

Promotio Iustitiae

**"I was in prison
and you visited me..."**

From Australia

Julie Edwards

From Latin America

Luis Roblero SJ

From Africa

Alfonso Ruiz Marrodán SJ

From Asia Pacific

Vilaiwan Phokthavi

Eli Rowdy Y Lumbo SJ

From Canada and the United States

George Williams SJ

Michael Kennedy SJ

Jose Osuna and Isabel Osuna

From Europe

Leo de Weerd SJ

From South Asia

George Fernando SJ

Susai Raj SJ

Generosity and effectiveness

Roberto Jaramillo SJ



**Social Justice and Ecology
Secretariat**

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Contents

Editorial.....	5
Patxi Álvarez SJ	
Prisoners: a forgotten people, a truly Jesuit ministry	7
Julie Edwards	
Prison and violence.....	11
Luis Roblero SJ	
With the minors in the Central Prison of Yaoundé	15
Alfonso Ruiz Marrodán SJ	
Jesuit Prison Ministry Thailand.....	18
Vilaiwan Phokthavi	
Personal Testimony on Prison Ministry	22
Eli Rowdy Y Lumbo SJ	
Ministry on California's Death Row - an Ignatian Meditation.....	26
George Williams SJ	
The Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative	31
Michael E. Kennedy SJ	
Hope in the flesh	35
Jose Osuna e Isabel Osuna	
Some pastoral reflections on the life in prison	37
Leo de Weerd SJ	
Rehabilitation as Spiritual Practice	41
George Fernando SJ	
Walking with the prisoners... Walking with the Lord	45
Susai Raj SJ	
Generosity and effectiveness.....	51
Roberto Jaramillo SJ	



Editorial

Patxi Álvarez SJ

The Jesuits, and the laypeople that they collaborate with, have a longstanding tradition of serving people in prison, dating back to the first companions of Jesus. The “Formula of the Institute”, 1550, says: “(The Jesuit) strives to... assist those who are found in prisons...” Ignatius and the first Jesuits carried out this merciful work in a sustained fashion. His successors continued to be present in prisons, taking in and consoling prisoners, providing for their needs and accompanying them on the path of personal restoration.

For the Society, this was an important *service* and continues to be a meaningful place of *encounter* with “God, present and active in all things” (*Contemplatio ad amoris*). Serving the suffering humanity and contemplating the Lord’s presence in it have been two key components in the life of the Jesuits and their associates who have visited prisoners throughout history.

In the present day, this ministry continues across the six Conferences of our organisation. Often it is realised as a silent ministry by people who for decades, in an individual and compassionate way, have paid regular visits to some local prison. Occasionally, this work is realised by a group of Jesuits and their associates. Sometimes these groups have developed special programmes for minors, or in the area of prevention or legal advocacy, or for helping people who are released from prison in the difficult period of transition from prison to daily life. In reality, this ministry is carried out in many diverse ways.

This edition of *Promotio Iustitiae* wishes to pay homage to these people and to paint a picture of the quiet work that they have carried out persistently over many years. The articles that you will find in these pages are moving. They encompass the two strands of this prison ministry to include a dedicated and committed ministry, and a contemplative perspective. In their texts, the authors offer a glimpse into the spirituality present in, and necessary for this ministry. They see beyond appearances. They transcend reality and discover in it a mystery of higher love which lives in the darkest and most hidden corners.

The first article is written by Julie Edwards, the Director of *Jesuit Social Services* in Australia, who presents an international network for ministry in prisons which has been created with her support. It is an initiative that is forging links between people who often work in isolation, allowing for mutual support and learning throughout the network. Following this article are others from Jesuits and their associates working in different Conferences who offer a good example of the variety of these activities. In total, the collection has eleven articles and their reading is most worthwhile.

We especially thank Julie Edwards and Matthew Cuff, who work in the *Advocacy* office of the Conference of Canada and the United States, for suggesting that this edition be dedicated to

this work, providing the names of people who could contribute to it. Without them, this edition wouldn't have been possible.

Finally, alongside this edition we have included a long document put together by the Network of Social Centres of Latin America, written specifically by Roberto Jaramillo SJ, Social Coordinator for Latin America. It is titled: "Generosity and Effectiveness", reflecting the necessary tension which must be upheld in our social work between the impact we seek, and the mindset of generosity beyond measure with which the social work is carried out. It is intended to help us to reflect on our particular way of yielding results. The document allows us to identify aspects for evaluation in the work of the Society's social centres.

Original Spanish
Translation Nils Sunderman



Prisoners: a forgotten people, a truly Jesuit ministry

Ms. Julie Edwards

Jesuit Social Services, Australia

Jesuit prison ministry has a long Christian history. Across time those in prison usually represent the most despised, feared and forgotten members of any society. In the ancient, and in much of the modern world, prisoners relied on their visitors for food and for money to pay their jailers and therefore the act of reaching out to prisoners has long been understood as a valued work of mercy. In the Gospels one of the practices that separates the sheep from the goats is visiting people in prison. Jesus assures his hearers that when we visit prisoners, it is he whom we visit.

For the early Christians, too, prison was an honourable, if feared, place to be. Jesus had been imprisoned before his death with two criminals. Peter and Paul spent time in prison, and Paul's journey in chains to his execution in Rome, like that of Ignatius of Antioch after him, was a way of connecting with the Christian churches along the way through letters and visitors. They were the first of many martyrs to be imprisoned and killed for their faith.

Ministry to prisoners has been a constant element in Jesuit ministry from the beginning. St Ignatius himself was imprisoned several times during the Spanish Inquisition for speaking on theological matters without a degree, and prioritised prison ministry during his life. Over the centuries prison ministry seems to have been mainly the work of individual Jesuits, mostly as part of a broader pastoral ministry. Jesuits ministered to prisoners awaiting execution, to people in the galleys and hulks and other places of detention. In the nineteenth century when imprisonment became the ordinary form of punishment and no longer simply a place where people were confined before being tried and sentenced, visiting prisoners and celebrating the sacraments in jails became an ordinary part of much parish ministry, as well as a full time work for some Jesuits.

In more recent Jesuit history, Jesuits and their colleagues who visit people detained in prison or in immigration detention centres have found that it embodied the option for the poor that the Society has made. Not only are prisoners at the bottom of the social ladder, their plight rarely attracts sympathy from the general public. For most governments prisoners are not a high priority and many politicians, in their efforts to gain popularity, try to outdo each other in vilifying them. Prisoners are the forgotten people. As many Jesuits have experienced life in prison, sentenced for their Christian ministry or for breaking the law in order to protest governmental injustice, the hidden life of prisoners has become more revealed.

Both Jesuits serving prison sentences and those in prison ministry have been able to come to know prisoners and to be companions to them. They can also serve them and plead their cause when they are neglected or unjustly treated. Their experience can help ground research and advocacy directed at improving the penal system.

The heart of Jesuit prison ministry, as of so many other forms of ministry, is best exemplified in the masterly visits and homilies of Pope Francis. In the strength and delicacy of his gestures and his words, he embodies the compassion of God, the joy of finding forgiveness and acceptance, and the good news of the Gospel. Both Pope Francis and our Jesuit documents have stressed the importance of going out to the margins of our society. This offers both the privileged place to preach the Gospel and the best vantage point for looking at our own society and church.

Prisoners in particular are a canary in the mine of society, the people who show us the working priorities of society and the way in which societies deal with people who are marginalised. Prisons generally collect people who are considered not to matter. They are filled with the poor, with the mentally ill for whom no other place can be found, with people suffering addictions who steal or do minor trafficking to support their drug habits, with people who have suffered abuse, trauma and neglect from their earliest days. Prisoners often come from locations characterised by significant disadvantage, with few services and supports, demonstrating a lack of care for the young children and families who reside there. Increasingly, too, refugees are held in prisons or their holding places are run like prisons. These are seen as the rubbish of society.

Prisons, too, often make manifest the priorities of a society. In many places the prisons are privatized, allowing private companies to make profit by minimizing the resources and the services given to prisoners. These companies and those dependent on them often resist any moves to reform the penal system. Prisons are also a testimony to the irrationality of societies that allow their fears and furies to rule their intelligence – while prisons are necessary in order to protect society from some violent and deeply disturbed people, they do not deter people from committing more crimes. In fact, they make it more likely that people will return to jail. They are costly – socially and economically.

For the majority of prisoners who would like to live sociable lives, but who lack the strength or the help to make healthy connections with society, prisons simply further isolate them: from their families, from education and work, from the broader community. Furthermore, when they leave prison they carry the stigma associated with their time in prison. They find it hard to get work, to find decent accommodation, and to make friends – all of which makes it a struggle to make a new start and stay away from a life of crime.

Disadvantage and involvement in the justice system are inextricably linked. In every country, we find the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in prisons. Some regions are renowned for more enlightened approaches to imprisonment, from which we can all learn. In others, we see disturbing abuses of power and inhumane conditions, while in many nations the death penalty continues to be used.

It follows from the Ignatian tradition of reaching out to the margins and those most in need that many Jesuits and Jesuit organisations would be active in the justice system at various stages of support: for example, in work focused on prevention, in diversion programs, in offering in-prison support (whether prison ministry, practical training or mentoring services) or at the transition stage as prisoners exit detention back into the community. This edition of *Promotio Iustitiae* includes insights from those active at a number of these different stages.

Jesuit Social Services is an Australian social change organisation that advocates for a smarter justice system and a safer community. Our belief is that an effective criminal justice system must work to prevent crime from occurring in the first place and that once people have begun down the path of petty crime, every effort should be made to divert them from further

engagement in the criminal justice system. Prison should be used as a last resort as the evidence is clear that it further entrenches criminal behaviour. Prisons should focus on rehabilitation and preparing people for their return to the community. Adequate support should be given to people exiting prison to assist them to make a successful transition and reduce the likelihood of repeat offending.

When the prison population grows rapidly, as is occurring in many places throughout the world, we see increasing strain on the system overall. Rapid growth in numbers of people in prison overwhelms the state's capacity to deliver effective rehabilitation or reintegration programs for prisoners, which in turn leads to higher recidivism rates, further burdening the system. The growth in prison numbers is linked to numerous interrelated factors including social attitudes often driven by the media and politicians, police practices, sentencing legislation, bail and use of remand, parole, quality and availability of programs offered inside prisons and transition support. Unfortunately, we see the same people rotating through the justice system. It is a challenge to stop this cycle, and one that requires significant investment of time and money.

Jesuit Social Services is active at a number of stages in the support cycle – diverting people from prison, helping get them back on track once they have committed an offence, staying connected with them while they are in prison, and supporting them when they transition back to the community. We run programs to help people address the reasons behind their offending (such as substance abuse, mental illness, or poor literacy and numeracy). We help them find housing and work, and access health and other support services – though the reality is that we can assist only a small percentage of people who need such help¹. Despite the strong evidence for the effectiveness of rehabilitative programs² they remain underfunded, compared with the growing investment in building prisons.

In addition to the services we offer to our participants, Jesuit Social Services has a strong policy and advocacy division, which works to influence community opinion and government policies in this area. Our policy team undertakes detailed research and prepares submissions on a range of justice issues. Last year we launched *Dropping off the Edge*, the fourth in a series examining disadvantage by geographical location. The results were sobering, with the evidence suggesting half of prisoners come from just 6% of postcode areas. We have also campaigned around issues such as raising the age of criminal responsibility in Australia, abolishing the death penalty in neighbouring countries, and alternatives to detention for those with cognitive and mental impairments.

Over the years, in the course of our work, we have crossed paths with a few other Jesuit organisations and individual Jesuits who are working to support those who are caught in the justice system. It was suggested to us that a Jesuit network of those working in prison ministry and the broader criminal justice area would be helpful, both in sharing experiences and ideas and mounting advocacy campaigns in partnership across the Jesuit network. As we explored this idea we discovered that there were many more people involved in this work than the handful we had already come across, and that there was great scope to collaborate for the benefit of all. As a result, the **International Jesuit Prison Network** was established in 2013.

¹ For example in the Australian state of Victoria, the Ombudsman noted that only one in five people exiting prison received post-release support from Corrections Victoria (Victorian Ombudsman, 2015, Investigation into the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Prisoners in Victoria, see <http://bit.ly/1iiDWhd>)

² MacKenzie, D.L. & Farrington, D.P., 2015, *Preventing future offending of delinquents and offenders: what have we learned from experiments and meta-analyses?*, in *J Exp Criminol* 11, 565-595.

The Network aims to connect Jesuit prison ministries throughout the world, in order to support each other in our work of accompanying prisoners and creating communities of solidarity. In keeping with Catholic Social Teaching and the Ignatian heritage of its members, the International Jesuit Prison Network strives for a just, humane and effective justice system in all countries that reflects the dignity of all people.

Since its launch, we have been encouraged by the number of people reaching out to the Network and contributing pieces to the Network newsletter. In order to widen its engagement, the Network launched a facebook page and website in 2016, which can be found at www.facebook.com/internationaljesuitprisonnetwork and www.jesuitprisonnetwork.wordpress.com. In addition, the Network produces a directory of members, enabling members to contact one another directly to discuss issues of joint concern.

Prisons are good places to see our society from the underside through the eyes of the poor. They are a good place for Jesuits and colleagues to be engaged. This year, Jesuit Social Services is excited to be celebrating its 40th anniversary. Over the past four decades our work with people in the criminal justice system has been a major focus of our efforts – in direct service and in our advocacy. We are committed to continuing this work into the future, in collaboration with our Jesuit colleagues around the world – and in this spirit of collaboration we are delighted that this edition of *Promotio Iustitiae* promotes the work of the International Jesuit Prison Network.

Original English



Prison and violence

Luis Roblero Arriagada SJ

Prison Ministry, Chile

The prisoners' stories are similar: They are men and women who, before they were born, internalized a violence passed down to them from generation to generation; from their ancestors, from their neighbourhoods, from their people made invisible by a society which never expected anything of them, nor ever will, from the thousands of uncertainties that generation after generation were born into. A violence which is incorporated into their lives, like inherited genes, and which future generations will certainly go on to inherit. It is their lot and they share this code, and as such they are a lineage.

They share and pass on this violence; they bear it, they suffer it, and they cause others to suffer it; violence which doesn't exist in time and geographical spaces; violence which amasses in their souls and which only departs with death.

These men and women locked away in Chilean prisons were not sentenced for a crime; rather, they serve the sentence imposed by the deprivation of rights, of social belonging, and of personal identity. All of these build up and are passed on. As such, the deprivation of freedom is just one of many. It's not unusual to encounter your lineage when passing through the prison from time to time; it's the norm.

Out of respect for the people with whom I now share my life, I will not refer to their real names. I remember Julia, 25 years old, full of life and dreams. She was imprisoned for three and a half years and during this time she shared a cell with her mother, already quite elderly, her younger sister and her father who was left blind from diabetes. They were all to be released at different times and Julia was the first to get out. She said goodbye to her mother and her sister who were in the same cell and packed her bag. She left with renewed faith as well as "new" capabilities and skills which we had provided to her, during her time of deprivation of freedom, so that she could "reintegrate" into society. She left happy, excited and with the commitment that "outside" we would continue working on what she had "learned" in prison. But the first night of her freedom, all those notions of wanting to choose her own destiny were short-lived; two bullet holes in her hands were enough to remind her of who she was and who she belonged to.

A few weeks ago, I went to visit Ana at her house. She has been free for two years. Her story: like Julia she was imprisoned for micro-trafficking, smuggling small quantities of coca paste (a cheap and low quality substitute of cocaine). Drug smuggling fed her and her two children; she was no Mexican or Columbian drug lord of wealth and power, but a poor woman, abused from a young age, basically illiterate and with three children. As is often the case in poor parts of Chile, the father of the first two children left, abandoning her. The father of the third child died; they never knew what killed him because in the public hospital they told her that the cause of death was unknown.

And so she smuggled drugs, it was both her lifeline and her crime; she moved small quantities of drugs from one neighborhood to the next, and for these activities (drug mule) she received about 900 dollars a month. With this, in addition to working sporadically in a slaughterhouse, she fed her children. These days, she doesn't smuggle, and only works from time to time in the same slaughterhouse. These days, she can't eat with what she earns. These days, I ask myself why I told her that smuggling was evil, who gave me that authority, that truth. These days, I ask myself who I am working for.

When I met her in the prison I invited her to take part in a cookery course provided by Infocap, one of the major social projects of the Chilean province, which provides job skills training to people in circumstances of extreme poverty. Infocap has two main headquarters, one in Santiago and another in Concepción, with about three thousand students registering annually. In 2011, we started to reopen small centres in a few prisons, something which we began to do in the early 90s but for a number of reasons we stopped at the beginning of the 2000s.

In 2011 we returned to the prison, to the female prison in Santiago, with a cookery course. There I met Ana, as I was the dean of Infocap and she was part of the first generation of students. She caught my attention with her sad face as if she carried centuries of hurt on her shoulders, her silence which seemed to hide an unknown guilt, her slow kneading of flour, water and yeast, as if time did not exist. Bit by bit, we got to know each other, and bit by bit she began to ask those questions which we as Jesuits were never trained for: "Father, what did I do to deserve this life? Why is the Lord angry with me? Father, what sin am I paying for?"

Neither she nor I had the answer, but she knew that she wore a stigma which did not belong to her, which robbed her of her identity and which prevented her from belonging to what we call society. I never knew how to respond to her questions, but one day I heard her say something to my colleague which is often heard in these southern parts of the planet, that her misfortune, her stigma, this violence which she inherited without knowing why "was because God had something in store for her"; something like, God gave her this life because He had chosen her for something special.

Her life, that of her mother, that of her grandmother, and those of her ancestors, all the same, all reproducing in one way or another the same violence. Violence in the absence of social rights, violence in the bare needs for human dignity, violence in the lack of happiness, of peace, of quiet. All these lives were marked by the stigma of "having been chosen for something" without knowing what. A stigma which persecutes you for hundreds of years, which is timeless, from which you cannot free yourself.

The Chilean state persecutes Julia, Ana, Enrique, and Hernán. It persecutes delinquency, but it focuses particularly on a group of people which has a shared history and, why not say it, some shared physical characteristics. I don't justify for one moment even the smallest criminal act, and our first loyalty always must be to the victim, but the contemplation of the incarnation in the Spiritual Exercises calls on us not to be blind and deaf to reality: in the United States the prison population is principally made up of people of African-American descent, while in Chile of the descendents of the violated or the invisible. Put simply, in USA and in Chile, "poverty-descendents".

The life stories of the majority of the imprisoned people in Chile are similar. They come from very poor families, of absent fathers and sacrificed mothers. They dropped out of school or never attended at all and quickly left home or were put into state care. They are early consumers of alcohol and drugs and a great many of the women have stories of sexual abuse and early pregnancies. They are violent in their words, in their conduct; violent with their own bodies and with those of others. It would seem that they grow up with a different relationship with death, as if unafraid of bringing it upon themselves or onto others. This violence of generation and birth is reproduced and sharpened in the prison context. Prison is more of the same; it's not a space to heal the pain, rather to drown it. Prison means more absence, definitely more vengeance. Prison is violent because it reproduces violence.

In Chile, people deprived from liberty form groups in prison determined by their home place, their family, what football team they support... they group together with others who they believe share something more with than the "lineage" which unites them subconsciously. The Gendarmerie, the state penitentiary service, controls the prisons. There is no space where they cannot enter and when they have to bring order, they bring order. But they know that in the "*cana*" (prison) there are certain codes which must be respected; for example, when the time comes to serve your sentence, before you are admitted, the first thing they ask you is, where is your family, your relatives? The prisoner responds, in Gallery 5; so he is sent there. They form groups and the Gendarmerie groups them with their people, with their closest relatives.

Constantly, there are conflicts among the inmates to defend the cramped prison spaces, power commandeered to subdue and impose. Violence within the walls, brutal, takes many lives and reflects the violence on the streets. The tall, thick prison walls don't succeed in preventing what happens "outside" from having repercussions inside, and what happens "inside" from having repercussions outside. It's as if the prison and the street are the same reality, one entity where the same things occur.

The violent acts which happen in the prison space are acts of the past, acts which come from the street, acts which filter through the walls in one direction or the other. In the *cana*, crimes aren't paid off with time, they are settled with life and death; in this way peace is made with past and present. One day, while in the Oval, the communal yard between the galleries, a group of "*perros*" (armed inmates sent by the bosses to defend prison spaces and hierarchies) came down quickly from one of the galleries and using handmade weapons killed the "rat". The Rat, a good friend of mine, for about 30 years, was poor, very poor. He was learning to read and write in the Mandela Space, a space belonging to the Catholic Church where antagonistic, violent and multi-offending inmates are offered, without discrimination, job training, literacy classes, psycho-social intervention, and inter-penitentiary work. The Rat had started to come to literacy classes. He was dear to me; I used to watch him with his handwriting book learning to write his name. When he succeeded he ran excitedly to show me his great work. I hugged him. That was the last time I would do so until embracing him as he lay dead in the middle of the Oval.

When I went up to the Rat's gallery to speak to his friends, I went accompanied by 5 prison guards. It isn't often that a civilian goes into the galleries. We went right to the end where the boss lives with his escort. The prison guards stayed 5 metres behind and we chatted. The only thing I remember from that conversation was the question: Father, why are you sad about the rat's death? Our lives are like this, we only have the present. The conversation finished, I left the gallery, the prison guards left me in a safe place and I thought to myself that there was reason in what they had said. It was true, in this world there is only the present. Nothing else.

The Santiago Penitentiary is the largest prison in the country with the highest levels of violence; it houses more than five thousand men. Approximately 50% of them live in the so called "Galleries of the Peni". These are twelve galleries with 200 men living in each one. Each gallery has 40 cells, twenty on one side, twenty on the other, separated by a corridor of about two and a half metres in width. All the galleries open into the 'Oval', the communal yard where age-old justice is served.

The galleries' cells which lie closest to the Oval have higher levels of overcrowding; and as you go further from the Oval, the overcrowding lessens. In other words, all the members of one family or one community will live in a gallery together; however even within this group violence will be used to put down some in favour of others. In practical terms, 7 to 10 people might live in the cells most exposed to the Oval, in a space two-by-two metres wide and four metres high; but in the last cell, the one furthest away from the Oval, one person lives, the person in charge, the boss. The first cells are filled with those who obey, those who give "sexual favours", those who clean the corridors and cells, those who wash the clothes and defend the gallery from the attacks of other galleries. They defend the "*ficha*", the boss. Violence is not only directed against other groups, but also between themselves.

In many parts of the world, the Society of Jesus is present in this complicated, fractured social context. We are there, without knowing what should be done, without knowing what to say. We don't know this world and we'll never know it; from this place of "ignorance", I echo the triad from the Society's social sector, "incarnation – reflection – advocacy". Without incarnation, without being grateful, without the scent of sheep impregnated in our souls, there's nothing to do or say. This first step, the one which is most testing, is the determinant one in this story of enhumblement.

We are called to be there, in our ignorance, simply to stay in this place where life and death are in play. We are there to feel the human suffering, deep, dry and profound, which carries with it poverty, marginalisation and exclusion. We are there to leave our truths behind, to stop pontificating about what should be done; we are there to put aside power, fame and glory.

I'll finish: Are all poor people delinquents? No. Are all delinquents poor? Yes. Prison reprimands us for the pain caused by the absence of human mercy, the consequences of our political – economic – religious model of development, the senselessness of poverty, of abuse, of wealth and of religion detached from human life.

Prison is prison. It is mining refuse, the radioactive waste material from lighting up our homes. Prison is violence, violence inherited over hundreds of years, from generation to generation. Is life possible in this place of death?

It is, and that is why we are there.

Original Spanish
Translation Nils Sundermann



With the minors in the Central Prison of Yaoundé

Alfonso Ruiz Marrodán SJ

Yaoundé, Cameroon

Soon it will be 15 years since I started working as coordinator of a diocesan association called “Foyer de l’Espérance”. It was founded in 1977 and from the beginning its aim has been *the familial and/or social reintegration of children and young people who are homeless or imprisoned*. We work on the street with children and young people who live and sleep there; we are with them in our two listening centres, one for boys and one for girls. We also work in two stabilization centres for children between the ages of 10 and 16 and for young people from 17 to 22, and finally in the minors’ wing in the Central Prison of Yaoundé. The reason I mention Foyer de l’Espérance is to make you aware that I am fortunate to benefit from the organization’s cumulative experience and longstanding traditions.

The Central Prison of Yaoundé was built in 1968 to house a population of 750 prisoners. At the moment there are \pm 4,200 prisoners, at times reaching 4,400. The living conditions, as you can imagine, aren’t good: enormous overcrowding in the so called Kosovo wing where the poorer prisoners are held, deplorable hygiene conditions, basically non-existent health services, insufficient and very poor quality food, the existence of all kinds of deceit and trickery along with physical, psychological, and sexual violence, corruption at every level. This is the atmosphere which permeates all life in the prison... I like to say that the Central Prison is in the image of Cameroonian society with all its vices and virtues, but concentrated and much more intense.

Inside the prison, two wings are separated from the rest: the women’s one where about 120 people live and the minors’ wing for juvenile boys. The few adolescent girl prisoners live with the women. The minors’ wing was built to accommodate 60 youths. Currently there are 110 living there, with the number oscillating between 90 and 290 in its extremes.

What do we do in this wing? I say “we” because the Foyer de l’Espérance has a team of three laypeople who come, at various times, five days a week.

To understand our work you must be aware that we can’t do anything inside the prison without the explicit permission of the prison authorities. Once allowed access and inside, our general goal is quite modest: *that the young prisoners can spend their period of incarceration in a more positive manner and thus be readied for a better social and/or familial integration*. With this in mind we organize various activities:

- Given that education is a right of all children, we organize, in the prison wing, a primary school which ranges from reading and writing to 5th Grade (10-11); and also a secondary school from 6th Grade to the end of high school. All the teachers are prisoners with the exception of a few occasional volunteers that come from outside.

- Often the young people don't have any identification documents and we have to put together a dossier so that they can present themselves to the various state exams: CEP, BEPC, Probatoire, BAC.³ This is no easy task!
- As the saying goes, "you can't reason with an empty belly", so we bring everything we need to cook two daily meals for the minors, and sometimes, during school times, we bring donuts as breakfast just after the beginning of class. If possible we oversee the cooking of the food so that not too much goes "missing".
- Classes finish in June and begin again in September, and as it would be bad for the young people to remain idle, we organize a "special holiday" during the months of July and August with board games, sporting activities, general knowledge competitions, small workshops in drawing, embroidery, etc...
- From September to June, every Wednesday morning, a group of twenty or so minors leave the Central Prison, to come and spend the morning in our centre, Noah's Ark, which is home to young trainees. In times gone by they would come by foot accompanied by two or three prison guards. Nowadays, we bring them in a small van. At the centre there is plenty of space and they are welcomed by a group of educators: they can play football, they find magazines to read, we organize an educational discussion group, they can use the telephone to speak to their families, wash with abundant water and finish the morning with a good meal before returning to prison around 2p.m.
- Many of the young people don't have any contact with their family and for some of them this can be a real tragedy. So, we try to make a link between the young people and their families. Obviously our mobile phone helps us enormously in this task but, if necessary, we also meet up with the parents.
- The Cameroonian justice system is slow and often very negligent. Nearly 75% of the detainees haven't been tried yet. Some minors can spend months and sometimes more than a year in prison before appearing in court to, in the end, be sentenced to three or four months in prison. It's also sometimes the case that young people who have completed their sentence can't leave the prison because their files have been lost somewhere. We do our best to go to the authorities, in the Court Registrar, in the prison administration, to advance the procedure so that the youths can be freed.
- We are also sometimes entrusted by the judge to take minors into our centre, in lieu of the nonexistent state care services.
- As for sanitation, we are left to provide treatment for scabies en masse, or bring critically ill minors to the hospital, taking responsibility for the hospital fee as the administration does absolutely nothing for them...

What is my own experience of working with the prisoners?

The first is pain and powerlessness. I enter into a world of pain, of misery, of violence and often of injustice which I can't control. At the same time, I am conscious that I go there for just a few hours and I leave afterwards. What can I say to someone who has been sentenced

³ For more information on French state exams: *American and French Grade Level comparison*. Retrieved from <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/france/5/pa/grade-level-comparison.pdf>

unjustly and who will have to spend a large part of their lives in prison? How can I proclaim the Good News during Sunday's sermon when I have always been a free man? Sometimes I ask myself what I would do if I were sent to prison.

The second experience is the desire to run away. I feel crushed by the volume of misfortune concentrated in this place. When I go to the prison, I have to cross the big yard to get to the minors' wing. I meet dozens of people who I know: former homeless people; others who have stayed in our centres; adults who I have met in prison as I have been coming here for fourteen years; many others who I do not know. Everyone wants to speak to me about their problem, their misery which needs to be resolved immediately... They say to me that I am their father, that I cannot abandon them. Others even threaten me. Everyone tries to keep me with them. Yes, in these moments, I wish I could run away.

Following that, I will say, actually, things do happen. Young people present themselves each year to state exams. There are some who learn to read, others who pass the BEPC, the Probatoire, and even the Bac. There are some among the adults who try to do the spiritual exercises in daily life; others, after having spent twenty years in prison, publicly attest that the time they spent in prison was a period of conversion, of meeting with God and with humankind. Sometimes, after having given the sermon, people come to see me to speak about themselves and about God and about discovering the richness of the Gospel. I am sometimes left deeply moved at the moment when we say the Our Father, gathered together with ±400 people for the Sunday Service.

Reasons for despair, they are many. You only have to enter the prison to bear witness to the misery concentrated in this place. Corruption used as a means for survival is everywhere. One feels that what we do is merely a drop in the middle of an ocean of horror. Admitting that there are young people who lose themselves in this environment is a sorrow that is difficult to look straight in the eye. What did we not know to do to prevent this or that youth from taking destructive life decisions? What can we do to stop this or that figure of authority from always using violence to reinforce his power, or so that prison life becomes fairer and more fraternal?

There are also reasons for consolation. A previously homeless young person, who took his BEPC while in prison and who we supported for years so that he could continue to study, has managed to get an Erasmus Plus grant to do a Masters. Another, who I bump into by chance on the street, calls me and greets me warmly saying, "When I was in prison in the minors' wing I received two things: Baptism and the BEPC, and I'm doing everything in my power not to lose them now".

As I said at the beginning, the prisons in Cameroon, probably like everywhere, are in the image of the country. Real political will would be needed for things to be able to improve.

Should we abandon our work with prisoners or with street children just because we can't act on the systemic causes of this misery and injustice? I don't think so. Furthermore I ask myself: those who observe and analyze the reasons for society's problems, looking at them from above, even if they have very good tools of analysis, can they do anything to resolve them? I don't think so.

Never forget: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14)

*Original French
Translation Nils Sunderman*



Jesuit Prison Ministry Thailand

Ms. Vilaiwan Phokthavi (Kep)

Bangkok, Thailand

Fr. Olivier Morin SJ started Prison Ministry in Thailand in October 1991. This year (2016) we celebrate its 25th anniversary. We organized a little sharing of our work with Xavier Hall parishioners after Sunday Mass on 30 October. A parishioner made a critical comment about our work:

"Your team has a wonderful spirit but... I totally disagree with your mission. Why do you help prisoners? Prisoners are bad people, they make trouble... When they are released they continue with the same bad behavior as before – drugs, etc. There is no way that they will change and be better. I suggest you take up another ministry."

This comment confirmed for me the negative attitude towards prisoners many good people have.

When I thought about it again, I realized that many years ago I had the same attitude – or worse. Prison is an area where good people do not belong. This attitude is difficult to change.

Once I was walking with my youngest brother along the beach. He showed me a big jellyfish. At that time I hated jellyfish and felt disgust. But my brother told me to look attentively. When I did, I was stunned! That close look with an open mind made me praise the Lord for that amazing jellyfish.

A similar experience but greater happened to me again when I started Prison Ministry work (July 2009). Fr. Olivier brought me to each prison for an orientation before I replaced him and became the new coordinator. One place was the Medical Correctional Institution where we visit prisoners who are ill. At that time there was one loathsome looking patient that I noticed from the short distance. I walked away immediately to another bed and hoped that Fr. Olivier would care for this patient. I felt relieved when Fr. Olivier went to that bed with his loving heart. But then Fr. Olivier called me to join him in a way that I could not escape. When I reached that bed Fr. Olivier held my hand while he held that sick man with another hand. No one said a word. Finally I forced myself to look at the man. I saw tears drop from his eyes with his sad smile. We stayed there together for a minute, hands in hands, eyes to eyes. That was a moment when I experienced the love of God among us. I would say that was the moment when I realized that I would be strong enough to carry out this Prison Ministry work. Fr. Olivier walked to another bed. I stayed on a little while holding that man's hand and my heart told him I'm so sorry to have walked away, please forgive my ignorance and hesitation. I looked at him to say good bye and I saw the beauty of his gentle face as he thanked me for my visit (although started with hesitation). I was filled with joy, like a prisoner who received royal pardon. This experience made me understand better the gospel of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" (Luke 16:19-31).

Jesuit Prison Ministry Thailand

At present we run two programs:

Prison Services (for criminal prisoners): for this program we have 6 persons on our team, one based at Chiangmai (North of Thailand), 5 based in Bangkok. Each month (almost every working day), we go to 12 prisons in 7 provinces of Thailand, including the Medical Correctional Institution. Our target group is the prisoners who have no visitors. Because of this, most of the prisoners on our list are foreigners from poor or underdeveloped countries, e.g. Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Nepal, Iran, Pakistan, Africa... In those 12 prisons there are currently about 1,300 prisoners from 37 countries plus Thai tribals (Lahu, Musor, Hmong, Karean). We talk individually with the prisoners, one on one, across a glass, using a telephone. In some prisons we go for an inside group visit. This depends on the regulation of each prison.

IDC (Immigration Detention Center), called Suan Phlu, in Bangkok: We serve detainees who are undocumented or have overstayed their visa. They may be migrant workers without work permits, stateless, asylum seeker, refugees, or foreign prisoners being prepared for deportation. At IDC we have two teams: a health care team (one nurse + one volunteer medical doctor) and a two-person release team which helps the detainees before they are released from IDC.

According to our statistics, many prisoners on our list (75%) are poor people, who began as drug runners. Then they got involved in drug dealing with the hope of making more money and finally they were trapped. Many have done this for the first time without any chance of getting money, but they have gone to jail. The drug sentence in Thailand is very long... from a death sentence to life to 50 years, 40 years, 25 years...

I have just visited one tribal man, in Chiangmai prison. His charge was attempted murder. He was sentenced to 25 years. He is now 33 years old, his wife left him, and he seems not to know much about his daughter. He looks very pitiful and sad. He thanks us for visiting him monthly saying that, there must truly be God, otherwise how could we come and visit him every month. He admits that he was very bad, always drunk, he never thought about the family, never listened to his wife or parents or even became aware of their love. Liquor was his life before, he never felt responsible in anything. He admitted that prison does him good. Now he has stopped drinking, and has time to look back in his life and be aware that he has not done any good. He knows how much he has hurt his parents and his own family. If he had not been arrested, he would still be a drunkard. He wants to change to be a good man, he will not touch liquor again. He has appreciated our visit, which gives him hope, encourages him to correct himself. However, he thinks 25 years will be very long.

We run a program once a year to visit prisoners' families in Laos, Nepal, and Northern Thailand (tribal villages). These family visits are very important to both the prisoners and their families. They link the prisoners with their families in Thailand, Laos, Nepal, and the Hill Tribes. The problem is that we can only reach out to a few families. We experience the love in the families for the prisoners, a lot of hope and joy as the prisoners get news from their loved ones. To send news and receive news from them is so valuable. We take photos of families to send to prisoners, give them news after the visit... Many prisoners have left their families when their son, or daughter was only a baby... How the baby grows up is really the news they wish to know and also about their parents and siblings.

In these visits to families we extend our services to also support the education of the children of prisoners (since they are in prison, their children are a bit lost). With our collaborators in Laos and Jesuits in Nepal we have managed to give scholarship & follow up for the education of some children. Prisoners feel very grateful and relieved when they know that their children are receiving support for Education from us.

We also follow up prisoners when they finish their sentence. Last September 2016, our three Cambodian prisoners were released and went back home in Cambodia. One told me that his family was very much involved in drug business, and it is very hard for him to tell his family to stop this business. This would cause him problems, but he does not want to be part of this business anymore. How can we help him?

We contacted a Jesuit in Cambodia (Fr. Jub) who could be contacted by our Cambodian ex-prisoners. They did it and they are very happy to meet him. Our ex-prisoners said that they were already happy because of keeping our connection, it is a spiritual support that makes them feel safe, warm and well accepted, and helps them to start a new life. We have ex-prisoners contacting us from time to time. We are happy to continue this relationship as our big family.

For detainees in IDC, the situation is worse than in other prisons. There are 13 cells in IDC, for an average of 800-1,200 people. Our clinic is only basic but we can refer the patients to hospitals when needed. Besides medical aid, our health care services include organizing a family day once a month, for which we got permission from the IDC authorities, to bring together detainees who are family members but remain in different cells (men separated from women, children most likely are with the women), so that they are able to get together once a month. We also organize a haircut day once a month, detainees who need hair cut sign up to have haircut. And as for the Release team, we work hard to find ways to help detainees scheduled to be released from detention.

In both programs, Prison Services and IDC, accompaniment is the most important element. When we really know the persons then we know their needs, and our services will follow these needs. We try our best to serve with love and care. Miracles happen - something that we experience with surprise and great joy from time to time, in difficult situations.

To serve prisoners/detainees little by little helps me to go a little deeper day by day into the word "sinner" - the experience of my shame (sin) for ignoring that sick man I mentioned - and the joy of being forgiven by his look and smile. The love we received together at that moment is the Love of God, and remains in our hearts.

When we listen to the prisoners telling their stories, their difficulties, desolations, hurts, their hope, their joy, the little things that they can pick up like a treasure in order to cheer themselves up, their stories and situation make us realize the struggle of life of every human being.

We are sinners and Jesus comes to rescue us. This sentence echoes in me.

And I'm very touched when I read the message from our Pope Francis:

"The name of God is mercy."

"There are no situations we cannot get out of, we are not condemned to sink into quicksand, in which the more we move the deeper we sink. Jesus is there, his hand extended, ready to reach out to us and pull us out of the mud, out of sin, out of the abyss of evil into which we have fallen."

"We need only be conscious of our state, be honest with ourselves, and not lick our wounds. We need to ask for the grace to recognize ourselves as sinners."

Even though we respect the justice system, we should be aware of the imperfection of the law. It needs to be combined with mercy!! There must be some circumstance, some situation in the mystery of life that leads to sin. Why do people do this and that? We need God's grace and mercy. Jesus told us to love one another so that we can help one another in our struggle.

Consolation

We receive support in terms of enough funding every year. This means that we have partners who share our mission. We receive spiritual support from Jesuits and friends. Our team, although not too professional, is good enough. There are touching moments for us from time to time, such as when a released prisoner reaches home and calls to let us know that he is safe and shows his gratitude to us. We feel the joy of being part of big family when their families receive news. Some letters from prisoners remind us that we are needed.

Desolation

In our work we have to face many regulations, from the Department of Correction, immigration officials, prison authorities, etc. Some practices exhibit a lost sense of humanity due to too many strict rules and regulations and a negative attitude toward prisoners. There are also cases where we cannot help or find a solution... We pray and let it be... God's grace will come!

Difficulties and challenges

We work close to prisoners, detainees who are (somehow) identified as persons who did wrong, who are unlawful (considered bad and dangerous) or at the edge of the society (trouble makers, unwanted...). We were told not to trust them.

We need to listen to them fairly with our heart, and with a positive attitude, but at the same time we do not want to be naive or unwise. It is very hard, and often we have no way to find the truth about the crime they may have committed. Some claim they are innocent, some tell lies, some make up stories, some tell the truth, some say what people told them (which may not be the real truth!!).

How much does this matter in order to know how to operate well our mission?

I think we can use as our guideline to manage our mission what Fr. Pedro Arrupe told us:

"Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything".

Original English



Personal Testimony on Prison Ministry

Eli Rowdy Y Lumbo SJ

PJPS, Muntinlupa City, Manila, Philippines

The Philippine Jesuit Prison Service Foundation, Inc. (PJPS), is a non-stock, non-profit organization that advocates a more humane approach to the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals and their families. Since our inception in 1994, in coordination with the Bureau of Corrections personnel and with the help of generous benefactors and volunteers, we have continuously provided various programs to help alleviate the conditions of our incarcerated brethren and their families. In its commitment to rebuild lives and rekindle hope, PJPS has been providing inmates not only with pastoral care but also social services and medical assistance, scholarships for their children, and livelihood program to help them re-integrate to mainstream society. These programs continue to this day.

Doing prison ministry is not easy. It is a full time ministry. One can never really rest, as there are so many things to do. Each time I enter the prison camp, I do not know what to expect. After all I minister to more than 20,000 inmates in the National Penitentiary. In my ministry, it has dawned on me that I will not judge the inmates as I do not know their real and complete story. Majority of them come from poor families and a good number have not had education or a good education. I would not begrudge them their choices. I will not make the prejudices of our society the basis of how I deal with supposed “criminals.” As a priest, I am invited to enter the world of the convicted felon. As I enter their world I come face to face with my own sin and my need for God’s mercy. As I pray with them during Mass, I feel their sorrow, pain and need for mercy. Mercy, a fellow Jesuit shared with me, is an invitation to enter the chaos of another, the willingness to be with the sinner, to accompany the sinner. Is this not what our Lord did in the incarnation? He entered the chaos of humanity. God’s boundless mercy is such that no matter our sins, his love and mercy will always have room for us.

Allow me then to share stories, which I have personally heard from my almost six years now in the PJPSFI which is based in the New Bilibid Prisons Reservation in Muntinlupa City, Philippines.

There is a story of an inmate who killed both his parents when he was high on drugs. He has been in prison for more than 10 years now. He says there is no single day that he has not felt remorse; no single day he has not felt pain for being the cause of the death of people who loved him and whom he loved. He knows that even his incarceration will never give him peace. He suffers each day not just because he is in prison where the conditions are far from humane given the congestion and the lack of facilities and the absence of good food but more so because of the pain of knowing he killed the very people who gave him life. Every day, he goes to Mass and prays for mercy, for the forgiveness of the people he hurt. Every time I see him I see the pain in his eyes, yearning for forgiveness, for peace, wanting to change the past, if only he can, but facing the future with a desire to change, hoping that one day he learns to forgive himself as he knows God has forgiven him.

There is a story of a former inmate who was released after having been in prison for 12 years. He was acquitted of a crime of murder, a crime he did not commit. While in prison he suffered because of congested and inhumane prison situation and more so because he longed for his children. They suffered also; they grew up without a father who would provide for them, protect them, comfort them, or just be with them. In PJPS we rebuild lives and rekindle hope through, among others, the scholarship program where we send the children of the inmates to school, hoping to stop the cycle of criminality thru education, and giving hope and reason to change to the inmate. What if he had been killed, and then our courts realize that he was innocent? In PJPS we fight for their rights, for their life, even if it means being persecuted, ridiculed and taunted. In PJPS we care for their families, in particular, their children.

There is a story of an inmate who was into drugs pushing because he was envious of the things his rich friends in school had. He was a scholar in a prestigious school. He wanted to have what they had and drugs became his means. But he was caught. In detention, he did not inform his family of his predicament because in his mind he did wrong, the only one to blame, and he should be the only one to suffer. But we all know this is not the case. When someone we love suffers, we suffer and shed tears with them. When the family of the inmate realized he was in prison, they visited him. But he shoved them away. He said, I committed the crime; let me be the only one to suffer. But they said, "do not deny us the choice to love you." Separation from the people we love is a tragedy in itself. We who have lost loved ones to sickness, accidents or violence know this. In PJPS we minister to such people because for Christ came to search for the lost, the last and the least.

There is a story of an inmate who was convicted of a crime he said he was not guilty of. But the truth is, he was given a choice: admit a crime he was innocent of but his family is provided for or deny his participation in the crime and he gets killed. His family would lose him and they get hungry. He chose to admit the crime because he says he would rather have a good life for his family. He is now in the Maximum camp serving a sentence of more than 20 years. He says he just thinks he works abroad and sends money to his family. If we were in his shoes, what will be our choice? I believe we are the choices we make. We choose what we do. But more often than not, our emotions and fears, sins and frailties, influence and even determine our choices. In PJPS we listen to their stories, discern with and guide them. One of the prayers of the inmates is to be with their families. A couple of months ago PJPS was instrumental in the reunion of an inmate and his mother. They reunited after 25 years. Such reunions are heart wrenching, connects the long years of separation, breaks through the barriers of numbness and opens the floodgates of tears and emotions. I was witness to theses reunions and I could only shed tears when parents embrace with so much love and longing their child.

There is a story of an inmate, convicted of rape when he was still a juvenile, who has been in prison for more than his lifetime. He was 16 when the crime occurred. He is now past 40. He was with older people whom he considered friends. When they raped a woman he joined them. There are those who as juveniles grew up on the streets, not having had the guidance of a parent, not having had the privilege of growing up within a family where love was nurtured, where they would have had experienced love and taught to love, where they would have been taught right from wrong. In PJPS we spend time with them to teach them. Yet we also realize that they teach us as well.

There is a story of an inmate who I observed as serious, who despite the smile I saw as rather forced. He seemed not to know how to enjoy life. (Of course who would enjoy life in prison). I gave him the feedback. His reply broke my heart. He said what I said was true. Early on he was given to an aunt who at a very young age made him work hard. As a child he did not know what play meant as he had no chance to play. This he said made him very serious about

everything; he was always anxious, irritable, and impatient. He is now where he is because of this. A joke from another led him to do something wrong. I felt for him. I feel for the inmates. In PIPS we enter their lives and understand them and help them understand that although they have lost their childhood, that they have lost their way, it does mean they would remain lost. We help their rehabilitation.

There is a story of an inmate student I had inside the penitentiary. I teach all the Accounting subjects, from 2nd year to 4th year in the college for inmates, an extension of a prestigious university. The inmates get a degree in Entrepreneurship after 4 years. I caught him, in a way cheating. His exam paper and answer sheet was with a classmate who was copying his answers. I told him I trusted him and asked why he allowed this incident? He kept quiet. I told him he should be instrumental in change, not just for himself but for others as well. He cried and apologized saying that this is the reason why he is in prison in the first place. He was charged as an accomplice to a crime because he kept quiet when a killer hid in his house. He said he should have said something then as he should have said something now. In prison we come face to face not just with the sinner, but the reality of sin. We are not just confronted with the criminal, but the crime as well, not their sin alone, but ours as well and the sin of the world.

We are familiar with the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The younger son demands from his father his inheritance and spends this on wild living. When he had spent everything, a famine arose, and he became hungry. When he came to his senses he realized that while he was starving, his father's servants had food to spare. With this he set out to go back to his father with a ready statement: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and ran to him. Before he could say anything, his father welcomed and embraced him. Before he could even understand what was unfolding, his father rejoiced and celebrated as he had him back.

Last September 8 this year, I pronounced my final vows as a Jesuit. I chose as my venue the prison camp. A day before, however, I had a Mass at the Reception and Diagnostic Center, the place where the newly convicted inmates from the City or Provincial Jails are brought. Before the final blessing, the inmates extended their hands over me in prayer. They thanked God for me; they blessed and celebrated with me. I was so overwhelmed by the experience that I silently shed tears. Here I was, a sinner, prayed over by sinners, loved by those deemed as loveless.

On the day of my final vows, during the homily Fr. Wilfredo Samson SJ said that many were shocked that I chose to pronounce my final vows in prison but he said he expected this, as a robbery, an anomaly and a miracle have happened. Robbery as, he said, the inmates, they who are seen as dregs and cancer of society, have stolen my heart. An anomaly as it is an anomaly to love those undeserving of love, and to be loved by the loveless. Fr. Willy says in my heart I knew what unconditional love meant – to love without asking for anything in return, to love even when the inmates do not change, and to love even when I am hurt and tired. The prisoners are still God's children. They deserve to have a second chance to change. A miracle as my heart has been tattooed with the impalpable love of God. In prison it is rare to have an inmate with no tattoo as it is a sign that they are brave, and that they belong to a gang, who protects them and will even fight for them. In prison I was, I am tattooed with God. I belong to God. I am a victim of love as I freely chose to be a victim of God's love. This is the reason why I chose to pronounce my final perpetual vows in prison. I wanted to tell the inmates that despite their sins, there is room for grace, that despite their being "unlovable," they can be loved. There is so much space for them in God's heart.

Pope Francis has always had a special place in his heart for prisoners. He washed the feet of prisoners. He insisted on a Jubilee for Prisoners in the Vatican during this Holy Year of Mercy. During the Mass, he centered his homily on hope, seeking to kindle hope in the prisoners: "God hopes! His mercy gives him no rest. He is like that Father in the parable, who keeps hoping for the return of his son who has fallen astray." God is love. This is why I truly believe His heart will always have room for the inmate and His mercy will always be willing to gather the sinner in an embrace.

Original English



Ministry on California's Death Row – an Ignatian Meditation

George Williams SJ

San Quentin prison chaplain, California

I become aware of God's presence

I lift up the Blessed Sacrament for the men inside the cage to see. *"This is my body, which is given for you."* God is here in this awful place...

The "chapel" on Death Row is a windowless old shower room encased in a heavy metal cage. There are 6 wooden benches bolted to the floor for the congregation. I stand outside their cage, having padlocked myself inside my own cage as required by the department. I wear my black stab-proof vest. (It's also bulletproof, which to my knowledge makes me the only Jesuit in my community who regularly celebrates Mass in body armor...).

There is a harsh florescent ceiling light over me and as I raise the host the light illuminates it. I look at the men. They are quiet and focused and I imagine as I am standing there facing them, separated by the steel mesh and padlocks, that the light of Christ is streaming forth from that host toward them, dispelling the dark shadows of "East Block" – San Quentin's Death Row for men.

These prisoners, referred to as "condemned" by the corrections department, are acutely aware of society's condemnation. Every day they are reminded that in the eyes of society that they no longer deserve to live. They live with the reality of their deaths in a way that we on the outside cannot imagine. It is not death by execution they fear, what they most fear is the living death of permanent separation from everyone else.

What they seem to long for the most is forgiveness. As a priest, I bear witness to God's forgiveness. God's mercy is greater than our worst sins. The love and mercy of God, expressed through the death and resurrection of Jesus, makes forgiveness and healing possible for all of us, even the most despised and outcast members of our society.

In Celtic thought there is the concept of "thin places" where the visible and the invisible worlds come together and almost touch. Experiences and places of beauty touch our souls and remind us of the transcendent. But these thin places can also put us in touch with hellish realms. Death Row is such a liminal place. As one man standing in a cage recently noted during mass, "perhaps this is our purgatory." As a Jesuit, I feel called to go to the margins, to the frontiers, to the thin places where the hope and the light of the Gospel are desperately needed.

God is present in this dark place. So are the spirits of despair, fear and revenge. It is a spiritual battleground. St. Ignatius, no stranger to battlefields wrote in the Foundation of the Institute:

"Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the Cross in our Society... should show himself ready to reconcile the estranged, compassionately assist and serve those who are in prisons or hospitals, and indeed, to perform any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good".

St. Ignatius realized the importance of prison ministry then, and I believe it is time for the Society of Jesus to reclaim this element of our charism that has been allowed to fall into obscurity over the years. The death penalty, mass incarceration, even life without parole, are all "Life Issues" and those who wish to stand up against a culture of death ought to pay heed to what Pope Francis has repeatedly said:

"All Christians and men of good will are called today to fight not just for the abolition of the death penalty in all its forms, whether it be legal or illegal, but also the goal of improving prison conditions, out of respect of the human dignity of people deprived of their freedom."

Ignatius says: "See God present in you just as God is present in a temple. See yourself as God's own image and divine likeness." Much of my work with prisoners is to help them see the presence of God in themselves.

The major spiritual illness of most prisoners is shame. At the deepest level they believe that they are 'no good.' Many have learned to identify themselves by what others have labeled them: criminals, murderers, even monsters. This radical sense of being worthless, bad, a 'nothing,' lies at the root of most antisocial behavior. I believe we must reject the lie that says we are nothing but the worst sin we have committed.

I review the day with gratitude

"This is my body, which is given for you." Words spoken at the last meal of a man about to be condemned and executed by the state. The words of the Gospel and the sharing of communion take on a haunting resonance on Death Row. Jesus, the executed prisoner is reflected in the eyes of men also condemned to die. How often do we remember that Jesus Christ was arrested, thrown in jail, put on trial, convicted and sentenced to death? That he was given the death penalty and was executed by the state as a common criminal? So was John the Baptist. So were Peter, Paul, James, and countless followers of Christ. Christians have not been strangers to prison. But how often do Christians think of Christ as an *executed prisoner*?

At the "sign of peace" we shake hands. This is the only point of physical contact with these men – they reach their hands through a 4 x 12 inch slot in the mesh wall to shake mine. I am often surprised at the way they grasp my hand – there is so little human touch there – in some way, it feels to me like they are trying to grab hold of a different reality than the cold and lifeless place they live in.

I feel deep gratitude every day I wake up and know I am going into San Quentin. I cannot imagine more consoling work. And of course it is also very challenging. There is an emotional heaviness one feels working in a prison that can easily lead one to compassion fatigue and burnout. But I find the consolation always outweighs the desolating sadness of prison. Almost every day I encounter men and situations that make me want to cry and then later, other situations and prisoners that are joyfully amusing. Laughter and tears – this work is so REAL! At the end of every day I am filled with gratitude for the rich, tragic, joy-filled graces of this ministry.

I pay attention to my emotions

I could feel despair, but I choose joy. There are many shadows in this building. There is an almost palpable air of oppression that broods over the place. The forbidding 12-foot high black doors labeled "CONDEMNED" at the entrance of the building name the spirit of Death Row. Visitors invariably comment how eerie and dark the place both looks and feels. There are plenty of ghosts too. There are over 720 men currently condemned to death in California – all at San Quentin. Some have been there for over 30 years – since the death penalty was reinstated in CA in 1978 by a voter initiative.

Far more men have died of old age or suicide in these past 30 years on San Quentin's death row than the 13 who have been put to death by the state. Their hopelessness and despair linger in the shadows, long after the bodies are wheeled out. One of my regular 'parishioners' wrote this:

Capital Existence

*I am sitting here....
Every now and then I sigh.
I am lying here...
Once in a while I moan.
I hardly smile...
Except to hide my pain
It's getting harder to think.
I can see the stress in the faces around me,
Hear the sadness in their voices,
Feel the depression surrounding me,
Smell the fear.
I am on Death Row.*

J.H.

D. tells me he's had enough; he wants to give up. His body, his health, his spirit have all been broken. My heart goes out to him. He is living in hell. I cannot imagine the emptiness of his existence.

I don't give him advice. I ask him about his granddaughter who he loves. He smiles. Maybe his love for her will be enough to keep him from despairing and killing himself. Maybe not. All I can do is point to love and hope, point toward the light in this valley of death...

The temptation to suicide is an ever-present reality for most of the men on Death Row. More times than I can count men have asked me if committing suicide would result in them going straight to hell. I don't believe it would, (the Catechism (paragraph 2283 states, "We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives.") However pastorally, I do not want to tell the man behind the bars that suicide is OK! I always try to focus on the things in their life that give them some measure of hope and peace. But I have felt very deeply the degree of despair and pain that many of these men live with. Somehow, I know that God is there with them in their suffering.

There are moments of levity and even joy on Death Row. The birth of a grandchild, the telling of a funny joke, the grace of receiving the sacrament of reconciliation that lifts years of shame

and guilt from a man's heart – these are all the counter-spirits that temper the temptation to despair. There are also moments of gallows humor that I have found very funny, though the humor does not usually translate well for people who do not work in prisons.

Choose a feature of the day and pray from it

Since my first experiences in prison ministry as a Jesuit novice, I have seen over and over the face of Christ in the prisoners as well as in those who guard them. Ironically, it is in the darkness of prison that I encounter most vividly the light of God shining forth.

I got permission from the warden to baptize B. He's been studying about Catholicism for some time and wishes to join the Church.

With his hands cuffed behind him, and attached to a chain around his waist, he is escorted down the tier of cells to the entryway of the "Condemned" building. Several members of the medical staff and administrators are on hand by his invitation to witness his baptism. The normally noisy hallway becomes quiet and uncharacteristically peaceful as we began.

B. reads a passage from Romans 6: *"Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"* I have to hold the book for him as his hands are still handcuffed behind his back. Condemned Inmates must always be under some form of physical constraint when out of their cells. The warden is not willing to make an exception to the strict security rules.

The words of the ritual are hauntingly powerful as we stand against a black-painted wall, a wall that hides from our view the old Gas Chamber behind it. *"If we have been united with him through likeness to his death, so shall we be through a like resurrection."* The words of St Paul challenge and indict the whole machinery of death around us.

The words blessing the water are similarly a rejection of the power of death, violence and revenge: *"Light, Hope, Healing, Rebirth, Joy, Peace, Love,"* each word, each symbol hits like a sledgehammer against darkness, despair, vengeance and death.

The sacrament is a clear sign of God's grace shining into one of the darkest corners of our world. *Do you reject Satan? I do. And all his works? I do, and all his empty promises? I do.*

As I prepare to anoint B. with the sacred oil, he says, "Can you bless my hands as well?" In order to do so, he has to turn and offer me his hands, handcuffed behind his back. The same hands that murdered 3 people are now anointed with the holy oil of salvation.

I look toward tomorrow

Prison ministry brings me right up into the battle between good and evil. I believe the spirit of evil that I, as a Jesuit am called to struggle against is not the evil misdeeds of the prisoners, but a greater oppression, a *punishment system* that robs them of their dignity as sons and daughters of God.

Prison ministry touches on virtually every important social justice issue of our time – poverty, mental health care, racism, violence and brutality, and the abuse of state power.

Prison ministry is a stark reminder that we are up against what St. Paul describes as *"the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* Ephesians 6:12. Prisons are hidden places of suffering. Prisons are not accidents – they are the product

of the hardness of human hearts: our common anger and fear poured out in concrete and steel. Policies made by people who may have meant good but have instead created a vast system of oppression. We have built these prisons. They are in a sense, demonic.

I could despair, but I choose hope and I choose joy. What a wonderful time to be a Jesuit! I am so encouraged by the recent words of Pope Francis to the Society urging us to press on to the peripheries; this is our charism! The true work of the Society of Jesus he said, is to offer the people of God consolation and help them so that “the enemy of human nature does not rob us of joy – the joy of evangelizing, the joy of the family, the joy of the church, the joy of creation.” A joy that cannot be stripped from us by the magnitude of the evils of the world we confront.

I have just finished writing my dissertation for a doctorate in Criminology from Northeastern University in Boston. I studied ways that correctional officers are socialized into their work roles and suggest steps that can be taken to help them resist the temptation to become cynical and burned out. Helping them would help prisoners too.

No matter where I am called to work, and no matter how many tomorrows God gives me, I am grateful for these years I have had in His service in prisons. And I know wherever I go, the need for Jesuits to continue to go to the margins and to speak out prophetically against the life-denying power of the prison will continue.

Original English



The Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative

Michael E. Kennedy SJ

Chaplain at Sylmar Juvenile Hall, Culver City, California

Pope Francis actualizes Jesus's depiction of discipleship related to us in the eschatological discourse found in Matthew 25. This is always especially true for me on Holy Thursday, when the Pope traditionally visits the poorest of the poor in prisons and detention centers, and when he washes the feet of inmates. The Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative of the California Province is imitating and expanding this work by assisting incarcerated individuals in forming communities of prayer behind bars, where inmates have the opportunity to open their hearts to God's grace and find healing and dignity as God's children.

Some background

The praxis of prison ministry came into my life while I was pastor of Dolores Mission, one of the few remaining Jesuit parishes in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Dolores Mission is located in the predominately Latino section of East Los Angeles known as Boyle Heights. This area, in turn, was and continues to be, the vortex of LA gang activity. In the 1990's violence reached a crescendo among the 450 gangs that were comprised of 45,000 to 50,000 members. At that time Los Angeles was clearly the gang capital of the USA. American gang life is marked by violence often stemming from criminal activity related to rival gangs vying for control of the very lucrative illegal narcotics trade, and the drugs of choice were cocaine and methamphetamine (crystal meth). From 2005 to 2008, the Los Angeles Police Department, reported 16,398 verified violent gang crimes including 491 homicides, 7,047 felony assaults, and 5,518 robberies.

In examining this violence, I became aware that most of the perpetrators, and most of the victims, were kids. These were young men brought up in fatherless households, often abused, neglected, and betrayed. To them, the gang life was attractive. Many of the young men and women I came into contact with fell into this pattern. They found that the "gang" was a substitute family, offering them the relationships they yearned for, but did not find at home. Gang involvement also produces a sense of prestige, usually through negative means such as fear and intimidation. Power was achieved through the barrel of a Glock 37 handgun, or even an AK47 assault rifle, and money came through the illicit drug trade or forms of extortion used to keep neighborhoods under control.

Birth of a ministry

As the pastor of a small parish in the heart of Los Angeles, I quickly became concerned with the numerous funerals we held for teenagers, and for every dead teenager there was likely a teenage killer. Back in those days the Los Angeles Police Department was a paradigm of efficiency and most juvenile offenders were quickly caught and incarcerated. One result of

this for me was more and more frequent visits to the accused teen in jail and home visits to the teen victim's family. In both settings, I found the need for healing to be overwhelming but often unfulfilled. All who were involved in this vicious interactive cycle fell into the bottom strata of society. Many parents were immigrants, often undocumented, and fearful of government at all levels. They struggled mightily to make sense of their new lives in *Los Estados Unidos*. They often worked at menial, low paying jobs for innumerable hours, and they found the strong family ties that bound them together in their old country had become tattered or non-existent in the new one. All this created a web of confusion for the younger generation who found a welcoming solace in gang membership. Here, the enemy became a member of a rival gang. Gang leaders (shot callers) often sent young men on missions to take out rivals as one street gang after another vied for control of their territory. As the violence escalated in the 1990's and early 2000's, I found myself visiting these juvenile offenders who were placed in detention. One of the main sites where they are taken is the Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall in Sylmar, California, a suburb of Los Angeles.

Teen prison

When I first visited Sylmar, if I could have looked over the twenty-foot brick and concrete block wall topped by barbed wire, I would have mistaken the cluster of buildings, paved walkways, and athletic fields as a small college campus. Only the numerous and ever present guards accompanying all youngsters gives a clue that this is indeed a prison for teens. This complex holds approximately 250 to 300 teens today, but in my first encounter with it, it held many more. Behind these walls, both males and females, strictly segregated, await court and sentencing for violent and non-violent crimes. As I visited Sylmar and several other juvenile detention centers to counsel some of my young parishioners, I noticed that the less violent offenders were moved to camps for sentences of up to a year and a chance to return home relatively soon. Those who committed more violent crimes were tried as adults, although they were as young as 14 or 15 years old. If found guilty, and most were, they were kept locked up at "JUVI" until their 18th birthday when they are sent to one of the thirty-four California adult prisons, often for many years, perhaps for the rest of their lives. I then found myself visiting the "graduates" of JUVI at one of the California state prisons.

Listening and healing

As I listened to the stories of these young people, I came to recognize that God was often missing from their lives. Like many other young people, they spent time searching for love and fulfillment in all the wrong places. They did not recognize what Ignatius learned in Manresa, that the Holy Trinity embodied in Christ is the fountain of satisfaction we all crave. As I worked with them, I saw that the most useful tool I could bring to their situation was the Spiritual Exercises. The genius of Ignatius could open these young people to the Spirit of God and perhaps begin a transformation process that assimilates Christ's own way into their very being. To get there, they needed to feel accepted, forgiven, and loved. For this to be credible to a teenager, a great deal of direct contact with a caring, empathetic person is required, and that person has to be able to listen.

Incarcerated teens have often experienced trauma related to physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. These traumas have often triggered behaviors that lead to substance abuse and eventually the crimes for which they are serving prison sentences. In order to heal from that trauma a young person needs a sense of self-respect, self-esteem, confidence, and courage. But

often that young person has to be cajoled into going deep within and recognizing mistakes made before God's healing hand can comfort them and change their lives.

Growing pains

Ignatian meditation was the entree into delving deep within the past life of troubled young gang members. It became the medium I used to help them realize God loved them and wanted the best for them. Of course, the focus is on Jesus Christ, but Jesus in the style and discourse of young gang members – a Jesus who relates to their most heartfelt experiences. The Spiritual Exercises are “exercises of the heart,” and most inmates, teens included, are not physically impaired. In fact, most Americans would envy their physical strength and stamina. While they spend a great deal of time exercising and bodybuilding, their hearts and souls have often atrophied from a lack of care and attention.

To facilitate a relationship between the teen inmate and Jesus, I began to introduce meditations based on the Gospel, but often in gang parlance and with situations with which they could identify. I found that posing simple questions, couched within their life experience, and then asking them to write over a 10 to 20 minute period of time, set the stage for their sharing these experiences small group settings. I soon recognized this was an immense task. California alone has over 250,000 individuals under some form of incarceration and the majority of these are under 25 years of age.

To help address this, in 2009 I formed a non-profit organization called The Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative, or simply JRJI, and recruited several like-minded individuals to assist me in visiting the young people both in Sylmar and in the many other state prisons where kids are sent in California when they turn 18. Today this small group continues to bring Ignatian Retreats to prisons stretching from Pelican Bay State Prison, 20 miles south of the Oregon/California border, to Calipatria State Prison 20 miles north of the California/Mexico border. We have reached thousands of inmates in our journeys.

Results – Communities of prayer behind bars

Transformation is a process and we need relationships to continue that process. The incarcerated are no different. The long-term goal of our work is to form self-sustaining prayer communities that can come together to recognize the experience of Christ in their lives. The best evaluation JRJI gets from its work comes from the prisoners themselves, many now past their teen age years, and finding spiritual anchors for the first time through the retreats. Here is a small sample of their responses.

- What did you learn from this retreat?
 - *To boil it down, I learned how to let go and speak from the depth of my soul rather than stay silent.* (José, in a California state prison)
- What impacted you the most from this retreat?
 - *It impacted me for the better, but the meditation aspect was an overwhelming positive experience. It brought me peace and connected me spiritually with Christ.* (Miguel, a California inmate)
- How did this retreat bring healing to your life?
 - *This retreat was the hands of God Himself lifting the burdens off my chest. They were slowly crushing me.* (José an inmate)

- Would you like to share your healing experience?
- *The healing experience is a tough but necessary one. I really had to dig deep and just let go of my day-to-day worries. I had to hand over the reigns of my life to God and let Him take charge and the experience was exhilarating.* (Steven, a 20-year-old serving life in prison)

Young prisoners finding Christ loves them

The Spiritual Exercises have definitely made an impact on many young people incarcerated in California. Many have found their true identity as a child of God and have begun healing the broken relationships incurred with their families, their peers, and most significantly with God. Creating communities of faith behind prison walls is no easy task, but it is a necessary one to help stem the tide of violence that affects many inner-city youth. Pope Francis has taken note of this by sending three personal letters to JRJI since 2014. In one of those letters, he responded to teens facing the possibility of life sentences. He asked me to assure those teens "...that the Lord knows and loves each of them, and that the Pope remembers them with affection in his prayers." That is the task of JRJI. We ask you to pray for us as we continue to expand these efforts in California.

To learn more about JRJI, visit www.jrji.org

Original English



Hope in the flesh

Jose Osuna and Isabel Osuna, father and daughter

Director of External Affairs, Homeboy Industries, Los Angeles, California

"I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you took care of me. I was in prison, and you visited me," Matthew 25:36

I spent 13 years of my life in prison. Many people visited me while I was incarcerated, the most impactful visits for me were the ones when my daughters and my sons would come to visit me. I had my oldest daughter Isabel write about her experience visiting me. Here are her words:

"If I could change one thing about my childhood, it would be the prison visits with my father. I went the entire first part of my life thinking that it was completely normal to visit a prison at early hours in the morning, never realizing that almost every adult I would meet later in life has never even driven past a prison. I don't quite remember every detail about these visits but they are still part of a time in my life where I now feel that I should have never even known what the inside of a prison looked like. If you know anything about these facilities, you'd know that they build them as far away from the city life as possible or at least that's what the long car rides would feel like. We'd leave way before the sun would rise and I'd stare out the window until boredom would make me doze off. Sometimes we'd arrive as early as four in the morning because there would already be a line forming since the food in the vending machines would run out. Here's the part that nobody would know unless you've actually gone through the process yourself... strict clothing guidelines. It would seem like common sense to not step into a prison with certain provocative or even gang inciting articles of clothing but as a little girl, I had clothes that were specific for these days. It was completely normal for my family to go on shopping trips for "visiting outfits."

None of this sounds too bad, it might just sound strange to some but like I said it didn't feel different to me. This was all a norm in my world. This was the only way I would be able to see my dad, to make any memories with him. I know I wasn't alone though. Thousands of families live this lifestyle; many little girls walk into those prison gates with broken hearts like I did for so long. It is very disappointing to feel like you're borrowing your dad, knowing that he'll never leave with you. I'd go through tons of security just to be able to be in the same room as my dad. I would envy the little girls that would make father's day cards in school and be able to hand them to their dads while I had to take the stickers off mine before my mom could mail it out because it was against the prison's policy. To talk to my dad about simple things like how my day went, was not my reality. My reality was the operator on the phone interrupting me mid sentence while I was telling my dad I loved him, just to remind me that my call was being recorded. My reality was long goodbye hugs because it would be weeks or months until we would see each other again. My reality was knowing I was going back to a home with no father figure in it. I am now 24 years old with a daughter of my own and many years separated from that being my reality. I've had some time to reflect on how

living life that way has shaped me. At the time I didn't realize what was really going on, I just knew that I was full of sadness. The majority of my sadness stemmed from my own feelings but there was a part that felt it for my mom. She lived a very lonely existence for a long time. Now that I am a woman myself, I try to put myself in her shoes and I can't help but admire her for always making sure that we had a relationship with my father even if it wasn't the ideal one. All the sacrifices that she made and energy she invested into those times. I also realized that I would break the cycle for my daughter. As much as I appreciate my mom's efforts, I didn't want the same for my daughter. Her father is now in prison, like mine was at her age and I have vowed to never let her feel the pain of a goodbye after prison guards have told you visiting time is up."

As I read the above words for the very first time, I could not contain the tears of gratitude. You see, for me God did not come in the form of a priest or a rabbi when I was in prison. He came in the form of my daughter. Through her visits and the few moments that I was able to spend with her, she gave me hope and she gave me faith in something greater to carry me through many hard days and hard nights.

I had to harden my spirit and protect my heart when I was in prison, so the time that I was able to spend around my daughter and my other children gave me the ability to steal a few bits of softness from them, and feel the innocence of their love, which was something that was inaccessible to me in the cold and hard world that prison is. I did not attend church, I did not attend any type of religious ceremonies, and yet God used my daughter to bring His message of love, compassion, and kinship into my spirit, even behind the walls of the many facilities where I spent time.

Original English



Some pastoral reflections on the life in prison

Leo De Weerdts SJ

Brugge, Belgium

Fifteen years ago, I took my first steps into the prison as if it was a daily routine. While doing this I entered into the history and the life of men and women who stay there. But does one really take this step as if it was 'daily routine'? I started to realize how delicate this situation is when I found myself for the very first time at the door of the prison of Bruges. Moreover at that time I wasn't aware how enriching this experience was to be.

Some months before I was asked to work in this institution as prison chaplain. As a Jesuit I had let my provincial-superior know that I wanted to engage myself in the service of the poor, the little ones, of those wounded by life, just like Jesus had done. This wish answered the desire I discovered in me in the course of my formation.

Between the walls of the prison the life of Jesus plays an important role. On the background where culpability and wounds are visible, the impact of the gospel is remarkable. The philosopher and writer Eric-Emmanuel Schmidt says that one gets to learn people better when one tries to know what they believe in.

I think this is an excellent description of what a prison chaplain tries to do. He looks on, listens and tries to find out what the detainees (still) believe in. Does he still believe in him, in his fellow prisoners, in society, in God...? This is how we get to better know the other and to accompany him.

What is the impact of detention on a human being?

I don't intend to arouse pity nor to discuss fact and cause in favour of men and women condemned to a prison sentence for having transgressed the rules of society and are punished, in most cases correctly, by the legislator.

We shouldn't forget though that a prison sentence is always temporary and that sooner or later the detainees take up again their place in society, a society which is also our society. We may also legitimately expect that they will take up again their responsibilities, compensate their victims; that they again follow the right path and work and provide for their relatives.

But is this feasible when during their stay in prison they have been completely cut off from society and have often during many years lived in a totally different universe? For to imprison a human being is all well considered much more than to deprive him of his freedom. And contrary to what one often makes us believe, the privation of liberty is a hard and shocking ordeal.

From the very moment he crosses the door of the prison the detainee loses part of his identity, of his personality. The teacher, the mechanic, the hairdresser, the father or mother are debased to the grade of detainee that is to say to somebody who by definition is not trustworthy and whom you may never praise. His name is replaced by the number of his cell, his clothes by the uniform of the prison. He won't do anything and won't get anything without permission.

He won't enjoy the least intimacy a fortiori when because of overpopulation he has to share a cell with a co-detainee. They know that at every moment of day and night they are being observed. All this generates a feeling of incapacity and of subjection.

In short, a prison does hardly offer what a human being needs to function normally. Values as respect and confidence, responsibility with respect to his own behavior are in fact non-existent in this kind of institution. Boredom and the lack of meaningful work generate resignation that deprives a detainee of whatever initiative related to a future project. As prison chaplains we regret that the society but often also the Church do not show much interest in the predicament of the detainees.

A brief review of the profile of a detainee

Certain conversations lead one to conclude that the criminal behavior of many detainees and mainly of young detainees, originates from a wound caused by a lack of love or recognition. The crime of a (young) criminal is often a call for help, tragic it may be, he wants to tell us "I am somebody, look at me", "You have to reckon with me too", "I am who I am".

As a society we have to protect ourselves against criminality but it seems to me equally important to listen to the message which hides itself often behind the criminal act. But it often happens that in prison only the co-detainees, their marginal colleagues one could say, listen to them.

The largest part of people living in prison comes from a social background that clearly offers less possibilities: a minimal education, a poor scholarly trajectory, limited chances to find a job, a low grade of formation and hardly any perspective. The detainees who are often from families far remote from the average family, feel themselves inferior, excluded and treated unfairly.

On the relational and social level we meet people often branded as 'the problematic ones' what makes them defiant vis-à-vis society. They have never experienced the security of a hearth. But deep down they aspire like all of us to encounter minimal recognition, love and mainly acceptance.

The very fact of the world of the prison asks for a conversion of my listening

Anne Lécu is a French Dominican sister who for many years has been engaged in prison life as a medical doctor. She recently published a beautiful booklet 'Steps towards Innocence'. Forty stages through the gospel of John.⁴

In forty short meditations on the gospel of John she surprisingly and very personally treats the theme of innocence. "*Madam, I am innocent...*" How often haven't I heard this in my

⁴ Anne Lécu, *Marcher vers l'innocence*, aux éditions Du Cerf, Paris, 2015.

meetings with prisoners during a consultation, writes Anne Lécu in the introduction to her booklet.

And in the beginning I listened like many others who work in a prison with consternation and sometimes with genuine indignation. But along the years I really grasped what the prisoners wanted to say, continues the author.

Nobody can be reduced to his failure. We are all limited, powerless, disarmed, but we are called to be sons and daughters of God. According to the author this calling makes us by the mere fact that we as human beings, share a fundamental and deeper innocence whatever we have perpetrated.

I think that this concept of a fundamental and deeper innocence in every human being is important for us prison chaplains while listening to the stories the prisoners tell us. In our daily meetings with prisoners we hear very diverse stories.⁵ The differences are not only located on the level of *the daily life of the prisoner* and *of the kind of deeds* that necessitated the imprisonment. They are also related to *the attitude of the prisoner with regard to those deeds*. He may deny the deeds he is imprisoned for. He may admit that he is their author but feel that in the circumstances he is not (wholly) responsible for what has happened, etc.

Apart from these elements – the deeds and the attitude vis-à-vis them – there is of course yet another element that plays a role: the real implication of the actor, alleged or not, in what happened. Was it an isolated case, an impulsive deed or is the deed to be situated in a long trajectory of criminal acts? Were the deeds premeditated or were they committed cool headed or was he carried away due to emotional and psychic factors?

But the detainee has often the impression that the “system” mistrusts his story. As a result he is left with a feeling of injustice. The detainee has always the impression to meet somebody in the “system” who tries to discover something behind his words (the mechanisms of defence, strategies of justifications, minimisation, or the habit to present oneself at one’s best).

It is as if the prisoner sees his investigator thinking ‘Yes, may be. That’s what they all say’. It happens that he hears his interlocutor express these words. Surprisingly but understandably one finds that the reaction against this reputation and this massive condemnation is often a feeling of innocence. “I am culpable” a prisoner once said to me and “I am for sure not a saint. I have committed a lot of errors but I am innocent of all they want to accuse me of here”.

Then the idea emerges of a fundamental and deeper innocence and also the question how as a chaplain one has to react against a human being who in the heart of the prison shouts out his innocence?

From my personal experience as chaplain I am inclined to say that one should listen to specific stories and explanations with a kind of ‘second naivety’. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur uses the expression ‘second naivety’ in contrast with a ‘first naivety’, which refers to a literal interpretation of things.

Analogous to what Ricoeur writes ‘second naivety’ means for me as a prison chaplain to let go the obsession to find out the truth of what the prisoner tells me. Moreover a lie is always possible but at the same time I have gained new confidence. I now take into account that what

⁵ Pieter De Witte, "Bewaarde onschuld. De schuldvraag in de gevangenispastoraal", in: Kristof Struys & Anton Milh (red.), *Hij zal komen oordelen de levenden en de doden: over de zin en de onzin van de geschiedenis*, Antwerpen: Halewijn, 2015.

the prisoners tell me is important, whether it is true or not. Even if they tell me stories that don't reflect the truth, often their words are true. In the context of our pastoral meetings people want to entrust us part of themselves not necessarily about technical and juridical details or about psychological analyses, but about how they managed to live in their present predicament.

Consequently it is very important for me to find again this second naivety and not to search like a detective the truth *behind* the words, but to see the truth *in* what they are telling, even in their lies, their minimisations and their fight in the face of their responsibility.

What drives me to practise this kind of apostolate and what gives me the force to do it?

I think that the social apostolate, the social work, is a vocation in the bosom of my vocation as a jesuit. It was during a training in the *Communauté de l'Arche de Jean Vanier à Trosly-Breuil* that I have more strongly experienced this new vocation and that I have also reflected on it.

It is while living together with human beings who are severely handicapped physically and mentally that I perceived through their penetrating cries and their interrogating looks the invitation: "Stay with me, stay with the poor". The look of these fragile people was like an appeal that upturned my life.

But my deepest force I finally draw from the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. From the very beginning of the Exercises Ignatius invites the retreatant to pray in front of the crucified Christ.

This is an important moment for many reasons : among others because it is an invitation to dwell near Jesus confronted with the cross, near a God who keeps silent, near a Father who seems to be absent. The question of Jesus: "My God, my God, why has you abandoned me?" remains without an answer. That is also what a fragile person apprehends, the sick, man and woman in the margin, the stranger, the prisoner. Their questions: why do I have to suffer, why am I rejected, how did it happen that I committed that misdeed. All these questions remain often without a response or are even not heard. So it is for us prison chaplains a matter of humanity and a grace to stay with them in whom Christ recognized Himself.

Original English



Rehabilitation as Spiritual Practice

George Fernando SJ

Negombo, Sri Lanka

Background

The Jesuit community at St Xavier Residence, Akkarapanaha, in Negombo helps the rehabilitation unit of the Remand Prison – Negombo in accompanying the Catholic inmates in their faith journey. Sharing with the inmates the hope of salvation from every kind of slavery is the basic vision of this ministry of merciful love.

The Remand Prison of Negombo is one of the twenty such Prisons clustered under the title “Prison Institutions in Sri Lanka”, administered by the Department of Prisons within the purview of the Ministry of Prison Reforms, Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Hindu Religious Affairs.

In Sri Lanka, we have 3 Closed Prisons, 20 Remand Prisons, 10 Work Camps, 2 Open Prison Camps, 1 Training School for Youth Offenders (who are between the ages of 16 and 22 years), 2 Correctional Centres for Youth Offenders and 23 Prison Lock-Ups. Two prisons for convicted offenders in the proximity have been built over 100 years ago by the British at a time where the country’s population was about 3 million (at present it is about 22 million). The story of Remand prisons is almost the same all over. Imprisonment is done at two levels of the criminal justice process. At one level, persons suspected of committing a crime are imprisoned soon after arrest as remand prisoners and at the second level the persons proved guilty are also sentenced to serve their term imprisonment in them.

Prisons statistics in Sri Lanka show that large numbers are kept in remand custody. Hence, it will be seen that no proper rehabilitation programs could be implemented for this type of persons (in transit), and no solution found to the problems faced by the prison administration. A peculiar situation in Sri Lankan prisons is that the number of unconvicted prisoners far exceeds that of the convicted. Many socio-economic factors prevailing in Sri Lanka have contributed to the increase in crime and the overcrowding of prisons. The effects of overcrowding are felt not only in the area of space, but in the area of discipline and control, hygiene and effective treatment programs also.

The Remand prison in Negombo shelters primarily the remand prisoners (male/female/youth) who are not convicted but awaiting trial. Apart from the remand prisoners, it also accommodates the following categories of prisoners: convicted, condemned, and appellant and those in the category of Youth Offender, who are brought there from other prisons, situated in close proximity, to be produced before the Magistrate and High Courts in Negombo, for their pending trials and to attend to jail services including work in the preparation of food.

Of the above categories, about 30-40% is Christians with a Catholic majority, and only 1/3 of them participate in weekly religious programs, especially the Sunday Eucharist.

Context

a) Justice Denied/Prolonged: Some prisoners are awaiting judgment from appeals, others are awaiting trials/cases postponed and those granted bail but are still locked in due to rigid bail conditions that they have no capacity to fulfill.

There are offenders with multiple crimes, tried in different courts, where one court might grant bail and the another might not, depending on the attitude of the judges. Sometimes two different orders are given – one to be remanded and the other to be granted bail.

Some suspects who have been given bail yet are languishing in the prisons as they cannot fulfill the bail conditions.

b) Prisoners admitted to Negombo Remand Prisons from Foreign Countries: The offences committed by these foreign nationals are mainly drug related. Although there are problems in communicating with some of these non-English speaking offenders, prison staff can be seen very kind to them. These prisoners do not have, understandably, regular visitors. Visitors generally are from the respective Embassies or Consular Offices.

c) Female Prisoners: Female prisoners constitute a very small fraction of the total number. Among the female prisoners at the Negombo Remand Prison, large number is convicted of prostitution, excise offences, trafficking drugs, petty thefts and financial frauds. Mothers who are imprisoned are permitted to bring their infants to prison with them.

The convicted female prisoners are given training in various vocations such as tailoring, knitting and designing ornaments.

d) Convicted Drug Offenders: Statistics have revealed that Sri Lanka is afflicted with the plague of drug abuse, and heroin dependence is commonest amongst the youth. Crimes related to thefts, stealing and burglaries have increased in recent years as a result of drug addicts who are in dire need of money to purchase drugs.

Prisons Statistics also show that there has been a steady rise annually in the number of prisoners who are admitted to penal institutions for drug related offences. With the influx of large number of drug offenders, the Department of Prisons is now confronted with a wide range of challenges.

The Department of Prisons which has experienced a very large intake of convicted drug offenders in recent years has organized rehabilitation, therapeutic and educational programs in various penal institutions and the Negombo Remand Prison is also included. These programs are conducted by prison officers and outsiders trained in the art of rehabilitation of drug offenders.

Rehabilitation is emphasized in the vision and the mission statements posted on the official website of the Department of Prisons in Sri Lanka:

The **Vision**: “Social reintegration of inmates as good citizens through rehabilitation.”

The **Mission**: Creation of a good relationship between the prison officers and the inmates in order to achieve the main objectives of **custody, care and corrections** (motto) and thereby

improve the job satisfaction of the officers and build up positive attitudes among officers and regulate the welfare of the prisoners, utilizing their productivity of labour for the benefit of the country.

Rehabilitation: Religious Observances

In a multi-faith setting, the following religious services are listed in the program of the Rehabilitation section of the Negombo Remand prisons:

- Buddhist religious programs – On Sundays and Poya days, discourses and meditation programs are conducted
- Catholic religious programs – Holy Eucharist, Sacrament of Reconciliation and other special programs: By Jesuits and Minim (Franciscan) Sisters
- Muslim Religious rites – Special worship services are conducted
- Hindu Religious rites – Special worship services are conducted
- Christian Religious rituals – On every Saturday religious services are conducted

In the backdrop and context mentioned above, the members of Jesuit community, on the invitation of the Archbishop of Colombo, serve as Catholic chaplains of the Negombo remand prisons, and its superior – Fr Sanjeeva Fernando SJ – has noted below his experience (2013-2016) in the area of Rehabilitation as Spiritual Practice: “Reveries and Reflections from Behind the Bars”

The Estranged

The last July Issue of *Vagdevi*, a journal of religious reflections, a bi-annual publication of the Sri Lanka Jesuits significantly provided me with ample insights on praying and preaching. Moreover, the concluding salutation of Fr. Aloysius Pieris in his editorial named ‘Mission failed or mission hailed – The Retired Pope and the Incumbent Pope on Post-Conciliar missiology’ was the starting point. I quote “Hence we share a common heritage when we join the non-Christians in witnessing to and promoting self-less love both as *Philadelphia* (love and service towards our dear ones and neighbors) and *Philoxenia* (being a neighbor to the strangers and even more to the estranged ones) as required by both the Old and New law”. I am convinced that most of what I have been engaged in being and doing at the Remand Prison is that to be faithful to the latter; being a neighbor to the estranged ones. Thus, praying, preaching and practicing are diametrically interwoven and inseparable.

Restless Thoughts

Ever since I was assigned to serve at the Remand Prison, I felt quite queer in going there, even in spite of religious garb I wore. Perhaps, I think of how I was brought up at home atmosphere, infusing with the stigma of the gravity in committing a crime and as a consequence going to the detention as abhorrent and highly objectionable thing. In my mind getting arrested and going to the prison was the most gruesome event that can occur in one’s life, leading to isolation and rejection. So much so, I was so blind to the fact that even though one has committed a crime or a sinful deed, still he or she is the beloved child of God. I was so afraid how on earth those allegedly convicted can be saved or have a ray of hope instilled and one fine day set free at last. I must confess that even though I am not so keen on Philosophy, it was “*The Social Contract*” by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains” drew myriad inspirations. Moreover, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his dramatic

opening lines to his immensely powerful treatise “The Social Contract,” wrote that man was naturally good but becomes corrupt by the wicked influence of human society and institutions. He preached that a mankind improves by returning to nature and living a natural life at peace with his neighbors and himself. Thus, as the time elapsed I perceived that in fact it was I who was a prisoner of so many attachments and addictions. Hence, unless I make peace with myself, others and nature around, all my preaching has no effect and becomes null and void. Therefore, I was enthused by the idea that I must be a good neighbor to the strangers especially, to the estranged ones. I often ask myself in what way we are able to bring about transformation of character and welfare of the person consolidated.

Horizons Widened

More than ever, I am totally propelled by the notion that this particular ministry moulds and fashions me tremendously. I realize how this unique ministry and the mission become trend setter from (ad-intra) *internal* to (ad-extra) *external*, leading the praying person to encounter God in the market place; love and mercy contemplated pour into diurnal hum drum, infusing action in a tangible manner to the estranged ones. Many years have gone by, yet, what ordaining prelate pronounced at the Ordination rite of a Deacon, while presenting the book of the Gospels, echoes in my ears vividly. *“Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.”* As praying becomes starting point and bedrock, preaching leads one to be the harbinger of faith and morals who practices what is preached. The triple ‘P’, namely Praying, Preaching and Practicing have created ripples of pragmatic spirituality and widened the horizons of humane face of God perceptible in my life.

Sinner, yet Called

At this juncture, I believe, it is life giving to reflect how faith can become void unless bound by the works of charity and Grace of God. Truly works toward our neighbors are to serve them and to do good for them, knowing the fact that some have committed grave evil deeds and others have been falsely accused. Praying for the accuser and the accused, victim and assailant alike promotes growth of godly character and provides a shining example of true Christian living and genuine humane atmosphere.

I wish to draw inspiration from what our Holy Father Pope Francis has said while presenting himself to the Prisoners in Bolivia. *“The one who stands before you is a forgiven sinner. This sinner dressed in white has not much to give you and offer you. But I bring you a gift which I have and which I love: Jesus, the Mercy of the Father.”* Hence, as for me, the most rewarding experience is to be a neighbor to the estranged, building up the kingdom of Joy where saints and sinner are welcome!

Original English



Walking with the prisoners... Walking with the Lord

Susai Raj SJ
Patna, Bihar

While serving as Socius of the Provincial(s) of Patna Province, after a year into my main ministry, I undertook Prison Ministry as my second ministry and continued with it for seven years (2009-2016), making weekly visits to the central prison of Patna, capital of the state of Bihar in India. I was part of a small group of religious women and men working in about 8 prisons of Bihar, under the aegis of 'Prison Ministry India', an organization which was formed in 1981, registered as a national body in 1995 and received the approval of the national Bishops' Conference in 2000.

There are about 2,500 prisoners in the central prison of Patna, including about 100 inmates in the women's section. There are 37,500 prisoners in the 57 jails of Bihar and 385,000 in the 1,400 prisons of India. Of these, roughly one-third (33%) are convicts and the rest two-thirds (67%) are under-trials; 96% are men and 4% are women.

Since the poor in general and the weaker sections such as the Dalits ('untouchables' as they were known earlier) and Tribals do not have the knowledge of the legal system and are not able to engage lawyers for want of money, they get punished easily. Many of the under-trials have spent more time in the jail than the maximum punishment they would have received if they had been convicted, but are languishing inside because there is no one to plead their cause or just to draw the attention of the concerned court about the status of such prisoners.

The ministry for the under-trial prisoners consists of three aspects: i) being present to/with them, ii) contact with and wherever possible a visit to their families and iii) working in the courts to get their cases expedited. In not a few of these cases, the under-trials are juveniles; hence, part of the work in the court involves providing proof of age and getting the case transferred to the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) and getting the inmate transferred from the prison for adults to the Remand / Rehabilitation Homes for juveniles.

i) Ministry of presence: Loneliness and a feeling of being abandoned by near and dear ones is the most painful part of life for the prisoner in a prison; the social interaction of the jail inmates among themselves is in no way a substitute for the sense of belonging which was theirs in their families and familiar social circles. In such a situation of loneliness and abandonment, the compassionate presence of a disciple of Jesus makes a world of difference to such prisoners which cannot be described in words - they long to meet a person who cares for them, chats with them with respect and relates with them with love and dignity. The loneliness and sense of abandonment experienced by those who are booked for heinous crimes has its own nuance⁶.

⁶ You can read Narrative 1 – Shantha Ram on p. 49.

ii) Contact with and visits to the families of prison: inmates is most often a touching / moving evangelizing experience. "Those who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Upon those who dwell in the land of gloom a light has shone" (Is 9:1) becomes so true when families are visited or contacted through phone and the family members are provided with information about their dear one in the jail and also the knowledge of the legal procedures; they see a way to move forward. Since arrest by police and being put in jail is looked upon as a matter of shame by the society at large, in many instances, when a member of a family is in prison, the rest of the family feels humiliated and so disowns the prisoner; but, with some counseling and accompaniment when the family is helped to 're-own' the member, the joy is boundless.

Similarly, due to temporary or prolonged mental derangement, some persons wander away from homes and in that condition get into situations of conflict with law; they are arrested and sent to jails. Family members remain in the dark with regard to their whereabouts. There have been many cases of such persons from within the state of Bihar as well as from neighbouring states of Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and West Bengal whose families we were able to contact, inform them about their family member, get the case expedited and re-unite families⁷.

iii) Working in the courts to get justice for the poor is no doubt an excruciating task, but the consolations are no less. The help of priest/religious-lawyers is of immense help in this regard; the presence of sister-lawyers in court rooms and their role not only in handling the cases of women prisoners but of youth and men too is a very inspiring and edifying prophetic service. We have received the help of some lawyers of different faiths and ideological affiliations, who on coming to know of our ministry have offered to argue the cases free of cost, as their mite in serving the suffering humanity.

In Bihar (I presume it is the case all over India) when a prisoner is being taken for being presented before the magistrate or the judge, on the date of hearing of the case, the men prisoners are handcuffed (women prisoners are spared of this humiliation); of course political and 'high profile' prisoners are exempted. Since visiting a prisoner in the prison is a formal process and most often includes paying bribes to security guards, many family members and friends come to the courts on the dates of hearing of the cases to meet their family member or friend. They walk with the prisoner to and from the court rooms. But, once again, the Dalit, Tribal and other prisoners of the weaker sections suffer from want of knowledge and money to know the dates of hearing of the case and the exact court room in which a particular prisoner will be produced. Walking with the prisoners to and from court rooms, sometimes along with their family members and many at times without them, is indeed an experience of walking with the Lord, along with Him, by His side, on His way of the cross.

There are many **programmes and activities within prisons** which are prescribed or provided for in jail manuals for the welfare, reform and reconstruction of life of the inmates - education of prisoners (illiteracy to literacy, primary or secondary levels to graduation, up to doctorate level and beyond too, computer classes), training in income-generating trades, recreational activities such as music and dance, painting and writing poems or essays, games (cricket is a craze among young prisoners!), yoga and karate,... Since prison is a place of gloom and negativity, these programmes and activities play a vital role in creating a positive and

⁷ You can read Narrative 2 – Akash Kumar Sonkar on p. 50.

constructive atmosphere, engaging the mind of the prisoners in a positive and productive direction; these programmes and activities equip and pave the way for the smooth re-integration of the inmates as and when they are acquitted or come out of prisons on completing their period of punishment or on bail.

Most of the prisons are under-staffed. Hence, the state authorities and prison officials are looking forward to the help of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) or charitable organizations in organizing and supervising these programmes and activities. The Salesian Fathers are running a vibrant industrial training institute in one of the central prisons of Kolkata; some of the congregations of women religious are conducting tailoring and beauticians' courses in many jails; some NGOs organize painting, music, writing, sports and games competitions in prisons. Prisoners look forward to cultural and entertainment programmes on major national / international festival days such as Independence Day, Women's Day, and religious feasts such as Christmas.

Overcrowding in jails, torture and abuse of inmates by prison and police officials, health care of the inmates, hygienic conditions within prison premises, information on the status of the cases of prisoners, visits by family members and a host of issues related to prison reforms are attempted to be addressed by many secular and religious organizations. For example, in a "National Consultation on Prison Reforms" organized by the Human Rights Law Network (HRLN) with other organizations and some researchers, held in Delhi on 3-4 April 2010, had a sizeable Christian presence (of priests, religious and laity). Such a presence showed that the Church in India, even in a miniscule form, is engaged in evangelizing every aspect Indian society and all its realities; but it also showed how much more the Society of Jesus in India can and needs to do. It can be safely presumed that similar interactions of all the stakeholders - the civil society or NGOs and the (prison departments of the) governments - are taking place in most countries of the world today under the banner of Human Rights of Prisoners or any other perspective; and, the presence / participation and contribution of the Society of Jesus by a more intense and coordinated efforts in prison ministry, could be viewed on similar lines as that of the wonderful ministry of JRS. Many of us can do prison ministry as our second ministry, without seriously impacting our primary ministry.

Spiritual foundations: According to prophet Isaiah, in proclaiming the Year of the Lord, the anointed one of Yahweh says, "He sent me ... to proclaim ... release to prisoners" (Is 61:1). And, while inaugurating His public ministry at Nazareth, Jesus invoked (Lk 4:18) this passage of Isaiah. In fact, Jesus went further when He identified Himself with all the least ones and said in the description of the Last Judgment "... I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:36). We cannot and should not shy away from the fact that in the last 18 hours or so of His life on this earth, Jesus was a prisoner and He died the death of a condemned 'criminal'. **Jesus is the prisoner, par excellence** - By His imprisonment we have been freed from the 'prisons' of sin and darkness. Due to His death as a 'criminal' we have been 'pardoned' and 'acquitted'. And, through His resurrection, He has released us from our personal, collective and social prisons / graves of selfishness and bad-habits, corruption and fundamentalism, and, gender discrimination and ecological destruction. He has released, renewed and rehabilitated us. From this is born the vision and mission of Prison Ministry: **release, renewal and rehabilitation of prisoners.**

The example of St. Maximilian Kolbe, a Franciscan prior, is indeed inspiring. In 1941 he was arrested for hiding Jews in his friary to protect them from the Nazi persecution. One prisoner escaped from Kolbe's barrack and the cruel camp commander was picking up 10 prisoners daily to be tortured and starved to death. One day one of the picked up prisoners, Franciszek Gajowniczek, cried out lamenting his family, and Kolbe volunteered to take his place. On 14

August 1941 Kolbe was killed by a lethal injection. Pope John Paul II canonized Kolbe on 10 Oct 1982 in the presence of Franciszek, for whom Kolbe had offered his life, and declared Kolbe the patron saint of the prison ministry. 14 August is celebrated as the feast of St. Maximilian Kolbe and in India the Sunday before that date is celebrated as Prison Ministry Sunday.

After being elected as the Pope in 2013, Pope Francis celebrated his first Maundy Thursday as Pope, by washing the feet of 12 prisoners, including two young women, at a Detention Centre for juveniles on the outskirts of Rome. Now it has become a pattern for him to wash the feet of prisoners on Maundy Thursdays every year and he visits prisons of many countries during his apostolic journeys.

Prison ministry, like all other ministries, offers its own specific form of privilege and challenge: It offers the privilege of immersion into the world of crime and sin, false allegations and a labyrinth of court proceedings - "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk 2:17). Prisons are indeed the 'garbage-bins' into which the 'healthy' society throws away those it judges or suspects them to embody its moral dirt; jails are the 'graveyards' where the 'normal' section of humanity buries away its skeletons. From within the four walls of prisons, the world outside does look very different: it offers a different perspective to the moral, ethical and spiritual status of the society. Many who are there should not be there and many who are outside should be inside; the dividing wall is only those who got caught and those who didn't or couldn't escape. This ministry challenges the volunteer towards a constant purification of one's inner self as well as doing the ministry in a sustained, mature and prudent manner, because even a single act of imprudence can get you into serious trouble - instead of doing prison ministry, you may end up as a prisoner! Who knows, that may be another way of doing this ministry!

Visiting websites of the prison ministry (if not the prisons!), subscribing to journals of this ministry and praying for the volunteers, prisoners and their families, and the prison officials and security staff (who quite often work under conditions of threat to their own lives) could as well be the starting point.

Original English

The author, Susai Raj SJ, has submitted two narratives. Names of persons have been changed to respect their privacy; all other details are from court and prison records

Narrative 1 – Shantha Ram

Shantha Ram is accused of rape and murder of Kanchan Kumari, a 8 year old girl, his neighbor in the *jhopari-patti* (cluster of huts) along the railway track near the Bihar State Secretariat, Patna. The incident took place on 16.12.2007. Ram went absconding, but was arrested on 07.08.2011 and is in Patna central jail since then.

Like many others, initially Ram said that he was falsely implicated in the case; but, when I showed him the copy of case records, including Seizure List of items recovered from his *jhopari* (hut) such as his voter ID, the undergarment of the deceased girl and the forensic test reports, he became silent. With eyes filled with tears he said, “I don’t want to live any longer; I want to die.” I put my hand gently on his shoulder. This was around the time when the Delhi High court had confirmed the verdict of the trial court, awarding capital punishment (of hanging till death) to all the five accused in the infamous Nirbhaya case (of barbaric sexual attack on a physiotherapy intern in a moving bus 16 December 2012 night and her death on 29 December 2012 in a Singapore Hospital - an event which shook the conscience of India); and, a court in Mothihari (East Champaran District in North Bihar) and another court in Uttar Pradesh had similarly awarded capital punishment for rape and murder of a small girl in each case. Ram had read about these judgments in the newspapers.

After sometime of silence, Ram asked me if he too will be awarded the same punishment. I told him that what he did or did not do to Kanchan Kumari is between him and God. Based on the evidence placed before it, the court will decide on his case. Since I am neither God nor the judge in the case, I am no one to pronounce judgment; but, the records of the case, including the statement by the mother of Kanchan Kuamri, indicate that his case is indeed moving towards a similar conclusion as that of Nirbhaya and other girls who were raped and murdered.

After some more silence, Ram asked me if I too will stop meeting him once the judgment is delivered and he is put in the isolation cell for prisoners who are awarded capital punishment. I told him that in such a scenario I will try for special permission from the jail authorities to meet him in his cell and if granted permission, I will surely visit him; and, if and when he is led to the gallows, I will walk with him till the last step or door up to which I would have permission to do so. Ram looked deep into my eyes; with eyes welling up with tears but lips twitched in a little smile, he said “Please do that for me.” I promised him that to the best of my ability, I will.

During my weekly visits to the prison I met with Ram periodically. He asked for the Bible which I gave; he asked for other religious literature and from time to time I was supplying him with some. As a matter of curiosity to know why he was reading them and/or what he understood from reading these materials, couple of times I asked him what was it that he liked in the Bible or what ideas attract him or help him in reading these materials. He gave me a short reply “I find peace in reading them.” I realized that my curiosity in this context was not a good or the right disposition - I knew that God was working in the inner being of Ram, I was sure of that; but, it was none of my business to know how the Lord was working or what He was doing within him, after all it is between him and the Lord. I am called to be an instrument or a medium, nothing more; it is a privilege that the Lord had granted me and I shouldn’t contaminate that privilege with my sinful tendency of curiosity.

St. Ignatius has taught us his sons the beautiful prayer: "Give me your love and your grace and I ask for nothing more." The Lord showed me His love by giving me the grace or privilege of 'being with' Ram, in this manner at this stage of his life; I should not ask for anything more. May the Lord purify my inner being as He works to purify the inner being of Ram.

Narrative 2 – Akash Kumar Sonkar

Akash Kumar Sonkar was a successful businessman in Kanpur, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, producing high quality painting and white-washing brushes. But due to some reason he became mentally disturbed and began to wander away here and there. Once he wandered away from home and after two days the family members managed to find him. But when he wandered away in 1999 the family was not able to trace him. On 30 August 2004 he was arrested for unauthorized entry into prohibited Air Force area in Bihta, Patna, Bihar and put in prison.

In 2009 the Prison Ministry India (PMI) volunteers met him in Beur Central prison (Patna) and began attempts to contact the family on the one hand and expedite his case on the other. There was a discrepancy in the address he had given and so tracing family was proving to be difficult. But, God has His / Her own way of looking after the welfare of the least and the lost. In the beginning months of 2011 the family was traced, contacted and it was such a joyful yet unbelievable news for them that he was still alive. They wanted to rush to Patna to meet him, but were advised to hold on. Due to the efforts of PMI, on 10 June 2011 the court acquitted him and the family was informed immediately. When Akash's wife and son were getting ready to take the night train to come to Patna, the 10 year old charming grand-daughter (son's daughter) asked them where they were going? When they told her that they were coming to Patna to fetch her grand-father, she was adamant that she too would join them to meet, welcome and bring her 'dada' (grand-father) back home.

Thus on 11 June 2011 Akash was re-united with his family after 12 years. On seeing his grand-daughter for the first time, Akash lifted her up, kissed her, sat down and putting her on his lap he began to stroke her tender cheeks; and, in return the little girl with her tender fingers stroked the beard of her grand-father. Not only her father and grand-mother, but the PMI volunteers too could not control the tears of joy. The family had brought new clothes for him. After the simple but emotion-filled reunion, the son took his father for a haircut and a clean shave. After a refreshing bath when Akash put on the new clothes, it was indeed difficult to recognize him. The old Akash was gone and a new Akash had emerged. His family disposed off his old clothes in Patna itself because they did not want to carry the sad and painful memories of the past 12 years with them. No words can describe the joy of this family when they experienced that their family has been re-built since the head of the family was back with them. Occasionally Akash calls the up the PMI volunteers to say that he is keeping fine.

Original English



Generosity and effectiveness

Roberto Jaramillo SJ

Reference Text of the Network of Social Centers of CPAL, Lima, June 2016

The subject we have chosen to discuss at our meeting relates to a tension that is always present in the service we provide in our social centers, at both the personal and the institutional level: we are called to be at once **generous** and **effective**. This tension is present as well as in the other apostolic works of the Society of Jesus.

The origins of this long-standing dynamic tension are to be found in the Good News of Jesus: “*You give them something to eat!*” (Luke 9, 13), a command that is forcefully seconded by Ignatius Loyola: “Love should be shown by deeds more than by words” (SpEx 230). This challenge takes on a special importance in our day, when the world’s peoples – especially the poor to whom we are sent “to announce the good news” – expect from us and truly deserve a clear and generous testimony, through effective works and words, of who we are.

As members of the Network of Social Centers of CPAL, we have come together in Lima in June 2016 in order to reflect on this reality of who we are, on the testimony we are called to give, on the sources that nourish our personal and collective (institutional) commitment, and on the concrete forms and institutional consequences of the call we have received.

We need to set out three basic premises before going into finer details:

- The mission of the institutions that belong to the Social Centers Network (and therefore also of the teams that collaborate in those institutions) is nothing less than the mission of the Society of Jesus itself, which in speaking about the Social Apostolate in general (not only the social centers) affirms the following: “its goal is to build by means of every endeavor a fuller expression of justice and of charity into the structures of human life in common.”⁸
- For this reason, we who are directors and members of the teams of all the social centers of Latin America meet together not simply as employees with some job or other in these institutions but as persons RESPONSIBLE for the MISSION that has been entrusted to us, a mission that is far more basic and wide-ranging than the particular functions we have and the actions we perform.
- This mission is shared by Jesuits and by many lay people, both men and women, including persons who are not religiously motivated. Indeed, the great majority of collaborators of the social centers are not Jesuits, and many are not believers. We are all part of a true “concert” which unites and harmonizes our wills around shared objectives and procedures. Ours is a concerted effort in which collaborators have the

⁸ Complementary Norms, 298.

right and the duty to know the ultimate purpose of the work so that they will interpret their roles in the best way possible. Likewise, it is an endeavor in which the Society of Jesus has the right and the duty to define with clarity the apostolic objectives to be achieved.⁹

- A great diversity of realities and specific opportunities enriches the implementation of the general mission of which we speak. Each institution “concretizes” this vocation (the mission, or general calling) and at the same time “fertilizes” it by embedding it in a particular reality (regional, national, or international). Thanks to our networks, the differences allow us to add up the lowest common multipliers, but we must also discover (and not just “hope to have”) common challenges and shared ways of working together in a global world, which are the highest common denominators.
- This dynamic, which today we call “glocality,” is enriched further by our awareness that this is a challenge for all of the works of the Society of Jesus, whether they involve pastoral ministry, education, social assistance, communication, or anything else. Therefore, it is important to renew our own awareness – and we make it clear to our collaborators in other sectors – that this reflection does not seek to impose limits on “the social sector” or reinforce any separation of sectors. We want, rather, to make our colleagues ever more keenly conscious that this is a mission the belongs to all of us and that we will achieve it only to the extent that we join forces together and work with generosity and efficiency.¹⁰

Called to live an effective love

In 1949, when Father General Janssens published his “Instruction on the Social Apostolate,” he issued a call to the whole Society to be formed “*in that sincere and effective love that in modern language we call the ‘social spirit’ or ‘social mentality.’*”¹¹ The then Father General reiterated his call on several occasions¹² and attempted to define more precisely the substance of that “**sincere and effective love**” and that “**social mentality or spirit.**” For example, on the occasion of the canonization of Joseph Pignatelli, he wrote:

“In the instruction I gave on the Social Apostolate, I tried to distinguish between charitable works and what today is called social action. The first of these, and the only one known in the time of Joseph Pignatelli, is good. Our Lord Jesus Christ praised it, and the Church has always recommended it. It helps the suffering members of Christ in this world. It can never disappear because “the poor will always be with you.” The other form of ministry is better; it is more universal and more lasting, and it expresses a higher degree of love. Charitable works relieve

⁹ General Congregation 34 decreed that any initiative for which the Society of Jesus accepts ultimate responsibility “should be governed by a clear mission statement which outlines the purposes of the work and serves as the basis for working together on it” (GC34 D.13, no.12). See also the Preface of the document, “Characteristics of the Social Apostolate,” page v.

¹⁰ “This type of collaboration will demand of us tremendous spiritual reserves. Great generosity will be required to leave our small worlds and contemplate reality with a broader horizon. We need to consider the mission of the Society and not just the particular missions of each sector; we need to put aside our individual concerns and trust that together we are better able to reach that magis to which we are called. For this we will need much humility, discernment, and prayer in common.” Cfr. “Invited to Collaborate,” *Promotio Iustitiae* 107, 2011, p. 35.

¹¹ Cfr. Michael Campbell-Johnston, “A Brief History,” p. 2 (unpublished).

¹² Cfr. Congregation of Procurators of 1953.

some forms of misery, while social action suppresses as far as possible the very causes of human suffering. The entire mystical body of Christ is made healthier and stronger.”¹³

In later years, our reflection on the characteristics and the mission of the social apostolate was inspired by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and their unfolding in the life of the Society and the Church. Our understanding kept developing in very rich ways, always emphasizing **our commitment to working on behalf of the poorest** (and later – especially after Medellin – “with the poorest”) and insisting on careful analysis of social conditions, accompanied by theological and philosophical reflection.

A seminar with the theme, “The Social Apostolate in Today’s Society of Jesus,” was held at the General Curia in 1980. While it did not arrive at an authoritative definition of what the social apostolate is, it clearly outlined its characteristic features: the social apostolate is a ministry that involves “a group of Jesuits (and collaborators, we would say today) who:

- are radically committed to the promotion of justice in solidarity with the poor;
- seek not only the conversion of individuals but a structural change in society;
- desire to contribute to the construction of a new and more just society based on participation;
- have a clear idea about the identification of priorities and the importance of making decisions about actions on the basis of scientific analysis of reality, an analysis that considers not only structures but also contemporary events and tendencies and does so within the perspective of Christian faith;
- are prepared to associate in different ways with those who share the same ideals of social transformation;
- are engaged in a critical dialogue with groups seeking change in a manner different from our own; and
- pursue the objective of communion with the Church and with the whole Society.”¹⁴

¹³ *Acta Romana* 12 (1954) 696. Quoted *ibid.* p. 3.

¹⁴ Cfr. Michael Campbell-Johnston, s.j., “Remembering Our History,” *Promotio Iustitiae* 100, 2008/3, “The First Thirty Numbers,” p. 8. See also the document published in 2005 by the Secretariat of Social Justice, “Structuring the Social Apostolate,” pp. 8-9, which states: “Jesuit Social Centers have the following characteristics:

- They promote justice as one of their main goals.
- They seek the transformation of social structures by means of research, and/or formation, and/or social action. Though not all three of these activities need to be present in every center, close coordination among them should be ensured through an adequate mechanism.
- They are considered to be part of the social sector, or at least they are adequately coordinated with it.
- They are committed to an attitude of discernment which encompasses the different dimensions of the organization as they attempt to adapt to the changing reality. Adaptation is important in the following areas:
 - mission and vision, especially as they relate to our fundamental Jesuit charism (GC 32, D 4, no. 9 and GC 34, D 2, no. 14);
 - methodology, organizational structures, and types of action;
 - selection of national and international collaborators;

Almost 20 years later, in 1998—a half century after Father Janssens wrote his instruction on the social apostolate—the text of the “Complementary Norms” promulgated by the 35th General Congregation summarizes what was enshrined in statute by the four most recent General Congregations: *“The contemporary mission of the Society is the service of faith and the promotion in society of that justice of the Gospel that is the embodiment of God’s love and saving mercy”* (CN 245 §1-2). And the 35th General Congregation reaffirms and declares *“its firm conviction”* that *“the aim of the mission we have received from Christ, as presented in the Formula of the Institute, is the service of faith”* whose *“integrating principle ... is the inseparable link between faith and the promotion of the justice of the Kingdom.”* (D3, no. 2)

This phrase “integrating principle” is difficult to define precisely, but it points without doubt to the need to express with effective works and words the faith that moves us *to live in* justice and *to work for* justice. It is a fundamental axiological principle, designating the types of action which make manifest the values that endow our works with a deeper meaning. As true *“sacraments of the love and the mercy of God,”* our words and actions coincide, and they become places where “mercy and truth are met together, justice and peace have kissed” (Psalm 85:10).

Let us conclude this section, therefore, by saying that all the Society’s collaborators, whether in the social apostolate or our other ministries, are invited to be *sincere and effective* (per Father Janssens) in translating into liberating words and actions the insane love of God. For God’s love

- **gives freely and gives itself without measure** (the Contemplation to Attain Love) – against our temptation to give without giving ourselves or to give ourselves without giving freely;
- **lowers itself to become one flesh with our flesh** (Incarnation) – against our temptation to give without lowering ourselves;
- **does not evade the tragic consequences of its special form of loving** (Third Week) – against our temptation to give in order to evade;
- **gives without expecting something in return** (Paschal Mystery) – against our temptation to give in order to get something back or to “buy” the other person;¹⁵ and
- **loves in a way that absolutely respects the freedom of the beloved** – against the temptation to give in order to manipulate.¹⁶

-
- openness to discerning in common with other centers of the sector and to collaborating with other sectors and institutions;
 - use of intermediate instruments of social and hermeneutical analysis.”

¹⁵ Simone Weil writes: “It is not surprising that a man who has a piece of bread should give it to someone who is hungry. What is surprising is that he is able to do so with a gesture different from that of buying an object. Giving charity should not resemble the action of buying. God is not present there where the poor are simply an occasion for doing good - because you cannot love impersonally.” *A la espera de Dios* (Trotta, Madrid, 2004), p. 92, quoted by Benjamin González Bueta in his book, *Tiempo de Crear: Polaridades Evangélicas* (Sal Terrae, Santander, 2010), p. 88.

¹⁶ These five temptations of love are inspired by the considerations of Nuno Tovar de Lemus SJ in his book *El Príncipe y la lavandera* (Ed. Sígueme, 2005).

Generosity and gratuitous effectiveness

The reflections of the latest General Congregations (from GC 32 in 1978 to GC 35 in 2008) have generously enriched our understanding of what “*service of faith and promotion of justice*” means for us. The characteristic features of this mission are:

- dialogue with diverse cultures and religions,
- awareness of how we all participate—from diverse perspectives and in different tasks—in a single mission which is the mission of Christ (*Missio Dei*),
- formation of communities of solidarity that are a manifestation of reconciliation with one another, with creation, and with God.

But perhaps the most important contribution of this evolving reflection on our mission of “faith and justice” has been a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the meaning of the “promotion of justice” in terms of personal and institutional practice, and not just in discourse.

Immediately after General Congregation 32, the promotion of justice was understood as beginning where charity ended (a pre-conciliar vision), but with the passing of time, and especially after General Congregation 34, the notion of justice came to be enriched to the point that today we can say that true charity is that which begins where justice ends: justice that is born of faith (true charity) goes far beyond the notion of justice that is not informed by Christian love.

Since the time of Father Arrupe it has been insisted that, although charity can be abused by being made a subterfuge for injustice, “*justice cannot be done without love. Nor can one disregard love when one resists injustice, since the universality of love is, according to the wish of Christ, a mandate without exception.*”¹⁷ It is therefore affirmed that:

*“our social apostolate, our struggle for justice, is something very distinctive. It is far superior to any kind of mere human agenda and essentially exceeds any philanthropic, sociological, or political conception because we are moved to it by God’s intrinsic love and by our human love for God. In that sense, it is an eminently apostolic work and, as such, completely and absolutely Jesuit in the most rigorous sense of our charism.”*¹⁸

More recently, Pope Francis has placed this reality at the heart of his proclamation of the Good News. The principle of mercy is nothing more than the justice of the Gospel taken to its extremes. It is the highest manifestation of charity: it is loving as God loves us, in total self-surrender to those who were lost prior to this rescue.¹⁹ The justice born of faith is identified with the merciful action of the God who redeems one and all.²⁰

¹⁷ Pedro Arrupe, “Rooted and Founded in Love,” 1981, no. 56.

¹⁸ *Promotio Iustitiae* (18 July 1980), p. 129. See also General Congregation 34. D 3, no. 4.

¹⁹ Without doubt the same intuition is present in the speech of Pope Benedict to the Jesuits gathered in General Congregation 35 when he says that “the preferential option for the poor is implied in the Christological faith in a God who became poor for us in order to enrich us with his poverty (2 Cor 8:9).” Discourse of Pope Benedict XVI to GC 35, February 2008.

²⁰ “Christian love has to be freely given because it presupposes the surrender of oneself to God and his Kingdom without setting conditions, without passing the bill to someone else, and without conceiving our work as a well-calculated investment. It means loving everyone without exception, in relationships that are not business transactions; it means losing ourselves joyfully in the mystery of the realization of

Nevertheless, we must maintain a positive awareness that “Christian love cannot be simply gratuitous gift; it must also be effective. In other words, good feelings and right intention are not enough. Love must also try to solve the concrete problems faced by the people we come upon day by day. It must have a broader vision, seeking to collaborate in the organization of society and helping to change the structures that affect everyone. It must bring about lasting changes that will create societies that are truly prosperous, just, and free.”²¹

One paradigmatic gospel passage not only portrays this dynamic of love that does justice but also reveals the ensuing tension between generosity and effectiveness, between commitment and gratuitous giving: it is the parable of the wounded Jew on the road and the Samaritan who takes pity on him (Luke 10:27-37). The stranger saw (1) the wounded man on the side of the road, stopped (2), got off his horse (3), approached him (4), touched him (5), healed him with his oil (6), gave him wine to drink (7), bandaged his wounds (8), lifted him onto his horse (9), and took him to the hostel (10); he cared for him all night (11), paid his expenses (12) and provided for his future (13). It is no accident that Jesus indicates that the person who did this was a Samaritan while the others, a priest coming from the temple and a Levite (a legal expert), did nothing for him. The practice of mercy (which is the supreme manifestation of justice) is a positive decision that creates something new where justice does not exist, where respect is not shown, and where reconciliation is unthinkable. Mercy is practiced wherever the unjustly treated are not unjust, where the violently abused are not violent, where the despised do not despise, where the excluded do not exclude, where the persecuted do not persecute, where the slandered do not defame, where the deceived do not lie, where the offended do not offend, where the condemned do not condemn. It is here that we see perfectly (divinely) manifested the tension between generosity and effectiveness, between commitment and gratuitous giving.

We must therefore employ all the means and abilities necessary to be effective in a concrete and precise manner, knowing that “gratuitous giving by itself can distance us from reality, making us disembodied, irresponsible, and naïve. On the other hand, mere effectiveness can lead us astray, making us hard, ruthless, and disenchanted when things do not work out as we hoped or in the timeframe we set. We need both of them, in a flexible and constantly creative synthesis.”²²

Both the example (deeds) and the teaching (words) of St Ignatius Loyola reveal clearly to us this dynamic tension between generosity (gratuitousness) and effectiveness. Ignatius insists that “love should be shown in deeds more than in words” in one of the most typical passages of the Spiritual Exercises (the preludes of Contemplation to Attain Love), but he does so only after the exercitants have already passed through a careful process of cleansing and purification in their response to Love. The writings of Ignatius which orient the day-to-day life of the Society of Jesus repeatedly insist on the need to live in “discreet charity” that is “discerning,” “well-ordered,” “personal,” and “true.” These adjectives and others show us that not every exercise of charity leads us to make the best decisions, or to transform God’s love and our own love for God into a concrete reality. The creative tension entailed in loving

the Kingdom in history without setting time limits, thus placing ourselves beyond measurable successes and obvious failures.” Benjamín González Buelta, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

²² “The Samaritan can be effective because in the profoundest depths of his heart there is an immense sense of gratuity. He does not know the assaulted man. He does not give with a heart that holds back. He exposes himself to personal danger. He places no limits on costs and imposes no conditions on the Jewish man. But underlying his effective action is an immense sense of gratuity that makes it all possible.” *Ibid.*, p. 107.

generously and effectively, with all the consequences that both dimensions require, is reflected in the famous phrase, "Work on everything as if it depended on us, and hope for everything as if it depended only on God."²³

Effectiveness with efficiency

Efficiency is a worthy and important value that is usually associated with discernment and the proper use of the means needed to perform an action that aims at something greater than mere utilization of those means. It is therefore linked to a more pragmatic view of the use of things, and in our case, of things which do not belong to us and of which we are only the administrators.

The **effective love** that we positively seek is much more than mere *efficiency*. It is important for us to reflect on this and to deepen our awareness of it (two distinct kinds of activity). To state it in purely Ignatian and evangelical terms: we are asked to acquire *interior knowledge* of the truth that "*bearing fruit is not the same as being successful*" (Pablo Mella SJ²⁴).

The whirlwind of efficiency can easily make us lose our sense of the gratuitousness of things (everything for everyone), the gratuitousness of time ("there is more time than life," as the Mexicans say), and the gratuitousness of our relationship with people. We feel we must produce, we must minimize efforts, and we must maximize results; we must save material resources ("neither more nor less than is strictly necessary"); we must manage time ("time is money") as well as human resources (people are simply that, "resources").

But efficiency should not be made an end itself. There is no doubt that being efficient is a value, but like all other values in life, it has its contingencies (I may be efficient, but I am also at the same time friendly, kind, intelligent, etc.). Efficiency also has subsidiary relationships with other more or less broad and important values, depending on the situation of the individual and the communities.²⁵ We can therefore affirm that to be effective generally means that we need to be efficient, although that by itself is not enough. Indeed, at times it may not even be necessary at all.

²³ "In everything he undertook for the Lord's service, he used all human means available to him in order to succeed, with utmost care and efficiency, as if any good outcome depended on them. At the same time, he trusted in God and looked to his divine providence as if all those human measures that he adopted were of no use whatsoever." Pedro Ribadeneira, *Monumenta Ignaciana*, 4th vol., I, no. 14, quoted by Benjamín González Buelta, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-111.

²⁴ "Bearing fruit" is a biblical expression brimming with spiritual significance. In the Bible, God's people appears frequently as a vineyard from which mature fruit is expected. Jesus himself uses the image to express the deep meaning of his mission. In the Gospel of John, he tells his disciples that the glory of the Father consists in his sons and daughters bearing fruit in abundance (Jn 15:8.16). Bearing fruit refers to fertility, a characteristic of all living things. It is through fertility that life multiplies, by the gratuitous gift of life itself. Those who wish to follow Jesus Christ are called to be fruitful. Every follower of Jesus is called to increase life by giving of self gratuitously. The spirituality of fruitfulness cannot be understood without remembering this statement of Jesus: "I assure you that the grain of wheat that falls to earth, if it does not die, remains but a grain of wheat. But if it dies it will bear much fruit" (Jn 12:24). Taken from an unpublished text of the author.

²⁵ As González Buelta tells us: "Evangelical effectiveness is permeated by gratuity and can transform reality through moments (...) in which nothing seems to happen, episodes of inefficiency and scandalous failure, such as the death of Jesus on the cross." *Ibid.*

While *generosity* implies self-divestment, surrender, offering, and openness, *efficiency* is marked by a centripetal movement that has more to do with keeping, saving, conserving, preserving, controlling, and possessing.²⁶ By falling into the trap of “efficientism” (seeing efficiency as an end in itself), one enters into the deceptive dynamic that Gabriel Marcel denounced over half a century ago: “*possessing almost inevitably results in being possessed.*”

For this reason, when we speak of effectiveness as an attribute of the love we are called to live, we are referring to a reality more extensive and demanding than simply “being efficient” (though efficiency is usually implied). We are referring directly to the “fruit,” to the “results,” to the “aim,” to the “objective,” to the “impact” of our actions (which are efficient, organized, coordinated, respectful, etc.).

Since it is impossible for us to live completely only in a single dimension, we need to comprehend better the different aspects of this dialectical relationship between generosity and effectiveness, between bearing fruit and having success. To do this, let us ponder the analytical scheme proposed by Pablo Mella SJ²⁷:

BEARING FRUIT	BEING SUCCESSFUL
Fundamental action and passion: gift, gratuitousness	Fundamental action and passion: possession, merit
Something ‘natural’ that follows the rhythms of life and lets them flow	Something “artificial” that does not respect life’s vital rhythms but forces and pressures them
Key word: maturity	Key word: triumph
Core values: <i>confidence</i> and patience	Core values: <i>security</i> and efficiency
<i>Integrates</i> imperfections and defects	Rejects imperfections and defects
Evokes the nourishing silence of earth and nature	Evokes the brightness and the loudness of <i>spectacular</i> appearance
Receives and digests food (relationship with earth, seed, rain water, and sun), in communion with Creation	Pure work that depends on immediate results, in isolation from nature
<i>Integrates</i> limit situations, <i>recognizing</i> the presence of “what is harmful”	<i>Discredits and denies the importance</i> of limit situations, <i>because they are considered as failures</i>
Cannot be measured with <i>standardized precision instruments</i>	<i>Everything is</i> measured with <i>the same precision instruments</i>
Is not cumulative: <i>it always has something new in profusion (does not respond to expectations)</i>	Is something accumulated, <i>like a collection of diplomas or like money in a bank account</i>

²⁶ Cfr. Benjamín González Buelta, *Ibid.*, p. 86

²⁷ These two realities, compared here metaphorically, are not absolute opposites. The object of the exercise is to understand the dynamic that moves each reality toward its final goal. But in real life they are creatively combined so that “being successful is bearing fruit”: in order to bear real fruit, one must succeed in the evangelical sense. The table is taken and adapted from unpublished material by the author. **Words in bold italics are my own modifications.**

Specific challenges

Called as we are, then, to live an effective love in our personal service and in our projects and institutional actions, we need to have appropriate ways of elaborating, implementing, and evaluating our plans, projects, and actions so that *our works are consistent with our statements*. In doing this, we must strive constantly, both as individuals and as a body, to make use of our own personal experience and that of other persons and organizations, especially if they are more skilled than we are in the processes of planning, execution, and evaluation of collective and public actions.

General Congregation 34, which took place in 1998, strongly insisted on this need:

"Jesuit institutions can use the following means to help in implementing our mission: institutional evaluation of the role they play in society; examination of whether the institution's own internal structures and policies reflect our mission, collaboration and exchange with similar institutions in diverse social and cultural contexts, continual formation of personnel regarding mission" (Decree 3, "Our Mission and Justice," no. 21).

"Each Province should evaluate its apostolic planning using the Ignatian criteria in the Constitutions, read in the light of our mission today. When understood in the light of the faith that seeks justice, the criterion of "greater need" points towards places or situations of serious injustice; the criterion of "more fruitful," towards ministry which can be more effective in creating communities of solidarity; the criterion of "more universal," towards action which contributes to structural change to create a society more based on shared responsibility. After decisions are made, it is of crucial importance to evaluate the process of implementation. Annual review of the accomplishment of objectives during the year can help determine objectives for the coming year. Serious and regular review of effectiveness in carrying out our mission will give credibility and realism to our provincial and our institutional planning." (Decree 3, "Our Mission and Justice," no. 22).

At the interprovincial and international levels, the Society must continue to find ways to collaborate with other national and international groups or organizations, both non-governmental and official, for a part of our responsibility as an international apostolic body is to work with others at the regional and global level for a more just international order. The Society must therefore examine its resources and try to assist in the formation of an effective international network so that, at this level also, our mission can be carried out. (Decree 3, "Our Mission and Justice," no. 23).

The 35th General Congregation (2008) insisted on this collaboration in an even more concrete way, urging the diverse sectors of the apostolic body of the universal Society to work together as a group in order to achieve concrete results with regard to common issues such as migration, violence, poverty, and environment. In its Decree 3, "Challenges to Our Mission today," GC 35 states:

*"The Congregation urges all Jesuits and all partners engaged in the same mission, particularly the universities and research centers, to promote studies and practices focused on the causes of poverty and the question of the environment's improvement. We should find ways in which our experience with refugees and the displaced on the one hand, and people who work for the protection of the environment on the other hand, can interact with those institutions, **so that research results and advocacy have effective practical benefits for society and the environment. Advocacy and research should serve the poor and those who work for environmental protection.** This ought to shed a new light on the appeal of the Holy Father*

that costs should be justly shared, “taking due account of the different levels of development.” (Decree 3, no. 35, our emphasis)

In this global context it is important to highlight the extraordinary potential we possess as an international and multicultural body. Acting consistently with this character can not only enhance the apostolic effectiveness of our work, but in a fragmented and divided world, it can witness to the reconciliation in solidarity of all God’s children. (Decree 3, No. 43)

Our challenge today is not to produce fresh ideas but to renew and update our efforts to implement in our concrete works what has already been stated repeatedly on various occasions. It is true that some institutions in our social sector have already taken important and appropriate steps such as the following, which form part of a virtuous circle:

1. analysis and diagnosis of reality,
2. planning and development of projects,
3. organization, planning and, execution of tasks,
4. evaluation of results and impacts,
5. strategic reorganization in function of new analysis and diagnosis
6. in order to achieve new objectives.

We may find that this is a difficult language because it has dynamic and pragmatic technicalities with which we are perhaps unfamiliar. Or we may resist using such language because it challenges our apostolic identity and opportunity. Sometimes we seem to have a clear vision of “what to do” (action) and “where we want to go” (vision), but at the same time we lack realism and the managerial ability to make the decisions and carry out the actions needed to reach the goal we are seeking. On other occasions, we are so tied to traditional ways of organizing and promoting things, or so taken up with accomplishing tasks and responding to immediate needs, that we fail to see the urgency of making important modifications – at the executive as well as the managerial and organizational level – with regard to the results we want to achieve.

It is for this reason that we have convened this “special seminar” (coinciding with the meeting of directors of the social centers that belong to the CPAL Network). It is for this reason also that during the coming year we will be constantly trying to help one another to grow in the ability to clearly define and identify the results and social impacts we hope to achieve. This will require that we share our experiences and be open to questions about our practices. We will also consider the implications that this aspiration (and those results, once obtained) will have on executive, organizational, and managerial structures in our centers. In the process we hope to find the best way to express a credible and reliable narrative for ourselves and for our allies.

It is worthwhile reproducing at the end of this framework document a text about the need for us to have and to implement clear and well-defined collaborative strategies (it was already published in the 2011 document, *Invited to Collaborate*):

*“In the face of the challenges of the current frontiers of our world, we need now a **joint strategic vision** that can provide us with both direction and orientation.*

*A strategic vision of this kind will allow us to **order our priorities**, discover their meaning and purpose, and **prepare us for the sacrifices** that may be necessary along the way. Only that strategic vision will enable us, albeit painfully, to renounce works and initiatives which were valuable in the past, but which perhaps today do not help us to stay on the frontiers we have identified”.*

This strategic vision requires some key tools:

- *Capacity for rigorous, deep, and interdisciplinary thinking about our reality*
- *Elaboration of diagnostic analyses about our reality which will allow us to take well-considered positions that we can justify*
- *Concreteness of projects and actions in our various apostolic fields and our taking of positions*
- *Follow-up and evaluation of projects and actions*
- *Guidance of the entire process by shared apostolic discernment and a constant insistence on our identity, marked by the service of faith and the promotion of justice.*

Once again, the key to the construction of this strategic vision will be found in our spiritual attitudes. In particular, we will need a great sense of freedom, what Ignatius called indifference, in order to be able to find and collaborate with the God who is at work in this broken world.²⁸

*Original in Spanish
Translation by Joseph Owens SJ*

²⁸ *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 107, 2011/3, pp. 39-40

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