

Crime Prevention

Everyone is called to help criminals(sinners) repent and to know Christ's love for them.

“And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you ? ' And the King will answer them, ' Truly I tell you , just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me .” (Matthew 25: 39 -40)

Prayer for Justice and Mercy

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1807, 270)

Jesus, united with the Father and the Holy Spirit, give us your compassion for those in prison. Mend in mercy the broken in mind and memory. Soften the hard at heart, the captives of anger. Free the innocent: parole the trustworthy. Awaken the repentance that restores hope. May prisoners' families persevere in their love.

Jesus, heal the victims of crime. They live with the scars. Lift to eternal peace those who die. Grant victims' families the forgiveness that heals. Give wisdom to lawmakers and to those who judge. Instill prudence and patience in those who guard. Make those in prison Ministry bearers of your light, for all of us are in need of your mercy! Amen.

In the 30s and 40s in this country, there were serious polio epidemics also called infantile paralysis which caused many people to be crippled by the disease .President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was crippled by polio and many others lost their lives from this terrible disease.All that could be done before the cause of the disease was discovered by Dr. Jonas Salk was to treat symptoms; keep the patient comfortable, etc. In the 50s when the cause of the disease was identified, the Salk vaccine was used most effectively to immunize people. Now we seldom or maybe never hear about people in this country being afflicted with polio.

Deterrents to crime are necessary. We will always have a need for police, burglar alarms, watchdogs, bright lights, jails and prisons, etc. **If this is all we do,we are only treating symptoms** and we find criminal activity increasing like a plague or a cancer in which **the cause of the disease is not known, identified and destroyed.** Any and all deterrents, **at best, may delay or discourage criminal activity** at times. Those who are intent on criminal activity will find a way to commit their crimes. They never expect to be caught or arrested.

The only way to **prevent crime** from being committed is to **change the heart of the criminal so that he desires only to do good toward others.** This change can be effected in the way of, and with the certain help of Jesus Christ.

To prevent crime(serious sin), we, in the Catholic Church, know the cause and possess the

means and ability to not only immunize people so they won't become criminals, but we also possess the medicines(sacraments) and physical therapy (Catholic moral teaching , prayer life, worship, etc.) to heal criminals of their evil inclinations.

Crime is sin. The source and cause of our inclination to sin is our damaged human nature. All people are born with a damaged nature.

We have a good fruitful life producing happiness and peace for ourselves and others when we live in God's truth and love. However, we are not inclined to live in truth, selfless love for God and for others. We are inclined to live troubled lives, troublesome to others as well as to ourselves, because of our **damaged human nature** which shows itself in self-destructive pride, selfishness, greed, envy, gluttony, lustfulness and laziness.

When these characteristics rule our lives, we become incapable of living as true friends of God and other people. When our lack of love for others(sinfulness) becomes such an obstacle to peace that even the atheists can't tolerate it , then we are labeled as criminals and kept from hurting others by locking us up in prison with long sentences.

We must face the fact that **crime is sin**. If we don't deal with sin, we only treat symptoms, and that is what is happening. People who don't believe in God can't even understand that there is such a thing as sin. Hardened criminals have repeated sinful actions so much that they live habitually with harmful, vicious, sinful inclinations.

When sin is not recognized as the problem, as is the situation now in this country, then we hear that **the criminal made bad choices** or; even worse, he **made a mistake**. What does that mean? Made bad choices. If he did his crime in a better way, he wouldn't have been caught and arrested. Made a mistake. He won't make that mistake again during his next robbery or murder. Sin must be recognized as the cause of the problem if the criminal is to be truly rehabilitated. He has been rehabilitated when he only desires to live in a friendly love relationship with God and with all other people.

In other words, **the criminal must have a change of heart** and be converted to be a person who loves God and his fellow man and believes that this is the only way to live. He believes and desires wholeheartedly to no longer ignore his need to love God and his fellow man. If this belief and desire is sincere, he can only do good. This is how to prevent crime.

Many men and women in prison are very unhappy with their lives. They want to change and we, in the Catholic Church, have the calling from Jesus Christ, and the ability to help them enter into Jesus Christ's way of love which is the only sure way of preventing them from ever again engaging in criminal activities.

Preventing crime is good, but not good enough. We should be making an effort to **eliminate crime(sin)** in our own lives. Then we will be able to help others, with the help of God, **to eliminate any desire for sin or criminal activity in their lives**. In other words, to change others, we must first change ourselves. We can't give or move others to do good, if we can't ourselves, do what we want them to do.

If our only response to those who have committed crimes is to seek revenge and to punish

the lawbreaker, criminal activities can only increase. If all we do is punish the criminal, take revenge with long sentences and death penalties; we can only expect him or her to become more angry, more desperate, more dangerous, hopeless and more likely to be convinced that there is nothing else possible for him or for her than a life of crime. With this approach, recidivism and the crime rate for most every type of crime increases and can be expected to continue to increase.

We must make a greater effort to encourage and to help a criminal to repent and begin to live the Christian life while he is in prison. How can we say we believe in Jesus Christ if we don't believe that a criminal can repent, be forgiven by God, and with the grace of God live a good, purposeful, fruitful Christian life?

