



CELEBRATING THE HOLY YEAR OF MERCY Diocese of Portland ~ December 2015

VISIT THE IMPRISONED

A CORPORAL WORK OF MERCY

To “Visit the Imprisoned” means to be present to someone whose freedom of movement has been compromised, either due to some form of institutionalization (jail or medical facility) or physical impairment (wheelchair bound).

“...I was in prison and you visited me ...whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me!” (Mt 25:36-40).

OPENING PRAYER

Visit the Imprisoned

Blessed are you, Lord of Mercy. You know the secrets of all hearts. Prison walls come in many forms. Help us to be aware of those who suffer imprisonment, no matter what the form. Let them turn to you and live with hope. May we offer them comfort and care in your name. Amen.

READING

Isaiah 61:1-2

“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
release to the prisoners,
to announce a year of favor from the Lord
and a day of vindication by our God.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 130:1-8

With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to my voice in supplication.

R. With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

If you, O Lord, mark iniquities,
Lord, who can stand?
But with you is forgiveness,
that you may be revered.

R. With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

I trust in the Lord;
my soul trusts in his word
more than sentinels wait for the dawn.
Let Israel wait for the Lord.

R. With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

For with the Lord is kindness
and with him is plenteous redemption,
and he will redeem Israel
from all their iniquities.

R. With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

INTERCESSIONS

For all (men and women) who are incarcerated and separated from their families and communities: may we visit and support them in their time of restitution, rehabilitation and reconciliation, **we pray to the Lord...**

For all (men and women) who are serving time in our prisons and jails: may we work to preserve their dignity as members of the human family and support them with our prayers, **we pray to the Lord...**

For all (men and women) who feel “imprisoned” by the circumstances of their lives or by unjust laws and government: may our commitment to justice give them hope and help to free them, **we pray to the Lord...**

For the loved ones of those who are in prison, and for those who work in the correctional system: may our support of them help to reflect God’s unconditional love, mercy, and fidelity, **we pray to the Lord...**

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer for the Year of Mercy

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.

Show us your face and we will be saved.
Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money;
the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;
made Peter weep after his betrayal,
and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.
Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us,
the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman:
“If you knew the gift of God!”

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:
let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.
You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness
in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error:
let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy;
you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.

WORKS OF MERCY

Weekly suggestions for the faithful to consider

- December 8: Read and reflect on the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Why are we celebrating it? What does it mean to you?
- December 13: Participate in the Light is On. Invite a friend to accompany you.
- December 20: Pray for those who are imprisoned and for their family members.
- December 27: On vacation this week? Visit a friend, relative, or neighbor who may not get out of their home much or who is in a nursing home.

REFLECTION

Prison Ministry

By: Deacon Bob and Phyllis Curtis



Kairos Prison Ministry has been our ministry since 1997. With Bob's ordination to the diaconate in 2011, the ministry extended formally to the Maine State Prison in Warren. This was a perfect match for us, and so, we gave up our home in Limerick and moved closer to Warren.

After a few months, we began to realize that the men who were incarcerated were not unlike us. They had just made big mistakes in life. We saw so many broken, lost souls who just needed someone's attention and to feel God's unconditional love. We found that, as a team, we could share that with them. Some of the men had never heard the words "I love you" in their entire lives. Some heard them as small children but never again. They had no idea about the act of forgiveness.

Most came from broken or abusive homes. Some had never seen a husband and wife work together as a team or sharing God's love. This was new and strange for them. They wanted to know what we, as a couple, had and whether it was real. They need consistency, so it took a while for them to realize we were not going away. We would not abandon them as many had in their lives. We began to establish relationships with many of them. Some call us the mom and dad they never had. Some younger inmates call Phyllis 'Grammy.' In the mental health unit where we go every Monday, the prisoners are waiting at the door for us. We listen to them, pray with them, and do a Bible study with them. Many have come to believe that God loves them unconditionally and now know that they are never alone.

We have taught many to say the rosary and helped them to realize that Mary will intercede for them in times of need; for some prisoners confined to isolation, saying the rosary both takes up time and brings them comfort; for those with anxiety, saying the rosary helps them calm down or helps them to get to sleep at night.

We have found a whole new family and enjoy praying together. The prisoners have a praying circle that prays for anyone in need. They pray from their hearts, and it is so powerful. The prisoners have learned to pray for others. When Phyllis suffered a back injury, the prisoners prayed daily for her recovery. The doctors were surprised at how quickly and how well she recovered.

We minister to prisoners who have no religion; however, it has been particularly gratifying to have journeyed with several men who have felt called to embrace the Catholic faith. Through it all, we simply accept them for who they are and do not judge them. We do not focus on their crimes, but rather, we see each as a human being and one of God's special children. We simply try to live Matthew 25, in which Jesus said "I was in prison and you visited me." We just try to witness to that teaching. We get much more than we give. It has been a very rewarding ministry, for which we thank God every day.
