



Partners in Pastoral Care

Continuing the Healing Ministry of Jesus
in the Name of the Church

PROJECT BOOKLET

Templates for Formation

SUMMARY:

A Template for Programs of Formation for Pastoral Care ministers in Diverse Settings through Partnership of Arch/diocesan Offices, Academic Programs and National Associations



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APPENDIX 5: SAMPLE SESSIONS FOR FOUNDATIONAL FOR CATHOLIC PRISON MINISTRY

Developing Outline for Foundation Pathway Training

Catholic Prison Ministry Coalition
Formation Committee

Target Participants: Catholics who, prompted by the Holy Spirit, feel called to minister with the incarcerated but have little to no concrete experience providing pastoral care within the justice system.

Objective: Participants will possess basic competencies for prison ministry and will be prepared to begin work with the incarcerated or deepen existing commitments. This includes:

1. Firm rooting in spiritual call to serve Christ, the risen prisoner, and the practical reflective tools necessary to sustain strength in this call (Spiritual formation)
2. Basic understanding of criminal justice, prison culture, predominant mental health issues, and Church teachings regarding care for the incarcerated (Intellectual formation)
3. Foundation in simple pastoral principles that guide effective ministers, such as empathic listening, spiritual accompaniment, sacramental/para-liturgical facilitation, and evangelization (Pastoral formation)
4. Familiarity with the realities of the institution into which the participant is entering (facility rules/regulations, proper interaction with COs/administration) and the self-awareness that ministry requires (boundaries with inmates, behavior, and attitude) (Human formation)

Method: The participant (or, ideally, participants) will progress through a series of modules that provide information on the basic competencies outlined above and encourage greater personal reflection, and eventually participation. As a formation committee, we can discern amending the number of modules to provide greater emphasis or clarity, or to accommodate a more effective structure. I have chosen to use the four “areas of formation” -- spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, and human -- outlined by the USCCB as a basic structure for designing these modules. I have also been careful to incorporate most of the elements of the committee’s existing document on **Foundation Pathway** training on the first pass. The wealth of excellent and available material makes it simple to expand existing modules or add new modules if necessary. Each module will include the following:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Questions to activate prior experience or knowledge
3. A brief video (10-15 minutes), to be produced at San Quentin State Prison
4. Initial reactions to the video
5. Brief readings selected from existing resources
6. Time for reflection on the video/readings and responding to specific prompts given
7. (If in a group) Sharing the fruit of personal reflection
8. Suggested assignments/opportunities for deeper engagement before next module
9. Closing Prayer

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Of course, the situations in which participants engage this training will vary greatly. I am not attached to this methodology and any suggestions for making it either more or less intensive are welcome.

Module I: Lost and Found

Criminal Justice Ministry Competencies related to this module:

- 1.1.2 Demonstrate openness to differing views, perspectives, faith traditions, and opinions
- 1.1.3 Understand and embrace the inviolable human dignity and hope
- 1.1.4 Face own biases related to culture of offenders
- 1.1.5 Cultivate genuine humility vs. “better than thou”
- 1.2.5 Face personal biases related to wrongdoing, personal weakness, taking responsibility
- 1.2.9 Value the empathetic, prayerful presence of another
- 1.3.3 Open to feedback and ongoing learning
- 1.6.2 Demonstrate the ability to attend to others' feelings, needs, and concerns
- 2.1.3 Articulate an understanding of Catholic pastoral care teaching related to incarcerated
- 2.5.2 Biblical call to serve
- 2.5.4 Own call to ministry as an ecclesial reality
- 2.9.1 Have a self-awareness of the ministerial situations to which I am called and knowing those in which I am challenged.

1. Opening Prayer:

2. Question:

What is drawing me to this ministry? Can I describe it in detail?

3. Video:

Potential participants:

Fr. George Williams SJ, volunteers at SQSP, inmates at SQSP

Potential interview questions for staff/volunteers:

What first drew you to minister in a prison? Could you tell the story?

What keeps you coming back week after week?

How have you experienced God in your ministry?

What would you say to someone who is considering this ministry?

Potential interview questions for inmates:

What is it like for you to practice the Christian faith in prison?

How do you understand your own call to service and ministry?

How have you been impacted by the chaplain/volunteers? Stories?

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4. Reactions to Video:

What moved or surprised you in the video?

5. Readings:

- a. *Messengers of Hope*, Preface and Introduction I.a.
<https://dismasministry.org/catholic-correctional-training-resource/>
- b. “**Christmas Through the Looking Glass**” *When We Visit Jesus in Prison*, pp. 17-19, Chaplain Dale Recinella, ACTA Publications, Chicago, IL 2016,
www.actapublications.com
- c. Matthew 25:31-46

6. Reflection Questions:

Consider praying with each question and writing a response.

- a. As you consider a call to prison ministry, what fears and insecurities surface in you?
 - b. Do you carry any burdensome biases (either favorable or unfavorable) toward our justice system?
 - c. On page 5 of *Messengers of Hope*, our evangelical goal is given: “to restore dignity and hope to the incarcerated.” What does that look like to you?
 - d. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “I was... in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:36)?
 - e. Consider how an incarcerated man or woman and a Catholic volunteer might mutually encourage one another’s faith. (cf. Rom 1:12)
7. **Group sharing on reflection** (*if possible*)
8. **Going forward** -- between now and the next session:
Think: Read “Preface” to *Prison Ministry* by Lennie Spitale.

QUESTIONS

Pray: Spend 30-45 minutes contemplating Luke 15:11-32, the Parable of the Two Sons.

- ◆ Imagine the scene before you. What stands out?
- ◆ With whom do you identify?
- ◆ How could this prayer impact the way you approach prison ministry?

Act: Seek out someone you know who is or has been involved in the criminal justice system. Perhaps this is a Deacon at your parish, or a volunteer you met on a retreat, or even a friend that has experienced incarceration and is open to talking about it. Ask them to simply share their experience with you. Pay close attention to how the Spirit is present in your conversation.

9. Closing Prayer:

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Module II: By His Wounds We Were Healed

Criminal Justice Ministry Competencies related to this module:

- 1.1.5 Cultivate genuine humility vs. “better than thou”
- 1.2.5 Face personal biases related to wrongdoing, personal weakness, taking responsibility
- 1.2.10 Seek assistance in understanding/accepting the criminal justice process, and the making of personal choices around the process and having those choices respected.
- 1.3.3 Open to feedback and ongoing learning
- 2.1.3 Articulate an understanding of Catholic pastoral care teaching related to incarcerated
- 2.5.1 Demonstrate the ability to know and understand the fluidity of ministerial situations and the opportunity to integrate Gospel values into changing settings.
- 2.5.2 Biblical call to serve
- 2.5.2 Biblical call to serve
- 2.5.3 One’s own pastoral identify
- 2.5.4 Own call to ministry as an ecclesial reality
- 2.5.5 Pastoral care as a healing ministry in the name of the Church
- 2.5.6 Authorization/Commission
- 3.11.5 Particular attention to the cultural diversity experienced in most inmate settings
- 4.2.2 Understand the unique relational dynamics of the cultures encountered in inmates.

1. Opening Prayer:

2. Question:

What is the first thing that comes to mind when I hear the following words?

- Criminal
- Prisoner
- Justice
- Mercy

3. Video:

Potential participants:

Fr. Bill O’Neill, Fr. George Murphy, Lane Center RJ advocates, inmates

Potential interview questions:

Could you briefly describe the structure of the American criminal justice system?

Could you describe the culture within the prison?

What kind of issues do prisoners face?

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What is it like being inside the prison? (if applicable)

How can a Christian respond to this system and culture?

How do you understand the Church's role in engaging with the justice system?

4. Reactions to Video:

What moved or surprised you in the video?

5. Readings:

a. Messengers of Hope, pp. 5-8

b. Excerpts, "Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration" USCCB

6. Reflection Questions: Consider praying with each question and writing a response.

a. The excerpt from Messengers of Hope evokes St. Francis of Assisi's maxim to "preach the gospel and, if necessary, use words." How is your life a preaching of the Gospel?

b. What emotions do you experience when you consider our justice system?

c. If someone asked you what justice looks like in the Kingdom of Heaven, what would you say?

d. Consider Church teaching on human dignity and a "culture of life." How does prison ministry participate in this mission?

7. Group sharing on reflection (*if possible*)

8. Going forward - between now and the next session:

Think: Read Chapter I, "The Social Justice Framework for Credible and Responsible Prison Ministry," When We Visit Jesus in Prison, Recinella, pp. 23-41.

QUESTIONS

Pray: Spend 30-45 minutes slowly and gently reading Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

- ◆ What lines do you find yourself repeating?
- ◆ What is happening in your imagination?
- ◆ What could this passage, often heard during Holy Week, say about our call as prison ministers?

Act: Make the first step. Reach out to someone directly involved in prison ministry. If you don't know who to ask, contact your diocese. Ask the chaplain or volunteer to give you the information you will need to enter the facility. Follow the appropriate steps to receive clearance in a timely manner. As you prepare to begin ministry with the imprisoned, consider seeking out the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When ministering to the vulnerable, our self-knowledge and familiarity with our own vulnerability can be a source of great strength. (cf. 2 Cor 12:10)

9. Closing Prayer:

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Module III: With Me in Paradise

Criminal Justice Ministry Competencies related to this module:

- 1.1.1 Show awareness of one's own personal values, goals, prejudices, and biases.
- 1.1.4 Face own biases related to culture of offenders
- 1.1.5 Cultivate genuine humility vs. “better than thou”
- 1.2.1 Articulate (demonstrate) a knowledge of self that is realistic, including one's gifts, limitations, and opportunities.
- 1.2.9 Value the empathetic, prayerful presence of another
- 1.2.10 Seek assistance in understanding/accepting the criminal justice process, and the making of personal choices around the process and having those choices respected.
- 1.6.4 Understand the unique relationship building in prison setting
- 2.3.2 Articulate the importance of sacramental and Eucharistic life for the setting of the incarcerated
- 2.4.1 Have the knowledge of the importance of the environment and cultural setting for liturgical and communal prayer in pastoral care settings.
- 2.4.3 View place of incarceration as sacred space, and conduct services accordingly
- 2.5.1 Demonstrate the ability to know and understand the fluidity of ministerial situations and the opportunity to integrate Gospel values into changing settings.
- 2.5.2 Biblical call to serve
- 2.8.2 As an incarceration environment, must know limits and possibilities for celebrating Eucharist
- 2.8.3 Respect for the diversity of faiths encountered
- 2.9.1 Have a self-awareness of the ministerial situations to which I am called and knowing those in which I am challenged.
- 2.10.2 Openness and deep respect for the diversity of faiths encountered
- 3.1.8 Have competency with scripture for purposes of bible study groups.

1. Opening Prayer:

2. Question:

Think back to a time when you felt deeply helped, supported, or encouraged by another Christian. What did that look like? How did he or she minister to you? What was so effective about it?

3. Video:

Potential participants:

Volunteers (Willis, Brian, SJs, etc.) and Fr. Williams

Interview Questions:

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- When have the inmates surprised you? Can you tell a story?
- What does it mean to be a minister in this place?
- Describe your ministry practically -- the nuts and bolts.
- What are its gifts and challenges?
- What are the most important skills you bring to prison?
- Can you say what it is like to be a good listener? Any stories?
- What is it like for you to provide spiritual accompaniment?
- Describe the qualities of a good Bible study.
- What is worship like in prison?
- What is it like to bring the Sacraments to prison?
- How have the Gospels taught you to be with the incarcerated?

4. **Reactions to Video:**

What moved or surprised you in this video?

5. **Readings:**

- a. Messengers of Hope, pp. 17-20
- b. Homily for the Jubilee for Prisoners, Sunday 6 November 2016, Pope Francis

6. **Reflection Questions:** consider praying with each question and writing a response.

- a. Take a moment and pray about the spiritual gifts God has given you. (cf. 1 Cor 12:1-11)
What stands out? How do you imagine the greatest use of your gifts?
- b. Pope Francis's homily contains several potent lines. Choose 2 or 3 phrases and consider why they stood out to you.
- c. How will you react when a prisoner knows the Bible more thoroughly than you do or uses quotes to challenge you?
- d. How will you respond to a non-Catholic inmate who asks you for communion?
- e. MORE?

7. **Group sharing on reflection** (*if possible*)

8. **Going Forward** -- Between now and the next session:

Think: suggestions welcome for further reading on spiritual companionship with prisoners

Pray: Devote 30-45 minutes to Luke 23:33-43.

- ◆ Imagine the scene. What stands out?
- ◆ What emotions does this passage draw out of your heart?
- ◆ What might this passage say about how we are to care for the imprisoned?

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- ◆ Act: If at all possible, shadow someone who already is engaged in ministry with the incarcerated.
- ◆ Whether it is a Bible study, cell visits, or Mass, simply observe the ministry. Pay attention to how the Spirit moves you in this time.
- ◆ What fears come up?
- ◆ Vulnerabilities?
- ◆ What surprises you?
- ◆ Spend some time sharing with your guide after the ministry is over.

9. Closing Prayer

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Module IV: Feed My Sheep

Criminal Justice Ministry Competencies related to this module:

- 1.1.6 Culture of offenders themselves within prison system that work against human dignity
- 1.2.5 Face personal biases related wrongdoing, personal weakness, taking responsibility
- 1.2.8 Able to be tolerant of differences, more accepting of others as her/his desire to be accepted is heightened.
- 1.2.11 Process for exploring issues, such as personal journal work on own life/family history/
- 1.6.1 Demonstrate careful attention to emotional, physical and spiritual boundaries
- 1.6.2 Demonstrate the ability to attend to others' feelings, needs, and concerns
- 1.6.3 Demonstrate an accountability and responsibility to the Church, the minister's employer, the minister's manager, and the profession of pastoral care ministry
- 2.2.1 Respond to issues in a manner manifests Catholic spirituality
- 2.5.2 Biblical call to serve
- 2.5.3 One's own pastoral identify
- 2.5.4 Own call to ministry as an ecclesial reality

1. **Opening Prayer:**

2. **Question:**

Think back to a time when you felt deeply helped, supported, or encouraged by another Christian. What did that look like? How did he or she minister to you? What was so effective about it?

3. **Video:**

Potential participants:

COs/Admin, Volunteers (Willis), Chaplains of other faiths

Questions for COs/Admin:

- ◆ Describe your day-to-day work.
- ◆ What is it like working here?
- ◆ What is the hardest thing about working here?
- ◆ Describe the perfect volunteer.
- ◆ What do you wish volunteers knew about your job?

Questions for volunteers:

- ◆ What was your experience getting clearance to enter the prison?
- ◆ What was your experience walking into prison the first time?
- ◆ What guidelines or rules have you found to be most fruitful in practice?
- ◆ What is it like interacting with COs/admins?
- ◆ How has your attitude changed as you've grown in your ministry?

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- ◆ What practical advice would you share with those preparing to volunteer?

4. Reactions to Video:

What moved or surprised you in this video?

5. Readings:

- a. “Do’s and Don’ts” Prison Ministry, Spitale, pp. 215-225

6. Reflection Questions: Consider praying with each question and writing a response.

- a. (*If possible*) Group sharing on reflection

7. Going Forward -- between now and the next session:

Think: Read Recinella’s description of boundaries in *When We Visit*, pp. 82-89

QUESTIONS

Pray: Spend 30-45 minutes imagining Jesus’s restoration of Peter (Jn 21:15-19)

Recall Peter’s threefold denial of Jesus.

- ◆ What does the repeated commandment to “feed my sheep” mean to you?
- ◆ How could this passage help you in your ministry?

Act: Having been prepared in this training, make a commitment to volunteer with an existing program or begin the process of building a ministry. As you prepare to enter the facility, take a moment to recall Jesus the night before he died -- imprisoned, meek, and humble. Consider the grace of your call to enter that mystery.

8. Closing prayer.