



Order of Malta

North American Prison Ministry Apostolate 2016-2017 Strategic Plan

Participating Associations:

- American, Canadian, Federal & Western

Mission Statement

Our mission is to promulgate the Gospel message that all of God's children matter and cannot be forgotten. We will compassionately demonstrate the hope that comes from our Catholic Christian faith and from God's love for those incarcerated. Through mercy we will demonstrate forgiveness and care for a better future for the formerly incarcerated. We will promote rehabilitation over punishment for those around us.

Vision Statement

- ❖ We share our faith in the Gospel and the mercy of Christ with the incarcerated
- ❖ We support those who struggle to return to free society by helping them to become reconciled with the world, their families and their victims
- ❖ We work for humane, effective and Christian treatment before, during and after incarceration
- ❖ We support the prison chaplaincy staff and volunteers who vigorously attend to the spiritual needs of the incarcerated

The members of our Order are small in number, but long in reach and connectivity both within and outside of the Catholic Christian community. We use these special gifts to educate for the compassionate treatment of all who are involved in the Criminal Justice system which include the victims of crime with a consistent commitment to their ultimate, eternal redemption – always treating them as human beings and the beloved Children of God that we all are.

Background

- *Creation of the Apostolate*

Initially each of the participating Associations had launched their own Ministries with the first one beginning in 2007. There was no formal interaction regarding prison ministry among the Associations of the United States until 2013.

- *Grand Masters involvement*

Early in 2013 the Grand Master asked the three United States Associations to work together on prison ministry which led to semiannual meetings which began with a prison ministry conference in 2014. This initiative worked particularly well, and since Canada had been distributing a U.S. publication that relationship led to an invitation to Canada to join our three Associations. The Grand Master's request has led to what today is a seamless operating structure known as the North American Prison Ministry Apostolate.

- *Genesis of the Strategic Plan process*

It became clear in 2015 that to operate most effectively and add value to our activity we needed a Strategic Plan. Thus at the March Annual meeting in Washington, D.C. an initial process was authorized. Subsequently each of the four Associations appointed steering committee representatives.

The Committee used the following four questions among its 9 lay members to develop ownership, focus and alignment:

- What got each of us interested in Prison Ministry (PM)
- What are the 2 to 4 things you like the most about PM
- What are the 2 to 4 things you like the least about PM
- What are 2 to 4 things that need to be improved

The first question is designed to provide a perspective of the motivation of each Board member. One consensus on the second was the recognition that prison ministry is a Christian response to the great need of suffering souls. A common response on the third question was the need for more member and prison Chaplain participation. Responses to the fourth question reflect a need to focus on re-entry-to-society initiatives.

Bob Fredericks, Apostolate Chair, simultaneously conducted a survey to identify how many members, Chaplains and others/volunteers we are now supporting. The current estimate is 1,200 to 1,400. He has also established that we are the largest Catholic outreach to the incarcerated in the world.

Strategic Plan Process

The 5 person Steering Committee has served its purpose and the full 12 person Board, as of 1-1-2016 will be these members:

- Eileen Bitten, DM-Western
- Roman Ciecwierz, KMOB-Canadian
- Steve Caron, KM-American
- Joe Feitelberg, KMOB-American
- Chair, Bob Fredericks, GCMOB-American
- Marion Glennon, DM-American
- Aleksander Johnston, Aux-Federal
- Patrick Kraft, KM-Western
- Vice Chair, Mike McGarry, KM-Federal
- John Santa, KM-American
- Andy Vissicchio, KMOB-American
- Vice Chair, Collins Whitfield, KM-Federal
- Chaplain, Fr. George Williams, S.J., ChM

The focus of the process is to develop and furnish a two-year draft plan for the four Association Presidents that will become a “living document” for the Apostolate. One or more Board members will take responsibility for the Actions outlined below to make this plan succeed. Future significant changes to the Strategic Plan will require the four Associations approval.

Strategic Plan Actions

- Strengthen the already effective working relationship of the involved Associations. Broaden Apostolate membership; regular communication with all Apostolate members using centralized and updated electronic contacts; semi-annual meetings; create unified message and disseminate such through a common Apostolate web-site (plus Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).
- Encourage increased membership participation through a letter from the Grand Master; distribution of an Apostolate Annual Report to all members (and Bishops); through the Grand Master seek an Apostolate meeting with the Pope; conduct Regional Masses **inside the walls** for Regional members.

- Expand the reach of our **inside the walls** rehabilitation program with distribution of more Bibles, Prayer Books, Prayer Cards and The Serving Brother; increase pen pal participation; explore the Apostolate's involvement in religious and civil education programs for the incarcerated such as Bridges to Life and/or that being conducted in the Angola Prison in Louisiana; expand and develop programs like "Get on the Bus" that bring families together
- Identify existing **re-entry to society** programs such as Dismas Home, Oxford Houses and Diocesan efforts to determine the roles that the Apostolate can play; create Apostolate re-entry initiatives such as Project Prodigal, and the Social Service Guides focusing on housing, jobs, health services and mentoring
- Consistent with the respective Associations' leadership approval, and working with both the **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)** and **the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB)**, educate our members on prison ministry issues such as the need for the abolition of the death penalty, relaxation of the mandatory sentencing guidelines, establishment of mental health resources for the addicted and/or the incarcerated, and available alternate approaches to incarceration particularly for those that are juveniles
- Work with Dioceses usually through Catholic Charities to identify prison ministry resources (including prison Chaplains/Deacons) and expand the role the Apostolate can play. Inform Bishops of the Apostolate's work through the distribution of an Apostolate Annual Report
- It is anticipated that Associations' budgeted and allocated funds will not be sufficient to implement this Strategic Plan, The Board is committed to locate the needed financial resources from members with specific Prison Ministry interests and organizations or foundations not affiliated with the Order. However, any outreach for such outside funds must be approved in advance by the respective Associations' leadership.