



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

“You Matter. You are a priority,” Prison Chaplains across Australia deliver ‘A Message for Prisoners’ during the Year of Mercy

**Media release
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Prison Chaplains across Australia are delivering a special ‘Message for Prisoners’ from the Catholic Church about love and hope from the Australian Catholic Prisoners Pastoral Care Council.

This message marks the Jubilee for Prisoners chosen by Pope Francis to be celebrated during the Year of Mercy on 6 November 2016.

In his message written for prisoners, Bishop Delegate for the Australian Catholic Prisoners Pastoral Care Council, the Most Reverend Terry Brady said, ‘Pope Francis shows us the importance of accompanying one another in the ups and downs of life. We all stumble; make mistakes; fail others and ourselves. But we are all capable of loving and of experiencing hope’.

Bishop Brady said this special day for prisoners, occurring during the Year of Mercy, invites each one of us to follow the merciful example of God, ‘to forgive and love rather than judge and condemn’.

‘Many people have spent time in jail – including saints and even Jesus himself. His message is meant for everyone, regardless of the circumstances because we all possess human dignity.’

Recognising and valuing the human dignity of Prisoners, Pope Francis said, ‘no one is beyond the reach of God’s mercy’. In the past, our thinking and beliefs have been that everything will be resolved by ‘isolating, separating, incarcerating’ but in fact ‘the care of prisoners is a moral imperative for the whole of society’, reintegration does not begin within prison walls but rather ‘outside – in the streets’, the Holy Father said.

It is during the time in prison that ‘the task of a chaplain is to let the prisoners know that the Lord is inside with them. No cell is so isolated that it can keep the Lord out. He is there,’ Pope Francis said.

Speaking about ‘Reaching Out, A Message for Prisoners’, Fr Peter Carroll MSC, Chairman of the Australian Catholic Prisoners Pastoral Care Council said, ‘The Council would like every prison chaplain across Australia to know that their vital ministry is acknowledged and appreciated by the Church in Australia during this Jubilee for Prisoners in the Year of Mercy. The role of a prison chaplain is essential in many ways, especially in affirming the uniqueness of each individual.’

‘It is easy to forget the families who are also affected by having a loved one in prison. They too need the prayers of our Catholic community and practical gestures of concern and support from our parish communities.’

‘It is my hope that each Prison Chaplain will use this message as a resource to continue their essential and pastoral conversations with prisoners about their human value; their self worth in our society and their importance in the eyes of the Church.’

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