



Orthodox ChristianTM
PRISON MINISTRY



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry an agency of
the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of
the United States of America.*

To all the Clergy and the Laity of the Holy Orthodox Churches in the United States:

Christ is in our midst!

The Hierarchs of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops have blessed the Sunday nearest the feast of St. Silas (the patron of prison ministry) to be **Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday** in all US Orthodox parishes.

In 2025, this occurs on Sunday, July 27th.

This is an incredibly important day of awareness for our ministry and we want to help you make the most of it by sending you the following resources in this packet:

- **A Sample Homily for Prison Ministry**
- **Bulletin Inserts**
- **Informational Brochure**

America's tragically high incarceration rate (1.8 million) means that—chances are—more than one parishioner has been touched by a person serving time in prison. As the national prison ministry of the Orthodox Church, Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) supports the unique spiritual needs of people in prison through longterm case management and provides resources and training to parishes and clergy, enabling them to offer local solutions and fulfill Christ's command to visit Him in prison.

But we can't do it without the support of our parishes.

Please help us fulfill the commandment of our Lord to visit Him in prison (Matthew 25:36) by participating in this vital day of awareness.

After passing a tray for the ongoing work of your parish, **we humbly ask that you please pass a second tray on Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday, July 27th**, and send these generous gifts to:

**Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry
276 5th Avenue
Suite 704-3183
New York, NY 10001**

If you have any questions or comments, please reach me at: npetrogeorge@theocpm.org

In Christ,

Nicholas Petrogeorge
Executive Director

PRISON MINISTRY AWARENESS SUNDAY

Sample Homily

July 27, 2025



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+In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. Glory to Jesus Christ!*Glory Forever!*

In today's Gospel reading, we encountered two blind men crying aloud to Christ, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." And then Our Lord asks these men such a profound question in response to their pleas: "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they say, confessing not only the power of Christ, but His rightful place as Lord. They know Christ can heal them, because they know who Jesus is: Lord, Son of David, Son of God.

This Scripture passage is one of our Church's key texts in Her teachings on the Jesus Prayer, for these men were not crying out for Jesus to have mercy on them just once, but continually. They were begging to be healed.

Surely, in these blind men, the Gospel is calling us to see our own spiritual blindness, to remind us that in moments of darkness, we too will benefit from crying out to the Lord: *have mercy!*

And who hears the cry? It is Christ himself. As a Church and specifically as clergy, we know that healing can be most powerful when there is someone to physically be there, to embody love, to hear the plea. This Gospel passage compels us to be ready to listen to the cry of another as much as it reminds us to not be ashamed to ask for help in a moment of darkness.

The Hierarchs of the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops of the United States have appointed today as **Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday**, the Sunday nearest the feast of St. Silas, the patron saint of prison ministry. Prison ministry is not something most of us think about often, and so today we are encouraged to consider how we might serve those in prison.

Brothers and Sisters, however unknown, frightening, or off-limits the prison system might feel to you, I can assure you this: there are so many men and women in prison right now,

so many of God's own children, begging to be healed. The United States has reached a truly crisis level of incarceration with over 1.8 million people incarcerated. The traumas these men and women have caused, the traumas they have often suffered before their crime, and the traumas they witness now behind bars are all tragedies in need of Christ's healing touch.

This is why the Assembly of Bishops created Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry, or OCPM. Our Church follows Christ's example: we are here to hear those crying out.

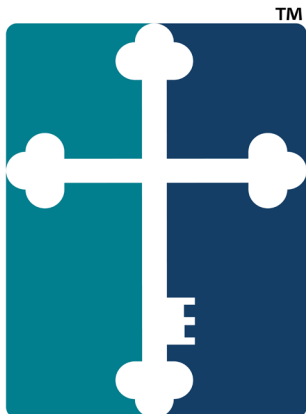
Last year alone, 235 people in prison reached out to OCPM to begin their journey toward Christ and His Church, adding to the more than 1,200 people in prison OCPM serves each year. It can be hard to believe that people change. But they do. Miracle stories abound in prison ministry. Formerly suicidal inmates have now dedicated themselves to a prayer rule. Former gang leaders are excitedly teaching others about the faith they have gained. One man in the Mental Health Unit of his facility stepped out of his cell, took the hands of the priest who had been praying for him for months, and was given his first prayer rope.

The word is spreading. Personal testimonies of God's power and the love that dwells in the Orthodox Church are going around in prison facilities across the United States; OCPM continues to serve more and more people every year, because people in prison are asking for them. They are ready to be healed.

But Brothers and Sisters, let us not forget Our Lord's question from the Gospel reading today: "Do you believe I am able to do this?" Thousands of people in prison are saying "Yes, Lord." But what about us, what about you and me? Do you believe that Christ is able to make the blind see? Do you believe that Christ is able to heal those in prison, just as He is able to heal you? Do we honestly believe this?

I hope we can say together, "Yes, Lord." May we not hinder the healing Christ desires to bring to people in prison. May we be more like the blind men, more like people in prison, asking for Christ and His Church. And may we believe with our whole hearts that *no place, however far from us today, even as far as a prison cell, is too far for Christ to reach.*

To Him be all glory, honor, and worship to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.



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WHO
WE
ARE

Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry is the national prison ministry of the Orthodox Church in the US and an agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops.



OUR MISSION

Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry serves those who are incarcerated and their families, and provides resources, training, and support to our ministry partners so that lives are transformed and God is glorified.

WHAT WE DO

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT - Through our Correspondence Ministry, OCPM case managers maintain relationships with Orthodox and non-Orthodox prisoners over years and decades at a time.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN PRISON MINISTRY - We rigorously train Orthodox clergy and laity through a one-year academic program, in partnership with St. Tikhon's Seminary.

CHURCH PROGRAMS - We train, inspire, and partner with churches to establish parish-based prison ministries and implement OCPM's religious education and spiritual formation programs, like Early Christian History, Stories of Faith: The Parables of Jesus, and the PenPal Ministry.

STORYBOOK CONNECTIONS™ - Storybook Connections™ is an OCPM program that enables volunteers to enter a jail to record incarcerated parents reading a storybook for their child. The recording along with the book is then sent to the child, who now has a tangible connection to his or her parent.

YOUR 2024 IMPACT

1,268 people in prison who corresponded with OCPM

236 new case files of people in prison opened

55,059 spiritual books, study courses, Bible studies, daily readings, and spiritual reflections sent

93 Orthodox parishes participated in OCPM Church Program

517 prison facilities served by OCPM

CONTACT US

276 5th Avenue, Ste. 704-3183
New York, NY 10001

(347) 868-6957

LEARN MORE

WWW.THEOCPM.ORG





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PRISON MINISTRY AWARENESS SUNDAY

Did you know that there are Orthodox Christians practicing their faith in prison? Or that there are prisoners who are ready to repent of their crimes and embrace the Orthodox Church? **Who will minister to them?**

As the national prison ministry of the Orthodox Church, Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) supports prisoners' unique spiritual needs through longterm case management and provides resources and training to parishes and clergy, enabling them to offer local solutions and fulfill Christ's command to visit Him in prison. As a result, families are reunited, marriages are healed, and thousands of incarcerated men and women have a new sense of peace and restored order in their lives.



4,845

TOTAL PRISONERS MINISTERED TO

55,059

BIBLE STUDIES, DAILY READINGS, AND
SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS SENT IN 2023

*"I was in prison,
and you visited Me."*

Matthew 25:36

LEARN MORE AT theocpm.org

PHONE: +1.347.868.6957



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