

DIOCESE OF ORANGE



MEDIA CONTACT
RYAN LILYENGREN
714-282-3075
RYANL@RCBO.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DIOCESE OF ORANGE REUNITES CHILDREN AND MOTHERS THROUGH ANNUAL “GET ON THE BUS” PROGRAM

ORANGE, Calif., (May 4, 2006) – More than 1,500 children and their guardians throughout California will board 37 Buses and depart for five women’s prisons in celebration of Mothers Day, May 12, at 6:00 a.m. The annual “Get on the Bus” program has been reuniting mothers and their children for this special day since 2000. “Our program allows prisoners and their children to experience one special day of love and normalcy. We are truly blessed to have the opportunity to spread hope and reunite families in the healing mission of Christ,” said Sr. A.J. Crookston, director of Detention Ministry, Diocese of Orange.

Children and their guardians will spend a day with their mothers at the California Institute for Women in Corona, the Central California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla, Ventura Youth Correctional Facility in Camarillo, Valley State Prison in Chowchilla, and California Rehabilitation Center in Norco. The Chowchilla facilities are the largest women’s prisons in the world and house more than 7,400 inmates, 75 percent of whom are mothers. Many of the prisons are located far from urban areas, which prevent children from seeing their mothers outside of this program.

When families are torn apart because of incarceration, children pay the high price of separation. According to the California Department of Corrections, 17,760 children under the age of 18 have mothers in prison and reside with relatives or in foster care. Many of

these mothers are from poor communities and are in prison as a result of mandatory sentencing for drug violations.

“Get on the Bus” seeks to alleviate the hardships these children endure throughout the year. The program’s many special features includes giving each mother the opportunity to take a picture with her child in memory of this special occasion. As the children return home from their visit, each child is given a letter and a Teddy Bear as a gift from their mom. This gift exchange further reinforces the mother-child bond that is rekindled through this momentous mother’s day experience.

About Detention Ministry:

The Diocese of Orange Detention Ministries attends to the spiritual needs of the five adult jails, six juvenile facilities and the Orangewood facility for abused and neglected children. There is an average of 7,300 inmates housed in these Orange County facilities. The Detention Ministry has approximately 400 volunteers who provide 110 services per week for the adult jails and juvenile halls.

For more information contact Sister Anne Joseph, Director of Detention Ministry at 714-547-7082 or srajoseph@rcbo.org.

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THE MARYWOOD CENTER
2811 E. VILLA REAL DRIVE
P. O. BOX 14195
ORANGE, CALIFORNIA 92863-1595
PHONE: (714) 282-3000
FAX: (714) 282-3029