



Update on Status of Catholic Prison Ministries

Mid-Atlantic Congress, Baltimore, MD February 15, 2019

USCCB Study - February 2018

- Response to the decline of the number of Prison chaplains and the current Pope's own visits to prisons in every country visited as well as his Holy Thursday practice of washing the feet of prisoners whether Catholic or not.
- It became clear that more support is needed for leaders (wardens) and staff who work in Corrections.
- Demographic studies are also needed to Coordinate, Promote and Share Lessons Learned.
- Changes are needed at all levels: parish, diocesan offices, state conferences, etc.*
- What is most needed is a *national ecclesial* approach; an integral approach to criminal justice activities, supervision and ministries is required.
- Education for all Catholics at the diocesan and parish levels is critical.
- Greater awareness needed so we understand the full continuum of care for all affected.
- Therefore, we need to expand Catholic ministries beyond pastoral care for Prisoners; more help beyond the Prison walls is needed in the communities affected.
- Advocacy Efforts should affirm connections to Catholic Social Teaching

National Discernment on Correctional Ministries - April 24, 2018 at Catholic University of America:

- This led to formation of a new coalition being formed: **Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition (CPMC)** to promote a national, ecclesial approach.
- Mission Statement:** *The Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition (CPMC) promotes Catholic ministry to all those affected by incarceration. Our goal is to recruit, train, support and empower those called to minister with the poor and marginalized. We hope to create a more just and merciful criminal justice system closely aligned with the ministry of the Church and the teachings and example of Pope Francis.*
- CPMC will create opportunities to share resources and best practices to strengthen the Church's mission to advance restorative justice that upholds the dignity of every human person.*
- The CPMC has a steering committee of over 33 known partners and an executive committee that coordinates efforts between gatherings.

Changing Focus is needed – based on Catholic Social Teaching. Movement is needed from:

- Focus on Punishment to a focus on Restoration
- Focus on "in prison" to focus on the "whole community affected" so that everyone affected by Mass incarceration can be better helped.

There is a growing agreement that this New National Approach must:

- Include both "Pastoral Care" and "Justice Advocacy" acknowledging their potential for conflict.
- These Advocacy Efforts will need to affirm their strong connections to Catholic Social Teaching.
- Ought to promote the "Restorative Justice" paradigm.
- Build networks that maintain the delicate balance of vertical authority and horizontal collegiality in the best tradition of "Subsidiarity."
- Establish ministries and networks that are built on the Church's mission not on personalities or special interests.
- Promote communication.
- Promote the sharing of best practices.
- Provide greater education for all Catholics: at the diocesan and parish levels in criminal justice issues and pastoral care ministry.
- Offer more coordinated pastoral care beyond the prison walls in the community.
- Develop standards, training, and resources for the many volunteers needed.

What has already been accomplished:

- Starting to see the silos break down.** For example, members of the steering committee of organizations gathered together again at the Dismas Ministry, Bridges of Hope Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 12 & 13th. See more at <https://dismasministry.org/>
- New Resources are being created:**
 - Creation of a National Formation Committee:** Looking at national standards and training beyond those for existing for professional chaplaincy to developing training for beginning and long-term volunteers and chaplains. These standards

will help in multiple settings beyond prison ministries to include: eldercare, hospitals, veterans' homes, etc. Already created multiple formation opportunities:

- **National Webinars:** @ <http://www.usccb.org/prisonministries>.
5 English and 1 Spanish language webinars focused on diverse topics, including
 - Ministry to the incarcerated inspired by the call of Pope Francis
 - Accompaniment ministry in prison settings
 - Resources from our colleagues at Dismas Ministry
 - Maintaining resilience in prison ministry
 - Ministry to the incarcerated (en espanol)
 - Recognizing and responding to trauma among prisoners and others in prison work
- **Video made available by our Dismas Ministry:** "Re-Entry: An Insider's Perspective" **given at** their annual prison ministry conference. Available @ https://youtu.be/8sgl41_lies?t=25. **This video features the testimony of two former inmates:** Curtis Gibson, a real estate developer and Vice President of the Board of Dismas Ministry and Joshua Stancil, the founder of Deep River Media and President of Connexus, a nonprofit prison ministry. They **offer a first-hand account of their encounter with God's mercy during their incarceration**, challenges and opportunities of the re-entry experience and their practical perspectives on how to respond to the needs of the formerly incarcerated who are seeking to re-enter society after their sentences have ended.
- **NACC – Conference Partners in Pastoral Care** - Continuing the Healing Ministry of Jesus in the Name of the Church @ Mundelein, St. Mary of the Lake Seminary May 31-June 3, 2019 in conjunction with the NALM conference. See more @ <https://www.nacc.org/conference> 6 hours session on prison ministry will be live-streamed.
- **Working to establishing strategic hubs around the country at universities** to promote better recruitment and formation of the next generation of lay ministers for this work, communication among those who do it and better sharing of resources and best practices.
- **New Website launched February 2** - need link here - and growing to improve communications and sharing of best practices. In initial conversations with funding resources as well as America Media and others.
- **Exploring new partnerships** as awareness about what is happening around the country rows.

An army of volunteers is needed; therefore, we are asking you to consider:

1. Where might you best help?
 - a. In Prison ministries?
 - b. In Community support ministries?
 - c. Support and Advocacy for these ministries?
2. What are the resources you know of in your own communities you can go to - to join in their efforts?

Thanks for participating in this workshop. If you would like to: learn more about the CPMC, register for future workshops, or send us further questions or comments. **Please email us @ Catholicpmc@gmail.com or go to the new website @ <https://catholicprisonministries.org/> to watch for ongoing developments.**

Please note that, as the website is developed, we hope with the help of volunteers and the efforts of our partners to offer links to all the websites and resources developed as they continue to be surfaced. Some partners who have joined in the conversation include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">□ American Catholic Correctional Ministries□ Catholic Charities USA□ Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC)□ Catholic Mobilizing Network□ Dismas Ministry□ Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities (FADICA)□ Jesuit Refugee Service□ Kehoe Correctional Consulting, LLC□ Knights of Peter Claver□ National Association of Catholic Chaplains□ National Council, Society of St. Vincent de Paul□ Order of Malta | <ul style="list-style-type: none">□ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Staff from three offices of the USCCB have been involved: Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations; Department of Justice, Peace & Human Development, and the Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service of the Secretariat of Catholic Education.□ The American Bible Society,□ and many more... |
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