



CHAPLAIN'S *report*

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS *In service to One. In service to all.*

LEARNING THE FAITH, LIVING THE FAITH ♦ 1 COLUMBUS PLAZA, NEW HAVEN, CT 06510-3326, USA

Lord, When Did We See You in Prison?

The below excerpt originally appeared in the December 2014 issue of Columbia, in an article by Christina Gray, a reporter for Catholic San Francisco, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

Despite its medieval appearance and echo-filled interior, San Quentin State Prison's "death row" is no cathedral. It's a five-story human warehouse of lost hope squatting on the rocky shores of San Francisco Bay. The words "Condemned Row," painted in black Gothic script over the front door, serve as a reminder of this reality.

Nonetheless, hope is something that Jesuit Father George Williams, the California prison's Catholic chaplain, has to offer men currently condemned to death for their brutal crimes. Approximately 125 of the 750 maximum-security inmates wait for their turn to attend one of the two Masses offered here each week. Up to 18 at a time shuffle in restraints to the "chapel," a windowless old shower room retrofitted with heavy metal caging and six rows of bolted down benches.

Dressed in both priestly vestments and a Kevlar vest, Father Williams, 56, looks out at his congregation from within a padlocked metal cage of his own, a little larger than a phone booth. The men, many scarred and pale, are silent as they gaze at the consecrated host lifted into the glare of the florescent bulb overhead.

Father Williams said it's at this point in the Mass when he often imagines the light of Christ streaming forth from the host, illuminating the darkness of death row and the souls within.

"When I raise the host I don't see heinous murderers standing in front of me, I see human beings," he said. "If his body was not given up for them, too, then what difference would our faith make? What a gift I have been given to be able to bear witness to the mercy of Christ embodied in this sacrament in such a dark place."

Whether priests, deacons or laymen, there are thousands of trained Catholic prison ministers and volunteers who share the privilege of bearing Christ's light to incarcerated communities throughout the United States. And many of them, like Father Williams, are Knights of Columbus who manifest their commitment to charity and fraternity by heralding a message of hope to those who need it most.

Ministry to prisoners is recognized by the Catholic Church as one of the seven corporal works of mercy grounded in the Gospel mandate of charity. In preaching about the Last Judgment, Jesus identified himself with those who are imprisoned: "I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:36). During his crucifixion, Christ ministered to the repentant

criminal on the cross (cf. Lk 23:43). And the Letter to the Hebrews reads, "Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment" (Heb 13:3).

Knights of Columbus serving in prison ministry also have a special model in their founder, Venerable Michael McGivney. In the spring and summer of 1882, Father McGivney was immersed in both parish responsibilities and the work of his fledgling Order in New Haven, Conn. He also paid daily visits to James "Chip" Smith, a notorious young ruffian, in New Haven's jail. Two years earlier, Smith had killed the chief of police during a drunken brawl and was sentenced to death for the crime.

For more than a year, Father McGivney was a faithful visitor and friend to Smith, counseling him back to the Church.

With Father McGivney's permission, a reporter from the *New Haven Evening Register* visited Smith the week before his execution, Sept. 1, 1882.

"The ministrations of Father McGivney and the Sisters of Mercy have given [Smith] the full consolation conveyed by strong and sincere religious faith," the reporter wrote. "He has lately had an unwonted animation of countenance and cheerfulness of spirits which can be accounted for on no other ground."

With gratitude to Father McGivney, who stood by his side, the repentant Smith assured his weeping mother that he was meeting a "happy death."

Nearly a century later, Father Williams first felt the call to religious life while growing up in North Haven, Conn., just a few miles away from where these conversations took place.

In 1987, at age 30, he left a career in the Air Force to become a Jesuit brother and chose prison ministry as an "experiment" at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution in Norfolk. It was there, while peering through a narrow slot to talk to a man in solitary confinement, that Father Williams said he "realized that Jesus was showing me his face."

Williams, now a member of Mother of Good Counsel Council 1078 in Andover, Mass., later chose to become ordained to the priesthood because of his experience with prison ministry. ... His job isn't to fix prisoners or undo the damage they have done. He doesn't proselytize inmates, but rather meets them where they are. "I offer them a path for healing their souls and making peace with themselves and with God," he explained.



A deacon distributes Communion to a death-row inmate at Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, Ind.

As a modern Catholic prison chaplain, Father Williams represents a minority in the United States. Only 13 percent of the 1,474 state prison chaplains that responded to the Pew survey identified themselves as Catholic. Nearly three-quarters of them are evangelical Protestants aided by a legion of lay volunteers.

The fact that Catholic inmates are more likely to drift away from the faith without a Catholic presence underscores the need for more Catholic prison chaplains, as well as the need for more lay volunteers to assist and supplement their work.

“I have some terrific volunteers — wonderful, dedicated people — but we’re not getting all the help we need in prisons,” said Father Harold P. Paulsen, a veteran prison minister and retired priest of the Diocese of Tyler, Texas.

For more than 20 years, Father Paulsen has focused on healing prisoners by helping them overcome inclinations to evil and crime through Christ. A longtime member of Palestine (Texas) Council 1323, the 83-year-old Boston native inherited the prison ministries of five Texas prisons and now zigzags the roads of northeast Texas for weekly visits to each facility.

“You see miracles every time you come,” said Father Paulsen, whose ministry consists of celebrating Mass and the sacraments, counseling and encouraging prisoners to educate themselves through spiritual and catechetical reading using materials such as those published by the Knight of Columbus Catholic Information Service.

“I get as much K of C literature as I can for every prison I go to,” Father Paulsen explained. “I have them study as much as possible, and then they discover the goodness of the faith and of God. Some of the changes are really dramatic.”

Since the Catholic Information Service launched a 10-part Faith Formation Home Study Course in 1947, more than half of the students have been inmates, including 51 percent of the 1,550 students currently enrolled.

In addition to the resources that the Order provides, there are many examples of Knights who have found the courage to volunteer for prison ministry themselves.

Emmett “Spike” Hawkins, a retired utility worker and member of Whitehaven Council 5062 in Memphis, Tenn., has been volunteering in prisons for nearly 20 years. After completing a Cursillo weekend, a three-day “short course in Christianity,” he began serving as a team member of Kairos, a modified version of Cursillo for the prison community.

Hawkins, 66, also serves with a group of volunteers at West Tennessee State Penitentiary, located 60 miles north of Memphis.

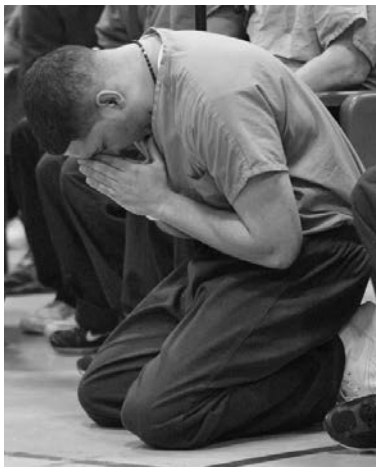
“We talk about what we believe and go over the *Catechism*,” he said, “but one of the main things is just to listen. It means a lot to the prisoners to express themselves to someone who cares.”

Deacon Bill Davis, director of prison ministry for the Diocese of Memphis and a member of Timothy J. Coyne Council 9317 in Cordova, Tenn., encouraged Hawkins to get more involved.

“He helped me to see there is such a need,” Hawkins said.

An ocean away, Deacon Joaquin “Kin” Borja, a longtime prison minister at Halawa Correctional Facility in Aiea, Hawaii, similarly convinced his fellow council members to “adopt” the facility and its 300 medium-security inmates.

“This is more than just a Catholic issue; it’s a human issue,” said Deacon Kin, a member of nearby St. Elizabeth Parish and Father Damien de Veuster Council 6906. Speaking to brother Knights who are thinking about becoming prison ministry volunteers, he says, “Pray about it. The love of God will overcome your fear.”



A prison inmate at Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia prays on his knees during Mass.

CNS photo/Sarah Webb, CatholicPhilly.com

Resources to Share With Prison Ministries

One of the simplest ways to assist prison ministries in your diocese is to help supply volunteers with spiritual materials that may be shared with those they visit. The Knights of Columbus Catholic Information Service currently offers the Faith Formation Home Study Course, which provides a series of readings on the basic beliefs of Catholics. Each lesson is accompanied by a lesson summary, questionnaire booklet and test sheet. When the completed test sheet is returned to us, it will be corrected and sent back to the student along with the materials needed for the next two lessons. This process will continue until the course is completed.

You can also separately order booklets for distribution. Prison ministries have shared that some of the more well-received booklets are:

- *The Forgiveness of Sins* (#108)
- *Virtues and Vices* (#124)
- *The Ten Commandments* (#300)
- *Prayer Time: A Collection of Catholic Prayers* (#309)
- *Becoming a Real Man of God* (#322)
- *Mary, The Mother of God* (#324)
- *St. Joseph: Our Father in Faith* (#328)
- *Christ: Lord and Savior* (#358)
- *Faith: Questions and Answers* (#390)
- *The Woman Who Changed the Face of a Hemisphere* (#4752)

Chaplains should encourage their council’s grand knight to contact the director of the parish or diocesan prison ministries to share details about the Catholic Information Service materials. When used in prison ministry, the materials are available free of charge.

To inquire about ordering CIS booklets or the correspondence course, use the contact form on the CIS page at kofc.org or write to CIS, PO Box 1971, New Haven, CT 06521-1971.



Father Tony Sagrado, pastor of Most Holy Trinity Church, celebrates Mass during a prison visit coordinated by Most Holy Trinity Council 5774 in Balic-Balic, Manila. After Mass, the council provided food, drinks and toiletries to the 68 inmates.

Monthly Suggested Activities

MAY

Offer to assist your council's grand knight in determining the eligibility of potential new officers, if needed. Because only practical Catholics in union with the Holy See are eligible, a grand knight may consult you about the Catholicity of potential new officers.

In honor of the 100 years since Our Lady of Fatima first appeared, lead the parish in a rosary novena to conclude on the memorial of Our Lady of Fatima, May 13. You could distribute Catholic Information Service's *The Message of Our Lady of Fatima* (#341) or *Mary, The Mother of God* (#324). For more information on these booklets, visit kofc.org/cis. Be sure to share with your brother Knights and parishioners the details of the indulgences granted in honor of the entire anniversary year.

Honor the mothers of your local community following weekend Masses on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 14. Invite your council to organize a Mother's Day flower sale and encourage your brother Knights to support local mothers in need by donating supplies to women's shelters or crisis pregnancy centers.

JUNE

Encourage the members of your council and parish community to celebrate the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, June 18. In honor of the feast, ask Knights to help distribute Holy Communion to the sick or homebound. Or, ask their assistance in contacting local hospitals' chaplaincy services, as well as the families of homebound parishioners, with details about your parish's distribution of Communion.

Work with council officers to hold a Father's Day Affirmation of Wedding Vows during or following all Masses celebrated June 18-19. Be sure to preach on the Church's understanding of marriage and fatherhood on the days leading up to the event. For more information, visit kofc.org/domesticchurch.

Encourage fathers in your community by sharing the resources provided by Fathers for Good. Fathers for Good addresses the main concerns facing men: faith, family, finances, the domestic church, love and marriage. For more information, visit fathersforgood.org

Mark the feasts day of Sts. Thomas More and John Fisher, who were imprisoned and eventually killed for their faithfulness to the Church's teaching. In honor of the saints, lead your council members and parishioners in praying for those who are imprisoned. Encourage your parishioners and brother Knights to consider volunteering in prison ministry.

Celebrate the solemnities of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 23. Offer to bless images of the Sacred Hearts for families to display in their homes.

JULY

Support your council's newly elected officers and appointed program chairmen and directors as the fraternal year begins.

Celebrate the upcoming holidays of Canada Day and Independence Day with Masses of thanksgiving. During your homily, reflect on the importance of religious freedom, including topics such as:

- The importance of praying for national leaders, especially that they follow political practices that protect all human life, uphold religious freedom and safeguard families.
- The example of the saints and holy people who have lived on North American soil, such as Kateri Tekakwitha and Junípero Serra, whose feast days we celebrate in July. For details on their lives, please visit usccb.org.

Support brother Knights as they prepare for special events in the new fraternal year, including Knights of Columbus Family Week (Aug. 7-13).

BEST PRACTICE OF THE MONTH

Prison Ministry Shining a Ray of Light Amid Darkness

"In fidelity to the example of the Master, it is vitally important for the Church today to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear. The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded." — *Evangelii Gaudium*, 23

Catholic prison ministers and volunteers are privileged. They bring the message and mercy of Christ to people who are desperately in need of his mercy, love and forgiveness.

Many people might be intimidated by ministering to convicted felons, but not Knights in the Diocese of Venice, Fla. Of the 150 volunteers serving in the diocese's prison outreach, many are Knights. They distribute Catholic Information Service materials to inmates in nearby facilities, offering them opportunities to participate in the 10-part Faith Formation Home Study Course. The course and other CIS materials are well-received by the inmates, who are also given the opportunity to attend a Mass celebrated each week by a chaplain volunteer.

Bob Hiniker, co-coordinator of the outreach program, shared his gratitude for the Knights of Columbus materials, saying they are popular among inmates and that many of the inmates who regularly attend the services are serving life-sentences. For the other inmates, he hopes to create a spiritual and community program through which support can be given after their release.

"It's so important that they have that. But that's more challenging. It takes more volunteers," he explained. "We're working on having someone at each Catholic church in the diocese — to make them feel welcome."

Chaplains should consider personally talking to the men in their councils about the important need for such ministry, both within the prisons and without. A good practice is to invite your brother Knights to read *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*, the USCCB's statement on the issues of crime and justice in the United States. The statement, available at usccb.org, offers suggestions for actions that may direct those involved in prison ministry.

Of course, not everyone can volunteer on an extensive level, but there are many means of participating in prison ministry:

- Raising awareness about prison ministry among members of the parish and community.
- Supplying faith formation materials, such as those from Catholic Information Service, for distribution to inmates. Contact your local diocese for information about which existing prison ministry program might be interested in such materials.
- Helping coordinate Communion services at prisons that currently have no Catholic chaplain.
- Sponsoring programs for the children and spouses of inmates. Many dioceses run programs that offer children a way to stay in contact with their parents, allowing for greater healing, forgiveness and the ability to maintain healthy relationships.
- Volunteering at transitional housing centers, offering lessons in skills that will help formerly incarcerated persons transition back into the community.

Please note that transitional housing centers and correctional facilities require training for volunteers. For information, please contact the current ministries programs in your diocese.



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1 Columbus Plaza, New Haven, CT 06510-3326

Knights of Columbus Prayer of Entrustment to Our Lady of Fatima

This May, the Church celebrates the canonization of Blessed Francesco Marto and Blessed Jacinta Marto — two of three shepherd children who received miraculous visions in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. In honor of this event, we welcome all chaplains to lead their councils in the below prayer composed by Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori.

With filial love, we address you, O Mary, Our Lady of Fatima.

We, the family of the Knights of Columbus, come to this place hallowed by your apparitions a century ago, O woman clothed with the sun.

To you and to your maternal love we entrust our beloved Order.

Through you, O Mary, God's only Son assumed our human nature so as to redeem us of our sins. Through your maternal love, Jesus entered the world to show us the Father's love and to reveal fully our human dignity. Look upon us, O Mary. Pray for us sinners that we may open our hearts to the message of Fatima by turning from sin, doing penance and praying for peace in our troubled and violent world.

By your loving example and intercession, may we be confirmed in the Gospel principles of our Order.

O Mary — through whom Jesus, the very incarnation of the Father's love, came into the world — pray that we may be strengthened to live the principle of charity.

O Mary, through your Son the enmity of Satan was crushed, help us to live the principle of unity for the good of the Order, the Church and the world.

O Mary, whose love for your children is so evident in this holy place, help us to be strengthened in our fraternity in service to one and in service of all.

O Mary, assumed into heaven, pray that we may safely journey to our true homeland in heaven by living the principle of patriotism and striving to build a civilization of love.

To you, O Mary, we entrust our Order — every Knight, every family member, every activity — that we may be pleasing in the sight of your Divine Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.