



## CARITAS

# SUPPORT FOR THOSE IN PRISON OR BEING RELEASED

*“Punishment, in addition to preserving public order and the safety of persons, has a medicinal scope: as far as possible it should contribute to the correction of the offender”*  
Catechism 2266

As Christians, we are called to pray for the needs of all those affected by prisons: prisoners and their families, victims of crime and their communities, those working in the criminal justice system and the many people who are involved in caring for those affected by crime on the inside and outside of our prisons. We are also invited to step forward and give our time and gifts, in prisons and in our own communities to make a difference for people who are out of sight and often out of mind. This note offers some suggestions for parishes looking to reach out to support all those affected by prisons. Before taking any initiatives please remember—**ensure safeguarding processes are put in place and consult your parish safeguarding representative.**

- ◇ Invite the local Prison Chaplain to speak at masses on one weekend to raise awareness
- ◇ Put a link to PACT [www.prisonadvice.org.uk](http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk) on the parish website and consider donating to their work.
- ◇ Create a prayer chain: Ask volunteers to hold all those connected to the local prison in their prayers, e.g., ask for 12 volunteers to commit to saying a decade of the rosary or other form of prayer every day for this intention. Ask the chaplain if some prisoners could commit to praying for the parish, too.
- ◇ Ask parish priest to say a mass once a month for all those connected with the local prison – this would also raise awareness by getting the name on the parish newsletter if intentions are listed.
- ◇ Ask for a bidding prayer at mass for intentions linked to prison, e.g. for the chaplain, staff, those at risk of self-harm or of bullying etc.

# “I was ... in prison and you came to me.” Matthew 25:35-36

- ◇ Prison Fellowship volunteers work with prison chaplains and local churches to buy, wrap and deliver presents at Christmas, Partnering with Angel Tree is one fantastic way to contribute. To find out more: <https://prisonfellowship.org.uk/our-work/angel-tree/>
- ◇ Write letters - The Letter Link programme is a great way for people who care about prison ministry but are limited by their availability, mobility or location, to get involved. (You) commit to writing one letter a month as a minimum...If you are interested, you need to first apply to be a PF Volunteer. Training is provided. All letters are sent through the Prison Fellowship office and are regularly checked by the Programme Administrator for security reasons.” <https://prisonfellowship.org.uk/our-work/letter-link/>
- ◇ Ask the local chaplain what items might be useful, e.g., religious DVDs, Catholic books, plain wooden rosaries, reading glasses, clothes to be handed out or a small clothes bank. Perhaps parishioners can attend mass at the prison regularly and meet prisoners over coffee.
- ◇ Invite the local chaplain (if near a prison) and relevant groups e.g. PACT, SWCC [www.southwestcc.org.uk](http://www.southwestcc.org.uk) and the Welcome Directory <https://www.welcomedirectory.org.uk/> to run an evening on supporting those in prison and those being released. Invite other local churches and representatives from groups such as SVP, the Catenians.
- ◇ In Prisons Week, highlight in the parish newsletter those groups supporting people in prison and being released e.g., PACT, SW Community Chaplaincy and Mentor Me.

## Useful Links

PACT Community Support programme <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/family-support>

Support for Prisoners on release <https://www.southwestcc.org.uk/making-new-start-possible>

Supporting people with Convictions in the Bristol area <https://www.sixty-one.org/>

Getting involved in Wessex <https://www.sixty-one.org/>

Supporting people with Convictions to connect with religious communities <https://www.welcomedirectory.org.uk/>

St. Vincent de Paul Charity <https://www.svp.org.uk/>

Prisoners' families support line <https://www.prisonersfamilies.org/>

How to stay in touch with prisoners in the UK <https://www.gov.uk/staying-in-touch-with-someone-in-prison>

Nacro, helping to support newly released prisoners <https://www.nacro.org.uk/justice/>

