

# Prison ministry coordinator reflects on her Topeka Kolbe Prison Retreat experience

By Cindy Kellick

Last weekend, Oct. 18-20, I had the opportunity to attend a Kolbe Prison Retreat held at the Topeka Correctional Facility, the TCF.

A group of 52 women attended the weekend event. Ninety residents signed up to attend.

Kolbe is a strictly Catholic retreat that is designed to bring others to Christ. The women at Topeka were no exception to the intended purpose.

The women at TCF were greeted by volunteers who formed a line welcoming them to the retreat. Many women didn't know how to react and seemed timid at the kindness shown to them.

Volunteers showed the retreatants love and attention by showering them with good food, treats, education about the Catholic faith, and just listening to their stories. We saw them. We heard them. We loved them the entire weekend.

To see women who knew very little about the Catholic faith or albeit the wrong information, fall in love with the Eucharist and adore our Savior from the monstrosity was simply one of the many beautiful things that happened over the weekend.

Teaching others how to say the rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet was so powerful. It brings tears to my eyes writing this article. The Holy Spirit filled the room. It was amazing!

I was a table leader along with another volunteer, Kelli Broussard, who with a group traveled



Cindy Kellick

from Louisiana and Texas as a commissioning team to help us Kansas women learn how to have a successful weekend retreat.

Kelli and I had six retreatants at our table. We showed them so much love and attention that weekend. We both said that we wanted to take them all home with us.

I'm so blessed that I was able to attend this retreat so I have a grasp about what our Kolbe retreat will be like at the Winfield Correctional facility. The dates have yet to be determined.

Participating in this Catholic retreat changed me! I drove home from Topeka exhausted yet re-energized as I was filled with the Holy Spirit!

I was one of four volunteers who gave their Witness Talk. To have these retreatants come up and hug you afterward was so gratifying.

Our director, Lisa Lambert, was always saying: "This is not about us, it is about Him".

All six of the retreatants at my table want to pursue the Catholic faith as well as so many others!

At the end of the retreat, you truly understand the importance of sharing our faith to others even in prison!

I witnessed women who came in on Friday who were mad at the world and who left us on Sunday

with smiles on their faces in love with our Lord! You have no idea what this experience does to not only the participant but the volunteer as well.

Mass, adoration, confession, the retreatants attended everything and were so happy to be a part of the weekend.

Many retreatants came up to me and said they wanted to become Catholic because of my talk and what I have gone through. My response was, this is not about me, this is about Him and he is ready and waiting for you.

A piece of my heart stayed at the TCF that day. I am a better person for attending a Kolbe prison retreat and bringing others to Christ!

On Tuesday, Oct. 22 my new Topeka volunteer and friend, Tami Barta, had her OCIA class. She said that there were so many retreatants there ready to learn more about the Catholic faith! They could not stop talking about the retreat. The retreatants who attended were talking so highly about the Catholic faith to others in their dorms that two residents came to class ready to renew their Catholic faith! God is good!

*Kellick is the program coordinator for the St. Dismas Ministry to the Incarcerated.*

## Want to help with the Kolbe Prison Retreat?

Cindy Kellick said volunteers who have a desire to share our beautiful Catholic faith are needed for the Kolbe Prison Retreat to be successful. Volunteers don't have to have a master of theology degree, she said, they simply need to have a servant heart for bringing others to the faith.

To volunteer email [kellickc@CatholicDioceseOfWichita.org](mailto:kellickc@CatholicDioceseOfWichita.org) or call 316-269-3900 ext. 165.

"Remember this retreat is not about you, your time or lack of it," she said. "It is always about Him."