

AROUND THE ARCHDIOCESE

News about the organizations, ministries and people of our local church

Kolbe Prison Ministries Conference: Sharing the love of Christ with those in prison

Written by **Gerald Gaenslen,**
For Today's Catholic

The theme for recent Kolbe Prison Ministries conference was, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few," and more than 300 attendees heard heartfelt talks from Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSPS, Auxiliary Bishop Michael Boulette, Father Clay Hunt, Father Mitch Pacwa, SJ, from EWTN, and from five ex-offenders whose lives have been impacted by Kolbe Prison Ministries. The gathering was held at St. Mark the Evangelist Church Event Center.

Kolbe Prison Ministries (KPM) is a Catholic organization founded in 2009 in Fredericksburg. KPM ministers to incarcerated men and women in over 50 Texas and Louisiana State prisons and jails.

Why minister to prisoners? There are many examples in the Bible of God's way of dealing with sinners... of his mercy and forgiveness, of repentance and renewal, of reconciliation and resurrection. We have all made bad choices, fallen short, messed up, and lost our way. Some to a greater degree than others. Those who committed serious sins (crimes) and got caught ended up behind bars. These people are still children of God and remain rich in his love for them. These are the least of our brothers, and what we do for them, we do for Jesus. We know in our hearts that we are not the judge.

We've read in John's gospel that Jesus forgave the criminal who was being crucified right next to Him.

So, what are we called to do? Jesus tells us in Matthew 25 that we are to perform corporal works of mercy; one described as "I was in prison, and you visited me." Of all the various works of mercy that Jesus could have pointed out, He stated that visiting prisoners is especially important in God's eyes. And so KPM takes Jesus at his word and lives out this particular call. Simply because they are incarcerated doesn't mean that inmates should be deprived of caring fellowship and the Catholic sacraments. They should be able to receive the Eucharist, be given the opportunity to be forgiven of their sins through reconciliation, and be able to learn about our faith through Bible study and RCIA.

Archbishop Gustavo, the keynote speaker, has been a great supporter of Catholic ministry in the prisons, detention centers, and jails within the Archdiocese of San Antonio. The archbishop explained that Jesus is present in these facilities which is why those who are called get so much from their service. He said that we do this with love of Jesus Christ. Archbishop Gustavo, along with all of the speakers, make time to visit those in prison to share their love of Christ with those considered the least among us.

"Emboldened not by our own egos,



"But, trusting that God will place us where He needs us, we will be faithful to our call and we will serve with hearts of love."

—ARCHBISHOP GUSTAVO GARCÍA-SILLER, MSPS

600,000 on parole or deferred adjudication. But, trusting that God will place us where He needs us, we will be faithful to our call and we will serve with hearts of love."

but rather, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we who are unworthy of this call, unqualified for this call, but now qualified by God, go forth with courage and hope to encounter and accompany those little ones, those imprisoned and their families, to proclaim the love of God!" said the Missionary of the Holy Spirit at the conference. "We cannot reach all 140,000 incarcerated today, or all

If you're interested in this archdiocesan ministry, contact Deacon Bob Leibrecht, director of Criminal Justice Ministry, at Robert.Leibrecht@archsa.org. If you want to learn more about Kolbe Prison Ministries, contact Gerald Gaenslen at gerald@kolbeprisonministriessa.org.

The videos and pictures from the recent conference can be seen at www.kolbeprisonministriessa.org/multimedia/



*Our Lady of Fatima 102nd Anniversary
of the Miracle of the Sun Eucharistic Celebration
Celebrando 102 Aniversario de las apariciones
De Nuestra Señora de Fátima*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5

Open to the Public - Abierto al Público

Program begins at 10 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Programa comienza a las 10 a.m.

Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto • 5722 Blanco Rd. SA. TX 78216.

"My Immaculate Heart"