

*CCDA
For Staff Orientation in Prison Ministry*

**Catholic Charities
Diocese of Arlington
Prison Ministry**

What it is:

It is a pastoral care where the Christian Community participates in the healing ministry of Christ.

It is primarily focused on offenders who are locked in, offenders who are released, their victims, the families of both.

It is basically, a ministry of presence, witnessing to gospel values and the Church's social teachings on the sacredness and dignity of human life.

Its greatest challenge is to walk alongside these youths, adults, and the aged And to accompany them in their everyday experiences of rejection, isolation, separation, loneliness and even hopelessness.

It is also to accompany their victims and their families as they seek healing for their pain and loss caused by the crime inflicted on them.

To minister to the prisoner is to be present to those who are wounded and suffering.

It is not to excuse the crime and wrong they have done.

It is to visit them because they are children of God and loved by Him.

To minister is to listen and respond to them as Christ related to everyone in His time, Jews & Samaritans, the good and sinners alike.

- To minister to the incarcerated is to listen and respond to the words of Jesus:
“Come you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; stranger and you welcomed me; naked and you clothed me; sick and you cared for me; in prison and you visited me....”Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did it for me.””

- **To minister to incarcerated is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Lk. 4:18-19.)**

Who are these people we are ministering to?

- They are men and women from our communities, our families, our churches, schools and neighborhood.
- They are our fellow human beings, our brothers and sisters who have forfeited their freedom through wrong choices.
- They are not a collection of criminals, though they have committed crimes, they are unique persons, created in the images of God and loved by Him unconditionally, like every one of us. Majority of them have backgrounds of child abuse, manipulation, addiction, deprivation and neglect.
- They come from broken, dysfunctional, immature, violent and oppressive families and environments. Most of them have never experienced respect and unconditional love.
- They have very low self-image, very inferior and mostly angry.
- They have hardly finished high school for lack of opportunity.
- They are the troubled youth, young children at risk, mentally ill. They are the minorities; they are those in life sentence. Those in death row.
- They are the people who could not afford bail.
- They are the rejects of society, like the lepers of old.
- They are also the victims of crime that are experiencing their pain and loss, waiting for support and healing.

Some Statistics

- At present, about 2.3 million is the approximate number of incarcerated men, women and youth in the United States at any given time.
- Arlington Diocese has 28 facilities
21 jails (14 adult jails, one jail has 1,400, three has about 800 and the rest are much smaller.) and 7 juvenile detention centers
7 prisons, two prisons have population from 1200 to 1400 and the rest varies from 32 to 200 and more.

One men prison and one women prison in the Diocese of Richmond are also being served by our prison ministry in Arlington through KAIROS.

- Active prison ministry volunteers in Arlington Diocese at present: 160 lay and clergy.

Volunteer Opportunities for Prison Ministry
Catholic Charities
Diocese of Arlington

- Pastoral Activities:** Pastoral Counseling that leads to prayer, faith sharing, bible study, catechetical instructions.
- One-On-One Visitation:** Interaction with juvenile or adult offenders in one-to-one environment that leads to mentoring or tutoring.
- Liturgy Participation:** Mass, Confession, Communion Service or liturgy of the Word.
- Community Outreach;** Dispelling public ignorance about the criminal justice issues such as restorative Justice (Refers to an approach to criminal justice which recognizes that crime affects not only victims but also the community and the offender. It offers the possibility of reconciliation between offender and victim, offender and society, restitution of victims to society and eventual restoration of the offender to society as a productive and contributing member.)
- Legislative Advocacy:** Contacting state and national law-makers and executives; contacting judges/attorneys.
- Victims' Support:** Stand with them in their search for healing and genuine justice.
- Family support;** Especially for the children of offenders.
- Crime Prevention:** Dealing with school drop outs, gangs, media violence etc.
- Transitional Support:** Release follow-up. Helping at new connections, job-seeking and housing.
- Prayer Ministry.** Organize prayer groups in the parish or in school.
- Vigils During Executions** Join or organize groups from your parish or community to pray for the person and families of the person being executed.

Volunteer Opportunities for Teachers students:

- Say a special prayer for the incarcerated, their families, their victims and all who minister to them.
- Volunteer in the juvenile detention centers as tutors or mentors.
- Provide assistance to children of the incarcerated at Christmas time. Angel Tree of Prison Fellowship (Call 1-800866-230-0197 Or 1-866-794-2435)
- Support families and children of incarcerated parents. Join Virginia CURE (703-765-6549)
- Join Catholic Advocacy.
- Support “Messages from Mom and Dad Project” that tapes two-minute messages from incarcerated women and men to their children for Christmas, Mothers and Father’s Day, (Contact Carolyn leCroy at Clwitva@aol.com or 757-587-3721)
- Bake cookies for KAIROS retreats (contact: Sr. Connie Parcasio, SNDS 703-841-3832 or cparcasio@ccda.net)
- Collect tooth brushes, toothpastes, deodorant, soap, socks, lotion, stamps, blank cards for Christmas, birthdays, get-well, mother’s day, father’s day or for any occasion. (Contact Sr. Connie at the same address above)
- School children can make personalized cards for Christmas, Valentine day, Easter, Thanksgiving for the jails and prisons. (Contact Sr. Connie at the same address above.)

What Catholic Volunteers are Presently Engaged:

Masses & Confessions in English & Spanish
Bible Studies for men and women in English & Spanish
Scripture Reflections (Sunday readings), Rosaries, Chaplets of Divine Mercy
Mentoring and Counseling
Pre-GED tutoring
KAIROS in Prison (Men & Women)
Advocacy
Vigils during Executions
Computer classes
English as a Second Language in coordination with Hogar Hispano
Crafts and Music
Gymnastics and Dancing
Sports

Collecting postage stamps

Collecting blank cards for Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, Fathers and Mothers' Day, and for all occasion cards.

Collecting Christmas bags (toothbrushes, toothpastes, lotions, deodorants, soap, shampoos etc.

Kids from confirmation classes make personalized Christmas cards with encouraging words from scriptures or simply from their own hearts.

Knights of Columbus collect thousands of Christmas cards that are distributed to the jails and prisons.

Contact for information: Sr. Constanca Parcasio, SNDS
703-841-3832 or cparcasio@ccda.net