



Orthodox Christian[™] 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 2026, this occurs on Sunday, July 26th.

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 26th**, 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

By The Rev. Fr. Michael Pejovic
July 26, 2026



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PRISON MINISTRY

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

In today's Gospel reading, we find our Lord in a deserted place. The great multitude of people have followed Him. They are exhausted, far from home, and they are hungry.

The disciples, overwhelmed with the situation, offer what seems to be a very reasonable and practical solution. They say to Christ, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food."

The disciples' meager five loaves and two fish seemed inadequate for a task of feeding five thousand. Faced with a problem far greater than themselves, they chose the logical solution, saying, "Send them away." It is a deeply human, yet flawed, reaction to a challenge that feels too big, too complicated, and too demanding.

But Christ turns to His disciples and says instead, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

Today, across our parishes, we observe Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday. As we reflect on this vital ministry, the testimony of today's Gospel powerfully resonates with this ministry. In our modern society, there are few places more "deserted" than our prisons and jails. They are places of profound isolation, separation, and often deep spiritual starvation. Behind the concrete walls and razor wire, there is a multitude of men and women who are separated from their communities, from their families, and too often, from hope itself.

Toward those who have committed a crime, the tendency of our society is to echo the words of the disciples. "Send them away." And we do. We build facilities far from our

neighborhoods. We lock the doors, and it becomes comfortably easy to forget those people inside, far away from us, are still human beings.

The problems of crime, addiction, and brokenness on an ancestral, global scale feel too large, and our resources too small. We expect the system to handle them. Yet, Christ stands before us today, pointing toward that very prison, and tells us, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

When we look at the immense prison population, it is easy to feel exactly like disciples holding those five loaves and two fish. What are my prayers, what is my small donation, what is a simple letter of encouragement in the face of such massive darkness?

But look closely at what happens in today's Gospel. Christ does not demand that the disciples produce a feast out of thin air on their own. He simply asks them to bring what little they have to Him. Christ takes the five loaves and two fish. He looks up to the heavens, He blesses them, He breaks them, and He gives them back to the disciples to distribute. And the impossible becomes possible. Five thousand men, besides women and children, eat and are completely satisfied, with twelve baskets of fragments left over.

This is exactly the same miracle that happens in prison ministry, and that is why the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops created Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry, or OCPM. OCPM exists to bear the testimony of the miracles of God multiplying our efforts. OCPM refuses to send the multitude away. Instead, they work tirelessly to bring the light of Christ into the darkest of cells. They provide Bibles, prayer books, icons, and spiritual correspondence to men and women who are desperately hungering for truth, for forgiveness, and for the Bread of Life.

When we decide to support their work, or when they send a priest to visit a local prison to hear a confession or celebrate the Divine Liturgy, they are bringing their small loaves and fishes to Christ. And Christ takes that modest offering of time, resources, hopes and prayers, and He blesses it, and He multiplies it into saving grace. A single Orthodox Study Bible, sent to an inmate becomes a lifeline. A letter from a Prisoner Spiritual Support Manager becomes a beacon of hope in solitary confinement. A visit from a clergy member becomes a sacred encounter.

Brothers and sisters, our faith teaches us that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God, no matter how obscured that image might have become because of sin, trauma, or poor choices. Christ Himself identified so intimately with the incarcerated that He told us, "I was in prison and you came to Me." He did not say, "I was innocent and wrongly imprisoned, and you came to Me." He simply said, "I was in prison."

We cannot look away from the deserted places of our own time. Yet, practically speaking, most of us cannot personally walk into a facility to deliver a Bible, sit with brokenhearted, or offer a prayer of repentance. This is exactly why OCPM is so profoundly vital to the life of our Church. They go into the darkest, most forgotten corners of our society on our behalf. They are our hands, reaching through the bars to offer the Bread of Life. They are our voices, speaking words of forgiveness to those who have only heard condemnation.

But OCPM cannot do this sacred work alone. They rely entirely on the loaves and fish that we bring to them. On this Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday, I urge you to look at whatever resources you have and bring them forward. They need our fervent, daily prayers for the incarcerated. They need volunteers willing to write words of encouragement to men and women. And they need our financial support to continue printing materials, sending icons, and training clergy to safely enter these facilities.

Let us not succumb to the comfortable temptation to send the multitudes away to fend for themselves. Instead, let us bring our offerings to Christ by supporting the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry today. Trust that He will take your gift, bless it, and multiply it to perform the greatest miracle of all, the redemption and salvation of a human soul.

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



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 2025 IMPACT

- 722 people in prison who received spiritual support
- 228 new case files of people in prison opened
- 65,336 spiritual books, study courses, Bible studies, daily readings, and spiritual reflections sent
- 81 Orthodox parishes participated in an OCPM Church Program
- 357 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





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.



5,073
TOTAL PRISONERS MINISTERED TO

65,336
BIBLE STUDIES, DAILY READINGS, AND
SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS SENT IN 2025

*"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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