

“When I was in prison, you...”

Prison ministry may not be a common undertaking in our panoply of ministries as Brothers, but it happens that two FICs have a serious interest in this.



Ordained **Br. Ted Letendre** volunteers to celebrate Mass every Saturday late afternoon for about 75 to 110 inmates of York County Jail, situated on the other side of the Town of Alfred. This opportunity, especially for the holydays of Christmas, New Years and Easter, is almost unique throughout the Maine prison system. It is a free service where the Brothers furnish the missalettes, hosts and wine as well as the liturgical books and vestments which he brings with him weekly.

This outreach began 10 years ago at the invitation of Sr. Theresa Couture, scim. Overcoming the intransigence of the Sheriff's Office a persistent demand for Catholic services from inmate Nicholas Dardeno – almost to the point of suing for this right – finally met with approval. Br./Fr. Ted makes himself available for consultation and the sacrament of reconciliation once or twice a week or whenever the jail Chaplain, Rev. Trent Boyd, gives him a call.

“There is a real need there for these “house calls”; these are the most marginalized individuals in our society. Inmates have said that the Saturday “church” service was the only “good” thing they had experienced during their incarceration. And, as fate would have it, a goodly number go from YCJ to our York County Shelter. Thus our relationship continues on the Notre Dame campus.” In addition Br. Ted encourages mail contacts during and after their stay at YCJ. This exchange of letters serves as a reminder of God's love with a promise of prayers for their success, their families, the victims of their crimes and for those working with the criminal justice system.

Ugandan **Br. Henry Monday** assists Br. Ted as liturgical reader. In addition, Br. Monday is a highly appreciated participant in Kairos Prison Ministry, an international Christian organization whose objective is to carry the love of Christ to prisoners motivated by Jesus' own words “when I was in prison, you came to see me” (Mt. 25:36).

Twice a year this group of several dozen volunteers organizes a weekend long Cursillo-style retreat at the Warren Maine State Prison. As a follow-up team members will travel once a month to Warren to hold a three hour Saturday morning reunion with past participants where prayers, scripture readings, worship singing and discussion take place.

Clint Daggeit, Buffalo native, was instrumental in bringing the Kairos program to Maine twenty years ago. Fortunately the present prison administration considers Kairos as a fitting ingredient to the rehabilitation work of the prison system. Clint considers Br. Henry a blessing to the entire program. “He is a natural leader of prayer and an effective table leader with meaningful testimonials and meditations.”

Tall Brother Henry who sports his white cassock attracts a number of the participants who “hang on his words”. He in turn is struck by the response of the 20 inmates who are most grateful for the opportunity to rediscover God's ever present unconditional love for them. “Give thanks to the Lord, for His love is everlasting.” The incarcerated individuals who wish to participate experience a deepening of their faith while preparing to re-enter the community with a transformed heart and mind.

A new logo was recently initiated fulfilling a request of the 2012 General Chapter for "a dynamic and eloquent logo that would become a common symbol for all of the Mennaisian Family. As an expression of unity in the congregation and its associates, the simple symbol expresses a branch with its leaves representing the international educational network established by the Brothers and their associates on the five continents (hence the colors). The D+S indicates how all is sourced in God Alone and rooted in the works of Fr. John Mary de La Mennais, works generously and selfishly sowed and maintained over 150 years for the welfare of youth in 26 countries.

