

## History of St. Maximilian Kolbe Prison retreats (Update: September 2015)

By: Larry Reeh

First Prison ACTS\*, Connally Unit, Kenedy, Texas, Aug 13-15, 2009

Having served on numerous KAIROS\*\* weekends in the Connally Unit, I believe God had placed before me a call of the Holy Spirit. On KAIROS number 12, which started on a Thursday evening, November 13, 2008, began like any other KAIROS weekend I had been on. The evening starts off with team member volunteers introducing themselves by name and the church they worship at. My church, St. Mary's Catholic Church in Fredericksburg, Texas, sparked the interest of one of the Offenders. After all the introductions were made and we took a break, this Offender (who has since been released) sat next to me and asked me if I had ever heard of the "ACTS retreat". I responded with a resounding yes! The Offender said that he had attended an ACTS retreat in the free world before being incarcerated and that he would like to see it in the prison. The seed was planted (Mark 4:31). Before the evening was over, I spoke to Chaplain Joseph Varghese, (a Priest from India) who had only been a Chaplain at the unit for a month or two. When I asked the Chaplain if he had ever heard of the ACTS retreat, he rose from his chair and his eyes opening wide, said he had numerous requests on his desk about ACTS. Ten months later, August 13-15, we held our first Prison ACTS retreat in the Connally Unit. God had put the dots out there, all I had to do was connect them. We have received approval from the Chaplaincy department at Huntsville, Texas, to bring this retreat into any unit within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) who may wish to have the retreat in their unit. Many thanks to the ACTS movement and especially ACTS Missions ([www.actsmissions.org](http://www.actsmissions.org)) for allowing us to bring the ACTS retreat into the prison. Without their blessings and support, this retreat would never have taken place.

\*Although Prison ACTS got its start from ACTS Missions and the local parish ACTS retreats, the name has been officially changed to Kolbe Prison Retreats (KPM). KPM is no longer associated with ACTS Missions. However, KPM and ACTS Missions share the same interest. As the Executive Director of ACTS Missions of San Antonio stated "ACTS Missions rejoices that this ministry was inspired by ACTS, just as ACTS was inspired by Cursillo and wishes the Kolbe Prison Ministries continued success." "ACTS Missions thanks the leadership of the Kolbe Prison Ministries for their vision and initiative, and prayerfully supports their mission."

\*\*KAIROS is an interdenominational Christian ministry whose programs are designed to be presented in correctional institutions. The purpose is to establish strong Christian communities among the correctional institutions.