

Orthodox ChristianTM
PRISON MINISTRY



Christmas **TOOLKIT**

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

We are going to create a Christmas card with a personalized handwritten message to mail to someone in prison. Once you print out the template, you will have a fun “draw by numbers” card of the Nativity of our Lord to then customize.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Our Lord commands us to visit those in prison and to care for them spiritually (Matthew 25:36 – “I was in prison and you visited me.”). When you write to those in prison, you are “visiting” them in prison and showing them in a tangible way that they matter and that they are not forgotten. Quite simply, you are writing to Christ and obeying His commandment.

Thousands of men and women are living in the deep isolation of prison. Many of them do not have family or friends on the outside. Many people in prison, especially those serving life sentences, feel that they have been completely forgotten by the outside world. Some even feel that their Church community has forgotten them.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

I AM THANKFUL
THAT YOU ARE
IN MY LIFE. THE
POSTCARDS
AND DYNAMIS
[NEWSLETTER]
MEAN A GREAT DEAL
TO ME. MANY DAYS –
WEEKS – YOUR MAIL
IS THE ONLY MAIL I
RECEIVE, MAKING
IT EXTRA-SPECIAL.
THANK YOU!

Imagine being confined to a prison cell—the isolation and sense of being cut off from the outside world. Imagine also what that is like on Christmas day and having no way to mark a special and holy day. This is why a ministry to prisoners through correspondence is so important. A heartfelt message on Christmas breaks through the sense of isolation and loneliness. Your card may well be the only one they receive.

Your card lets our brothers and sisters in prison know that the Church remembers them, cares about them, and that they, too, are part of the Body of Christ.

– From a woman
doing life in prison

Then the King
His right hand
of My Father
prepared for
tion of the world
and you gave
thirsty and you
was a stranger
I was naked and
I was sick and
was in prison



1

PRINT YOUR TEMPLATE

Print out the template card on regular white printer paper.

2

COLLECT YOUR MATERIALS

Prisons have very stringent guidelines for receiving mail due to the risk of contraband entering a facility. Please **DO NOT** use these materials or your card will be thrown out:

Glue

Glitter

Crayons

Colored Paper, Construction Paper or Card Stock

Please do use:

Black Ink or Pencil

Notebook Paper, Typing Paper or Printer Paper

Colored Ink

2

SAY A PRAYER

Say a prayer before you start so that God will bless your efforts and direct your message.

Almighty God, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, come to the aid of those in prison and grant them Your peace in the midst of this difficult time in their lives. I believe Lord that all the trials of life are under Your care and that all things work for the good of those who love You. Take away from those in prison all fear, anxiety and distress. Help them to face and endure incarceration with faith, courage and wisdom. Grant that this trial may bring these brothers and sisters closer to You for You are our rock and our refuge, our comfort and our hope, our delight and our joy. I trust in Your love and compassion. Blessed is Your name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, both now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.



WHAT TO WRITE

- Greet them as “To Our Dear Friend”
- Begin with a Nativity greeting: “Christ is Born! Glorify Him!”
- It is a great responsibility to write to those who are incarcerated. Please pray for guidance on how to write to best represent Christ, His Church, and the Holy Orthodox Faith, as our words may be read by many more people than the person we are writing. Cards are often passed around to others that are incarcerated and/or the staff that screens the incoming mail. Here’s a quote from someone in prison in Nebraska that gives you the idea: “I received the beautiful icon you sent me. I can’t tell you how awesome it was to bless those around me with this icon.”
- Writing with uplifting words and encouragement is beneficial, as the prison environment is often filled with anger and hostility. As we remember that we are writing to our brothers and sisters in Christ, we should not talk down to the person we are writing to, nor bring in our own personal problems, details, or political beliefs.
- When writing, do not include identifying information such as your last name or home address. Sign the card with your baptismal name.
- Offer words of encouragement. Most prisoners think the world has forgotten them; let them know they are the part of our bigger Church by sending them greetings from your community or church. Let them know they are not forgotten by their brothers and sisters in Christ.
- How long should the message be? Probably pretty short. Even just “wishing you a Merry Christmas” with a bible verse is ok if you can’t think of anything else.

If you are writing to people in prison as part of a Sunday School project:

- By doing this project you can teach children the importance of personal communication and the importance of doing something kind for someone else.
- Consider making a display in your church showcasing what your Sunday School kids are doing for people in prison.



4

GATHER & SEND

Please be sure to mail Christmas Cards for prisoners by Thanksgiving in order to ensure a timely delivery by Christmas.

If you are doing this as a group, gather all your cards together in one package and mail with your name and return address on the envelope.

RETURN ADDRESS AS

Your Name
Your Church's Name
Your Address

SEND YOUR LETTER TO

OCPM: Christmas Cards
276 5th Avenue
Suite 704 – 3036
New York, NY 10001

Your Name
Your Address



OCPM: Christmas Cards
276 5th Avenue
Suite 704 - 3036
New York, NY 10001

ABOUT OCPM

Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry is the national prison ministry of the Orthodox Church and an agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops. Our mission is to serve those who are incarcerated and their families, and provide resources, training and support to our ministry partners.

276 5th Avenue
Suite 704 - 3183
New York, NY 10001

(347) 868-6957
THEOCPM.ORG

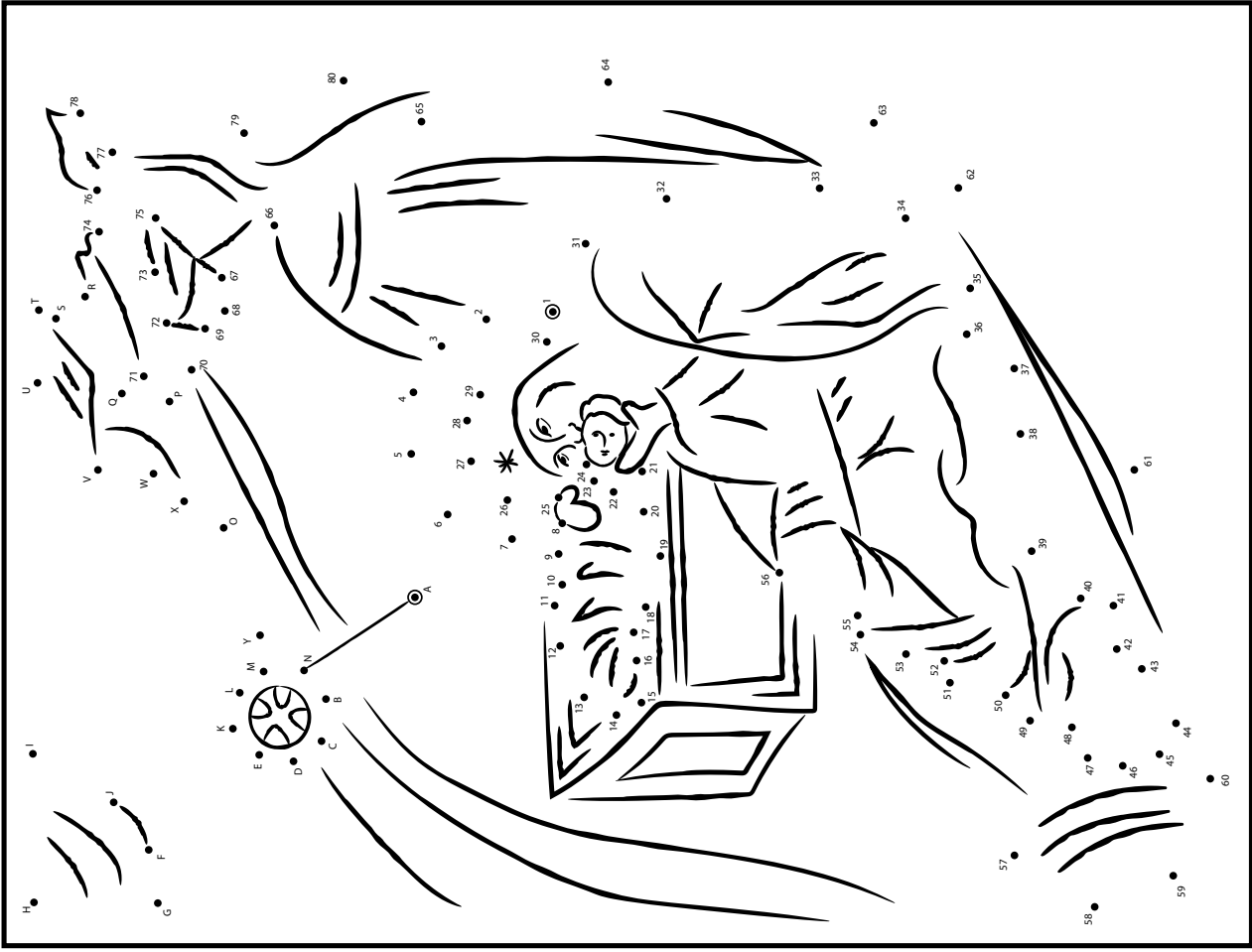


ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
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OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

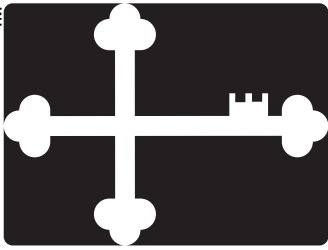
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