

## **How to Start Prison Ministry**

**How to recruit volunteers for Prison Ministry?** It is not always easy to find volunteers who might be interested in Prison Ministry. Often, when people think of prisons and inmates, the feeling is one of fear. We want to encourage people to consider the many different ways to volunteer in Prison Ministry and that not everyone is called to visit inmates directly.

- Contact organizations at your parish and see if you can talk to their group. (Human Concerns Committee, Parish Council, St. Vincent DePaul Society, Social Ministry, Catholic Charities, Pastoral Concerns Committee, Holy Name Society)
- Invite someone involved in Prison Ministry to talk to your group.
- Use the Dismas Ministry "Where are the Catholics?" DVD to inspire and motivate. (The DVD shows an honest representation of the many different ways Catholics are involved in Prison Ministry. Contact us to order DVD and Messengers of Hope" for \$15)
- Place an ad in the parish bulletin.
- Form a support group for victims and their families or the families of inmate.

If you do not currently have a Prison Ministry program in place, you may consider:

- Read Dismas Ministry's "Messengers of Hope" A Catholic Correctional Ministry Training Resource. (Cost is \$15, email [dismas@dismasministry.org](mailto:dismas@dismasministry.org) to order.)
- Contact a local prison minister to see what the needs are in your area.
- Place an ad in the parish bulletin to find out if anyone else in your parish or diocese is interested.
- Consider forming a support group for victims and their families or the families of inmates.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. How do we respond to these questions, as individual Catholics or as members of our local parish and diocese?
2. Where and when do we see Jesus in prison?
3. What jails and prisons are in our neighborhood or within the boundaries of our parish and diocese?
4. Can we identify and list them?
5. Is anyone going there to visit the imprisoned Catholics and bring them the sacraments?
6. As a sacramental faith community how does Catholic prison outreach differ

from non-Catholic outreach?

7. How do we go about training for prison outreach?
8. Does our parish and diocese give prominent place in their literature and websites to this work of mercy-prison ministry?
9. If not, are the other works of mercy recognized but not visiting Christ in the imprisoned?
10. Why does it seem to be the forgotten work of mercy? At least in the Catholic community?
11. Why are non-Catholics "light years" ahead of us in prison outreach with available printed resources and numbers of volunteers?
12. Why are the Catholic shelves often empty in prison chapel libraries?
13. How do we get started with creating a prison outreach in our area?
14. Does our parish or diocese have training available?
15. Are any Catholic prison outreach resources available?