

Acting for Prison Reform/Restorative Justice

Isaiah 1:17 NAB Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow.

Matthew 25:36 ESV I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.

John 3:17 ESV For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Acts 3:19 ESV Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out.

1 Timothy 1:15 ESV This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

1 Peter 3:18-19 NRSV For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison

1 John 2:2 ESV He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Michigan Catholic Conference. Crime has a far-reaching impact. It affects families, law enforcement, the wrongly accused, and certainly the victim. When discussing criminal justice reforms, solutions should foster fairness and rehabilitative outcomes. The Catholic concept of restorative justice promotes policies that improve public safety, encourages accountability and healing, and contributes, when possible, to rehabilitation. MCC supports:

- Policies that respect crime victims, including provision of just compensation and treatment for their physical and emotional injuries.
- Policies that incentivize intensive probation programming to reduce recidivism.
- Adequate state funding to ensure accused indigent persons receive competent legal representation.
- Comprehensive reentry services to assist the formerly incarcerated to become productive members of society.
- Sentencing guidelines and parole practices that reflect an individual's potential threat to society.
- Elimination of life without parole sentencing for juveniles convicted as adults¹.

¹ Catholic Advocacy Issues, MCC [Restorative Justice | Michigan Catholic Conference \(micatholic.org\)](https://micatholic.org) accessed 9-20-22

Pope Francis I think that here is the great challenge that we must all face, so that the measures taken against evil are not limited to suppressing, discouraging and isolating those who cause it, but instead help them to rehabilitate, to re-embark upon the path of good, to be authentic people who move on from their miseries to become merciful themselves. Therefore, the Church proposes a form of justice that is humanizing, genuinely reconciliatory, a justice that leads the wrongdoer, through an educative path of encouraged penance, to rehabilitation and total reinsertion in the community. How important and good it would be to take on this challenge, so as not to let it fall into oblivion. How good it would be to take the necessary steps to ensure that forgiveness does not remain exclusively in the private sphere, but instead attains a real political and institutional dimension to create harmonious relations of coexistence.²

Pope Francis. "Often when leaving prison, the person finds himself in a world that is alien to him and that does not recognize him as trustworthy, even excluding him from the possibility of working to obtain a decent livelihood.... By preventing people from regaining the full exercise of their dignity ... they are exposed again to the lack of opportunity that often contributed to their committing a crime in the first place. **Pope Francis on prison systems: 'We will be judged on this'**³

Pope Benedict XVI It is necessary not only to relieve the gravest needs **but to go to their roots**, proposing measures that will give **social, political and economic structures** a more equitable configuration in solidarity." *Message to Mexican Bishops*⁴

John Paul II. Prison gates cannot exclude from the benefits ... those who find themselves spending part of their lives behind them. In remembering these brothers and sisters, I first wish to express the hope that the Risen Lord, who entered the Upper Room through closed doors, will enter all the prisons of the world and find a welcome in the hearts of those within, bringing peace and serenity to everyone.

Imprisonment as punishment is as old as human history. In many countries, prisons are very overcrowded. Some of them are equipped with good facilities, but living conditions in others are very precarious, not to say altogether unworthy of human beings. What is clear to all is that this kind of punishment generally succeeds only in part in addressing the phenomenon of crime. In fact, in some cases detention seems to create more problems than it solves. *This must prompt rethinking* with a view to some kind of reform.⁵

²19th Congress of the International Criminal Law Association and the 3rd Congress of the Latin American Association for Penal Law and Criminology [Restorative Justice | Ad Deum](#) accessed 9-20-22

³ [Pope Francis on prison systems: 'We will be judged on this' | America Magazine](#) accessed 9-2--22

⁴ [5 Pope Benedict XVI Quotes on Social Justice | Millennial \(millennialjournal.com\)](#) accessed 9-20-22

⁵ [Message for the Jubilee in Prisons \(June 24, 2000\) | John Paul II \(vatican.va\)](#) accessed 9-20-22