



DEPARTMENT OF EVANGELIZATION
OFFICE OF PRISON MINISTRY AND PRISON MINISTRY COUNCIL

ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE



STEPS FOR STARTING A
PARISH-BASED JAIL/PRISON MINISTRY

A BOOKLET FOR PASTORAL LEADERS AND PARISHIONERS

Front cover photo courtesy of Andrea Cipriani-Mecchi.

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Prison Ministry,

This feast day of Saint Maximilian Kolbe offers me a wonderful opportunity to offer words of support and gratitude to all of you for encountering the presence of Christ behind bars.

Saint Maximilian, a Franciscan and a prisoner, found himself in Auschwitz during World War II. At the age of 47, he offered himself to take the place of a young husband and father and was executed in the place of one who was a stranger. Although his personal ministry in prison ended, his work continued in those who witnessed his greatest sacrifice in the name of Christ. In 1982, Pope St. John Paul II canonized Saint Maximilian Kolbe, making him patron of prisoners and an example to all of us of loving service to others.

I am delighted to see so much outreach on behalf of our Church into the prisons throughout the Archdiocese and how much it has grown in the past few years. Two years ago, Prison Ministry was moved to the Department of Evangelization. Since then, Deacon Seigfried Presberry has become Director and has supported and expanded this ministry. We now have a Prison Ministry Council that assists him, and you, in prison work. Together you are leading the charge to get behind bars, meet the spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters, and assist those departing prison for re-entry into the wider community.

I am grateful for the full-time service in prison ministry of Fr. Charles Canterna, Sr. Kathy Dougherty, OSF, and Mr. Bob Lashinsky. In the past year alone, Fr. Carlos Cardoso, SAC, is serving the Hagerstown prisons, and I recently assigned Fr. John Kightlinger full-time to serve the Cumberland prisons. I was also very happy to support Fr. John Hurley's request to have dual assignments for some deacons, and I recently assigned three newly ordained deacons to serve in prison ministry alongside countless volunteers from our parishes.

It is most encouraging for all of us to be reminded of the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, when He tells us, "I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matthew 25:36). I am sure many of you walk away from the prisons you visit saying to yourselves, "I am leaving with so much more than I came with."

On behalf of our incarcerated brothers and sisters and Jesus' exhortation to visit Him in prison, I am so grateful for your witness and service of the Gospel, and I pray that the Lord may continue to bless you and those you serve.

Faithfully in Christ,



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William E. Lori".

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore

WHY HAVE A PARISH-BASED JAIL/PRISON MINISTRY?

Some years ago, when referring to our brothers and sisters who are incarcerated in prisons and jails, Bishop William C. Newman, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, said, “They are also our parishioners.” Perhaps they once attended one of our Archdiocesan Catholic schools, or sat in our church pews, or are related to one of our parishioners. They are from our cities, towns, and neighborhoods, or maybe they are from out of the state. And, of course, they are all beloved sons and daughters of our heavenly Father and our brothers and sisters in Christ. As Jesus taught the crowds, he invited us to minister to them: “I was in prison and you visited me” (*Matthew 25:36*).

The Archdiocese of Baltimore’s Office of Prison Ministry was created to respond to Christ’s call for us to love and care for our brothers and sisters in jail/prison. Our mission is to “proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and the sharing of His sacramental life to incarcerated individuals and their families in order to foster hope, human dignity, and opportunities for new beginnings.” To help parishes respond to Christ’s call, we have published this booklet to guide both pastors and a core team of parishioners to take the necessary steps to launch and successfully implement a parish-based jail/prison ministry.

A parish-based jail/prison ministry is designed to care not only for our incarcerated brothers and sisters, but also their families and those recently released and reentering society. The goals of such a ministry are to:

- **SHARE** the unconditional love of God.
- **ADMINISTER** the sacraments.
- **SHARE** the Gospel of Jesus Christ—through teachings on prayer, the study of Scripture, and mentoring—to help the incarcerated experience initial and ongoing conversion, and to live a meaningful and productive life.
- **DISCIPLE** new converts to Catholicism through RCIA programs, teachings on the Mass, sacraments, and dogmas of the Church
- **PROVIDE** meaningful, life-giving connections for returning citizens through their local parish.

STEPS FOR THE PASTOR

As you begin to think and pray about launching a jail/prison ministry in your parish, or to want to encourage your parishioners to become actively involved in a pre-existing ministry at a nearby parish or faith community, you may wonder, “Where do I begin?” Here are some steps you can take. And remember: the Archdiocesan Office of Prison Ministry has many resources to help you and your parishioners.

STEP 1:

ARRANGE a meeting of Parish Council members and parishioners interested in jail/prison ministry.

STEP 2:

TALK with Archdiocesan priests, deacons, and lay persons who are already involved in jail/prison ministry.

INVITE someone from the Office of Prison Ministry or Prison Ministry Council to speak to your parish group.

STEP 3:

SHARE your vision for a parish-based jail/prison ministry at Sunday Masses. Put announcements in the bulletin, and display other materials provided by the Office of Prison Ministry.

STEP 4:

INCLUDE intentions in prayers of the faithful for prisoners, their families, and victims of crime, as well as wardens, chaplains, correctional officers, and jail/prison ministers.

STEP 5:

FORM a Core Team made up of parishioners and others who show interest in this ministry, including, if possible, people who have experience in ministering to the incarcerated. Have the Core Team select a coordinator to schedule meetings and provide a regular progress report to the Pastor.

GUIDE the Core Team in researching funding sources.

STEPS FOR THE PARISHIONER CORE TEAM

The parishioner Core Team has the responsibility to (1) gather information about volunteer opportunities; (2) target ministry opportunities for volunteers; (3) recruit and train volunteers; (4) support the volunteers; (5) communicate with jail/prison officials, chaplains, and volunteers; and (6) sustain the ongoing ministry. Each of these six steps is explained in more detail below. Remember, the Core Team is the hub around which the ministry revolves.

STEP 1: GATHER INFORMATION

Contact the Office of Prison Ministry for information on volunteer opportunities that are near your parish.

Contact pastors/volunteers of other parishes and/or faith communities that have a jail/prison ministry to learn what ministries they provide, how they function within your particular community, and how to possibly work together.

Review the list—on page 11 of this booklet—where Archdiocesan volunteers are currently ministering. Extra volunteers are always needed for existing ministries.

STEP 2: TARGET MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS INSIDE OF JAILS/PRISONS

A. VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY TO INMATES INSIDE INSTITUTIONS

Volunteers provide programs to encourage growth and support in the spiritual, educational, and emotional lives of inmates. Programs foster hope and dignity and help inmates make better choices when they are released. They also address inmates' feelings of isolation and loneliness and combat the issue of idleness.

Volunteers are needed for the following programs:

SACRAMENTAL LIFE:

Mass, Eucharistic Services, Reconciliation.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT:

RCIA, studies of the Bible, Catechism, and Catholic Tradition, and KAIROS retreats.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION:

Offering spiritual support, practical advice, and friendship.

EDUCATION:

Literacy, English-second language (ESL), general education development (GED), and college-level courses.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION:

For those addicted to drugs and alcohol.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

Computer programs, carpentry, plumbing, sewing, etc.

LIFE SKILLS:

Parenting, interpersonal skills, anger management, victim/offender mediation.

MENTORING AND COUNSELING:

Mentors offer spiritual support, friendship, and practical advice. When the relationship begins before release, mentors can help assess strengths and weaknesses and help put in place a re-entry plan—including, whenever possible, family members. In some institutions, “inside mentors” are not permitted to continue this ministry after an inmate is released.

B. MINISTRY TO CITIZENS RETURNING TO OUR CHURCHES AND COMMUNITIES

Every day, inmates are released from incarceration and return to society. The success—or lack of success—of their re-entry is critical for their well-being and that of the community to which they return. For a returning citizen to become a responsible and successful member of society, he or she needs the support of family, friends, and yes—the Church!

Men and women re-entering society face many challenges, including unemployment, substance abuse, depression, problems with relationships, and lack of housing away from the influences of people and opportunities that led to their incarceration. Many will be re-incarcerated within a three-year period. Currently, the recidivism rate in Maryland is seventy percent. Many of the problems listed above lead to re-incarceration.

From within our Archdiocesan parishes, volunteers are needed to help support our returning parishioners. Your parish and other faith communities are in an excellent position to make these brothers and sisters feel welcomed. Spiritual and emotional connections during re-entry can help sustain those who are released.

Most state and local jurisdictions do not have or do not provide re-entry assistance. Parish re-entry volunteers are essential.

Re-entry volunteers can contact volunteers of other faith communities who may have experience in re-entry programs. Also, research the resources—including counselors—that are available from organizations, churches, and social service

agencies. See page 10 for additional resources.

C. MINISTRY TO FAMILIES OF THOSE IN JAIL/PRISON IMPACTED BY INCARCERATION

Family members—including the children—of those who are incarcerated need the support and prayer of the local Church. Those on the outside might suffer from personal embarrassment, isolation, shame, or prejudice as well as anxiety for the well-being of their incarcerated family member.

Please note that in the federal prison system, it is difficult to get approval to be an “inside volunteer” if prior contact has been made with families of inmates.

STEP 3: RECRUIT AND TRAIN VOLUNTEERS

It is important for those who are considering being a volunteer to look at jail/prison ministry opportunities through a realistic lens. Jail/prison ministers walk into a unique arena where intense spiritual combat is waged against evil every day. Although prayer is the greatest asset, it is substantive training and education that allows ministers to serve most effectively.

Who can be a volunteer? There are opportunities for all your parishioners. It is important to recognize that not every jail/prison volunteer will relate well to every inmate. However, with a diversity of volunteers and the love of God, most inmates can be reached. If you do not have enough volunteers in your parish, you might want to join with a neighboring parish.

What makes a good volunteer? Maturity and common sense are two prerequisites. Prospective volunteers should in most cases be older than 25, except when clear maturity is observed.

You are not alone! The Office of Prison Ministry is here to support you. Experienced volunteers will assist at your parish in the training of new volunteers. The Office of Prison Ministry also organizes “days of enrichment” twice a year for all Archdiocesan volunteers.

STEP 4: CREATE SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEERS: “BEHIND THE SCENES” MINISTRY

Some parishioners want to be involved in the parish-based jail/prison ministry but do not want to go into an institution.

A support team of volunteers is an essential part of jail/prison ministry. Support volunteers collect and organize the resource materials—or spiritual “tools”—for volunteers going into institutions. Together with the “inside” volunteers, they bring

God's love to our incarcerated brothers and sisters and their families.

Here are some "behind the scenes" volunteer opportunities:

- Pray. Start or join an intercessory prayer group for the parish-based jail/prison ministry.
- Collect items for celebration of Mass and Eucharistic service.
- Collect spiritual resources, including Bibles, books, rosaries, magazines, and prayer cards. (The institution's guidelines must be strictly followed.)
- Put together bags of hygiene and toiletry items for returning citizens.
- Collect clothing for returning citizens.
- Correspond with inmates. For security reasons strict guidelines must be followed.
- Organize parishioners in collecting gifts for children of prisoners.
- Involve young children/youth in making festive holiday posters and greeting cards, etc. Again, the institution's guidelines must be strictly followed.

STEP 5: COMMUNICATE WITH PRISON OFFICIALS, CHAPLAINS, AND VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers serve at the pleasure of the warden or director. Policies vary from institution to institution. The warden or director, working with advice from the senior staff, particularly the director of security, establish jail/prison policy.

Care must be exercised to establish and maintain lines of communication with those who establish institutional policy and/or approve volunteer activities. Maintaining an open dialogue between all parties is critical to a successful ministry.

An "Inside Coordinator" is the person appointed to communicate with the institutions where the volunteers will minister. This role can be filled by someone on the Core Team, and the position can be rotated periodically. Designating one person to communicate with the institution will enhance relationships and avoid confusion for both jail/prison officials and chaplains, and parish volunteers.

Initial responsibilities would include:

- Targeting the volunteer opportunities at a jail/prison.
- Assisting with security clearance/orientation for volunteers.
- Obtaining guidelines for materials to be brought into institution. Permission for all materials must be in writing.

Ongoing responsibilities would include:

- Ensuring activities within institutions are always covered and begin on time.
- Informing volunteers of changes in jail/prison schedules, such as unexpected closures.
- Communicating changes in jail/prison policies and keeping track of required meetings for re-orientation, etc.

Security Background Checks and Orientation for Volunteers: All volunteers must be approved by the institution. This involves submitting volunteers' personal information to the jail/prison's volunteer coordinator, including name, birthdate, address, Social Security number, and driver's license number. All volunteers must attend an orientation meeting that is offered quarterly to yearly. This meeting includes a briefing by the chief of security and training by the chaplain and/or volunteer coordinator. At these meetings, the specific "do's and don'ts" and dress code for the institution are reviewed.

Some institutions provide a "one-time" pass. A background check is required for such a pass, and an existing volunteer must act as an escort. A one-time pass provides access to a jail/prison to individuals who are gathering additional information for the parish-based ministry. A one-time pass can sometimes help prospective volunteers make a commitment to being on a ministry team. It can also be used when local churches want to bring in an entire choir at Christmas time.

STEP 6: SUSTAIN THE ONGOING JAIL/PRISON MINISTRY

A system for communicating with the Pastor and volunteers about the jail/prison ministry is essential. The coordinator of the Core Team should appoint one person to:

- Maintain a list of the names and contact information for the volunteers.
- Inform volunteers of training opportunities for different areas of ministry as well as ongoing spiritual-development activities that are offered through the Office of Prison Ministry and other jail/prison ministry organizations.
- Organize quarterly coordination/spiritual enrichment meetings to identify problems areas and address needed changes.

RESOURCES

The Archdiocese of Baltimore Department of Evangelization Office of Prison Ministry

www.archbalt.org

320 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

Phone: 410-547-5403 | Fax: 410-347-7896

Prison Fellowship

www.prisonfellowship.org/programs/reentry

44180 Riverside Parkway, Lansdowne, VA 20176

Phone: 703-478-0100

Angel Tree Program

For gifts to children of incarcerated men and women, visit www.prisonfellowship.org

44180 Riverside Parkway, Lansdowne, VA 20176

Phone: 703-478-0100

Broken Yoke Ministries

For sex abuse counseling, visit www.brokenyoke.org.

Kairos Prison Ministry International

www.kairosprisonministry.org

Kairos Inside ministry for incarcerated men and women; Kairos Outside ministry for women impacted by the incarceration of a family member or friend; Kairos Torch ministry for incarcerated youth.

6903 University Blvd., Winter Park, FL 32792

Phone: 407-629-4948 | Toll Free: 1-800-298-2730

St. Jerome Press

For Bibles, visit www.saintjeromepress.com.

9020 E 35th Street N, Wichita, KS 67278-0189

Phone: 1-800-845-2648

The Word Among Us

www.wau.org.

7115 Guilford Drive, Suite 100 Frederick, MD 21704-5234

Phone: 1-800-775-9673

Magnificat

www.magnificat.net. P.O. Box 822, Yonkers, NY 10702

Phone: 1-866-273-5215

Our Daily Bread

www.odb.org

RBC Ministries, P.O. Box 2222, Grand Rapids, MI 4950

Phone: 1-616-974-2210

Guideposts

www.guidepost.org

P.O. Box 5814, Harlan, IA 51593

Phone: 1-800-431-2344

WHERE ARCHDIOCESAN VOLUNTEERS MINISTER

Annapolis	Jennifer Road Detention Center
Baltimore	Baltimore City Correctional Center (Men) Baltimore City Detention Center (Women) Maryland Correctional Adjustment Center/Super Max Maryland Reception, Diagnostic and Classification Center Metropolitan Transition Center
Bel Air	Hartford County Detention Center
Cumberland	Federal Correctional Institution Western Correctional Institute
Glen Burnie	Ordnance Road Correct Center
Hagerstown	Maryland Correctional Institution Maryland Correctional Training Center Roxbury Correctional Institution Washington County Detention Center
Jessup	Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center Howard County Detention Center Howard County Detention Center (Immigration Inmates) Jessup Correctional Institution Maryland Correctional Institution (Men) Maryland Correctional Institution (Women) Patuxent Institution (Men) Pre-Release Unit
Oakland	Garrett County Jail
Parkville	Charles H. Hickey Jr. School (Juvenile Offenders)
Sabillasville	Victor Cullen Center (Male Youth)
Towson	Baltimore County Detention Center
Sykesville	Central Maryland Correctional Institution
Westminster	Carroll County Detention Center

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“ W H E N I W A S I N P R I S O N Y O U V I S I T E D M E ”

MATTHEW 25:36



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