



ORDER OF MALTA
Federal Association

Order of Malta Prison Pen Pal Program
PO Box 34442
Bethesda, MD 20827

Dear Prison Pen Pal Participant and those considering participation:

Thank you for your interest in our prison pen pal program. In writing, we, in a way, are "visiting" someone in prison, as our Lord asked us to do in Mathew 25:36. Most of the individuals we write to are broken; may come from extremely rough backgrounds and have been involved with drugs and/or alcohol. Many are under-educated and some need mental health assistance. They are truly some of the least among us. As Pope Francis said to prisoners he visited at the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia:

"I know it is a painful time not only for you, but also for your families and for all society. Any society, any family, which cannot share or take seriously the pain of its children, and views that pain as something normal or to be expected, is a society "condemned" to remain hostage to itself and prey to the very things which cause that pain. I am here as a pastor, and above all as a brother, to share your situation and to make it my own. I have come so that we can pray together and offer our God anything that causes us pain, but also anything that gives us hope, so that we can receive from him the power of resurrection." *Pope Francis*

The Order of Malta pen pal program is one of hope. It serves several purposes: it provides information about current events and things the inmate is interested in (information one does not readily get inside the walls); it helps instill a positive attitude due to hopeful messages we send; and, most importantly it tells the inmate someone cares. This latter point cannot be stressed enough since for many inmates no one writes or visits them. Studies show that corresponding with the incarcerated reduces the recidivism rate, which says, we are saving some souls. Below are several excerpts from letters we have received that capture the importance of our work.

"Thank you for writing me, it means a lot to know you care about me. I haven't wrote you because a lot of things have been going on and I've been moving around to various prisons. It's been crazy period... Well, thank you again for praying and writing me it means a lot..."

"How are you doing. I received a letter back from you guys and I am very happy about that ... It would be awesome to be put on your pen pal list that would be excellent to have the opportunity to meet fellow Catholics. So I really appreciate what you guys offer and do for

people behind wall thank you very much. I can't wait to hear back from you and have a wonderful day God bless.

Thank you so much for responding to my letter so quickly. I'm in a state prison camp and we have a small group of about 15 Catholics here and basically, we have nothing as far as Catholic leadership. I am very happy to hear that you have a pen pal program. I sure could use that! Please send me anything you have, and thanks for writing me back. You really made my day today. (Smile)"

"I write you because I am attempting for the first time in my life to "let go and let God! ". All the while, hoping and praying that he (God) will not only renew my spirit but also my mind as well."

It is important that all participants become aware of what is entailed in writing to an inmate. To this end, we are providing information about the program and the dos and don'ts. If you have any questions or just want to chat about your process, please do not hesitate to contact your pen pal Coordinator.

In your introductory package, you will receive the following documents:

#1 – Introductory Letter – this document

#2 – Program Guidelines: three page document that we ask all member/volunteer writers to read, sign and return to the Order of Malta Pen Pal Program, PO Box 34442, Bethesda, MD 20827. Once we receive your signed consent, we will enroll you in the program and send you your new pen pal information.

#3 – Program Process: member/volunteer writes directly to the inmate at the prison/jail address. The Order of Malta address should **always** be used as the return address in all circumstances, especially on the upper left-hand portion of the front of the envelope. (Sample in document #3.) The inmate's reply is sent to the Order of Malta's address. Inmate letters will be forwarded to the member/volunteer writer.

#4 – Pen Pal sample letter: Feel free to request that the coordinator review the first few letters that you write until you get the feel of writing on your own

#5 – Order of Malta letterhead: Participants are encouraged to print this out and use it for their correspondence. It is handy for everyone to have the address in plain sight. Other blank paper can be used.

#6 – "10 Ways to Up Your Pen Pal Letter Writing"

Always feel free to contact your coordinator, if you have any questions or concerns. We thank you for your interest in our Pen Pal Program.