



“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” – Matthew 25:40

Jail or Prison... What is the Difference?

You may hear it called a jail, a prison, a correction facility, a correctional institution, a penitentiary, a restitution center, or a security facility. The names may be different from state to state, but understanding the difference and correct terminology as to how and where people are incarcerated can be confusing. In the state of South Carolina, the facilities in each of the 46 counties are called Detention Centers and are run by the county Sheriff's Office. This is where men and women are first brought when arrested. They are processed awaiting court action and will be held until a trial if they are not released on bail. Many people refer to these facilities as jails and there are actually many different level facilities when you include city jails and multi-jurisdictional facilities within a county. In South Carolina, if sentenced to three months or less, the inmate will spend their time in one of these county facilities. If the sentence is over three months, the South Carolina Department of Corrections determines where the inmate will spend their time while incarcerated, depending on the nature of the crime and sentence.

What people would typically think of as prisons are called Correctional Institutions. In South Carolina, there are three levels. Level 1 institutions are minimum-security for inmates with short sentences. Some have work-release programs as well. Level 2 institutions are medium-security institutions, and Level 3 are high-security institutions designed primarily to house violent offenders with longer sentences. Both the Level 2 and Level 3 institutions may have “prison industry” options in the facility that allow the inmates to work.

In addition, some larger municipalities have local jails where people may be detained until they are arraigned in front of a judge.

In some states, there are designated “re-entry facilities” within the prison system. Inmates are sent there as they near the end of their sentence to help them prepare to leave confinement and re-enter the community. In South Carolina, several of the Level 1 institutions are designed to help with re-entry, and there are also similar programs in some Level 2 and 3 facilities as well.

Information from this article, came from the SCDC website and the South Carolina Law, Code of Laws, Title 24.

Two Sides of Restorative Justice Ministry

Restorative Justice is the umbrella that includes ministering to men in women in the state's detention centers and correctional institutions, and the re-entry support that we can offer the men and women as they finish their time in jail/prison and attempt to return to the mainstream of society.

Serving the men and women in county jails or state prisons in South Carolina is sometimes an ecumenical experience and other times it can be specific to Catholics. This may depend on the facility or institution, or the specific program. But even if volunteers are in a facility to meet with Catholics, there can always be visitors or others interested in hearing what the Catholic Church believes. Volunteers who serve at county detention centers have to be reviewed and approved by that county's local sheriff's office. In the state correctional institution system, a volunteer goes through a criminal background check and is approved by the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC). Once approved, you can then approach the chaplain at any state institution for an orientation to the rules and guidelines for that institution. Typically the process takes approximately two months.

Re-entry support can be part of the work done at the institution and there are many groups that help with this. There are many other groups a volunteer could get involved with if interested, including: Hearts for Inmates, Magdalene House of Charleston, Alston Wilkes Society, SC STRONG, Battered But Not Broken, Angels Charge Ministry, Soteria CDC, Probation Parole and Pardon Services, Department of Health and Human Services, SC THRIVE, Goodwill Industries, Individual Volunteers providing Workshops, DEW, Vocational Rehabilitation, Catholic Charities, Jump Start, Men's Reentry Group.

The Catholic Church has a program set up at Manning Correctional Institution and Camille Griffin Graham call RENEW. You can download a brochure on RENEW at this link: <http://bit.ly/renew-brochure>.

All of these groups offer something different to the men and women in prison, but typically they include help with services ranging from resume writing, mock interviews, basic computer skills training, soft skills, and job search tactics. In addition, RENEW also assists with securing housing, obtaining an ID, etc.



One Volunteer's Story – Allan Yust

My introduction to Prison Ministry started when a friend convinced me to participate in a Kairos Walk. Kairos is a 4-day Christian-based program that is based on the Cursillo program in the Catholic Church. I have participated in 5 Kairos walks to date.

After my second Kairos walk, I became a mentor for one of the men incarcerated at Perry through Metanoia Prison ministries. Metanoia is a ministry that tries to prepare men for their release back into society by strengthening or teaching a Christian way of living, encouraging inmates to reconnect with family, and helping prepare the men for living outside the prison walls. We meet on the second and fourth Monday of each month for 90 minutes.

It is not always the case that the men at Perry in the Metanoia program will be released, as about 50% of the men are serving life sentences without parole. The focus in cases where the inmate has no hope of being released becomes more relational.

Many people have preconceived notions of men in prison. I'm not really sure what mine were, but what I found were men who were hungry for connection with people and especially people from the outside prison world. Some of the men had lost their families through death, and some because the family deserted them because of the crimes they had committed.

In my specific case, the man I was paired with has a life without parole sentence, so preparing him for life outside the prison walls was not something that could happen. In addition, his parents and siblings have all passed away; therefore, getting him to reconnect with family was also a moot point.

So, the only thing left to do was to form a relationship with him and encourage him to live in a Christian way. Well, what a surprise it was to find that Tom, my "mentee," was a practicing Catholic who was, from a spiritual standpoint, at least on the same level as me and in many ways much further along in his faith journey.

We have read and discussed several spiritual books, including *The Universal Christ* and *Falling Upward* by Richard Rohr, *Owning your Own Shadow* by Robert

Johnson, *The Book of Hours* by Rilke, *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St Francis da Sales, and several other books. Pretty high level stuff! He and many of the inmates at Perry are very intelligent men.

More importantly, we have formed a friendship that is much more than a mentor/mentee relationship. Over the past two years, we have developed a relationship that is based on mutual trust, friendship, vulnerability, and love. We mentor each other through our live's ups and downs. His life inside, and mine outside, the prison walls. Believe it or not there are a lot of similarities. We try to the best of our ability to become the best versions of ourselves spiritually, intellectually, physically, and emotionally.

I am able to talk to him on the phone and through email in the prison system. During the coronavirus pandemic, the prison has not allowed any visitors, so these forms of communication have been very heavily used. As this is being written, 50% of the yard is on lockdown due to coronavirus infection and is unable to use the phone/email system—my friend included.

The man I am paired with is a good man who made a mistake. He now tries to help as many men as possible survive and thrive in the prison setting. What a tall order that seems to be. He constantly exhibits "making the best of a bad situation" to me. Practicing one day at a time, staying in the moment, and doing the next right thing are traits that I have seen Tom exhibit on a regular basis. He has been an inspiration to me and many of the men at Perry. I try my best to incorporate the same attitude in my life outside the prison walls.

He has also introduced me to several other men in Perry through Mass on Thursdays. I now stay in contact with them as well. Again, good men who made unfortunate mistakes.

This ministry is likely not for everyone. The list of ministries anyone can practice includes: Feeding the hungry, providing drink for the thirsty, clothing the needy, welcoming the stranger, taking care of the sick, and visiting the prisoners. Small things that anyone can do. They are all service to God and our fellows. What I have found is that when I practice any one of these I am helping myself as much as the other.

Subscribe to *The Word Among Us for Prison*

Below is the link to request free monthly copies of *The Word Among Us* for use in jails and correctional institutions. If you want to sign up your institution, you should clear this with the chaplain first. You can request the number of English and Spanish versions you need for your institution. They can/should be sent directly to the chaplain to allow for distribution each month. This free monthly subscription is made possible through The Word Among Us Partners (Partners in Evangelism Inc.). Just go to <https://waupartners.org/request/request-prisons>.

Meet Gracie Ortiz – Associate Director, Restorative Justice Ministry



I moved to Greenville in August 2019, and I am amazed by all the wonderful people and the beauty in this part of the country. Having grown up in Corpus Christi, Texas, I have spent the last 20 years in Virginia, and I am happy to be serving in Restorative Justice Ministry for the Diocese of Charleston. I was first introduced to Prison Ministry in high school and began corresponding with an inmate. In college, a fellow student was on a Kairos retreat team and asked us to take an hour to pray for the men on the retreat. I was very moved by what he shared when he came back from the retreat at the correctional institution. Fast forward to 2020, I was going to give a talk at the Kairos women's retreat in Greenwood this past April before it was canceled due to COVID, and I am so impressed by how much thought and planning goes into these retreats.

I have visited both Perry and Tyger River Correctional Institutions. I attended the Mass at Perry last December celebrated by Bishop Guglielmone for five men coming into the Church. I was very touched by one of the interactions I had with one of the men. I was sitting with a gentleman who had just been baptized and he told me the following story: He said he had a major cardiac event a few days prior and had been rushed to the hospital. As a follow up, he had been scheduled for a doctor's appointment on the very day he was coming into the Church. He would have had to miss the Mass and celebration, and he related how upset the medical personnel were when he canceled his medical appointment as they were extremely concerned about the seriousness of his condition. He said "I wasn't going to miss this. I told them, I can get my heart right, but what good is that going to do if I don't get my soul right?" That said it all. His conviction was a great testimony about how much difference Prison Ministry makes in the lives of these men and women. We are here to show them that we all need the grace of God and each of us is capable of transformation. What a privilege it is to journey with these men and women!

An Inmate's Reflections — Remembering Volunteers from Inside

The second decade of my first Rosary each morning is for the priests and lay volunteers who have encouraged me and my family while I have been incarcerated. Soon I will "Max Out," finishing my 17 years or 85% of a 20 year sentence. One of the effects of the pandemic is that the South Carolina Department of Corrections has not allowed volunteers to come in for the last six months. This includes priests who say Mass for the Catholic inmates. While this isolation is understandable, it is not easy to have support and friendship taken away. It has caused me to reflect on the last 16½ years—the people who have come in and the lifeline they have been to my faith and sanity.

My first year of incarceration, the only volunteer for the Catholics was a local priest. This priest was serving his parish and two hospitals. Still, as overextended as he was, he always made us feel loved by God when he came through the prison gates.

My second year, I was moved to Perry Correctional Institution much closer to home. At the time, Father Gene Leonard came each Thursday to celebrate Mass. When he retired a 2nd time, we became the main focus of his ministry. Then Bob Dowd became our first lay volunteer and helped us establish a Catechism class on Fridays. Other volunteers were recruited, or were led, to help our small community. At 90, Father Leonard retired for a 3rd time and moved to Oklahoma to help his family. When Bob Dowd became ill, our community prayed for him. When he passed we mourned. Our volunteers represented us at his memorial service. Both men are proof that not all saints are canonized.

After Father Leonard left, our volunteers talked to the area parish priests, all of whom are already over-extended. Still, four priests volunteered to visit Perry in rotation, once a month being more manageable than one priest coming in every week. When I was transferred to Tyger River from Perry three years ago, the Catholic group at Perry still had Mass most Thursdays and Catechism on Fridays. I was richly blessed by the volunteers that came out over the years. If I tried to list the contributions of each volunteer it would be long, and my memory couldn't begin to recall all of their words of encouragement and overall commitment to keeping us balanced in our faith. But God has the list and he knows when "*I was in prison they visited me.*"

Three years ago, I was transferred to Tyger River Correctional Institution. At Tyger River we have been blessed with Father Michael McCafferty as our pastor. A more dedicated man we could not hope for. Our time slot for Mass is Friday mornings. Father McCafferty with his parish and its schedule still makes it out most weeks. If he cannot make it, Mark Pace our lay volunteer brings out Communion. Father McCafferty will still talk about being recruited by Father Leonard as a temporary fill-in that was 12 years ago!

John of the Cross wrote that each ministry has its own savior. What I got from that is each person feels useful and gains satisfaction from the ministry that the Holy Spirit has prepared them for. Not all Catholic volunteers come to Mass with us. Some participate in ecumenical ministries such as Kairos. Every volunteer is a blessing!

Looking for Ministry Support?

If you are beginning in this ministry or looking to enliven the offerings at your institution and don't know where to find ideas and resources, check out the Catholic Prison Ministry Coalition (CPMC) website. The CPMC promotes Catholic ministry to all those affected by incarceration. Their goal is to recruit, train, support, and empower those called to serve in this ministry. There are many resources on their website that can help both the beginner or an experienced volunteer. To the right, you see one section on the website that has a six-part video orientation to Prison Ministry. They have a webinar once a month on some aspect of Prison Ministry. They deal with serving both men and women in the prison system, as well as promoting resources for re-entry after time served.

The CPMC is a pretty recent development where a large number of organizations that were addressing issues related to restorative justice joined together to form the coalition. If you look at the partnership listed on their website, it has 26 different organizations that are connected through this coalition. It is significant that one of them is the United States Conference of Bishops (USCCB). The CPMC was created in 1998 and their website followed a few years later

with resources to help orientate people to the challenges and opportunities for working inside prisons or helping men and women who are re-entering the working world. The website has material that can be downloaded and shared with the incarcerated. One such download is a booklet written by and for people living in controlled units. This 94-page booklet, *Survivors Manual—Survival in Solitary*, can help the person incarcerated, or their family, to understand how to deal with the issues that come out of forced isolation, especial in the time of the pandemic.

You can download a handout to help the incarcerated go through the Stations of the Cross. There is information on the American Prison Ministry Apostolate Pen Pal Programs, Juvenile Ministry Resources, articles that can be printed out and brought/sent to the incarcerated, podcasts, radio recordings, and outlines on holding a regional conference for volunteers. There is no need to “re-invent the wheel.” Through the coalition, ideas from volunteers all across the country can be shared through posts so others can benefit from their efforts. As we hear about many things these days, “We are all in it together.” It just makes good sense to share best practices. Everybody wins.

The link to the CPMC is <https://www.catholicprisonministries.org/join-our-mission/>. At that website you also can sign-up for notifications of upcoming webinars. This is a resource that can help you recruit new volunteers and connect with other people committed to Prison Ministry.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [catholicprisonministries.org/resources#featured](https://www.catholicprisonministries.org/resources#featured). The page title is "Jail & Prison Ministry 101". The text on the page describes a pre-conference workshop at the 2019 National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) National Conference. It mentions that six video recordings cover fundamental topics and issues pertinent to persons involved in Catholic jail and prison ministry. The presenters are Fr. George Williams, S.J., and Fr. Dustin Feddon. Below the text are two video thumbnails: "Session 1: Pray - Spiritual Formation I" and "Session 2: Pray - Spiritual Formation II".

Finally, a Newsletter for Prison Ministry Volunteers in South Carolina

This is the first Restorative Justice newsletter for the Diocese of Charleston published in over 10 years. It is intended to support, educate, recruit, and highlight the efforts of Prison Ministry volunteers in order to grow our outreach throughout the state of South Carolina. It is distributed electronically free of charge, and will be published three times a year. If you have ideas to share in future newsletters or would like to be added to the distribution list, contact Deacon John Leininger at john@saclemson.org or by phone at 864-903-0050.

Deacon John Leininger is working to collaborate with volunteers from different institutions across the state. If you need help contacting a chaplain, getting the right paperwork to become a volunteer, recognizing the rules that allow for Communion or a Priest's Mass Kit, he can assist you.

If you would like to submit an article for our next newsletter, please send it to Deacon John and if possible include a photo. Include your contact information and whether you are a volunteer, visitor or family member for one of the state institution or one of the county detention centers.