



JANUARY 2020

The last weeks of the calendar year offer many opportunities for us to be absorbed into the excitement and pressure of the holiday season. Even faithful disciples of Christ are often inadvertently drawn to the distracting immediacies of the moment, paradoxically losing sight of the momentous event of the birth of Christ. Then we are in danger of losing the vision of life in service to the Gospel. Pope Francis tells us that this service in action is service to community. Perhaps the change of pace of the new year can allow time for reflection on the needs of our brothers and sisters. How can the call to perform works of mercy be fulfilled in the midst of this hurried and sometimes harried time?

Jesus defined community in Luke 10:25-37. Through his Parable of the Good Samaritan he described neighbor as someone we encounter who is in need. And in Matthew 25 Jesus instructs us to search out the needy. Some of the neediest are those who are in custodial facilities of detention.

One way of serving community is simply to pray for others. Prison ministries are active throughout our archdiocese. These dedicated volunteers receive prayer requests from those to whom they minister. Here are some examples from the Advent season from one of the jails:

N – Pray she goes through drug treatment. She was a RN and her twin girls are due in March. She asked for peace and calmness and help dealing with the death of her 7-year-old son.

R – I hope and pray to be released by New Years to spend time with my kids whom I have not seen in 10 years.

C – That my wife, Alyssa, who is homeless has a safe place to go and isn't on drugs and will be there when I get out.

Please keep these needs in your prayers, too.

These same volunteers went to their parish school and asked the children to create greetings for men and women in jail. Over 75 cards were received and given to those in custody. They were thoroughly enjoyed and brought hope.



Of course, another way to serve is to visit those in custody. Volunteers throughout the archdiocese have been volunteering for years with tremendous commitment and dedication. Additional volunteers are welcome and needed to bring diversity and solidarity to the ministry.

In order to explore this, one parish, which has an Office of Works of Mercy, formed a group of seven young women who wished to learn more about prison ministry. On December 28, 2019, they visited Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Accompanied by a seasoned volunteer, they met with a group of women in custody in order to share the love of Christ. Starting with a game to break the ice, they moved on to singing Christmas carols accompanied by guitar. Then, after a prayer, one of the group presented a talk on the God who loves you, manifested through the birth of Jesus Christ. The women in custody opened up afterwards with a question and answer session, culminating in a beautiful faith testimony.

These women, with a range of gifts and hearts for this ministry, now seek to do this more often.



Yet another way to reach out to those in custody is to become a pen pal. Individuals are in custody because they have harmed others. While the safety of the community mandates that they be incarcerated, punishment need not and should not deprive them of their dignity as a person made in the image and likeness of God. Unfortunately, the world of incarceration strips one of autonomy, traumatizes and isolates. The opportunities for authentic rehabilitation and restoration are minimized or lost. Often a person who is incarcerated is rejected or neglected by family and friends. Exchanging letters is a way to be active in prison ministry, to serve others and to make a difference in someone's life.



Learn more: [Pen Pal Information](#)



CATHOLIC MOBILIZING NETWORK

Grounded in the Faith and working to further the approach to criminal justice and prison ministry endorsed by the USCCB, the Catholic Mobilizing Network promotes and educates about the practice of restorative justice as an approach to ministry. Here is the current, fascinating blog.



Eric Boldizar, currently incarcerated since 2002, is a Benedictine oblate who strives to be a servant leader and promote restorative justice inside and outside of prison. He received the 2017 Bert Thompson Award for Faith-Based Program from the National Association for Community and Restorative Justice for his work in helping organize the Hope for Restoration restorative justice conference, and hopes to continue growing these annual conferences to promote positive change in the community.

[Catholic Mobilizing Network Blog](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

January 17, 2020

12:00 am - 1:15 am PST

Partnership for Safety and Justice

City Club of Eugene

"Lock Them Up! The Costs of Incarceration"

Baker Center, Eugene, OR

<http://www.cityclubofeugene.org/events/lock-them-up-the-costs-of-incarceration/>

January 22, 2020

10:00 am - 11:30 am PST

Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition

Webinar

"Preparing Our People to Provide Pastoral Care:

National Association of Catholic Chaplain Partners in Pastoral Care"

<https://www.catholicprisonministries.org/webinars/>

June 20, 2020

Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon

Prison Ministry Conference

Mount Angel Abbey Library