



# Remember Me

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

## The 2026 St. Dismas Award Recipient: Deacon Mike Gutierrez



Dismas Ministry is honored to announce that Deacon Mike Gutierrez of the Diocese of Tucson, Arizona has been selected as the 2026 St. Dismas Award recipient, honoring his extraordinary dedication to serving our brothers and sisters who are incarcerated.

A humble and deeply committed servant, Deacon Mike has worked with Catholic Community Services for 32 years, spending the last 14 years walking alongside individuals in prisons and detention centers across southern Arizona. He typically spends four days each week in five different prisons and one jail, offering prayer, communion services, sacramental preparation, pastoral care, and spiritual accompaniment.

*Deacon Mike Gutierrez,  
2026 St. Dismas Award Recipient*

Deborah Auclair, who nominated Deacon Mike, spoke of his humility, compassion, and steady

dedication to those behind bars. She described him as a “faithful and tireless servant” whose leadership has strengthened prison ministry across the diocese. Bishop Gerald Kicanas further supported Deacon Mike’s nomination, writing that he serves “with distinction” and is deeply respected by staff, chaplains, and those he ministers to. The bishop shared that without Deacon Mike, “we would not have the exemplary prison ministry we have today.”

During his discernment, Bishop Kicanas and Deacon Mike drove to the prison in Douglas, Arizona, several hours across the desert. That first visit in 2011 was a transformative moment. The fences, barbed wire, heavy iron gates, and intimidating process of entering the facility deeply affected him. Yet the moment he stepped into the chapel, two men in custody stepped forward and warmly welcomed him. Their hospitality immediately put him at ease and opened his heart to this new calling.

Today, Deacon Mike serves hundreds of individuals each week across the Tucson region. The ICE detention center can sometimes see large groups, *continued on page 3*

**“God’s love reaches into every cell, every yard, every story, and every person.”**

## Voices of Those We Serve

*Hi. I hope this letter finds you doing well. My name is John Paul and I'm currently incarcerated in Avenal State Prison in California and I'm serving a 3 to 6 year sentence. I'd love to get your correspondence Bible study book. I saw another inmate with your booklet and he showed me how cool it is and I'm super interested in it! It looks like it would help me learn, relearn, and strengthen my faith all around. I'd really appreciate it if you could help me out.*

*Thank you, John Paul*

*Greetings, my name is Marco and I am an inmate here at Cobb County Jail. I was transferred due to overcrowding. When they brought us here they took all our Bibles, books, and everything. The chaplain I have is underfunded and understaffed so he has no Bibles or rosaries available. I humbly request a rosary for my prayers.*

*Thank you and God bless you,  
Marco*

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

# A Message from Our Executive Director



Dear Friends,

As winter continues, I find myself reflecting on the quiet strength and steady hope this season brings to our ministry. In the life of the Church, these weeks invite us to listen more closely, to remain attentive to God's presence, and to entrust the work before us to God's care.

We recently marked the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, placing our ministry and those we serve under her protection. We celebrated the Epiphany, when Christ is revealed to the world, and the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which reminds us of our own baptismal call. These sacred moments ground us in faith and remind us that every season of ministry flows from God's presence and promise.

This time of year also invites us to deepen our relationship with God's Word. For Dismas Ministry, winter is a season of ongoing, faithful ministry, rooted in service and quiet perseverance. While the world settles into its daily routines, individuals who are incarcerated still continue to reach out for meaning, connection, and spiritual nourishment. Please know that the resources you help provide continue to meet those needs in tangible and life-giving ways.

Thank you for beginning this year with us. You are remembered often in our prayers, and we are honored to share this mission with you. I encourage you to share the good news of our ministry with all who will listen - this corporal work of mercy!

With peace and gratitude,

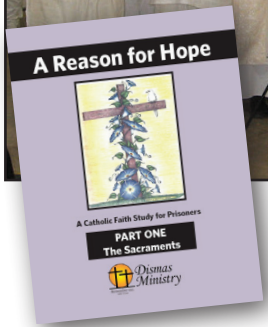
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Juliann Joeres".

Juliann Joeres  
Executive Director

**“Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.**

~2 Timothy 4:2

## Welcomed into Communion: A Reason for Hope in Action



We are excited to share how our Faith Study course, *A Reason for Hope*, is being used in correctional facilities across the country as part of OCIA formation.

Recently, we received photographs from Gerald Gaenslen of Texas that beautifully show this study in action. Gerald is a dedicated chaplain assistant and prison minister who serves inside correctional facilities through his work with Kolbe Prison Ministries in Texas.

Through retreats, catechesis, and pastoral presence, Gerald walks alongside individuals who are incarcerated, accompanying them as they grow in both their understanding of the Catholic faith and their relationship with Christ and the Church.

The images he shared capture a powerful moment of faith from the Dolph Briscoe Unit in Dilley, Texas. Eight men were welcomed into full communion with the Catholic Church after completing their OCIA preparation. All of them used *A Reason for Hope* as part of that journey. Their witness reflects what is possible when faith is patiently nurtured, supported, and allowed to take root, even behind bars.

Our Faith Study, along with the Catechism, is frequently used for OCIA formation in correctional facilities, helping participants explore the foundations of the Catholic faith through Scripture and prayer.

Beginning in February, we will share a weekly reflection from our Faith Study, *A Reason for Hope*, on our social media. Each post will include a Scripture passage or question, inviting you to reflect and pray alongside our brothers and sisters who are incarcerated, and to remember that faith can grow anywhere, even in the most difficult places. Follow along at: [facebook.com/DismasMinistry](https://facebook.com/DismasMinistry)



## The 2026 St. Dismas Award Recipient *continued*

at times reaching 80 to 100 people in a single service. Through prayer, Scripture, reflection, and genuine presence, Deacon Mike and his team walk with these individuals, providing comfort, connection, and a reminder that God remains near.

Deacon Mike remains steadfast as he navigates the unknowns of his ministry. Several prisons, for example, now require all paper materials to be mailed or delivered early for clearance, and the frequent movement of populations between yards and institutions disrupts continuity. Undaunted, Deacon Mike coordinates with chaplains, organizes sacramental materials, and maintains a schedule that allows him to continue providing spiritual care in ways that respect both safety procedures and the dignity of the people he serves. He is especially grateful for the respect and support he receives from the chaplains and security staff in his region.

For more than eight years, Deacon Mike has also served as a permanent deacon. Although he once resisted the idea of the diaconate, he eventually recognized God's call to a deeper form of service. His vocation allows him to bridge parish life and the prison chapel, bringing the sacraments, the Gospel, and a compassionate pastoral presence to individuals who are often overlooked or forgotten. His volunteers describe him as tireless, faithful, and deeply committed. One volunteer wrote, "No one has seen a harder-working and more impactful deacon."

The St. Dismas Award honors individuals who embody the mercy of Christ and the spirit of the repentant thief. Deacon Mike reflects that spirit every day. He lives the Gospel with authenticity, showing that mercy, compassion, and respect can reach places where hope is often fragile. His leadership has touched, strengthened, and restored dignity to countless lives.

*Dismas Ministry is proud to recognize Deacon Mike Gutierrez as the 2026 St. Dismas Award recipient. His ministry is a powerful reminder that God's love reaches into every cell, every yard, every story, and every person. The formal celebration will be held at St. Augustine Cathedral in Tucson, Arizona, on March 28, 2026. We invite you to join us in honoring Deacon Mike's faithful service and in praying for all who minister to our brothers and sisters behind bars.*



*Deacon Mike Gutierrez offering communion service at an Arizona correctional facility.*

## Annual Impact Report Available Now

**TOTAL  
DONATIONS  
RECEIVED**

**\$362,553**

**PRAYER  
BOOKS  
DISTRIBUTED**

**8,328**

**RESOURCES  
MAILED TO  
MINISTRY  
NETWORK**

**19,870**

**TABLET STUDY  
COURSES  
COMPLETED**

**5,218**

**CATHOLIC  
BIBLES  
PROVIDED**

**3,614**

The 2024–2025 Impact Report, now available on our website, offers a meaningful snapshot of Dismas Ministry's work over the past year and the people who help bring this mission to life. The report highlights new board members, the dedicated volunteers who strengthen this outreach, and the Young Adult Prison Ministry interns who serve alongside the ministry. It also reflects on key milestones, including Dismas Ministry becoming the official steward of the Paulist Prison Ministries legacy, expanding the reach of trusted Catholic resources for individuals who are incarcerated. The report further shares the growing demand for services and the financial support that makes this important work possible.

Deep gratitude is extended to both long-time and new donors whose generosity sustains this mission and supports continued growth. A strong donor base, built over many years, has made it possible to carry forward the Paulist legacy, preserve these well-known resources, and serve even more individuals seeking spiritual guidance and hope. You are invited to explore the full report and see how prayers, generosity, and partnership help ensure that individuals who are incarcerated are given opportunities to find or build a relationship with God. Read the full report at: <https://dismasministry.org/impact/>



# Dismas Ministry

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Remember me.  
Luke 23:42

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MILWAUKEE, WI

A newsletter published by Dismas Ministry, a national Catholic prison ministry supporting individuals who are incarcerated, those who minister to them, 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

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## Thank You

With grateful hearts, we thank the many organizations whose recent financial support makes our ministry possible:

- CPPS Heritage Mission Fund Grant
- Catholic Foundation of North Georgia
- Catholic Community Foundation (Milwaukee)
- Sebastian Family Charitable Foundation
- Ray & Kay Eckstein Charitable Trust
- Augustinian Stewardship Fund
- Donald D. Lynch Family Foundation
- Green Bay Packers Foundation
- Catholic Human Services
- Guadalupe and Lilia Martinez Foundation
- Divine Mercy Parish (South Milwaukee, WI)

**Your generosity sustains Dismas Ministry's mission to bring Scripture and faith resources to individuals who are incarcerated.**

## Your Support Matters

This Lent, we are especially focused on meeting the growing demand for the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Often used in OCIA formation and paired with our Faith Study, *A Reason for Hope*, it helps deepen faith and offer guidance and hope.

Your generosity makes it possible to respond to these requests with care and dignity. Each mailing carries more than a book. It carries encouragement, formation, and a reminder that God's love reaches even the most forgotten places.

**Please consider making a Lenten offering by using the enclosed envelope, scanning the QR code, or visiting [dismasministry.org/donate](https://www.dismasministry.org/donate)**

