



Remember Me

"A National Catholic Outreach supporting the spiritual lives and rehabilitation of prisoners."

Understanding the Plight of the Prisoner



As a member of the Board of Directors, Fr. Frederick Zagone, SJ offers both spiritual guidance and practical advice for the leadership team of Dismas Ministry.

For more than 24 years, Fr. Zagone has served in various positions and is now University Chaplain at Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI.

Fr. Zagone previously served as director of development for the Raynor Library, assistant to the vice president for university advancement, and acting vice president for mission and ministry.

Before coming to Marquette to lead fundraising efforts for the Raynor Library project, he worked at Loyola University Chicago, Xavier University, and The University of Scranton, where he later served on the Board of Trustees.

"While I am not involved in prison ministry, I was asked to be on the Board because of my fundraising background and my connections within Milwaukee's Catholic community," said Fr. Zagone.

Serving others is central to our Catholic faith life, and there are many people who need support. "Not all prisoners are incarcerated in jails," Fr. Zagone noted. "Many are imprisoned by physical, psychological and spiritual demons. But we are called to care for prisoners of every type, and Dismas Ministry provides one of many ways to serve."

Acts of kindness, words of encouragement, and prayers go a long way in lifting up someone who is struggling.

"Of course, literally visiting the prisoner can be complicated and sometimes impossible. This was especially true during the pandemic, and still exists in many situations," said Fr. Zagone. "Getting involved with organizations like Dismas Ministry, or the Center for Restorative Justice at Marquette, can be beneficial to better understand the plight of the prisoner."

Rev. Frederick Zagone, SJ, is a Dismas Ministry board member based in Milwaukee, WI. Born and raised in the south suburbs of Chicago, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1982 and was ordained a priest in 1993. Fr. Zagone holds degrees from the University of San Francisco, Loyola University Chicago, and the Weston School of Theology. Fr. Zagone serves as the University Chaplain at Marquette University, where he is a loyal Marquette men's and women's basketball fan.

Voices of Prisoners

"I want to thank your ministry for everything that you do for us inmates who are trying to grow spiritually. We sometimes lose faith. I know I do. But my faith only grows stronger when it is tested. I am still learning. I am looking forward to receive other materials from you. Thank you for your services. God Bless You."

~ Jule H., a prisoner

From the Chaplains

"I have offered 'Pray in the Spirit' prayer book to the inmates for over 10 years and all find it to be very helpful in beginning a habit of daily prayer. I would guess that I have distributed over 300 copies and never have seen one left behind when the person was released."

~ Deacon Joe Twidwell

"I was in prison and you visited me" ~ Matthew 25:36



From the Director

Dear Friends,

Depending on where you live, the winter months can be dark and cold. This, coupled with feelings of loss or isolation, makes moving through the season very difficult. I know. This winter has been challenging for me since my sister Tracy passed away in December.

My sister's death was unexpected. It's been hard to get my bearings in the wake of this loss. Through this time of mourning, however, I'm reminded of these basic facts: Everyone is vulnerable. Life is a precious gift. Be open to both give and receive grace.

From its humble beginnings, Dismas Ministry has served the imprisoned – the most vulnerable because they are so marginalized. We serve people who have made mistakes but whose lives are precious. We give hope – to men and women who seek a new path filled with light and God's love and mercy. We support the spiritual lives of men and women despite what landed them behind bars. It is through God's grace that this bridge exists – for all of us – every season of the year.

Please consider a gift to Dismas Ministry today. And, please share the good news of our mission with others.

With gratitude,

Ms. Tyler Curtis
Executive Director

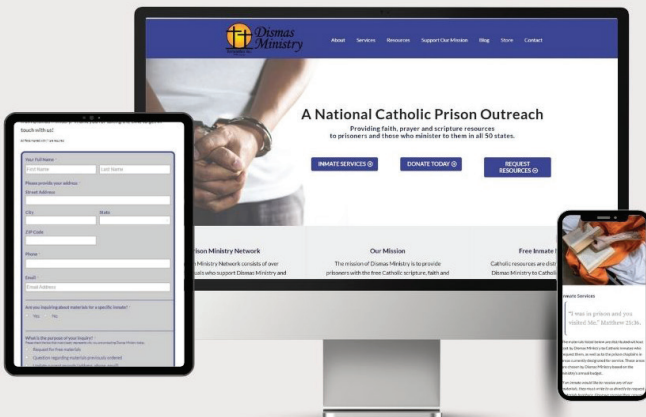
"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

~Matthew 25:40

Introducing the NEW DISMASMINISTRY.ORG

**Everything you need for your prison ministry.
Get inspired. Get connected. Get excited.**

A brand new website design.
Easy-to-read fonts, easy navigation, free offers,
and everything you've come to know and love.



Sharing inspiration, faith, support, and Catholic resources
for our brothers and sisters behind bars.

Easily find our most recent newsletter.

Take a few moments to view our Prisoner Art Gallery.

Read some inspiring stories from our Blog.

Check out our new History page, sharing the last 22 years of our ministry.

**Help us spread the LOVE by liking, sharing,
and commenting on our new look!**



Please consider supporting
the work of Dismas Ministry!
We give prisoners access to
free bibles, prayer books and
spiritual study materials.

Donate directly at

www.dismasministry.org/donate

**"The work of Jesus is,
precisely, a work of mercy,
a work of forgiveness and
of love! Jesus is so full of
mercy! And this universal
pardon, this mercy, passes
through the Cross."**

~ Pope Francis

A Journey of Faith: Toni R. Jordan

2023 St. Dismas Award Recipient

As a young girl growing up in St. Louis, Missouri, Toni was a model student in the Catholic schools she attended through high school. The youngest of four children, she was well loved and cared for by her parents and older siblings.

But, when she was 14, Toni started experimenting with marijuana and alcohol with neighborhood kids. This well-kept secret eventually led her away from the days of academic success at Bishop DuBourg High School. "I was living in two different worlds," said Toni.

In the mid-1980s, with two young daughters in tow, Toni discovered crack cocaine. "It was this drug that took me on a nice, long, roller-coaster ride," she explained. Throughout the next several years, Toni was in and out of treatment centers, and shoplifted to support her drug habit.

On April 6, 2004, she left her children in her husband's care, and began a seven-year prison sentence. An addict for more than 20 years, Toni knew hardship and struggle from her days of living on the streets. Toni's life focus changed when, just 10 days into her prison sentence, her mother died.

It was the wake-up call she needed to choose a different path for herself.

**"God, I have
got to be that
woman you
put me on this
earth to be."**

"I had hit rock bottom. It was my mother dying that woke me up. I had to stand my ground and declare 'God, I have got to be that woman you put me on this earth to be. I have to do it.' It was time to get my life back on track," said Toni.

In prison, she began going to church. "I always had a faith and it grew while I was in prison," she explained. "But, I had to trust in God to care for what I couldn't do. I had to lean on God to watch over my children."

Toni made good use of her time behind bars. She attended addiction support groups and parenting classes and learned she was not alone. Other female inmates had walked a similar path. She served 30 months of her sentence and was released in October 2006. As she prepared to reunite with her daughters, she was afraid of how they were going to accept her. It was a time of transition, but they got through it. Today, Toni revels in the strong relationships she has with her five adult daughters, and treasures time spent with her seven grandchildren.

With her family's support, Toni planned to serve women in prison who could benefit from her experience. "I went back to prison, but not as inmate #87383. I was determined to walk with and help other women," said Toni. She estimates about 95 percent of the women she works with are battling some kind of addiction and mental health issues.

Toni currently serves as the Women's Support Coordinator for Criminal Justice Ministry (CJM). Since 1979, CJM has improved the greater St. Louis area by supporting and empowering individuals, families, and communities impacted by incarceration. CJM offers services to incarcerated individuals and provides reentry programs for those returning to the area.

Between giving in-person and virtual presentations, Toni shares her story with a wide audience, speaking to elementary, high school and college students, and with incarcerated women and men across several counties.

"I always tell people preparing to be released 'have a plan and just be ready.' There is a team of people who want you to be successful," said Toni. She adds that when family support is lacking it can make one's transition more difficult.

Those involved in prison ministry can and do shine a light on the needs of inmates and all those impacted by their incarceration. "Education is key," said Toni. "We made mistakes, but we aren't bad people. Recovery is possible. And, for me, I needed to go back in and give my sisters hope. I couldn't imagine being anywhere else."

Congratulations to Toni R. Jordan on being named the 2023 St. Dismas Award recipient. Toni will be presented with the award on Thursday, April 13, 2023 at her home parish, St. Vincent de Paul, in St. Louis, Missouri.



**Toni R. Jordan,
2023 St. Dismas Award Recipient**



Dismas Ministry

PO Box 070363

Milwaukee, WI 53207

www.dismasministry.org

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #5011
MILWAUKEE, WI

A newsletter published by Dismas Ministry,
a national Catholic outreach for inmates, victims, their
families, those released from prison, and the community.

DISMAS MINISTRY is registered as a nonprofit
corporation in the State of Wisconsin, and listed in the
US Catholic Directory as a religious, tax-exempt,
501(c)(3) organization. All gifts are tax deductible.

Follow us on social media

-  **Facebook.com/dismasministry**
-  **Twitter.com/dismasministry**
-  **Instagram/dismasministry**
-  **Pinterest/dismasministry**
-  **YouTube.com/user/dismasministry**
-  **LinkedIn.com/company/dismas-ministry**

Volunteer Spotlight: Bringing the Hope of Christ

Susan Federman is the newest member of our team and faithfully volunteers every Wednesday. Susan is responsible for managing our large work room – HOPE – where she prepares packages for prisoners and chaplains. And, she has developed an inventory management system and procedures to ensure best practices within our fulfillment center.

A member of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps® (IVC), she has volunteered with a variety of agencies in the greater metro area. IVC volunteers, like Susan, serve one or two days per week, 10 months per year, and come from a wide variety of backgrounds and professions.

Recently, Susan was invited to reflect on her experience, so far, with Dismas Ministry:

Q: What do you like most about your ministry experience?

SF: I have met great people who are very dedicated to the ministry. I have felt encouraged to bring ideas to improve efficiencies in the work room and that has been fun.

Q: What brings you the most joy – in serving prisoners and supporting chaplains – in helping provide Catholic scripture, faith and prayer resources to those on the margins?

SF: The imprisoned may be the most marginalized group of people because, in general, there isn't much compassion for them. So, it brings me joy to be able to serve them and play a small part in bringing them the hope of Christ.

Q: What would you say to encourage others to learn more about “visiting the prisoner” through Dismas Ministry?

SF: In the past, whenever I heard a homily on the Corporal Works of Mercy, in my mind, I skipped “visit the prisoner.” I never thought there would be a way for me to serve the imprisoned, but Dismas Ministry has changed that. If anyone has felt the same way, here is a great opportunity to serve the prisoner.

We are grateful to partner with Susan and the IVC in helping carry out the mission of Dismas Ministry!

To learn more about volunteer opportunities with Dismas Ministry, please contact Mission Coordinator Delisa Person at 414-410-4318 or delisa.person@dismasministry.org.



Susan Federman