



Diocese of Port Pirie

Chancery

PO Box 1206, Port Pirie, Sth Australia, 5540
Email: diocoffice@pp.catholic.org.au

Phone: 08 8632 0550

Fax: 08 8632 0599

Pastoral Letter to the Christian Faithful of the Diocese of Port Pirie

Jubilee for Prisoners: The Year of Mercy

Dear Brothers & Sisters

I am writing to you concerning the Jubilee for Prisoners proclaimed by the Holy Father as part of the Year of Mercy and set for Sunday 6th November. An attachment, "Suggestions for Parishes" has been forwarded for incorporation into your liturgy on that day.

We will also move the collection for the Prison Ministry to the 6th November, changing the date originally advised (27th November). Concerning the collection for Prison Ministry, last year it was allocated as the annual Special Collection, but achieved a relatively small response of just over \$2,000, diocesan-wide. I appreciate the fact that the parishes of the Riverland, Port Augusta and Port Lincoln cover additional costs themselves for this ministry. Envelopes will be available on the pews.

The diocese expends over \$22,000 on prison ministry per annum, largely to cover travel and accommodations costs. Mel Monfries visits on a fortnightly basis from Adelaide. We have Peter Ryan working with Fr Khalid in Port Lincoln, and Fr Paul Bourke visits Cadell on a fortnightly basis as does Fr Khalid. Fr Khalid is in Port Augusta prison almost on a daily basis. Fr Paul Crotty also visits Port Augusta Prison, as do Srs Elizabeth, Kaspar and Delma. The significance of this ministry can be perceived not simply from Matthew 25 – "I was in prison and you visited me" – but from the sheer number of incarcerated men and women in the diocese, (over 900) very many of them very marginalised, and therefore close to the mission of the Church.

When I first came to the diocese I did make the statement that our ministry among Aboriginal people and the prisoners in our midst could be strengthened, as they are groups so dear to the Gospel. I am delighted at the way in which both ministries have been strengthened. Fr Khalid has kept a record of the hours engaged in by our chaplains among our prisoners. He records it as 1196 hours a year on visits, and another 600 hours dealing with prisoners post-release. Those hours relate only to pastoral visits. In addition there are the weekly church services.

With the cooperation of our parish priests, writing groups have been established in three of our parishes, and bands of noble souls meet regularly to write letters to prisoners, observing all the safeguards. One must bear in mind that there are many prisoners incarcerated for many years, who never receive a letter, or a phone call, or a visit from anybody, including Christmas Day and Easter. How marginalised is that? The letters are received with delight, Fr Khalid informs me, and I am grateful to the writers.

With every good wish and a prayer for this Jubilee for Prisoners.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read '+ Gregory O'Kelly SJ'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

+ Gregory O'Kelly SJ
Bishop of the Diocese of Port Pirie

26th October 2016