

# Blessed SACRAMENT

## Building Relationships with Christ, Behind Prison

For parishioner Jack McGovern, it began with conversation and an invitation — even if he wasn't so quick to respond at first.

"My friend always worked prison ministry into the conversation, followed immediately with an invitation to join him," Jack recalls. "My immediate reply was, 'Thanks, but no thanks.' At that point in my life, I had a 'lock 'em up and throw away the key' mindset.

"Finally, I went on one condition — he had to agree that if I went, he'd never ask me again," he continues. "He was so certain it would be life-changing, he agreed. It has changed my life and my relationship with God and other people."

That one visit to the prison changed everything for Jack, and 18 years ago, he found himself in a position he would've never imagined — working

with several friends to start His Way Ministry, an outreach to those who are incarcerated at Lieber Correctional Institution.

Patterned after the Cursillo method, His Way Ministry begins with the EXODUS weekend retreat in the prison. After the retreat, participants are invited and encouraged to join a group that meets weekly to provide support and community.

The focus of the meetings is both practical and spiritual.

"If a person's heart changes, if they start to develop a realization of God and who He is in their life, then the rest of their life will change also," Jack says. "It starts with the spiritual side, but it doesn't end there.

"We tie the two together, the spiritual and the practical, day-to-day life skills," he adds, explain-



*His Way Ministry begins with a retreat experience for men incarcerated at Lieber Correctional Institution and continues with small groups — both behind bars and after they have been released.*

## Walls and Beyond: *His Way Ministry*

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ing that the ministry covers topics such as how to find a job, and housing, money management, and much more.

Once they are released, the former prisoners are encouraged to continue finding support and mentorship in His Way small groups, which also meet weekly. These small groups are an important way that those involved with His Way Ministry are working to reduce the number of people who are re-incarcerated.

“[In many cases], family members have cut them off, their friends have lost contact, so they’re totally on their own except for the people and places that got them into trouble in the first place — they drift back to that because it’s the only people who will have a relationship with them,” Jack says of the importance in helping them build positive community and accountability. “They see the example of other guys in the ministry and realize ‘if that guy can do it, I can too.’ And with help, they will.” (the current President of His Way Ministry is a graduate of His Way.)

Serving in this ministry has impacted Jack in many ways he didn’t expect.

“It was the slow process of realizing how central God is to my whole life,” Jack says. “That process happened with meeting guys and developing relationships with guys that I would’ve never met.

“In the mentoring process, it’s not, ‘I’m teaching you,’ or ‘listen to me,’” he continues. “It’s relationships! Most importantly, I have seen God’s pres-

ence in the faces of the men who come through His Way Ministry.”

Jack encourages his fellow parishioners to consider serving those who are imprisoned.

“Just come and try it, come and see what it’s like,” he says. “Why don’t you come see what it’s about? What do you have to lose — a couple hours?

“I’ll buy you lunch if you come with us!” Jack adds, with a smile.

Of course, ministering to the imprisoned is one of the works of mercy, as Jack points out.

“Remember the prayer Jesus taught us?” he says. “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.’ We all have our good parts and bad parts, and we’ve got to get beyond the ‘us’ good people over here and ‘them’ bad people over there. It’s not ‘us’ and ‘them.’ It’s us, all together.”

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*For more information, or to become involved in His Way Ministry, please contact Jack McGovern at 843-813-8161 or visit the website at [www.hiswaysc.org](http://www.hiswaysc.org).*

*Not only are people needed to work with those who are incarcerated or have recently been released, but also, there are many other ways you can help His Way Ministry, from prayer and donations, to financial support. If you care about sharing God’s love and mercy with those who have been incarcerated, His Way Ministry will find a way for you to be involved.*