



# Remember Me

“A national Catholic outreach supporting the spiritual lives and rehabilitation of prisoners.”

## Opening Doors and Transforming Lives Through Compassion



Sister Marilyn Kesler, SSND  
Dismas Ministry Board Member

*By Juliann Joerres*

In a recent conversation with Sister Marilyn Kesler, SSND, I was reminded of the profound impact that compassionate service and dedication can have on those who feel forgotten. Sister Marilyn, who has served on the Dismas Ministry Board of Directors for the past two years, shared insights into her journey, her motivation, and the unique perspective she brings to prison ministry.

When asked what inspired her to join the board, Sister Marilyn reflected on the unmet needs she saw in the field of education. "In education, it's more than just teaching; it's about sharing good news and information that can change lives," she said. She believes that Dismas Ministry opens doors for those who are deep in despair, offering them the opportunity to see a

broader life than the one they have endured. "People need to realize that God created them, no matter what happened to them. God is watching them, and if we can create opportunities for them to see that, we fulfill our mission."

Although Sister Marilyn has never been directly involved in a formal prison ministry program, her experience visiting a friend who was incarcerated profoundly shaped her understanding of restorative justice. She emphasized the importance of being present, both physically and spiritually, in prison ministry. "You have to change the way you reach out to people so they can see the possibility of change. Just like architecture evolves, so do we. The most important thing is to be present—share your beliefs, but most importantly, be there."

As she looks at her work with Dismas Ministry, Sister Marilyn is particularly appreciative of the organization's "maverick ways" of opening doors for those in need. She encourages us all to look at prisoners as Jesus does—not with judgment, but with open hearts and minds. "Just open doors and include all in our society. Change is possible. We need to be open to the presence of God in all of our lives."

Sister Marilyn's words remind us that the work of Dismas Ministry is not just about providing resources or education; it's about transforming lives through compassion, presence, and a commitment to seeing the humanity in everyone. As we move forward, let us carry her message with us: that no matter where someone has been, they are seen, loved, and capable of change.

*Sister Marilyn, SSND, worked as a secondary teacher, high school administrator, and later as an instructor at Mount Mary University. She also served as the SSND Personnel Director for a decade before being elected Provincial of the congregation, a role she held for two terms. After her time as Provincial, she worked in planned giving at Mount Mary, continuing her commitment to the SSND motto: "To be Jesus to the rest of the world."*

## Voices of Prisoners

*"What a great study of the 10 commandments! It was very in depth, and explained in a way that I could understand.*

*I wish I had this good of an understanding of this study years ago. I probably wouldn't be where I am now, but moving forward by loving myself as a child of God, I can share that love with those around me! Thank you for helping me become closer to my Heavenly Father."*

~ Bruce, a prisoner

**So far in  
2024, we  
have  
helped  
over  
8,280  
people in  
prison.**

**"I was in prison and you visited me." ~ Matthew 25:36**

# A Message from Our Executive Director



Dear Friends,

I'm thrilled to be writing to you as the new Executive Director of Dismas Ministry. While I've been connected to this life-changing organization for the past 20 years, stepping into this new role has been both exciting and challenging as I familiarize myself with the many responsibilities that come along with it.

Change can be daunting, but it also presents incredible opportunities for growth and progress. This summer has been a season of responding to evolving needs and expanding our reach to serve more effectively. I want to thank you for your patience as I find my footing and as we implement some necessary updates to our ordering systems. Change is often beneficial, but I understand it can also be disruptive, and I'm committed to minimizing any inconvenience for those placing orders and making requests for free materials. We remain committed to our mission, ensuring that our services

continue to meet the needs of those we serve.

One of our biggest challenges—and opportunities—is finding equitable ways to connect with as many incarcerated individuals as possible. Historically, our resources have been distributed on paper, but with 45 states now using tablets in correctional facilities, we must adapt to this new landscape. Our goal is to ensure that no one is left behind. The exceptional curriculum provided by Dismas Ministry is too valuable to be limited by outdated methods.

We invite you to explore all the materials we offer designed to support the incarcerated, their families, and those who minister to them. Together, we can continue to make a profound impact in these changing times. A full list of all our resources can be found at [www.dismasministry.org/shop](http://www.dismasministry.org/shop).

Please continue to pray for those we serve behind bars, as well as the prison ministers and chaplains who dedicate their time and talents to bringing our resources to those in need. Your prayers, your generosity, and your dedication inspire us to keep striving for justice, compassion, and hope in every aspect of our ministry.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Juliann Joerres  
Executive Director

*As I open the mail and process the donations we receive, I'm often moved to tears by the overwhelming support of you, our benefactors and I say a silent prayer for every donor. You are a blessing beyond measure! Thank you for your continued support of our mission!*

## Now Accepting Nominations for the 2025 St. Dismas Award

Do you know someone who has demonstrated exceptional dedication in their ministry to the incarcerated?



Help us recognize and celebrate the extraordinary efforts of those who embody the spirit of service to the incarcerated by nominating them today for the St. Dismas Award!

Please consider the individuals within your organization or people you have worked with who make a lasting impact through their work with prisoners. If someone comes to mind who meets the following qualifications, we invite you to submit a nomination.

**The nominee should:**

- Be actively engaged in ministry or service to the incarcerated.
- Demonstrate ongoing contributions beyond a single act or accomplishment.
- Positively impact and enrich the lives of people in prison.
- Foster a sense of community through their life and work.
- Raise awareness of the pastoral and spiritual needs of the incarcerated.
- Inspire support for the challenges faced by those in prison.

**Submit your nomination at [www.dismasministry.org/award](http://www.dismasministry.org/award)**

## Dismas Ministry Employees and On-Campus Volunteers

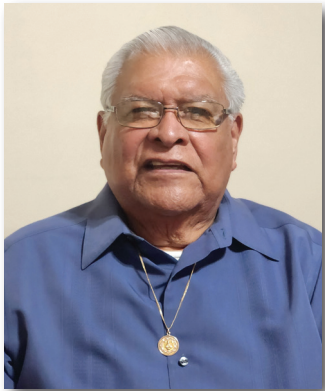


Picture above, Dismas Ministry Staff, Kevin Abing, Greg Dunlop, Maggie Wilnot, David Bardon, Haley Marini, Giselle Mareno, 2nd row: Julie Needham, Kelly O'Keefe, Juliann Joerres

The Dismas Ministry office, located at Alverno College, is up and running and now fully staffed! We are working diligently to meet the needs of the prisoners, prison ministers and chaplains and fulfill their requests for our materials. Our team includes a full-time Executive Director, and five part-time employees: an administrative assistant, a grant writer, and three interns from Alverno College. Additionally, we are blessed with three regular on-campus volunteers who manage our bookkeeping, inmate mail, and packaging.

We are truly fortunate to have this wonderful team working tirelessly to support our brothers and sisters behind bars. Follow us on social media to learn more about our current plans.

## Dismas Volunteer Spotlight: A Legacy of Hope



Deacon Roberto Fuentes,  
Dismas Ministry Volunteer

For over two decades, Deacon Roberto Fuentes has been a steadfast presence in the lives of Spanish speaking men and women who are incarcerated, offering them hope, spiritual guidance, and the unwavering love of Christ. His journey with Dismas Ministry is a testament to the power of faith, perseverance, and the belief that no one is beyond the reach of God's mercy.

Deacon Fuentes' story begins with his arrival in Wisconsin from Lorado, Texas, with a group of migrants, looking for work. It was a time filled with uncertainty as he sought to build a new life far from his parents. Determined to find work, he went to church and prayed to God to help him find a job. He secured a job in Racine at J.I. Case, and soon after his prayers for a wife were answered when he met his future spouse and love of his life at the same workplace.

But it was his deep desire to serve those in prison that truly shaped his spiritual journey. Deacon Fuentes felt a strong call to prison ministry, yet faced resistance from his local priest, who urged him to wait until he had support from a priest. Time and again, Deacon Fuentes returned, undeterred, until one day he made the decision that would change countless lives: "I am the one. I am the help. I can make this happen."

With the blessing from his parish priest and his resolve, Deacon Fuentes began leading a Wednesday night prayer service for prisoners, a ministry he has faithfully carried out for the past 22 years. As he walked through the prison gates for the first time, he prayed, "Jesus, please, I will be your servant. Please be with me so I can help these prisoners." To his amazement, it was the prisoners who revealed to him that Jesus was already there, waiting.

Deacon Fuentes' ministry extends beyond leading prayer services at the prison. He has become a spiritual companion to those he serves, offering them not only religious guidance but also a sense of dignity and worth. Over the years, he has received countless letters, Father's Day cards, and holiday greetings from prisoners, each one a testament to the impact he has made in their lives. Despite the challenges he has faced, including the recent passing of his beloved wife of 57 years, Deacon Fuentes has remained devoted in his ministry. Assessing Spanish student Bible study materials has provided him with solace and focus during this difficult time, while the support of his children, grandchildren, and neighbors has helped him navigate this new chapter of his life.

Deacon Fuentes' contributions to our Spanish Bible study program have been invaluable. His tireless dedication, coupled with his unique ability to connect with prisoners on a profound spiritual level, has made a significant difference in the lives of those we serve. His humility shines through when he says, "I didn't help them—God did." But it is clear that without Deacon Fuentes, many of the opportunities for spiritual growth and healing within our ministry would not exist.

As we reflect on the impact of Deacon Fuentes' work, we are filled with gratitude for his volunteer service. His legacy is one of unwavering faith, compassionate service, and a deep commitment to helping others find their way to God. We would be lost without his ongoing support and constant help.



Deacon Roberto Fuentes,  
and his late wife, Lorenza



# Dismas Ministry

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## Please take note of our NEW PO Box #

A newsletter published by Dismas Ministry, a national Catholic outreach for inmates, victims, their families, those released from prison, and the community.

DISMAS MINISTRY is registered as a nonprofit corporation in the State of Wisconsin, and listed in the US Catholic Directory as a religious, tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) organization. All gifts are tax deductible.

## Follow us on social media

- [Facebook.com/dismasministry](https://www.facebook.com/dismasministry)
- [Twitter.com/dismasministry](https://twitter.com/dismasministry)
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## Celebrating 25 Years!!

This July, we began a celebration of 25 years of Dismas Ministry and our role in “visiting the prisoner.” The celebration starts with all of you, benefactors and friends.



First, please continue to keep us and those we serve in your prayers. Second, we invite you to consider a special gift or commit to a monthly gift of \$25 to commemorate our 25th anniversary. However, a contribution of any amount will help sustain our work and touch the hearts and souls of prisoners.

Can we count on you to help us deliver our programs and services and continue the vital work of Dismas Ministry?

**Please make a 25th anniversary year gift TODAY!**  
Donate at [www.dismasministry.org/note](http://www.dismasministry.org/note)

**The Celebration Begins with You!**

## Tablets Verses Paper?

### Attention Prison Ministers and Chaplains



**Do the facilities where you minister still accept paper material deliveries?**

Over the past few months, we have noticed a rise in returned packages, and we are concerned that some facilities are no longer accepting our mailed materials. This presents a significant challenge for us as we cover both the initial postage and the cost of returned packages.

We need your help to understand how policies are changing. Is your facility now using tablets? Is your facility accepting packages for inmates?

Please take a moment to complete a short form on our website. Your feedback is essential in helping us adjust our approach and continue serving those behind bars.

**Please visit [www.dismasministry.org/tablets](http://www.dismasministry.org/tablets) or scan the QR code.**

