



# Remember Me

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

## Empathy and Experience: A Unique Contribution to Our Board



Joseph DeAlmeida,  
Dismas Ministry Board Member

Joseph DeAlmeida is the newest member of our Board of Directors at Dismas Ministry. He brings a unique perspective shaped by his profound personal experiences, having navigated the challenges of incarceration and discovered the transformative power of faith during his journey.

Even though Joseph is a “cradle Catholic,” it was in prison that he discovered the significant impact of religious resources for those behind bars. His experience notably shaped his life’s path and his desire to serve others facing similar challenges.

While incarcerated, Joseph founded a rosary group, creating a communal space of faith and support that became a cornerstone of his daily life. This initiative not only helped him but also allowed him to help his fellow

inmates, highlighting the critical need for accessible religious resources within the prison system.

Joseph decided to join the Dismas Ministry Board of Directors for several reasons. He is passionately committed to giving back to the community, aiming to provide the same gifts and resources that aided him during his time of need. He hopes to make a memorable difference in the lives of current inmates. Additionally, Joseph’s faith deeply informs his view of incarceration. He draws a powerful parallel between his experiences and those of Jesus, who was also “imprisoned.” This acknowledgment reinforces his resolve to serve and advocate for those in similar situations.

At the heart of Joseph's involvement is a deeply felt desire to serve; he sees his role on the board as a means to better others’ lives through direct action and policy advocacy. “Jesus was a prisoner who broke the chains of hell. Remembering this gives me strength to serve and support those who are still confined,” said Joseph.

Today, Joseph is an active advocate and servant in various capacities beyond Dismas Ministry. He works as a facilitator for young adult peer mentors throughout Massachusetts, sponsored by the Department of Mental Health, among other organizations. His role involves providing a comprehensive network of support and resources to peers navigating their own mental health challenges. In addition to his facilitative work, Joseph is a board member of the Depression Bipolar Support Alliance in Boston, where he helps to organize support groups for individuals and families dealing with mental health issues. Continued on page 2

*“In prison, the rosary was my refuge. Every night, it brought peace and structure to my life.”*

## Voices of Prisoners

*I was once an altar boy, now I'm in prison. I have recently become more knowledgeable of my childhood faith as a Catholic. I still have so much to learn. I wonder if you have a copy of the Catechism, even an older one, if not, anything you can send that would help me learn more about the Church and my role in it, would be welcome.*

*God bless and thanks,  
~Luseano L.*

## Voices of Donors

*“I am a proud Mercy Circle donor, contributing monthly to support this incredible ministry. I'm deeply grateful for the work you do—work that I am unable to do myself. I truly believe my donation makes a meaningful difference by bringing the Word of God to those behind bars. It fills me with joy to support such a wonderful organization. Thank you for all that you do.”*

*~Donna C.*

*This testimony beautifully captures the spirit of our community—a shared commitment to transforming lives through mercy, faith, and compassion.*

*Thank you to all our donors for making this ministry possible. Together, we are spreading God's love where it's needed most.*

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

# A Message from Our Executive Director



Dear Friends,

As we step into 2025, we are thrilled to celebrate a remarkable milestone: the 25th anniversary of Dismas Ministry! Over the past quarter-century, this ministry has touched countless lives by providing free Catholic resources to those affected by incarceration. I am excited to share that this year holds incredible promise, and exciting developments on the horizon.

On March 22, 2025, we will present the St. Dismas Award to Father Chuck Canterna in Baltimore, MD. Father Chuck's dedication to the incarcerated is beyond inspiring, and we are honored to recognize his work. (Learn more about him and his work on page 3 of this newsletter.)

In April, we will be hosting a prisoner art gallery event in partnership with the Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC) called, *Expressions of the Soul*. This event will be held at St. Francis of Assisi in Milwaukee on April 6, 2025 and will showcase the talents and artwork of men and women who are incarcerated. If you are in the area, we would love to see you there. (Learn more on page 4.)

We are introducing a new project that we at Dismas Ministry are deeply passionate about. *I Am Worthy: A Collection of Art, Stories, and Poems by and for men who are in prison*. This will be a resource that addresses a critical need expressed by the incarcerated men we serve — the need for a resource that supports their journey of healing, personal transformation, and reconciliation with Christ and their communities through art. We are currently looking for funders who will help with the creation of this new resource. If you are interested in supporting this project, please contact me at [juliann.joerres@dismasministry.org](mailto:juliann.joerres@dismasministry.org).

I encourage you to stay connected with us by following our social media channels and ensuring your contact information is current in our database. This will help us continue to keep you informed about our latest news, developments, and our latest resources. Visit [dismasministry.org/nfg](http://dismasministry.org/nfg) to update your information.

As we celebrate 25 years of Dismas Ministry, let us look forward with hope and gratitude for all that God has in store for us in 2025. May God bless you and all who carry out this vital work.

In Christ's peace,

  
Juliann Joerres  
Executive Director

*"Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*  
~Philippians 4: 4-7

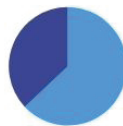
Empathy and Experience: Continued from page 1

Joseph is also pursuing academic and professional growth through his studies in Human Services, with aspirations to become a licensed mental health counselor. He is particularly interested in working within frameworks that integrate religious guidance with mental health care, aiming to serve in environments that respect and nurture both spiritual and psychological well-being. His unique insights are particularly valuable to Dismas Ministry as we strive to deepen our understanding of the needs of the incarcerated. His experiences equip him with an unparalleled ability to empathize with and advocate for those we serve. Please join me in welcoming Joseph DeAlmeida to the Dismas Ministry Board of Directors.

## 2023-24 Fiscal Year Impact Metrics

### Revenue Sources

- Grant Makers and Organizations - \$117,920
- Individual Contributions - \$200,860



**9,924**  
Prayer  
Books  
Distributed

**7,163**  
Rosaries  
Distributed

**6,044**  
Bibles  
Provided

**3,975**  
Study  
Courses  
Supplied

**1,825**  
Facilities  
Reached

**210**  
Chaplains &  
Ministers  
Helped

**731**  
Active  
Donors

## 2025 St. Dismas Award Recipient – Fr. Charles Canterna



### Fr. Charles Canterna: A Lifelong Journey of Prison Ministry

Fr. Charles (Chuck) Canterna, nominated by Charlotte Ponticelli, has been selected as the 2025 St. Dismas Award recipient, recognizing his dedication to prison ministry and countless men and women who are incarcerated. It was an honor to speak with Fr. Chuck and hear firsthand about his extraordinary journey, which spans over 44 years. His life is a testament to the profound impact that faith, presence, and prayer can have, even in the darkest corners of society.

Fr. Chuck lives without the distractions of modern technology—no computer, just a simple flip phone. His ministry is deeply rooted in face-to-face personal connections. “The ministry I know is hands-on,” Fr. Chuck shared. “That’s the way I think Jesus would want it.”

When he was young, Chuck envisioned a future on the baseball diamond, but everything changed one afternoon when Sister Philomena read him Matthew 28:16-20, the Great Commission. “I was sitting there, and something happened. It was like the Lord outside of me just touched my soul, my heart, my mind. I knew, right then, that God existed and that He was speaking to me,” he recounted.

“That moment was the most powerful experience of my life,” he said. “It was like being in love for the first time. I knew I wouldn’t be a baseball player. I knew I had to give my life to Christ.”

After 12 years in seminary, Fr. Chuck felt an additional pull toward serving society’s most marginalized. Inspired by the work of St. Francis and Mother Teresa, he longed for street ministry and serving the poor. Eventually, this path led him to the Maryland State Penitentiary and Baltimore City Jail, where he began his prison chaplaincy. “I was just 32. But I said yes, and that yes shaped my entire life,” said Fr. Chuck.

His dedication to the incarcerated reflects an understanding of their profound hunger for meaning. “These men live in an environment filled with violence and darkness, but they’re open. They’re searching for something real,” he said. “When we come to visit, they realize we don’t have to be there. We’re there because we want to share the Word of God, and that touches them. It always works when they’re open.”

While working with some of the most hardened criminals in Maryland, he heard a thousand times from inmates, “I’ve broken every commandment, how can Christ forgive me?” “But through faith they see their lives change, and to see that transformation—it’s amazing,” Fr. Chuck said, “It’s not me doing it. It’s God. I’m just the instrument, the channel of blessing.”

For Fr. Chuck being that instrument is the key to effective ministry. “I tell anyone who wants to minister to these men: read Matthew 25. If you understand that, you understand what true service is,” he said. “When Jesus said, ‘I was in prison and you visited me,’ He meant it. We’re all called to serve in some way, whether in prison ministry or elsewhere. It’s about using the gifts God has given us.”

He added, “These men know they’ve made mistakes. They’ve suffered. But when they stand up for their faith, it’s powerful. They’re going against the current of their environment, and that takes strength. It’s beautiful to witness because you realize you’re just on the sidelines, watching God work.”

Fr. Chuck’s ministry has reached thousands over the years, and his words are a reminder that real change begins with presence, prayer, and a willingness to serve. “Life is temporary,” he said softly, “and what matters most is keeping our eyes on eternal life. The more love you give, the more you get. It’s simple. It’s what the Lord calls us to do.”

In reflecting on his journey, Fr. Chuck left me with this thought: “God needs our hands and feet. He needs us to be His instruments. And when we say yes, incredible things happen.”

Fr. Charles Canterna’s legacy of service and deep, unwavering faith has shown that the power of Christ’s love can touch even the most forgotten hearts. He is a most worthy recipient of the 2025 St. Dismas Award, and we couldn’t be more pleased to add his name to the list of those servants of God who have received this award.

**"We're all called to serve in some way, whether in prison ministry or elsewhere. It's about using the gifts God has given us."**



# Dismas Ministry

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Remember me.  
Luke 23:42

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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.

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.

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## Expressions of the Soul: An Afternoon of Art, Conversation, and Connection



Please join Dismas Ministry and the Ignatian Volunteer Corps of Milwaukee for an afternoon art exhibit.

**Sunday, April 6, 2025**  
**2:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

St. Francis of Assisi Parish Hall  
1937 N. Vel R. Phillips Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Parking: Free—available on site.

Admission: Free. A free-will offering will be graciously accepted at the door.



Have you had the opportunity to see our Prison Art Gallery in person? Well now is your opportunity. Step into a world where creativity transcends barriers and art becomes a bridge to humanity. This unique event will showcase powerful and thought-provoking artwork created by individuals who are currently or were formerly incarcerated. Each piece in this moving exhibit explores profound themes of freedom, confinement, resilience, and self-expression, offering a glimpse into the lives, hopes, and journeys of those often unheard and unseen.

As a special highlight, the event will feature a dedicated exhibit of the latest volume of *I Am Beautiful: A Survival Resource Created by and for Women*. Limited edition prints will be available to order at the event.

Enjoy complimentary hors d'oeuvres and beverages as you take in the artwork, engage in meaningful conversations, and connect with others who share a passion for service and justice.

Join us for an afternoon that promises to inspire, challenge, and connect us all.  
Learn more on our website at [www.dismasministry.org/artevent25](http://www.dismasministry.org/artevent25)