. He mostly appeared in dinner theatre venues, and in other live productions. Paul even performed at a maximum security prison in Montana before an audience of inmates and corrections staff. It was his first time visiting a prison. In reference to that experience, he said, "I was just as nervous as a cat on a hot tin roof." Little did he know then that visiting prisons would become his true vocation in life.

A circuitous career path drew him from his birthplace in Birmingham, Alabama, to New York City, to Western and Great Plains states, then back to the Deep South years later. He settled in the Atlanta area, where he had success in the software industry as a one-time direct competitor of Bill Gates. When asked if he really thought he and his business partners were going to beat Microsoft, Paul said they were just "old country boys trying to make a living."

Despite the successes, all roads led to a new chapter when Paul became a self-professed "different man" in his 40s. He participated in Cursillo, an intensive weekend retreat for lay people in the Catholic Church. "The Holy Spirit grabbed me," said Paul, of the experience.

Since then, Paul has served the incarcerated and indigent for over 32 years, and currently is the leader of the St. Joseph Cafasso Prison Ministries in Georgia, which he founded in 1999. He has said that inmates, though often "treated like lepers," are in fact "children of God," and that "conversion of hearts" is his main mission. Throughout more than three decades in prison ministry, Paul estimates he has served nearly 40,000 people.



Paul J. Caruso
2022
St. Dismas Award
Recipient



Artwork created by EJ, a prisoner at
Lee Arrendale Women's Prison

"Early in 2021, we almost lost Paul to COVID. He was in a coma and on a ventilator for almost two months. Paul worked hard to recover with many months of rehabilitation. He is beloved by so many people, including a female inmate, and talented artist, who painted Christ on the cross as seen from the Good Thief's perspective and side view (pictured on left). It was specially framed and presented to Paul at a meeting last year following his close brush with death," said Kevin Reidy, a prison minister who nominated Paul for the St. Dismas Award.

Before one can serve the incarcerated, there are important facts to understand. The majority of inmates who've been incarcerated for more than five years have no contact with the outside world. They have trouble forgiving themselves for the crimes they committed.

"I tell them, 'You have to take responsibility for what you did,'" said Paul. "When they accept responsibility, we can start. Hearts soften and break, and we can build from there. They are children of God, just like we are."

Through the ministry, his charge is to make sure there is a Catholic presence in every facility in the state. The Sacraments and Living Word are offered weekly to those behind bars.

**"They are
children
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"In all my life, I have never seen a humble 'servant of God' like Paul, who serves as effectively as he does," said Kevin Reidy. "He has taught me so much about my faith, and how to serve others."

Congratulations to Paul J. Caruso on being named the 2022 St. Dismas Award recipient. Paul will be presented with the award on Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at his home parish, St. Thomas Aquinas in Alpharetta, Georgia.



Dismas Ministry

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Sharing Gifts continued

“In general, their spirits were positive and their quest for self-improvement palpable. I received complete respect and, in our classes, we had occasion to laugh and cry, but moreover learn. With fluency in Spanish, I was able to teach and connect with a large percentage of inmates,” said Kate. However, she added that, as students grew in self-confidence and respect, the pieces that were missing were faith, the ability to win back the respect of their families, and hope for a future, productive life.

“I tried to infuse other lessons into the curriculum, like the importance of hard work, and trust in a God who loves and can forgive them. It brought me great peace to see a classroom of irritable, incarcerated cohorts begin to help and encourage each other in learning,” she added. Kate encourages others to consider ministry to the imprisoned.

She suggested contacting the local prison Warden or Chaplain to make them aware of Dismas Ministry’s study course program, and praying daily for spiritual awareness, reconciliation, and renewed hope for our incarcerated brothers and sisters.

“The Board is grateful to everyone who supports Dismas Ministry, and invites others to learn more about our mission,” said Kate.

Kate Nava is a Dismas Ministry board member based near Dallas, Texas. Born and raised in Philadelphia, she holds a bachelor’s degree in business from the University of Oregon and a master’s in business administration from Notre Dame de Namur University in California. Kate’s career path included work in the airline industry and higher education. A devout Catholic, Kate lives her faith through loving service to family, friends, and neighbors in need in her community.