



Current Issues in Prayer

February 2015

Welcome! The Pope invites people of different faiths to come together and pray:

That prisoners, especially the young, may be able to rebuild lives of dignity.



Getting started:

I select a quiet place and get comfortable so as to prepare for prayer. I become aware of what is happening inside of me: do I feel impatient; anxious; worried? Do I feel suffocated by society and those around me, as though I were in a prison? If so, let me try to calm down. I draw in a deep breath while realizing that God is looking with loving eyes at me and at those around me.



Short story:

During the month of December in 2011, Gordon Ramsay, a well known British cook, set up a project within the prisons at Brixton, UK. He selected twelve prisoners and set about teaching them how to cook. Along with his assistant, he spent a whole six months meeting up with these inmates. Arguments and fights were frequent. Every day brought its challenges of who was to use which knife and who was to stay in which group. They would commence early in the morning and only wrap things up late in the evening. It was not long before the group of twelve came down to seven. And yet, by the sheer determination of those who kept it up and a few others who later joined the 'Bad Boys' Bakery' – as they came to be called – they managed to put up a meal that seriously impressed the most prominent persons in the catering sector in the UK.



Ramsay's original intention for this project was that those serving a prison sentence would give something back to society, but actually the end result was that these inmates themselves received much more from it by way of satisfaction, skills, experience in cooking and a sense of dignity. On completing their prison term, four found work as cooks – three actually in the kitchens of well known restaurants. The fourth is working with an association that helps ex-prisoners reintegrate in society.

The 'Life Changing Taste' programme still runs at the prison.



Time to reflect:

Do I know of anyone who feels trapped in a prison and has lost hope?
Do I know of anyone who is serving a prison sentence or relatives of someone in prison?
How do I imagine these people must feel about their situation?



Let us pray:

Lord, I pray for all those who are in prison, that they may not lose hope and that they may find a society that is ready to welcome them back.



Inspiration:

"It is said that one cannot know a nation without first visiting its prisons. A nation is not to be measured by the way it deals with its top citizens, but with its lowest." (Nelson Mandela)



Hands on:

Throughout this week, I will pray for someone I know who is in prison or feels as though trapped within a prison.

I will try to bring encouragement and hope in the lives of others.
If possible, I will try to help someone reintegrate in society.