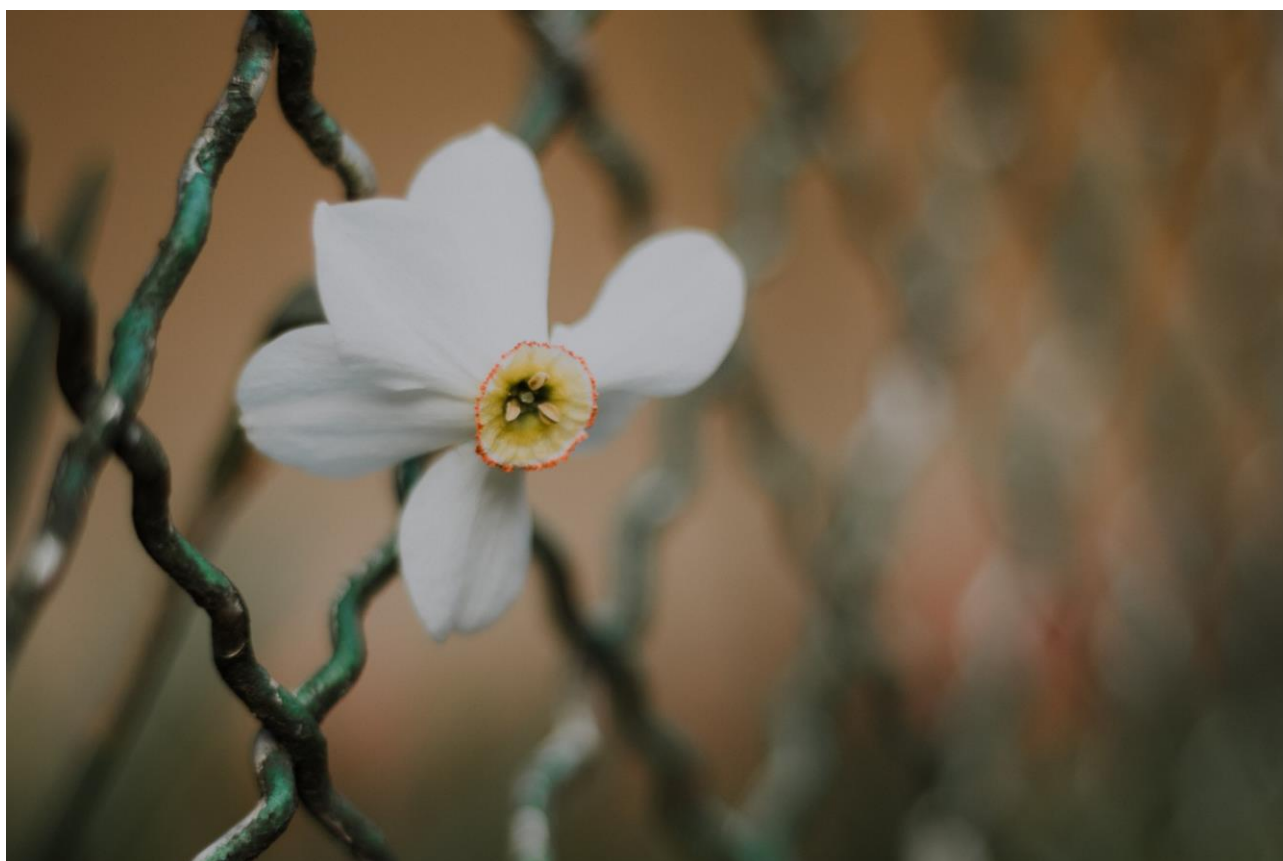


# FLOURISHING INSIDE?

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT AND PRISON PASTORAL WORK**



**MARGARET BEAUFORT INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY**  
**2020-2021**

**FUNDED BY**



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## 1. Introduction to the Project

What do incarcerated people need from pastoral workers? What resources do pastoral workers need? How can they work best within the prison system? What can Catholic social thought contribute? And how can Catholic social thought be enhanced from listening to the prison context?

These questions were explored in a unique research project, *Flourishing Inside*, completed 2020-2021 at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology (Cambridge, United Kingdom) led by Dr Elizabeth Phillips (2020 Research Fellow) with oversight from Dr Férdia Stone-Davis (Director of Research).

One of the central commitments of Catholic social thought is that every human being has inherent dignity and worth which need not be earned by anything they do and cannot be taken away by anyone or anything external to them. Another central commitment is that human beings are inherently social. We need one another and our interrelatedness makes us who we are. Both of these commitments, for Catholics and other Christians, arise from belief in the Triune God in whose image all human beings are made. Human beings flourish when their dignity is recognised and upheld, and when they have strong and healthy social bonds and relate to just social structures. What does it mean, then, to flourish inside a prison? Can chaplains and others who work with prison residents encourage and contribute to human flourishing even inside structures and conditions which deprive humans of some essential aspects of dignity and sociality? How can chaplains themselves flourish in their work inside? And what can people outside prisons learn about flourishing in life by listening to voices from inside prisons?

The research included three areas of exploration:

- listening to experiences from inside prisons through a focus group event with practitioners and individual interviews with former prison residents
- overviewing introductions to and resources for learning Catholic social thought
- reviewing previous research on prison chaplaincy in particular, as well as chaplaincy more generally and religion in prisons more broadly

The project aimed to produce the following outcomes:

- A discrete collection of digital resources, hosted on the MBIT website, publicly accessible, focused on theology and ethics of prison chaplaincy;
- An internationally significant collection of theological reflections on CST and prison ministry, newly shaped by the research;
- An improved training programme and increased access to that programme;
- Established collaborative relationships between actors in academy and prison practice, and organisational links amongst prison charities, academic and ecclesial institutions.

In what follows, the findings and outcomes will be summarised, then more detail is provided on each area of findings and outcomes in the main section of the report. The report concludes with the full bibliography of sources consulted.

## a. About the Team

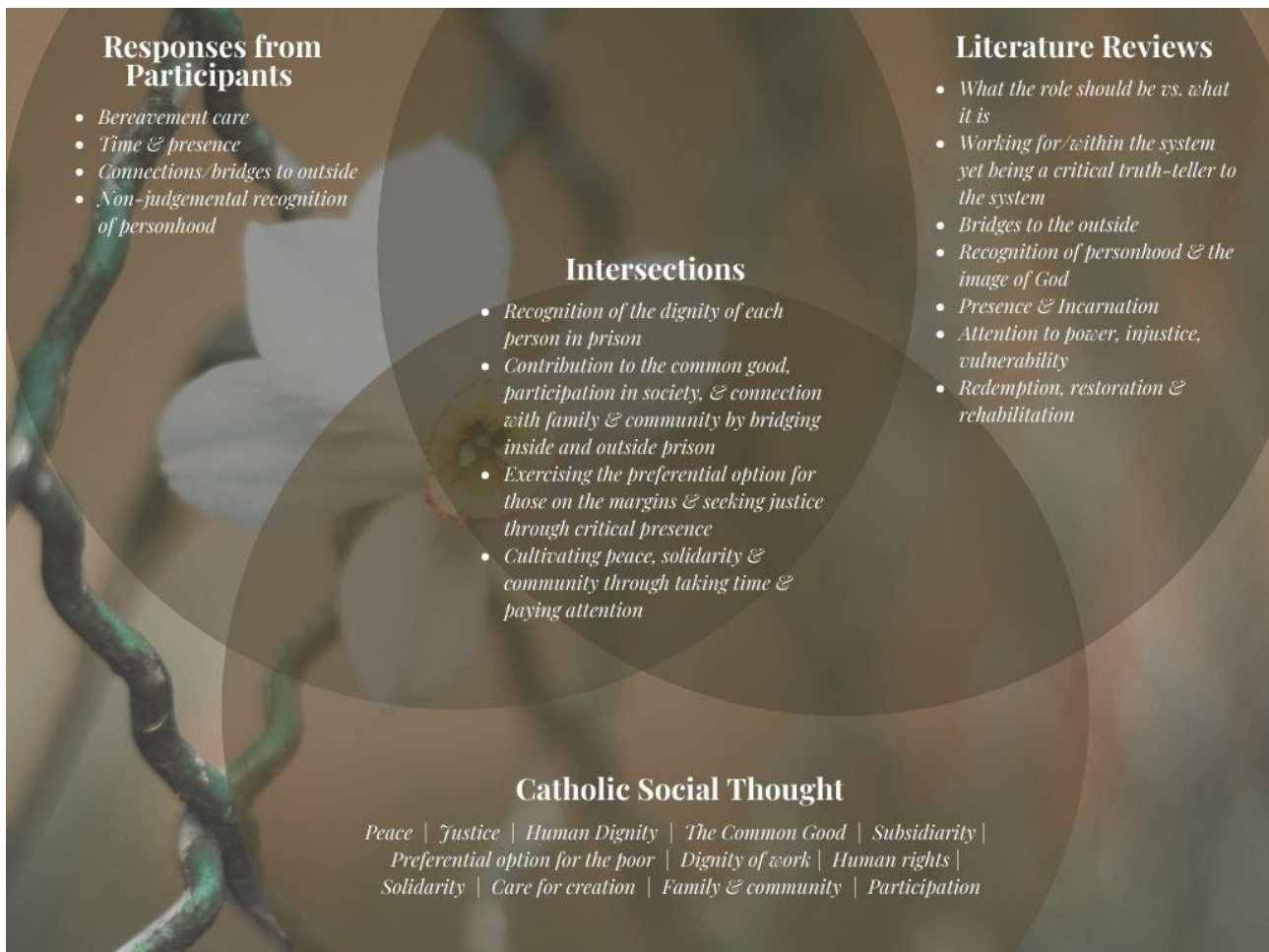
### **Lead Researcher: Dr Elizabeth Phillips (erp31@cam.ac.uk)**

Elizabeth Phillips spent 2018-2019 as Visiting Scholar in the Institute for Criminology (University of Cambridge) and 2019-2020 as Research Fellow at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology. Previous to and following her fellowship she was Director of Studies and Lecturer, Westcott House, Cambridge, where she taught Christian ethics and political theology. As of April 2022 she is Public Engagement Fellow, Woolf Institute, Cambridge. She is author of *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (T&T Clark, 2012) and co-editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Political Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and *T&T Clark Reader in Political Theology* (2020). See <http://www.margaretbeaufort.cam.ac.uk/person/dr-elizabeth-phillips/>

### **Director of Research: Dr Férdia J. Stone-Davis (fjs23@cam.ac.uk)**

Férdia Stone-Davis is Director of Research, Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Affiliated Lecturer, Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge, Postdoctoral Bye-fellow, Murray Edwards College, Cambridge, Associate Fellow of the Centre for Arts and the Sacred, King's College London, and Chair of the Royal Music Association Music and Philosophy Study Group. She is currently a senior scientist on a three-year project funded by the Austrian Science Fund with the University of Music and the Performing Arts Graz, 'The Epistemic Power of Music: On the Idea and History of Artistic Research through Music'. She is author of *Musical Beauty: Negotiating the Boundary between Subject and Object* (Wipf & Stock, 2011), co-editor of *The Soundtrack of Conflict: The Role of Music in Radio Broadcasting in Wartime and in Conflict Situations* (Olms, 2013), editor of a special journal issue of *Contemporary Music Review*, 'Home: Creating and Inhabiting Place through Music Activity' (Taylor & Francis, 2015), and editor of *Music and Transcendence* (Ashgate, 2015). Recent and forthcoming articles include 'Revaluing Silence', in *On Commemoration* (eds. Gilbert, McLoughlin & Munroe, Peter Lang, 2020), and 'Redemption and Sin', in *Companion to Theology and the Arts* (eds. Adkins & Garrett, T&T Clark, 2021). See <https://ferdiastonedavis.com>

## 2. Summary of Findings and Outcomes



This graphic represents the three areas of research in the Flourishing Inside project:

- Analysing literature related to prison chaplaincy, including empirical research of chaplaincy, prison chaplaincy, and religion in prisons as well as theological literature about chaplaincy and prisons
- Listening to project participants, who included current practitioners of prison pastoral care and former prison residents
- Analysing Catholic Social Thought, including official documents of Catholic Social Teaching, literature about them, and wider literature on the themes and movements of Catholic social thinking and engagement

Within each of these areas of enquiry, you can see the key themes which emerged from the research, and in the centre of the graphic you can see the key areas where these themes overlapped and intersected. Each of these themes is summarised in the sections immediately below, and more detailed descriptions are in the 'Data and Findings' section following these summaries.



## **Literature Reviews**

The reviews of relevant literature for the project included empirical research as well as theological literature related to prison chaplaincy. More specifically, the following types of literature were consulted:

- Empirical studies of prison chaplaincy
- Empirical studies of prisons which address chaplaincy and/or religion in prisons
- Theological work on chaplaincy
- Theological work on prison chaplaincy
- Theological work which relates Catholic Social Teaching to prisons
- Documents published by churches in the US and England and Wales regarding prisons

Overviews of the literature can be found in the 'Literature Reviews' section, below. The following **key themes** emerged from this diverse body of literature (citations refer to entries in the 'Project Bibliography', below):

- **There are significant tensions between theologies and theories of what the role of a prison chaplain should be and realities of what the role is or is perceived to be.** Prison chaplains spend more of their time on administrative and other tasks which are peripheral to the religious and pastoral provision they consider central (Sundt and Cullen 1998 and 2002; Pew Research Centre 2012). Prison chaplains tend to explain their role in religious terms whereas prison officers and residents tend to explain the chaplain's role in terms of humanitarian assistance (Todd and Tipton 2011; Liebling et. al. 2011). Although prison chaplains believe that extremism is uncommon and not a major threat (Pew Research Center 2012), increased focus on anti-extremism agendas has a significant impact on prison chaplaincy (Todd and Tipton 2011; Todd 2013). A study of one English prison found that the focus of governance in relation to religion was on reducing the perceived risks of extremism rather than encouraging positive faith practices (Liebling, et. al. 2011). One piece on Christian chaplaincy names five theological models according to which chaplains themselves and their churches understand their work, contrasted with five secular models according to which the institutions and publics with whom they work understand chaplaincy (Threlfall-Holmes and Newitt 2011).
- **There are significant tensions for prison chaplains between working for and within the system and being a critical truth-teller to the system.** Chaplains understand their primary purpose as working for and on behalf of the prison residents, but in reality they often serve the needs and interests of the prison system, including the control of prison residents (Sundt and Cullen 1998 and 2002). Several of the theological sources on the role of chaplains note that the chaplain acts as a critical friend, a prophet, and/or a challenging presence within the institutions where they work. However, in most of the work reviewed this was either mentioned only briefly or in passing, or was not mentioned at all (absence was particularly notable in all the England and Wales training and induction materials for prison chaplains provided by NOMS, the Quakers, the Church of England, and the Catholic Church). By contrast, other theological work focused on critical presence as central to the role of prison chaplaincy (Church of England 1999; Williams 2003; van Eijk et. al. 2016; Todd 2016; DuBois Gilliard 2018). While some emphasise working within the system so as not to be dismissed as troublemakers (Brandner 2014), others argue that 'when a prison chaplain only adapts to the situation and does not speak out on human dignity violations

he loses his identity, his credibility and betrays his vocation' (van Eijk 2016). One piece in particular emphasised the role of the chaplain as truth-teller, which includes telling prison residents the truth of who they are and telling the prison system itself the truth of how it should function and how it falls short (Williams 2003).

- **Bringing in volunteers and other aspects of acting as a bridge between inside and outside were central to literature on the role and work of prison chaplaincy.** This includes the importance of volunteers both for prison residents and for enriching the church; the ability of chaplains and those who volunteer in prisons to influence public perception and policy related to prisons; recognising that prison residents are members of society and empowering them to make positive contributions; and helping with transitions during and after release from prison (Kavanaugh 2014; Brandner 2014; Sadique 2016; van Eijk et. al. 2016; Riordan 2020).
- **In both secular and theological work, there is a shared emphasis on the importance of the prisoner as person, including humanising residents in dehumanising contexts, recognising each individual's personhood, upholding human dignity, and the creation of every human in the image of God.** Prison residents view chaplains as distinct from prison officers, with one of the distinctions being that chaplains treat the residents as persons (Todd and Tipton 2011). In one English prison, residents viewed chaplains as distinct from prison psychologists, with one of the distinctions being that chaplains demonstrated trust whereas psychologists focused on risk assessment (Liebling et. al. 2011). The same study found that prison residents trusted chaplains and education staff because they believed that they cared for their best interests and viewed them as humans, not merely offenders. The humanising effects of religious conversion in prison include a new sense of identity, meaning, and empowerment (Maruna et. al. 2006). In theological work, prison ministry is said to begin with the centrality of humankind as God's creation (Hall 2004), to recognise the intrinsic worth of every human being (Kavanaugh 2014), to focus on all people being created in the image of God and the importance of human dignity (Brandner 2014), to contribute to rehumanising those who have been dehumanised by the system (Hake in van Eijk et. al. 2016).
- **Theological work emphasised the theme of presence, which was often related to incarnation.** There is an entire book dedicated to tracing the dominance of the model of 'ministry of presence' to describe chaplaincy, and how this can either be an invocation of incarnational theology which positively engages with pluralism, or a diffuse notion which cannot sufficiently address tensions chaplains experience between accountability to themselves, to their employers, and to their faith communities (Sullivan 2014). Some work emphasises the presence of Christ in the chaplain's example, in those who are imprisoned, and in the incarnational nature of the ministry (John Paul II 2000; Hall 2004; Sadique 2016; Todd 2016; DuBois Gilliard 2018).
- **Prison chaplains were described as those with a special responsibility to pay attention to power, injustice, and vulnerability.** These themes were especially prominent in theological literature, and especially where the critical presence of the chaplain was central. Prison chaplains and their churches are called on to challenge institutional racism (Jones and Sedgwick 2002), challenge abuses of power (Hall 2004), to stand on the side of the

powerless (Brandner 2014), and advocate for non-custodial solutions for vulnerable populations (Church of England 1999).

- **Prison chaplains are also described as being responsible for and/or known in practice for their contribution to work which can be described in relation to redemption, restoration, and rehabilitation.** Although overall it cannot be said that research proves a clear link between chaplaincies and desistance, many studies have linked involvement with prison chaplaincies (or religion in prison) with better adjustment and behaviour within prison as well as increasing commitments to rehabilitation (Deuchar et. al. 2016; Clear and Sumter 2002; Maruna et. al. 2006; Levitt and Loper 2009; Duncan 2018). Prison chaplains tend to favour understandings of prisons as rehabilitative rather than punitive (Sundt and Cullen 1998 and 2002; Pew Research Center 2012), and theological work often emphasises that prison ministry which is redemptive also advocates for criminal justice which is rehabilitative and restorative, rather than retributive or retaliatory (John Paul II 2000; Hall 2004; Williams 2003; van Eijk et. al. 2016; CBCEW 2004; USCCB 2000; Conway et. al. 2010; Levad 2011 and 2014).

### ***Responses from Practitioners***

Through our research day with a focus group of practitioners involved in pastoral care of current and former prison residents, and interviews with former prison residents,<sup>1</sup> several **key themes** emerged in common about the experiences of prison residents, prison chaplains, and their involvement with prison chaplaincies.<sup>2</sup> More detailed accounts of this data are provided in the 'Participant Responses' section, below.

- **Bereavement Care:** One of the formal duties of all prison chaplains is to visit prison residents when there has been a death in that person's family. Prison residents spoke of the importance and significance of how chaplains handled bereavement care. This included one who told a story of a service that was organised when a beloved fellow resident committed suicide, another who described the impact of a chaplain who remembered bereavement anniversaries and reached out on those days, and another who received assistance from a chaplain to connect with family members when his mother died. Practitioners spoke of the importance of reliable access to and pastoral care for bereaved prison residents. They also emphasised that this was an area where they lacked and desired formal training.
- **Time and Presence:** When asked whether involvement with the chaplaincy contributed to their well-being during imprisonment, former residents described appreciating the way chaplains took time to be with them and pay proper attention to them. The importance of taking time was related both to the chaplain taking more time with them than other prison

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<sup>1</sup> Eight women attended the research day and six men were interviewed. Original plans for the research were for a much larger and broader group of participants, however the research began in February of 2020 and the first COVID lockdown began shortly after our research day, which was planned to be the first of a series of collaborative action research events which were made impossible by the pandemic. Plans to visit community chaplaincies and women's centres to interview additional former prison residents were also made impossible by the pandemic.

<sup>2</sup> Discussions during the research day and all interviews were digitally recorded with permission, transcribed, and coded and analysed using NVivo software.

staff, and also to a sense that the time and presence of chaplains was genuine and caring. Practitioners said that having and/or taking time was one of the most important parts of their job. They also said one of their main frustrations was feeling unable to spend the time they wanted to with prison residents, whether in pastoral care or religious provision beyond the standard weekly service. The lack of time was connected to several realities: the demands on their own time, the short time they may have with a resident before release or transfer to another prison, and the lack of time allowed within the prison regime. Practitioners also emphasised the importance of presence, including being there for those who have no one else, being available to support both residents and staff 'in very difficult working/living environments', and listening.

- **Connections/Bridges to Outside:** Former prison residents named connections with people outside as something they most appreciated about chaplains' work. They described receiving assistance from chaplains in contacting and speaking/corresponding with family, interactions with volunteer groups working with the chaplaincy, and being helped with making contacts for the transition outside upon release. When asked about chaplains who particularly impacted them and how, some participants spoke of chaplains who remained present with them in their release transition. One participant described how he had received no transitional assistance and had no positive connections outside when he was released from his first two sentences, but on his third the chaplain introduced him to his local community chaplaincy, which he believed made all the difference. When asked whether involvement with chaplaincy inside had contributed to their wellbeing outside since release, those who were not involved with community chaplaincies described the difficulties of having been cut off upon release from the tangible help they received from chaplains inside; whereas those who had been connected to community chaplaincies spoke of their contribution to their current wellbeing. Practitioners described themselves as having a bridging role between inside and outside, through bringing in volunteers, helping maintain and sometimes mend relationships with family members, connecting prison residents to global Christian fellowship and liturgy, sharing perspectives outside prison of what it is really like inside, and making referrals for assistance upon release.
- **Non-judgemental recognition of personhood:** In answers to all the questions regarding what they most appreciated about the chaplaincies they'd encountered, how it contributed to their well-being, and what the chaplains who impacted them most had done, there was a consistent and clear cluster of themes related to prison residents feeling recognised and treated as fellow human beings. They described feeling that chaplains empathised with them and did not judge them. They said the chaplains treated everyone equally and took time to treat them as persons. Some spoke of how chaplains demonstrated trust in them (instead of the suspicion which is endemic to the prison context). Practitioners described the recognition of personhood as one of the most important and impactful aspects of their work, including relating to residents as persons, taking their selfhood and agency seriously, and offering unconditional affirmation, love, and acceptance. When asked what motivates them in their work, personhood also emerged. They spoke of accepting all persons, wanting to 'see and respond to the holiness in each person,' and recognising them as persons from whom they could learn and draw strength. One practitioner said, 'we hope that we represent the image of Christ to people, but also we encounter Christ in them, so that transaction is what's central to what motivates me . . . the more I recognise Christ within the other, I realise how much it's lacking in me'.

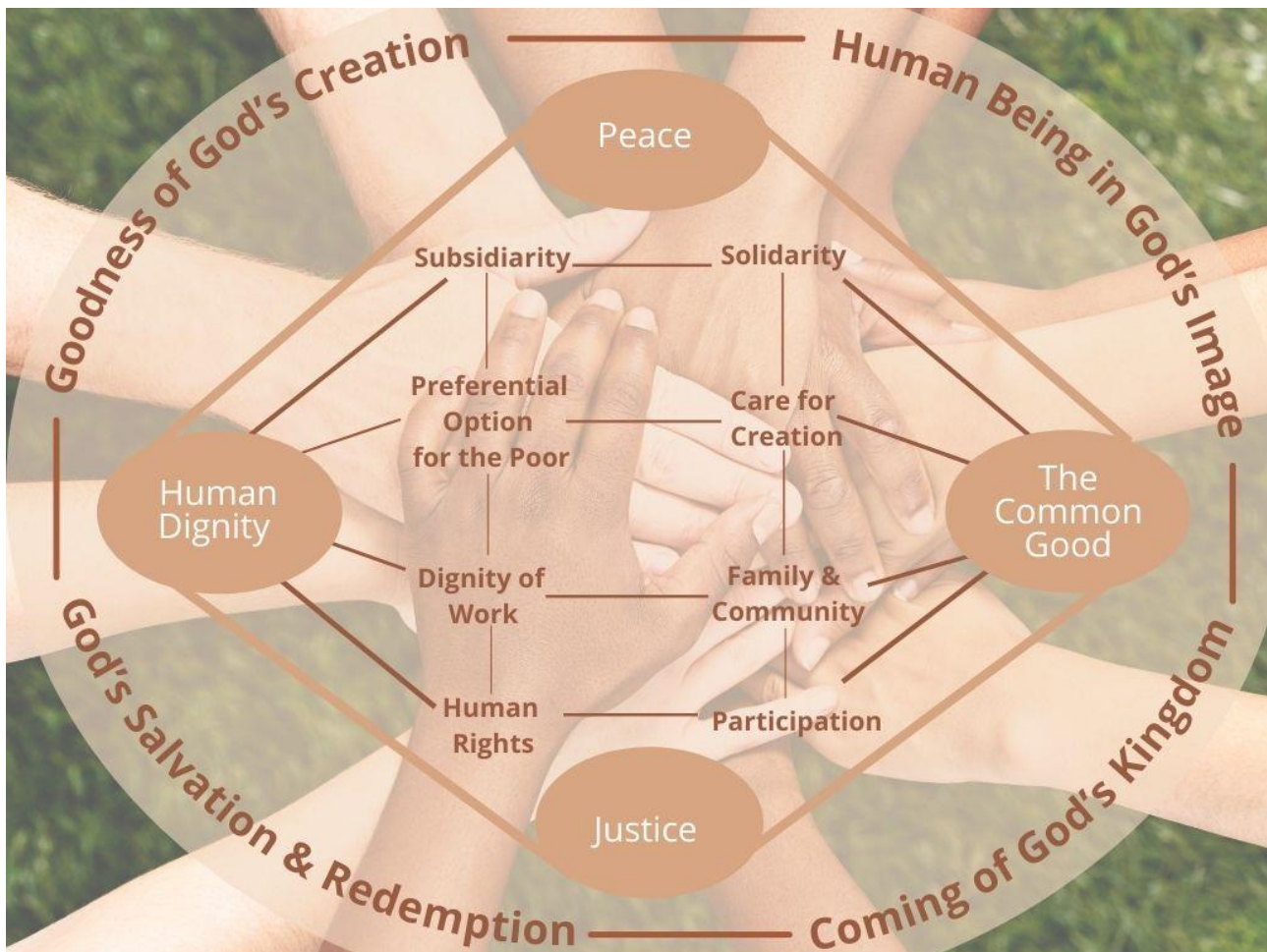
Apart from these overlapping themes between the two participant groups, a few **key findings** emerged from each group individually.

- When describing what prison chaplains do that is most important and impactful, practitioners placed much more emphasis on sacramental and spiritual practices than did former prison residents, who placed much more emphasis on tangible assistance and advocacy.
- Former prison residents also emphasised the importance of the physical space of the chaplaincy, as a place of peace and solace, and as a place of fellowship and belonging.
- When asked in what ways they felt best equipped and resourced for their work, practitioners responded primarily in terms of working within and relying on a good team within their chaplaincies. When asked in what ways they lacked equipping and resources, what frustrates them most in their work, and what the central difficulties are in their work, the majority of answers related to structural, systemic, and staff issues in the prisons.
- Practitioners emphasised their feelings of lacking time, lacking adequate resources, lacking formal training, and lacking adequate support/management/connections within the prison and in relation to Chaplaincy HQ.
- Practitioners also emphasised their concerns for the wellbeing of residents within the prison system, including issues related to lack of support for vulnerable residents, constant movement between prisons, overcrowding, unnecessary use of force, 'petty' rules, lockdowns due to staff shortages, outdated facilities, 'undignified' and 'humiliating' treatment, rising cases of self-harm, and unreliability of access to pastoral care or religious provision.
- It was notable that although the vast majority of problems, frustrations, needs, desires, and issues the practitioners discussed had to do with structural, systemic, and prison staff realities, when asked what resources they needed and desired, the majority of the answers were liturgical and spiritual.

It is also worth noting how a few **findings** in empirical research literature intersected with responses from participants of Flourishing Inside.

- Some former residents emphasised that the chapel was an important and safe physical space, as did the respondents in Todd and Tipton's study (2011).
- There was much discussion between the practitioners who participated in the research day about how they felt that other groups in their prisons, particularly Muslims, have more access to residents, more reliable provision of religious requirements, and/or more resources. An in-depth ethnography of one English prison found that both Muslim and non-Muslim groups felt discriminated against and characterised the other group/s as receiving preference and/or better provision (Liebling, et. al., 2011).
- The vast majority of empirical research on religion in prisons and on prison chaplaincy includes exclusively or predominantly male research participants, both prison residents and prison chaplains. There is a real need for more research focused on women in prisons and in prison pastoral care. Our practitioner participants were all women (largely due to the contacts in place at MBIT, which is a lay women's institute) and our former prison residents were all men (largely due to the lower numbers and the difficulty of making contacts with this vulnerable population in a time of crisis due to the pandemic).

## Catholic Social Thought



This graphic represents the framework, key themes, and interrelations between concepts in Catholic Social Teaching and wider Catholic social thought, arising from an overview of primary and secondary literature as listed in the 'Project Bibliography' section, below. Each of these concepts is defined in the 'Catholic Social Teaching' section, below.

### ***CST, Literature Analysis, and Participant Responses: Bringing it all Together***

The central research questions of the Flourishing Inside project asked what could be learned about prison pastoral care from Catholic Social Thought, and how Catholic Social Thought could be enhanced by listening to the prison context. Bringing together the project's three areas of enquiry, it is possible to chart the key themes arising from the literature and the participants in relation to most of the themes of CST:

<u>CST THEMES</u>	<u>PARTICIPANT THEMES</u>	<u>LITERATURE THEMES</u>
<b>Peace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>chapel as place of peace and solace</li> </ul>	
<b>Justice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of similar support after release</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tensions between what the role should be and what it is or is perceived to be</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• structural/systemic problems</li> <li>• lack of resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tensions between working for/within the system and being a critical presence in it</li> <li>• attention to injustice</li> <li>• attention to power</li> <li>• impacts of anti-extremism agenda</li> </ul>
<b>Human dignity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• importance of being non-judgemental</li> <li>• time and presence</li> <li>• personhood/recognition</li> <li>• lack of similar support after release</li> <li>• chaplain as advocate, tangible help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tensions between working for/within the system and being a critical presence in it</li> <li>• personhood/recognition</li> <li>• presence/incarnation</li> </ul>
<b>Common good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• connections/bridges with outside</li> <li>• lack of similar support after release</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tensions between what the role should be and what it is or is perceived to be</li> <li>• importance of volunteers and other aspects of bridging inside and outside</li> <li>• redemption/restoration/rehabilitation</li> </ul>
<b>Preferential option</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of similar support after release</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tensions between working for/within the system and being a critical presence in it</li> <li>• presence/incarnation</li> <li>• attention to injustice</li> <li>• attention to power</li> </ul>
<b>Human rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chaplain as advocate, tangible help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attention to injustice</li> </ul>
<b>Solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• importance of being non-judgemental</li> <li>• time and presence</li> <li>• chaplain as advocate, tangible help</li> <li>• lack of similar support after release</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tensions between working for/within the system and being a critical presence in it</li> <li>• presence/incarnation</li> </ul>
<b>Family and community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bereavement</li> <li>• connections/bridges with outside</li> <li>• lack of similar support after release</li> <li>• chapel as a place of peace and solace</li> <li>• fellowship of chaplaincy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• importance of volunteers and other aspects of bridging inside and outside</li> <li>• redemption/restoration/rehabilitation</li> </ul>

<b>Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• connections/bridges with outside</li> <li>• lack of similar support after release</li> <li>• fellowship of chaplaincy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• importance of volunteers and other aspects of bridging inside and outside</li> <li>• redemption/restoration/rehabilitation</li> </ul>
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Put more succinctly, the following have emerged as

#### **FOUR CORE INTERSECTIONS OF CST AND PRISON CHAPLAINCY:**

- Recognition of the dignity of each person is central to prison chaplaincy.
- By creating bridges between those inside and outside prison, chaplains can contribute to the common good, participation in society, and connection with family and community.
- Through exercising critical presence, prison chaplains can seek justice and demonstrate the preferential option for those on the margins.
- As those within the system who are able to take time and pay attention, prison chaplains can cultivate peace, solidarity, and community.



### 3. Data and Findings

#### a. Literature Reviews

##### *Empirical Research on Prison Chaplaincy*

There are very few systematic, academic studies of prison chaplaincy. Important studies in the United States include two national surveys of prison chaplains by Jody L. Sundt and Francis T. Cullen (see Sundt and Cullen 1998 and 2002) and by the Pew Research Centre (see Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2012).

Some of the key findings of the Sundt and Cullen study were:

- a) chaplains spent a significant amount of their time on administrative tasks and providing services directly to individuals in addition to their responsibilities for religious provision;
- b) chaplains often served the needs and interests of the prison system, including the control of prison residents;
- c) but chaplains themselves understood their primary purpose as service to the prison residents rather than the prison system; and
- d) although most chaplains understood the primary role of the prison to be the protection of society, they also strongly supported treatment and rehabilitation as opposed to punishment as the orientation of incarceration.

Some key findings of the Pew study were:

- a) although most chaplains believed their prisons were doing well at maintaining order inside, they were not doing well preparing people for re-entry into the community;
- b) most chaplains believed that religious extremism in prisons was uncommon and not a serious threat;
- c) where extremism was seen as a threat, the most commonly cited type of extremism was racial supremacy or intolerance towards specific social groups;
- d) chaplains believed more volunteers were needed, particularly for Christian chaplaincy work (as other faiths seemed more successful in recruiting volunteers);
- e) they believed that religious provision and pastoral counselling were their most important tasks but they reported spending significantly more of their time on administrative tasks; and
- f) most chaplains favoured alternative sentencing for first-time offenders and the use of early release earned through good behaviour and completion of rehabilitation programmes.

Another relevant study, based in ethnography instead of surveys, is Joshua Dubler's *Down in the Chapel* (Dubler 2013) which arose from his 2008 PhD at Princeton University. Dubler conducted an ethnography of a week in the life of a chapel in a maximum security prison in Pennsylvania, following the events there and the lives of several members of the chapel community. Dubler has gone on to co-author a book about religion, American mass incarceration, and prison abolition (see Dubler and Lloyd 2020).

In the United Kingdom, important studies of prison chaplaincy were done in the 1990s by James A. Beckford and Sophie Gilliat (see Beckford 1998 and 1999 and Beckford and Gilliat 1998). Their work focused initially on the established role of Anglican chaplains in prison and the problems with parity of provision for prison residents of other faiths; they later focused on the transition to

multi-faith chaplaincies, for which their research has widely been credited as a key catalyst. Beckford is a sociologist of religion and Gilliat is a scholar of Islam in the UK. After the shift to multi-faith chaplaincies, the most extensive study of prison chaplaincy in the UK was conducted by the Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies (see Todd and Tipton 2011), which was followed by further articles by Andrew Todd, a practical theologian and Anglican priest (see Todd 2013; for up-to-date prison chaplaincy statistics and related policies, see Todd 2020).

Key findings of the Tipton and Todd study included:

- a) in addition to religious provision, chaplains primarily functioned to provide services of support to prison residents, and in some cases staff, particularly in crises;
- b) the role of the chaplain has changed significantly and continues to change with cultural, political, and economic shifts;
- c) chaplains identified the need for a clearer, centralised management structure for parity, coherence, and accountability across prison chaplaincies,
- d) as well as the need for improved provision for chaplains' professional development;
- e) the physical space of the chaplaincy was seen as an important and safe space;
- f) chaplains tended to explain their role in religious terms whereas prison officers and residents tended to explain the role of chaplains in terms of humanitarian assistance;
- g) chaplains were understood as being distinct from prison officers, particularly as people who have time for prison residents and who provide safe spaces and recognition of personhood;
- h) the shift to multi-faith and multi-cultural models of chaplaincy appeared to be positive; and
- i) the impact of the anti-extremism agenda on chaplaincy is of concern and requires further investigation.

The Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies also partnered with Theos to produce an empirical study of chaplaincy in the UK (see Ryan 2015), which included over 100 qualitative interviews with people working in 20 different fields of chaplaincy as well as a quantitative study of the scale and nature of chaplaincy in one locality: Luton. Although there is very little explicit interaction with prison chaplaincy in the report (there is more specific data on community chaplaincy), it is an important study of the current scope of chaplaincy in the UK today, as well as differing understandings of the purpose/s of chaplaincy. The report also offers suggestions on how chaplaincies can measure, enhance, and report their impact.

Two landmark studies inside an English prison were conducted by criminologist Alison Liebling and her colleagues (see Liebling et. al. 2011). Where many criminologists studying prisons ignore the chaplaincy as a relevant subject, Liebling and fellow researchers include many important observations about the chaplaincy in their work. Although the studies focused on relationships between prison staff and prison residents, they also considered how residents were experiencing the contemporary experience of maximum security, including the role of the prison in 'generating prisoner alienation' and the role of faith and conversion in the prison experience. Amongst their many observations were the following:

- a) Muslims felt discriminated against, that staff treated them worse than other groups and that their material needs for religious provision were less met; non-Muslim groups felt the same way, in relation to their own treatment and provision in contrast to Muslims (i.e. both sides felt they were the victims of discrimination);
- b) the prison gave more attention and resources to reducing perceived risks of extremism than to encouraging positive faith practices;

- c) prison residents described more positive and supportive relationships with chaplaincy staff than with officers, but officers sometimes viewed extended conversations or prison residents opening up to other staff (chaplaincy, education, workshop, gym) as suspicious;
- d) the activities of the chaplaincy were described as 'humanising';
- e) when the observations of the second study were compared to the first study (twelve years earlier) it was found that a new sense of tension and controversy surrounded religious provision, conversion, and practices, which caused structural constraints to chaplaincy work;
- f) the role of the chaplaincy was 'critical' to the prison, as it generated trust and encouraged better relations between prison staff and residents;
- g) prison residents described their interactions with chaplains in terms of trust, hope, and meaning in contrast to their interactions with psychology staff, which they experienced as focused on risk assessment (this was correlated with previous research which found that prison residents found interactions with psychology stigmatising and interactions with chaplaincy redemptive);
- h) prison residents trusted chaplains (as well as education and some workshop staff) because they believed they cared for their best interest and saw them as humans, not only offenders.

One small-scale study of the impact of reforms to prison chaplaincy in England and Wales beginning in 2001 concluded that, although most prison residents in the study found religious provision adequate, the researcher concluded that the reforms had done little to change the restrictions of prison life or religion within it (see Hunt 2011).

A comparative study of young male prison residents' experiences of prison chaplaincy in Scotland and Denmark was conducted (see Deuchar et. al. 2016) which found that although both countries have become increasingly secular, prison residents still develop pro-religious/spiritual inclinations in prison and interest in chaplaincies. According to the study, engaging with the interfaith, holistic chaplaincy services in both countries contributed to turning points in identity and behaviour, and in some cases to increasing commitment not to reoffend.

Other relevant research is often conducted under headings related to religion in prison, and tends to focus on the religious views and practices of prison residents as well as their relationship to rehabilitation and/or repeat offending), but do not focus on the chaplain or chaplaincy *per se*. A thorough review of this literature between 1944 and 2010 can be found in Chapter 5 of *More God Less Crime* (see Johnson 2011).

One study of questionnaires completed by 769 prison residents in US prisons found that increased religiousness in prison was associated with better psychological adjustment to prison and fewer (self-reported) disciplinary infractions (see Clear and Sumter 2002).

Another study interviewed 75 men who had converted to Christianity in UK prisons and found that their conversion served as 'shame management' by creating a new identity, giving their prison experience purpose and meaning, empowering them as agents of God, providing a language/framework for forgiveness, and allowing a sense of control over their future (see Maruna et. al. 2006).

A significant problem with most of the empirical research into prison chaplaincy is that the vast and overwhelming majority of the participants in the research, whether prison chaplains or prison

residents, are men. One study focusing on women and religion in prison conducted in the US found that women who attended religious activities and reported receiving personal support from their participation were less likely to be depressed, act violently or commit serious infractions, and were more likely to adjust well to the environment than those who did not attend or who attended but did not report receiving personal support (see Levitt and Loper 2009). A more recent study followed over 300 women in the US state of Oregon for 13 years after release from prison, and concluded that higher rates of participation in humanist, spiritual and religious activities (the HSR model of chaplaincy in Oregon's prisons) during incarceration had a significant positive impact on desistance. They also concluded that chaplains have significant pro-social capital which helps women find new meaning through motivation, support, and self-regulation skills (see Duncan et. al. 2018).

### ***Theological Work on Prison Chaplaincy***

There is far more theological work on chaplaincy in general than on prison chaplaincy in particular. The central theological questions in this literature are the purpose and role of a chaplain/cy: What is a chaplain? What is chaplaincy for? What do/should chaplains do?

In *Being a Chaplain* (see Threlfall-Holmes and Newitt 2011) 22 chaplains from several Christian denominations give personal reflections on their work in the UK contexts of armed forces, education, healthcare, prison, airport, sport, and the arts. These are followed by four theological reflections by Andrew Todd, Mark Newitt, and Miranda Threlfall-Holmes. Todd considers the shift to multi-faith chaplaincies, Newitt focusses on pastoral encounters in chaplaincy, and Threlfall-Holmes offers a set of models for understanding what a chaplain is.

According to Threlfall-Holmes, five theological models are held by chaplains themselves and/or their churches: missionary, pastor, incarnational/sacramental, historical/parish, and agent of challenge/change. Five further models are held by secular institutions in which chaplains work and/or the public: pastoral care provider, spiritual carer, diversity, tradition/heritage, specialist service provider.

In *A Ministry of Presence* (see Sullivan 2014), Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, an American scholar of law and religion, gives an in-depth analysis of how changes in religion and culture, and the positioning of religion in relation to the state, led to the dominance of understanding chaplaincy as 'a ministry of presence'. Although much of the analysis is specific to the context of the US, the final chapter analyses the model of chaplaincy-as-presence in terms which relate to any context (including the UK) where this model has been employed. She explores how the model may be an invocation of the doctrine of incarnation which also positively engages with pluralism, but also may be too ephemeral and diffuse a notion to deal with the tensions chaplains experience between their accountability to themselves, their employers, and their faith communities.

Ashgate's *Handbook of Chaplaincy Studies* (see Swift et. al. 2015) does not focus on a theology of chaplaincy or theological questions about the chaplain's role or purpose, rather it focuses on how chaplaincies are and can be studied, as well as giving introductions to what chaplaincy currently looks like in particular UK contexts. In it, two pieces focus on prison chaplaincy. Helen Dearnley describes the statutory duties of prison chaplains, and Michael Kavanaugh describes how specific aspects of chaplaincy may contribute to reducing reoffending.

In *Chaplaincy Ministry and the Mission of the Church* (see Slater 2015), Victoria Slater describes the 'marks of chaplaincy' as serving the mission of God in the world, having a publicly recognised and validated role, and being accountable to both the host organisation and the chaplain's own faith community. She also describes the main characteristics of chaplaincy as:

- a) 'A focus on serving the *mission Dei* in the world rather than on the internal concerns of the institutional Church.
- b) Being rooted and formed in the faith tradition.
- c) A focus on meeting people where they are, both socially and personally.
- d) Having an empathy and understanding of the context with which they stand in critical solidarity.
- e) Being open to construct an effective chaplaincy identity in dialogue with the social context within which they are embedded.
- f) The capacity to be culturally "multi-lingual" in order to offer and witness to the insights and values of the faith tradition in a culturally plural context in ways which contribute to human flourishing and the common good and so to the flourishing of the Kingdom of God' (95).

In *A Christian Theology of Chaplaincy* (see Caperon et. al. 2018), a group of seven Anglican chaplains and chaplaincy researchers pursue the question of why chaplaincy is not more valued and explored theologically when church attendance and traditional practices of Christianity are in considerable decline in England, yet chaplaincy provision and participation is simultaneously on the rise. James Walters describes chaplaincy – in contrast to models which see the chaplain standing 'with her back to the church' (either in a positive or negative sense), 'in the world facing the church' (as a missionary, drawing people in), 'looking both ways' (with a 'bilingual' ministry) – as 'standing in the world as the church, looking around'. He elaborates this model in relation to the marks of the church:

- a) The church is one: chaplaincy draws people together.
- b) The church is holy: chaplaincy represents God's transcendence.
- c) The church is Catholic: chaplaincy holds together difference in mutual flourishing.
- d) The church is Apostolic: chaplaincy is missionary, furthering the kingdom but not colonising.

In the same volume, Ben Ryan explores Threlfall-Holmes's list of chaplaincy models, and adds three: the theological models of cultist and/or exile (in which chaplains develop their own religious practice and community in ways that are detached from church, neither growing out of or feeding back into church life) and the secular model of mediator/community bridge (especially in the cases of police and community chaplaincies). And Margaret Whipp describes the presence of a chaplain as:

- a) Faithful (a stable, patient, dependable presence)
- b) Evocative (a sacramental, symbolic, representative presence)
- c) Liminal (being 'on the edge' yet 'striving to be genuinely embedded')
- d) Exquisitely attentive (constantly alert and prayerful, with ceaseless attention)

While there are several books written by prison chaplains, both historical and contemporary, sharing descriptions of and reflections on their ministries, there are fewer systematic or academic pieces of theological work on prison chaplaincy in particular.

*The Future of Criminal Justice* (see Jones and Sedgwick 2002) is a collection of essays by policy-makers, campaigners, chaplains, and prison charity workers exploring the purpose of prisons and

the roles of society, churches, and those working in the sector in fulfilling its purpose. In the essay on prison chaplaincy, William Noblett focuses on the history of prison chaplaincy in England and Wales, going on to argue that the next necessary shift in the system was for inclusive and collaborative ecumenical and interfaith chaplaincy work. He described chaplaincy in terms of core convictions:

We believe that faith directs and inspires life, and are committed to providing sacred spaces and dedicated teams to nurture the human spirit so that it may flourish and grow. By celebrating the goodness of life and exploring the human condition we aim to cultivate in each individual a responsibility for contributing to the common good (90).

He also argued in conclusion that chaplains, and the wider church, must challenge the injustices of the system, particularly institutional racism, noting that, 'Without a challenge to the inequities which are part of the structures of power . . . injustices may prevail and structures remain inert' (101).

In an article for *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (see Hall 2004) American prison chaplain Stephen T. Hall argues that:

- a) a theology of prison ministry begins with the centrality of the inherent work of humankind as God's creation,
- b) and its recurring theme is hope;
- c) prison chaplaincy is a ministry of presence modelling Christ's incarnation;
- d) it proclaims forgiveness within frameworks of restorative justice;
- e) it seriously attends to issues of power and control;
- f) the prison minister should be a prophetic voice within the system, challenging abuses of power;
- g) and a theology of prison ministry must be inclusive, respecting all paths to God.

In a short piece for the *Prison Service Journal* (see Kavanaugh 2014), Michal Kavanaugh (then Head of Faith Services and Chaplain General for the National Offender Management Service, hereafter NOMS) described the contribution of prison chaplaincy, focusing on how chaplains can contribute to new self-understandings and identities which lead to valuing one's own life and the lives of others. He highlighted the importance of the following aspects of the chaplain's role:

- a) statutory duties to visit new receptions, those in segregation and healthcare, and those preparing for release, noting that these should not be viewed as a 'tick box exercise': 'Too much is at stake – such visits may be the window of opportunity a person needs at a liminal moment in their life to see things afresh and begin or reinforce a journey of change' (15);
- b) bridging to and establishing connections with support networks outside prison (noting that involvement with faith practice inside prison positively impacts adjustment to prison, but seems to have little effect on reducing reoffending unless combined with the engagement of a supportive faith community after release);
- c) offering a theistic or humanistic framework which recognises the intrinsic worth of every human being;
- d) providing opportunities for gatherings which are pro-social;
- e) teaching through religious education values such as the importance of work;
- f) and cultivating spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation which support emotional wellbeing.

Tobias Brandner, a Swiss Reformed minister who has worked in prison chaplaincy in Switzerland and in Hong Kong, wrote *Beyond the Walls of Separation* (see Brander 2014) as a kind of 'guidebook' for prison chaplains and volunteers in prison ministries. He covers everything from a

brief history of prisons, an introduction to what life is like in prison, and an overview of how Christian churches have related to prisons, to offering his own understanding of the roles, key characteristics, and a theology of prison ministry (which includes both chaplains and volunteers, whom he refers to collectively as 'visitors'). Brandner takes a primarily therapeutic approach to pastoral care within the prison (adapting Carl Rogers's 'therapeutic triad' to his own 'healing pentagon'), but seeks to balance this with a more socially aware model, including:

- a) an emphasis on awareness of power, arguing that because power is distributed so unevenly in the prison context, Christian ministers stand with the powerless and thus 'need at times to assume a prophetic and advocacy role, although much patience and wisdom is required not to overuse this' (102);
- b) attention to how 'visitors' connect those inside prisons to the outside, including informing enriching churches;
- c) a focus on all people being created in the image of God and the importance of human dignity.

Brandner's approach to the 'prophetic and advocacy' role is less transformative and more focused on 'humility', noting that chaplains should take care not to advocate so much or in such a way as to be labeled troublemakers. He says they should:

always be aware that they cannot refashion the prison system; they cannot circumvent rules even if the rules appear inhuman and degrading. However, the intercession on behalf of inmates, if done in humility, has a further spiritual dimension. When visitors intercede on behalf of others and, as usual, just run into brick walls, they participate in the continuous experience of weakness and powerlessness that characterises the inmates' own lives (148).

In a collection of interdisciplinary essays, mostly sociological or criminological, an international collection of authors addressed questions of religion, faith, and crime (see Sadique 2016). An essay by Anglican prison chaplains Helen Dearnley and Alison Booker draws on both criminology and Christian theology to discuss the dehumanising effects of prison which 'de-form' personal identity, after which a new, transient identity is 'formed' in prison, requiring a non-transient 're-formed' identity to be cultivated after release. The authors argue that the chaplain stands outside this 'system of de-formed identity' because chaplains can interact with and respond to all prison residents equally, no matter how they are identified by the prison system (as in the incentive and earned privileges scheme which gives each person a classification of basic, standard, or enhanced according to evaluation of behaviour and engagement with rehabilitation). Further, it is argued that community chaplains are crucial to the 're-forming' of identity after release. These authors describe the prison chaplain as:

- a) an icon whose 'very presence is symbolic of a wider faith community and also therefore of a belief in divine presence and activity' (361);
- b) a 'walking sacrament' (borrowing a phrase from Austin Farrer's metaphor of the priest);
- c) and a bridge, connecting prison residents to community outside, and people outside to the realities of prison;
- d) who offers a physical space which is a place of freedom.

In all of the treatments of the theological purpose and role of chaplains discussed above, the idea of the chaplain as a critical friend/prophet/challenging presence – someone who critically discerns, gives voice to, and seeks to resist and/or transform realities of social sin and injustice within the institutions and communities served – is either entirely absent (in 5 of the 12 authors) or mentioned only briefly as one possibility amongst many other roles or aspects of the role, without theological analysis or reflection on the need for such a presence or how that might work

(in 6 of the 12 authors). Training and induction materials for prison chaplains in England and Wales from NOMS, the Quakers, the Church of England, and the Catholic Church were also reviewed; none of the materials reviewed focused on or offered insight into or training for employing social criticism within the work of prison chaplaincy. Of the sources consulted for this study, only the following five bring the question of critical presence to the centre of their discussions of chaplaincy.

In 1999 the Church of England published *Prisons: A Study in Vulnerability* (see Church of England 1999). Most of the book is a description of the vulnerabilities of various populations impacted by prisons (women, children, people vulnerable due to mental health issues, sex offenders, and families). The book had two key messages: 'the vulnerable should not be in prison at all, but serving community sentences. To adapt a phrase, "prison is an expensive way of making vulnerable people worse"'. . . and 'conditions urgently need to be improved' (119-120). In the closing section 'The Christian Response', a chapter by Robert Hardy and David Fleming described prison chaplains as having 'dual accountability' to the Church and to the state, which 'lays upon a Chaplain an obligation not only to work within the system, but also and always to examine that system and, where necessary to challenge and to work to change it' (103). The authors describe the dehumanising effects of prison on its residents as well as the potential for prison officers to 'become victims of a system that tends to imprison them' with 'the resulting personal deterioration and tarnished view of humankind'. Therefore, they argue, 'Chaplains need to be actively involved here to encourage, support and share. Equally, they have a right, even a duty, to challenge what appears to them as oppressive, or dehumanizing, always remaining themselves agents of reconciliation' (107).

One of the most focused pieces of theology of prison ministry was written by Rowan Williams (see Williams 2003), originally delivered as an address to prison chaplains in Wales when he was Bishop of Monmouth. In the piece, Williams questions why there tends to be a distinction drawn between pastoral ministry and prophetic ministry and why, when such a distinction is drawn, most would place chaplaincy on the pastoral side as opposed to prophetic. He argues that 'the easy distinction between ministry that is unquestioningly supportive and one that is prophetically transforming does not actually make a great deal of sense' (3). He insists that 'the pastoral task entails a ministry of truthfulness' (2) For the prison chaplain involves telling truth to prison residents about who they are, 'that they are more than they seem to themselves – more than they can easily imagine when placed in a context that easily defines them primarily in terms of the limiting and damaging consequences of one set of conditions and decisions in their past' (6). But it also involves telling truth to the institution itself; 'the challenge is to be a pastor to the structure as a whole, to staff, to the systems of authority' (7) because 'the task of the pastor is partly to keep alive in the institution the purpose that is its justification' (8).

This is where the chaplain needs a theology of punishment and penance – here rather than in more immediate contact with prisoners. And a Christian trying to deal with this is bound, surely, to be reflecting on crime as a collapse of trustful relations in community, a sort of breach of "covenant" in society, and thus to see the penal institution as existing for the sake of honouring and restoring trustful relations. There is inevitably, then, an element of protest in the chaplain's presence with the penal institution is one that consistently undermines trust in its own operations . . . ' (8).

To be sure, Williams is aware that the prison chaplain cannot maintain a constantly adversarial stance within the institution ('though you will all know that there must and will be points where protest is appropriate') but by recalling the institution to its purpose to repair and restore (10).



Furthermore, prison chaplains have a ministry of telling truth to society and to the churches about prisons and the people living in them.

A group of Dutch Catholics published a collection of essays on prison chaplaincy around the world (see van Eijk et. al. 2016), gathered by the International Commission of Catholic Pastoral Prison Care (ICPPC). This was the only source consulted for this study which not only focuses on critical aspects of prison chaplaincy, but also explicitly engages with CST.

Bruno Van der Maat, a Belgian professor of theology and social science in Peru, emphasised that prison chaplains work in the service of justice, peace, and reconciliation. He encourages prison chaplains not to feel as if this work is beyond their limited scope or capability, rather to focus on recognising the full dignity of every human being, and on sharing their expertise on systems of justice and prisons with society, helping the search for better models (25-40).

Tobias Brandner contributed an essay focusing on volunteer visitors to prison chaplaincies. He describes the benefits of visiting volunteers, including: reminding the staff and administrators of the prisons, as well as the prison residents themselves, that people in prison are part of society; making the church more inclusive; and bringing awareness of realities inside prison to the outside, aiding in political engagement (131-146).

Hille Haker, a professor of Catholic Moral Theology, wrote in this volume about human rights and dignity, particularly in relation to the US context (209-228). She argued that prison chaplaincy must advocate for justice and recognition in ways that, even if they do not eliminate systemic injustices, 'contribute to the "rehumanization" of those who have been dehumanized, contribute to the re-socialization of those who have been excluded from society, and they will contribute to the restoration of dignity for those who have been denied the right to live life in dignity, which is possible everywhere under the right conditions, even in the extreme social space of prison' (228).

Fred von Iersel, an expert in both Catholic Social Teaching and chaplaincy in the Netherlands, argued that CST's contributions to ethics in criminal justice include the implication from the preferential option for the poor that a 'key measure of justice' is 'the practice of justice towards the poorest' (275). Thus, justice and penal systems 'should be put to the test of social justice and the preferential option for the poor' to ensure 'that imprisonment is not abused as an instrument for the social exclusion of those who already before imprisonment were poor and marginalized' (276).

Ryan van Eijk, Chief of Catholic Prison Chaplains in the Netherlands and a researcher, found that 'it is difficult for many prison chaplains to keep in line with the critical and prophetic aspect of the prison chaplaincy . . . They prefer to help in silence instead of to speak out and advocate openly' (299). He argued that 'when a prison chaplain only adapts to the situation and does not speak out on human dignity violations he loses his identity, his credibility and betrays his vocation' (298-299).

In *A Christian Theology of Chaplaincy*, Andrew Todd pursues a 'theology of the world' which focuses on a 'critical incarnational theology of chaplaincy', arguing that the ability to discern both God's action in the world and where it is being frustrated by humans as 'the theological basis for the Christian chaplain's prophetic role; for their speaking out within the host organisation on behalf of the humanity of those whom chaplains serve' (34). Todd has also edited a volume on

military chaplaincy which explores the critical roles of the chaplain within armed forces contexts (see Todd 2016).

*Rethinking Incarceration* (see DuBois Gilliard 2018), a book written for American evangelicals, seeks to inform readers about the injustices of the US prison system, particularly its racism. In the chapter on 'The Prisoners' Pastor', DuBois Gilliard writes,

Responsible chaplaincy entails holistic ministry: caring for the soul *and* body. The best chaplains take time to learn about the systems and structures funnelling people into their parish. They educate themselves about systemic injustice – not to condone or encourage a victim mentality, nor to excuse criminal behavior – because this equips them to do contextualized ministry. Learning about systemic injustice is a spiritual discipline, a formational practice of social energies. This deep study of society gives chaplains better understanding of the institutionally neglected communities most of their flock comes from and will return to. Understanding the system also elucidates the trauma and brokenness many parishioners bear upon entering their parish (117-118).

He argues that 'prophetic prison chaplaincy' is not only informed and alert about systemic injustice, but also focuses on 'raising up leaders from behind bars for the benefit of the broader church and world' (121), seeing prison residents not only as people who need care, but as people with gifts to give. 'Chaplains also disciple their congregants by helping them to realize the ways their innate talents can be used for God, instead of the things that they may have previously used them for' (119). The chapter also gives historical examples of the accounts of different models of prison chaplaincy at Sing Sing, showing how chaplains can either collude with or seek to transform unjust systems they encounter in their work.

### ***Literature on CST and Prisons***

The body of social encyclicals which form the core of official Catholic Social Teaching does not include any document which focuses particularly on prisons or imprisonment. However, there are several official documents of other sorts which do.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says,

The State's effort to contain the spread of behaviors injurious to human rights and the fundamental rules of civil coexistence corresponds to the requirement of watching over the common good. Legitimate public authority has the right and duty to inflict penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime. The primary scope of the penalty is to redress the disorder caused by the offense. When his punishment is voluntarily accepted by the offender, it takes on the value of expiation. Moreover, punishment, in addition to preserving public order and the safety of persons, has a medicinal scope: as far as possible it should contribute to the correction of the offender (2266).

It goes on to conclude that although capital punishment had historically been sanctioned as legitimate punishment, the Catholic Church no longer accepts its legitimacy and works for its abolition worldwide (2267).

As part of the celebrations of the Year of Jubilee in 2000, Pope John Paul II delivered a homily on 9 July for the 'Jubilee in Prisons'. He began with a reminder of the saying of Jesus in Matthew 25.36, 'I was in prison and you came to me', recalling the literal taking of Jesus as a prisoner leading up to his execution, as well as the presence of Christ with all prisoners. Two key themes emerge in the short homily: dignity and rehabilitation. As Jesus goes on to say in Matthew 25.40, 'As you did it to

one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me', which John Paul II called 'the "programme" of the Jubilee in Prisons', words which 'invite us to live them as a commitment to the dignity of all people, that dignity which flows from God's love for every human person' (sec. 2). He went on to insist that prison life should be 'enriched by a spiritual dimension' which, 'offered for each one's free acceptance, should be considered an essential element in a penal system that is more in conformity with human dignity' (sec. 2). He further insisted that legal punishment must not be reduced to retribution, 'much less take the form of social retaliation or a sort of institutional vengeance', rather that imprisonment only has 'meaning' if it serves to rehabilitate, 'offering those who have made a mistake an opportunity to reflect and change their lives in order to be fully integrated into society' (sec. 6).

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) issued *A Place of Redemption: A Christian Approach to Punishment and Prison* in 2004. Although it was not an official teaching document, the report offered an analysis by the Department for Christian Responsibility and Citizenship. The report found that the current penal system is 'essentially punitive' and should be reformed through 'better education, more drug treatment, more behavioural programmes and better mental health care' as well as 'greater bias towards the needs of the vulnerable – women, ethnic minorities, the elderly, and the children of prisoners'. Prison chaplaincy was specifically mentioned in the CBCEW statement of 1996, *The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching*. In the sections in which they describe how the Catholic Church is 'working alongside and often in alliance with other bodies, secular and religious, state and voluntary, on behalf of the common good', this work is described as stretching 'from prison chaplaincy and the "befriending" of young offenders to working with the mentally handicapped, from hospices to marriage guidance, from adoption and fostering to night shelters for the homeless and accommodation for refugees' (sections 7-11).

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) also issued a statement on criminal justice in 2000. In *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*, the bishops insist that, 'A Catholic approach begins with the recognition that the dignity of the human person applies to both victim and offender' (introduction). They turn to Catholic Social Teaching for 'directions as well as measures for our response to crime and criminal justice' (introduction), focusing on six themes of CST:

- a) Human Life and Dignity: They emphasise that both are retained and must be attended to in every victim and every criminal, as all are created in the image of God. They insist that penal justice must provide the necessities of human dignity.
- b) Human Rights and Responsibilities: These themes intersect with crime and corrections, where there must be social consequences for those who violate the rights of others and neglect their own responsibilities as well as social responsibility to recognise the rights of those who are held responsible.
- c) Family, Community, and Participation: They describe both how the lack of thriving families and communities contributes to crime as well as how criminal justice often exacerbates these problems by isolating people from family and participation. Further, the principle of participation is also emphasised in relation to victims, who should not be used as means to an end in criminal justice.
- d) The Common Good: They reiterated the purposes of civil punishment from the Catechism, and also emphasised the importance of restitution for victims to restoring the common good.
- e) The Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: Every public policy must be measured by how it will impact the most vulnerable members of society, and the Church should continually

work to address the needs which create poverty and vulnerability, which can also contribute to crime.

- f) Subsidiarity and Solidarity: The bishops encourage community work at the local level (subsidiarity) to prevent crime, and to act in solidarity with both victims and offenders.

In addition to these official documents, several theologians have considered connections between CST and imprisonment.

R. Michael Cassidy wrote a piece on Catholic Social Thought and criminal justice reform for the Boston College Law School's Digital Commons (see Cassidy 2018). Focusing on love, mercy and redemption as tenets of CST relevant to reform, he argues that these tenets point towards 'five discreet problems that are ripe for a legislative "fix"' in the US context:

- a) abolition of the death penalty,
- b) elimination of mandatory minimum sentences,
- c) promotion of diversion out of criminal justice through expanded mental health courts,
- d) realigned classification, programming, and re-entry services to encourage genuine rehabilitation,
- e) and presumptive parole (placing the burden of proof on denial of parole instead of granting parole).

In a brief piece for *Thinking Faith*, Patrick Riordan SJ asked whether or not the common good benefits from imprisonment (see Riordan 2020). According to Riordan, the 'two criteria for the common good' are 'that nobody should be excluded from the benefits of society, and that human flourishing ought not to be excluded from the aims of society'. Yet, the main ways of arguing that society benefits from the punishment of offenders are arguments for deterrence and incapacitation (that its existence deters some from committing crimes and those who do commit crimes are incapacitated through punishment, reducing their capacity to further offend), and both of these arguments assume that the persons being punished are outside of society; they are not part of the calculus of the common good. He advocates instead for policies which are not determined by 'protecting those who are included in the social fabric from those who are effectively excluded'.

A group of scholars and professionals based at or connected to Mount St Mary's University (USA) contributed to an edited collection of essays on Catholic perspectives on restorative justice (see Conway, Matzko McCarthy, and Schieber 2010). One section is dedicated to Catholic Social Thought. In their introduction to the section, the editors write, 'At a very human level, redemption and restoration of relationships are at the heart of Catholic social thought – in regard to economic exchange, work, political life, religious liberty, and a whole host of other areas related to our lives at various levels of community' (118-119). William J. Collinge then describes the background to and documents preceding *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration*, followed by a summary of its contents and an analysis of its reception and impact.

In a journal article (see Levad 2011) and later a full monograph (see Levad 2014), American Catholic theologian Amy Levad has proposed a sacramental approach to justice. Levad noted that apart from the USCCB statement of 2000 and the work of Catholic historian Andrew Skotnicki (who argued in his 2008 book that the bishops did not understand the history of prisons in Catholic tradition, and that prisons need a return to their roots in ecclesiastical and monastic punishments), Catholic theologians and ethicists had been largely silent about US incarceration, whereas many Protestant theologians had been writing on the crisis of the US criminal justice

system. In contrast, Levad seeks to argue for the urgency of Catholic attention to this crisis through the rich traditions of sacramental theology and practice, particularly drawing on the Eucharist and Penance to promote restorative justice within the system and social justice in wider society. In relation to CST, Levad emphasises the inviolable dignity of all human persons as central, arguing that this aspect of CST places limits on means of punishment and demands that offenders are treated as moral agents, and it also demands attention to the social injustices which contribute to crime, and the aspects of current criminal justice which contribute to ongoing social injustice.

***Themes emerging from empirical research on prison chaplaincy:***

- imbalance between importance of tasks and time spent on them (particularly admin)
- tension between serving the prison residents or the prison
- importance of volunteer visitors
- importance of the physical space of chaplaincy (safe space)
- chaplains understand themselves as religious, others tend to understand them as service providers
- anti-extremism agendas impact chaplaincies negatively
- importance of chaplains humanising prison residents, recognising their personhood
- there is good evidence that involvement in prison chaplaincy improves the experience of and behaviours within prison; the evidence about whether it reduces reoffending is debated
- women are neglected in the literature, both as chaplains and as prison residents

***Themes emerging from theological work on (prison) chaplaincy:***

- Most treatments of the role of the chaplain focus on mission, pastoral care, sacramental/religious provision, incarnation and presence, inclusivity, and representation.
- Treatments of the role of the prison chaplain in particular also focus on providing hope, promoting restorative justice, attending to power, being a bridge between inside and outside, recognising the dignity/*imago Dei* in every person, attention, and humanising/promoting flourishing.
- Treatments of both chaplaincy in general and prison chaplaincy in particular often mention but rarely describe or give tools/guidance for a critical/prophetic role.
- When mentioned briefly, the critical/prophetic role is described as an agent of challenge/change, critical solidarity, challenging injustices of systems/structures, prophetic voice, and advocacy.
- In the few sources which explore the critical/prophetic role more fully, there are common themes of attention to vulnerability, dehumanising, and oppression as well as responsibilities to speak the truth; work for justice, peace and reconciliation; recognise the dignity/citizenship/gifts of people in prisons; educate selves about structures/systems/injustice; and transform systems.
- Work explicitly relating CST to prisons focused on the themes of justice, reconciliation, dignity of every human, inclusion, preferential option for the poor, Christ as prisoner, attention to vulnerability, the common good, redemption, and restoration/resocialisation.

***Significant areas of overlap between empirical research and theological work:***

- Tensions between theologies of what the role should be and realities of what the role is or is perceived to be
- Tensions between working for/within the system and being a critical truth-teller to the system
- Importance of volunteers and other aspects of bridging inside and outside (including enriching the church, influencing public perception/policy, recognising membership in society, and helping with transition on/after release)
- Importance of humanising/recognising personhood/dignity/*imago Dei*
- Presence and incarnation
- Inclusion, inclusivity
- Attention to: persons, power, injustice, vulnerability
- Redemption/restoration/rehabilitation

## b. Catholic Social Teaching

### *What is CST?*

According to David Matzko McCarthy, in *The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology*,

Catholic social teaching is a tradition of commentary on economic, social, and political life—from the just wage, to the need for local, civic organizations, to human rights, and war and peace. Teachings on these matters can be traced back to Mosaic law, the prophets of Israel, and, of course, to Jesus. Jesus evokes a long history of prophetic witness to God's justice and mercy in his inaugural proclamation, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand . . . ' (Mark 1:15) and his instructions to 'strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness . . . ' (Matt. 6:33). Jesus puts the call of Israel in terms of the two great commands, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. . . [And] you shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:29–31). Following these biblical mandates, ancient and medieval writers, such as John Chrysostom, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas, establish a continuous tradition of commentary on justice and love. These biblical teachings and tradition of commentary are the roots of Catholic social teaching (CST).

Although Catholic Social Teaching has these roots deep in Jewish and Christian history, the official body of Catholic Social Teaching is usually said to begin with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891). Encyclicals are letters from the Pope containing official teaching, and they are named by the first few words of the letter in Latin. An introduction to each of the papal social encyclicals, along with links to their full texts, can be found [here](#).

Other official documents are included in this tradition as well: papal documents, documents of the Second Vatican Council, and those from conferences and synods of bishops. The broader tradition surrounding official Catholic Social Teaching is called 'Catholic Social Thought', and includes wider social thought and social movements within Catholicism. This includes the writings of theologians, philosophers, and social scientists as well as the thought and work of lay, ordained, and religious people in society, politics, and activism. As the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales put it, 'Many Catholics whose lives are dedicated to the service and welfare of others make this teaching present by their very activity, even if they have never read a social encyclical' (CBCEW 1996).

CST is not separate and apart from Catholic theology; instead CST grows from Christian understandings of God. God is triune, inherently social, having a social interrelationship in which humanity is invited to participate. And CST flows from Christian beliefs about creation, salvation, and eschatology:

- **Creation:** CST is rooted in the goodness of all God's creation, and the creation of humans as social beings, in the image of God.
- **Salvation:** CST reminds us that God's salvation is for the entirety of each human being and the entirety of creation. Social work seeks to participate in and point towards God's salvation, evangelising both individuals and social realities. 'Evangelisation means bringing the Good News of the Gospel into every stratum of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new' (CBCEW 1996).

- **Eschatology:** CST is about the coming of the kingdom of God, on earth as it is in heaven, and how we can participate in the coming of the kingdom as we look forward to the day when God's reign on earth is fully realised. We work for social justice not because we can make the kingdom come – the kingdom is the work of God – but because we seek to live now in the light of ultimate realities to come.

However, CST is not meant only for Catholics. It is meant to appeal to all people, whether Catholic or of other faiths or none, as it addresses our shared human sociality. CST has drawn on the sources of scripture and Christian tradition as well as from philosophy, science, and social movements outside Christianity.

Catholic social thought is a dynamic, living tradition, which grows and shifts over time. Many of these shifts have simply to do with the fact that teaching and thought has been responsive to current events. Much of early CST relates to the industrial revolution, whereas the newest social encyclical from Pope Francis responds to crises of the COVID era. In some eras social teaching has been primarily focused on economics and labour, more recently there has been more focus on politics and social justice.

Other shifts have to do with seeking to correct mistaken uses of the tradition. As the CBCEW put it, 'The development of Catholic teaching in the past has inevitably reflected particular historical circumstances, and this needs to be kept in mind in interpreting it today. At certain times it has even been wrongly invoked in support of oppressive regimes or governments perpetrating social injustice. One of the reasons for the progressive evolution of Catholic Social Teaching over the years has been the need to correct these misinterpretations' (CBCEW 1996).

Many shifts in the tradition surrounded the Second Vatican Council. From this time, the method of CST shifted from primarily deductive, universal, natural law approaches to more inductive, particular, and theological approaches. These shifts allowed for more influence from social movements such as Liberation Theology in Latin America and the Catholic Worker Movement in the United States. The focus of CST also became slightly less Eurocentric; both in its sources and its intended relevance.

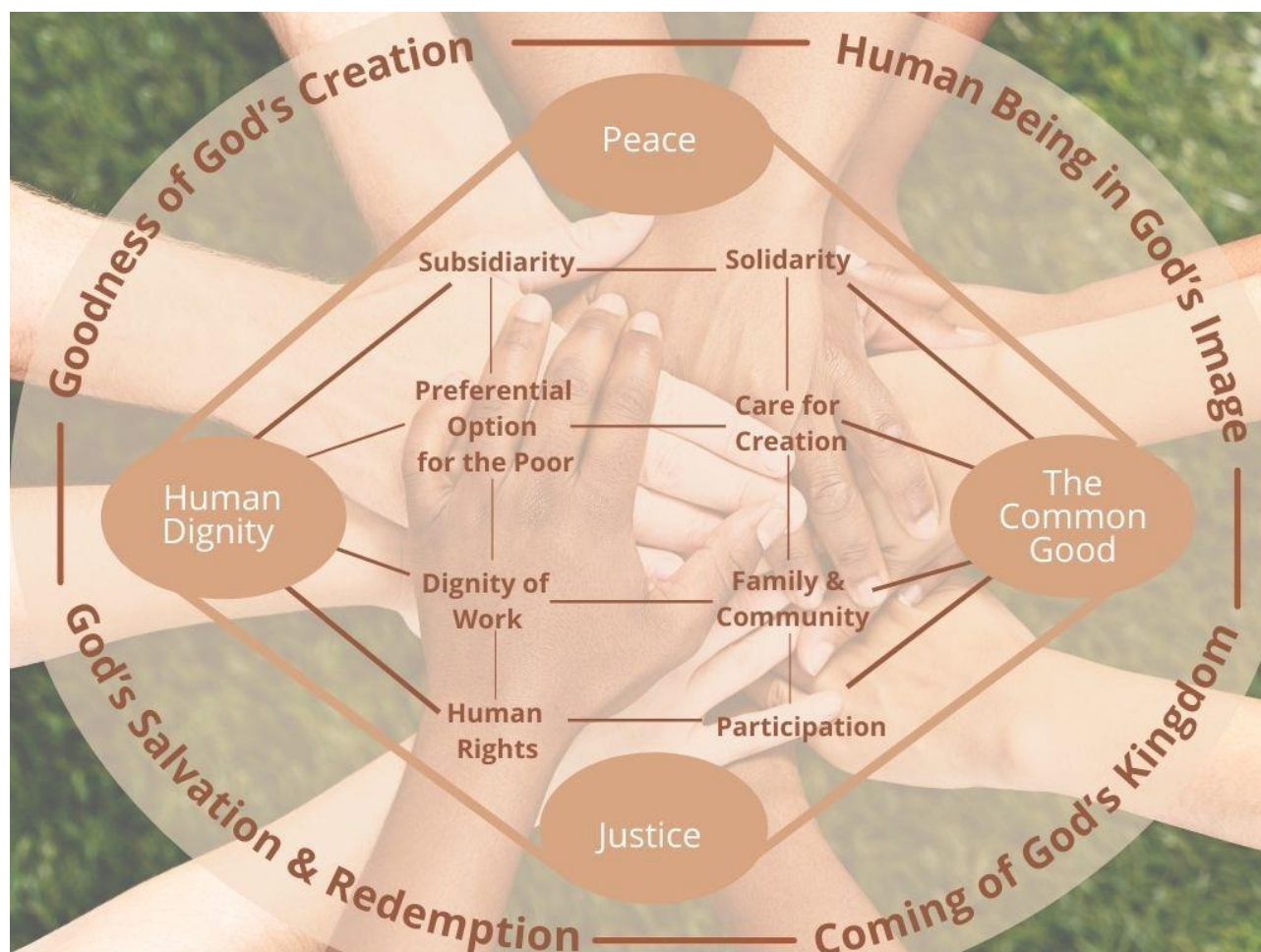
However, we should be clear that there is no unbroken trajectory of 'progress' or 'development' in CST. Shifts in one direction in a given era sometimes have been overturned in the following era, and steps taken in a given direction have been reversed and re-traversed by subsequent thought and practice.

Several significant critiques of official Social Teaching have been raised, some from outside Catholicism but some from within broader Catholic Social Thought. Some of the key weaknesses noted have included:

- there is not enough attention to conflict and uses/abuses of power;
- it has sometimes aligned itself with ideologies;
- the thought world is too Eurocentric (especially before Vatican II);
- justice for women has been seriously neglected;
- racial justice has also been neglected;
- there is not adequate analysis of the causes of injustice and oppression;
- its own teachings on society have not been applied to the internal institutional workings of the church itself.



Nevertheless, there are several clear principles, concepts, or themes in CST which are widely acknowledged to be central aspects of the tradition. As one introduction to CST noted, these 'should be viewed as a cluster or a cohort rather than a list' (J. Milburn Thompson, *Introducing Catholic Social Thought*) as they are a network of independent ideas and practices. The following concept map grows out of a survey of dozens of introductions to, books about, and websites explaining CST. Each item in the concept map is defined, immediately below.



### Human Dignity

'The Catholic social vision has as its focal point the human person, the clearest reflection of God among us. Scripture tells us that every human being is made in the image of God. God became flesh when he entered the human race in the person of Jesus Christ, true God and true man. Christ challenges us to see his presence in our neighbour, especially the neighbour who suffers or who lacks what is essential to human flourishing. In relieving our neighbour's suffering and meeting our neighbour's needs, we are also serving Christ. For the Christian, therefore, there can be no higher privilege and duty. We believe each person possesses a basic dignity that comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment, not from race or gender, age or economic status. The test therefore of every institution or policy is whether it enhances or threatens human dignity and indeed human life itself' (CBCEW 1996, 12-13).

### The Goodness of God's Creation

'An important foundation for the insistence on universality in the Catholic approach, especially with regard to the area of social ethics, comes from acceptance of the fundamental goodness of creation . . . God created the world and saw that it was good' (Curran 2002, 22).

### **The Human Being in God's Image**

'An insight of Christian faith in the Trinity is the knowledge that the desire to belong to human society is God-given. Human beings are made in the image of God, and within the one God is a divine society of three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Communities are brought into being by the participation of individual men and women, responding to this divine impulse towards social relationships – essentially, the impulse to love and to be loved – which was implanted by the God who created them' (CBCEW 1996, 18).

### **God's Salvation and Redemption**

'Catholic Social Teaching sees an intimate relationship between social and political liberation on the one hand, and on the other, the salvation to which the Church calls us in the name of Jesus Christ. The spreading of that message of salvation is the task of evangelisation. Evangelisation means bringing the Good News of the Gospel into every stratum of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new. That must include liberating humanity from all forces and structures which oppress it, though political liberation cannot be an end in itself. Evangelisation always requires the transformation of an unjust social order; and one of its primary tasks is to oppose and denounce such injustices' (CBCEW 1996, 39-40).

### **The Coming of God's Kingdom**

'When Christians pray "Thy Kingdom come," they pray for more than a place in heaven. They state that salvation is not just something about the next world. Rather, redemption is an ongoing mystery, and God's Kingdom comes in everyday life. . . We can never identify a human project with the Kingdom of God. Rather, we only partially and practically approximate it. The Kingdom in Christian discernment lies in that zone between what ought to be and what is at any given time in history' (Merkle 2004, 55 and 57).

### **The Common Good**

The common good is 'the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family' (*Gaudium et spes*, 26).

'Public authorities have the common good as their prime responsibility. The common good stands in opposition to the good of rulers or of a ruling (or any other) class. It implies that every individual, no matter how high or low, has a duty to share in promoting the welfare of the community as well as a right to benefit from that welfare. "Common" implies "all-inclusive": the common good cannot exclude or exempt any section of the population. If any section of the population is in fact excluded from participation in the life of the community, even at a minimal level, then that is a contradiction to the concept of the common good and calls for rectification' (CBCEW 1996, 70).

### **Peace**

'We who, in spite of Our inadequacy, are nevertheless the vicar of Him whom the prophet announced as the Prince of Peace, conceive of it as Our duty to devote all Our thoughts and care and energy to further this common good of all mankind. Yet peace is but an empty word, if it does not rest upon that order which Our hope prevailed upon Us to set forth in outline in this

encyclical. It is an order that is founded on truth, built up on justice, nurtured and animated by charity, and brought into effect under the auspices of freedom. . . . “For He is our peace, who hath made both one . . . And coming, He preached peace to you that were afar off; and peace to them that were nigh.” . . . “Our Lord Jesus Christ, after His resurrection stood in the midst of His disciples and said: Peace be upon you, alleluia. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.” It is Christ, therefore, who brought us peace; Christ who bequeathed it to us: “Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you.” . . . Let us, then, pray with all fervor for this peace which our divine Redeemer came to bring us. May He banish from the souls of men whatever might endanger peace. May He transform all men into witnesses of truth, justice and brotherly love. May He illumine with His light the minds of rulers, so that, besides caring for the proper material welfare of their peoples, they may also guarantee them the fairest gift of peace’ (*Pacem in Terris*, 167, 169-171).

‘There is a distinct preference for collaborative, cooperative, and participative structures and policies which encourage social harmony. While social conflict is inevitable in a fallen and imperfect world, everything possible should be done to seek the resolution of differences in a peaceful manner. In other words, there is a preferential option for non-violence’ (Hornsby-Smith 2006, 204).

### **Justice**

‘In the Old Testament God reveals himself to us as the liberator of the oppressed and the defender of the poor, demanding from people faith in him and justice towards one's neighbor. It is only in the observance of the duties of justice that God is truly recognized as the liberator of the oppressed. By his action and teaching Christ united in an indivisible way the relationship of people to God and the relationship of people to each other. Christ lived his life in the world as a total giving of himself to God for the salvation and liberation of people. In his preaching he proclaimed the fatherhood of God towards all people and the intervention of God's justice on behalf of the needy and the oppressed (Lk 6: 21-23). In this way he identified himself with his “least ones,” as he stated: “As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). From the beginning the Church has lived and understood the Death and Resurrection of Christ as a call by God to conversion in the faith of Christ and in love of one another, perfected in mutual help even to the point of a voluntary sharing of material goods. . . . According to the Christian message, therefore, our relationship to our neighbor is bound up with our relationship to God; our response to the love of God, saving us through Christ, is shown to be effective in his love and service of people. Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love’ (*Justitia in Mundo*, 30-31, 33).

### **Subsidiarity**

‘Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater or higher association what lesser and subordinate organisations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy or absorb them. The supreme authority of the State ought, therefore, to let subordinate groups handle matters and concerns of lesser importance, which would otherwise dissipate its efforts greatly. Thereby the State will more freely, powerfully and effectively do all those things that belong to it alone because it alone can do

them: directing, watching, urging, restraining, as occasion requires and necessity demands. Therefore those in power should be sure that the more perfectly a graduated order is kept among the various associations, in observance of the principle of subsidiary function, the stronger social authority and effectiveness will be, the happier and more prosperous the condition of the State' (*Quadragesimo Anno*, 80).

'In a centralised society, subsidiarity will mainly mean passing powers downwards; but it can also mean passing appropriate powers upwards, even to an international body, if that would better serve the common good and protect the rights of families and of individuals' (CBCEW 1996, 23).

### **Solidarity**

'If subsidiarity is the principle behind the organisation of societies from a vertical perspective, solidarity is the equivalent horizontal principle. Solidarity means the willingness to see others as another "self", and so to regard injustice committed against another as no less serious than an injustice against oneself' (CBCEW 1996, 23).

'When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a "virtue," is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual because we are really responsible for all' (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 79).

### **Preferential Option for the Poor**

'A good society is one where there is no debilitating poverty, where everyone can participate and realize his or her human potential. In order to realistically move toward such a society, the poor and marginalized persons must receive privileged attention' (Thompson 2010, 63).

### **Care for Creation**

'The Church recognises that care for the environment is part of care for the common good – the environment is one of the "common goods" which are the shared responsibility of the human race. We have to reject some of the easy assumptions of an earlier stage of industrialisation, such as that the human race, because God had given it dominion over the world, had an unlimited freedom to despoil the natural environment for its own purposes. Those who feel moved to a loving care for the internal balances of nature are responding to a deep religious instinct implanted within them by God. Their intuition tells them that the human race takes its place on this planet as a gift and privilege, and needs to cultivate what the new Catechism of the Catholic Church calls a "religious respect for the integrity of creation" (paragraph 2415)' (CBCEW 1996, 106).

### **Dignity of Work**

'Work is more than a way of making a living: it is a vocation, a participation in God's creative activity. Work increases the common good. . . When properly organised and respectful of the humanity of the worker, it is also a source of fulfilment and satisfaction. . . Workers have rights which Catholic teaching has consistently maintained are superior to the rights of capital. These include the right to decent work, to just wages, to security of employment, to adequate rest and holidays, to limitation of hours of work, to health and safety protection, to non-discrimination, to form and join trade unions, and, as a last resort, to go on strike' (CBCEW 1996, 90-91).

### **Family and Community**

‘The human race itself is a “community of communities”, existing at international, national, regional and local level. The smallest such community is the individual family, the basic cell of human society. A well-constructed society will be one that gives priority to the integrity, stability and health of family life. It should be a principle of good government, therefore, that no law should be passed with possible social consequences without first considering what effect it would have on family life and especially on children’ (CBCEW 1996, 21).

### **Human Rights**

‘[I]ndividuals have a claim on each other and on society for certain basic minimum conditions without which the value of human life is diminished or even negated. Those rights are inalienable, in that individuals and societies may not set them at naught: in Catholic terms those rights derive from the nature of the human person made in the image of God, and are therefore in no way dependent for their existence on recognition by the state by way of public legislation. These rights are universal. The study of the evolution of the idea of human rights shows that they all flow from the one fundamental right: the right to life. From this derives the right to those conditions which make life more truly human: religious liberty, decent work, housing, health care, freedom of speech, education, and the right to raise and provide for a family’ (CBCEW 1996, 36-37).

‘At its foundation, the Christian tradition of human rights rejects both the individualism and the collectivism that can distort an ethic of human rights. . . The goal is neither the autonomous individual of liberalism nor the submersion of the individual into a commune or the state of collectivism, but persons flourishing through relationships and community’ (Thompson 2010, 64).

### **Participation**

‘Human flourishing is connected to the health of the community and the creation of a good society. All persons should share in this social reality through their participation in it, contributing to the community and reaching their full potential through it’ (Thompson 2010, 59).

‘One obvious right of citizenship is that of participation in key areas of social life. This includes participation in the political life of society, in the election of representatives, decision-makers and civil authorities, and the determination of social policies; in the economic life of society, normally through paid employment which provided self-respect and a wage necessary to bring up a family and accumulate property; and in the social and cultural life of society. Participation as a right derives from the notion of the intrinsic dignity of each individual human being who, for Christians, is called to participate in the extension of God’s creation through productive work and to contribute to the common good’ (Hornsby-Smith 2006, 65).

## c. Participant Responses<sup>3</sup>

### *Practitioner Responses*

The following questions were discussed in an all-day action research event for practitioners of pastoral care with current and former prison residents, facilitated by the Lead Researcher with the participation of the Director of Research. The practitioners wrote brief individual responses, discussed them with the wider group, and participated together in the identification of overlapping clusters of themes (in bold) which emerged from their responses to each question. Written responses were collected and discussions were recorded with permission from each participant.

#### A.1. What is most important and impactful about your work?

- In relation to working with incarcerated people?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

Twenty-seven answers were given, most of which fell into six clusters of similar themes.

- Seven answers related to the **sacraments and spiritual practices**, including the Eucharist, Adoration, prayer, and penitentials. One answer highlighted the mutuality and fellowship shared with prison residents surrounding the Mass.
- An answer about prayer with bereaved individuals also fell into a cluster related to **one-to-one contact**, with two other answers about individual pastoral work with residents and staff.
- We decided to label another cluster of six answers '**personhood**', as they related to the prison residents as persons, taking seriously their self, agency, and humanity. These included encouraging positive attitudes about the self, affirming, loving and accepting unconditionally, and 'engaging mind and heart'.
- The answer about 'affirming' also fell into the cluster we called '**support**', along with three other answers about pastoral support for residents, staff, and governors.
- Four answers related to **listening**, and two of these highlighted listening without judgement.
- The answers about being non-judgemental overlapped with a category we called '**presence and modelling**', with two other answers about being Christ-like and 'modelling the life of faith and integrity'.

There were four remaining answers: two were about giving **time** and having 'adequate time to devote', one was about working well with other teams (mental health, probation, addiction), and one simply said 'to keep hope alive'.

#### A.2. What most motivates you to work in prisons?

- In relation to working with incarcerated people?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

Twenty-four answers were given, falling into seven clusters of related themes, some of which overlapped directly with the answers about what is important and impactful:

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<sup>3</sup> Eight women attended the practitioners research day. Original plans for the research were for a much larger and broader group of participants, however the research began in February of 2020 and the first COVID lockdown began shortly after our research day, which was planned to be the first of a series of collaborative action research events which were made impossible by the pandemic.

- The largest cluster of answers was the group of ten references to seeing **change and outcomes**, including to individuals' mindsets, to faith development, to experiences of joy and freedom, to the attitudes of staff and those outside of prisons, and reduction of crime and harm.
- Three answers were about '**bringing Christ**', and mentioned making Christ and the church 'present in prisons', bringing the love of Christ, and sowing 'first seeds of faith'.
- These were closely related to three answers which we labelled '**presence**': 'reaching out to those who often have nobody to care for them', supporting both residents and staff 'in very difficult working/living environments', and 'to be a listening presence'.
- Like 'presence', '**personhood**' was another theme we saw here, with three answers about wanting 'to see and respond to the holiness in each person', acceptance of all persons, and gaining 'strength from the residents I work with'.
- Four answers related to the **interest** and desire to learn, including wanting to meet prison residents, wanting to learn about prisons in society, taking 'a genuine interest in people', and wanting 'volunteer work with some challenges'.
- A final cluster of four answers related to working together with **prison staff and the chaplaincy team**, including experiences of staff being positive about chaplaincy, gaining respect of colleagues, and supporting staff.

### A.3. In what way do you feel best equipped and resourced for your work?

- In relation to your pastoral work?
- In relation to theology and spirituality?
- In relation to multi-faith team work?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

There were thirty answers to this question, which fell into seven theme clusters:

- The largest cluster was nine answers related to working together with a **chaplaincy team**, including relying on them, having a thriving team, receiving support and sharing respect ('support' was the most used word in these answers), as well as one which said 'being a chaplain to the chaplains'.
- Seven answers related to drawing on **previous life or work experience**, including being an officer, being resident in prison, other pastoral work, managerial roles, and personal 'faith journeying'.
- The faith answer also fell into a cluster of six related to drawing on '**inner resources**' including being easy-going, having good inter-personal skills, being 'a tough cookie', having 'courage' to 'support people in other faiths', and 'bringing silence'.
- This answer also fell into a cluster of four related to **sacraments and the Holy Spirit**, which included receiving joy from the mass, prayer, and 'recognition that it is not me but the Holy Spirit working'.
- Five answers cited **formal training** from theological institutions, from Chaplaincy HQ, from an annual conference, and from the prisons.
- Two answers mentioned **reflection**, one on faith and 'theological reading', and the other on 'practice, particularly when things go wrong'.
- However, three answers were about **not** being well equipped: lacking experience, not being familiar with Islam, and 'to be honest, not very well equipped, don't really know where to begin'.

### B.1. What do you most wish you could accomplish in your work but feel you cannot?

- In relation to working with incarcerated people?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

Twenty-two answers were given to this question, which we grouped into five clusters.

- Eight answers involved frustrations with the **system, staff, and management** of prisons, including insufficient provision of therapy for prison residents, lack of funding for prison reform, not having reliable access to prison residents, insufficient space, lack of exposure of the staff to what chaplaincy does, lack of recognition of chaplaincy's importance, staff with negative attitudes about prison residents, and a general feeling of not 'being able to change the system'.
- Some of these overlapped with answers involving insufficient **resources**, which also included lack of materials to help with special/specific needs, constraints of time and physical space, not being able to use the internet, and the general feeling that 'there are some things you can just tell people need, and you're not capable of making available to them'.
- Six answers related to **time**, including time to 'provide full range of sacramental and Catholic teaching', time to follow through, ability to run more groups or courses, in sufficient one-to-one time, and 'Time. Full stop'.
- Three answers related to **individual pastoral care**, including time with and access to residents, as well as 'raising self-esteem'.
- Two answers related to what happens **outside** prison, including ensuring they do not return, and connecting them with parishes for pastoral support.

### B.2. What is most limiting and frustrating about working in prisons?

- In relation to working with incarcerated people?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

The twenty-nine answers to this question fell into five theme clusters.

- The overwhelming majority were **systemic** issues, with eighteen related answers. These included concerns about faith provision, such as qualifications for chaplaincy, the segregation of faith groups from one another, chaplaincy not being prioritised, and difficulty getting clearance for visiting religious ministers. There were also systemic concerns about treatment of prison residents, including lack of support for the elderly, constant movement between prisons, overcrowding, unnecessary use of force by staff, 'petty' rules, and lockdowns due to staff shortages. There were frustrations with lack of space and outdated facilities, as well as disruptions to the prison regime and cancellation of events and meetings with residents. One answer was also a general sense of 'not understanding how the prison works and all its systems in the justice structure'.
- Several of these answers overlapped with a group of seven answers related to **prison staff**, including concerns about 'unhelpful attitudes', not unlocking residents for religious services, poor communication, and how decisive the quality of the chaplaincy manager is to being able to do chaplaincy well.
- The final answer also overlaps with frustrations in the **chaplaincy team**, including challenges of multi-faith teams, not having enough chaplains or volunteers, 'lack of joined up working in the chaplaincy sometimes', and an 'absence of reflection' on 'what we are about'.



- Fewer frustrations related to the **residents** themselves. These three answers related to not being able to 'maintain the confidence and intentions' of residents after release, a feeling of 'always having to be on the alert for violence, or being conditioned', and the disruption caused in prisons due to individual incidents.
- Two answers related to **time**: 'having time to give to each person who needs it', and the lack of time with residents (both because some are in the prison for short periods of time, either due to their sentence or to being moved between prisons; and because there is a lack of time in the daily regime).

### B.3. In what way do you feel least equipped and resourced for your work?

- In relation to your pastoral work?
- In relation to theology and spirituality?
- In relation to multi-faith team work?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

There were twenty-four answers to this question, and we grouped them into six themes.

- Again the largest number (nine) of these answers had to do with relating to the **prison staff and systems**, including the chaplaincy team. Some of these related to feeling ill-equipped in relation to other faiths or relations with colleagues of other faiths, some with not knowing how best to relate to senior managers or systemic issues, some with building good relationships with prison staff and 'supporting staff with compassion fatigue'.
- Five answers related to **pastoral** concerns, including needs for formal training in counselling, resources for bereavement support, and dealing with 'the contradiction of seeing God in everyone and hearing the stories of horrendous crimes'.
- Four answers related to particular **specialist aspects** of the work, especially lack of training in psychology and mental health. One simply said, 'often feel like a jack of all trades (and master of none)'.
- The concerns raised about other faiths and mental health also formed a cluster of four answers related to a lack of **formal training** in these areas.
- Three answers from people newer to prison work cited a general **lack of experience**.
- Two answers were **theological**: one about resources for prayer and one about a lack of grounding in Catholic theology.

### A.4. Given the themes arising from A questions, what are the central strengths and impacts of prison pastoral work?

- In relation to working with incarcerated people?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

Five themes emerged in this discussion: time, presence, bridging, change, and challenging. It was noted that chaplains are the ones who can take **time** with and for anyone in the prison. The idea of being a loving and sacramental **presence** was also important, and one participant emphasised the mutuality of the presence of Christ: 'we hope that we represent the image of Christ to people, but also we encounter Christ in them, so that transaction is that's central to what motivates me . . . the more I recognise Christ within the other, I realise how much it's lacking in me'. The work of chaplaincy was described as a 'channel' or **bridge** between the prison and those outside of it, through bringing in volunteers, helping maintain and in some cases mend relationships with families, providing an opportunity through liturgy to be part of something global, taking perspectives to outsiders on what prison is really like, and referring residents to parishes and

organisations for assistance upon release. **Change** was also seen as important, in terms of ‘seeing people set free’, reducing reoffending, and encouraging return residents that change is possible. A significant part of this conversation was dedicated to the theme of challenging, and participants noted the importance of the chaplain in challenging prison residents (not only in bad behaviour but to see themselves differently or to rethink their outlook) as well as staff when they act inappropriately or display attitudes which should be challenged. Aspects of the system and culture should also be challenged, and a specific example discussed was the inertia of being institutionalised (whether as a prison resident, an officer, or a chaplain) and losing any sense that things could and should be better – summed up by the phrase so often heard in prisons, ‘it is what it is’. One participant who was relatively new to working in prisons said, ‘It has such a Kafkaesque feeling about it, as soon as you walk through the door. Now my worry is – and this is not a criticism – if you get working in that system for long, do you not begin to adjust to it? And the Kafkaesque nature of it just ...’, another participant finished the sentence, ‘becomes normal’.

#### **A.5. What sorts of training and resources are already well in hand?**

- **In relation to your pastoral work?**
- **In relation to theology and spirituality?**
- **In relation to multi-faith team work?**
- **In relation to working within the prison estate?**

Participants mentioned the Starting Out and World Faiths training available to all prison chaplains, provided by Chaplaincy HQ. Catholic participants mentioned the annual conference for Catholic prison chaplains, which is a continuing training gathering. They also mentioned the Faith Inside course which arose from the conference. However, one participant noted that access to the conference is not equal, as she was unable to secure funding to attend. Quaker participants highlighted their annual checklist for prison chaplains as well as the handbook, online training, and residential training options for Quaker chaplains.

#### **B.4. Given the themes arising from B questions, what are the central difficulties and shortcomings of prison pastoral work?**

- **In relation to working with incarcerated people?**
- **In relation to working within the prison estate?**

This conversation focused on concerns about the structures surrounding chaplaincy on the one hand, and concerns about poor treatment of prison residents on the other. Structural concerns included the lack of supervision, insufficient oversight and managerial support, and lack of clarity in roles. One participant said, ‘I say to officers, especially when they’re the new guys, “Chaplaincy is not just for prisoners. If you need a confidential scream, we’re there for you.” But who’s there for the chaplains to have their confidential scream? And there isn’t.’

Concerns for residents included the ‘undignified’ and ‘humiliating’ nature of prisons (One participant described trying to visit a resident, opening the flap in the cell door, and seeing him ‘smiling and waving at me, but then I realised he was waving, “Don’t come in,” because he was on the toilet, facing out, and there’s no curtain.’), in which ‘there’s just very little happening that is really there to rehabilitate’, the use of lockdown, the rise of self-harm, inequalities in faith provisions, or time and prioritisation of faith provision.

#### **B.5. What is needed to address these?**

- **In relation to working with incarcerated people?**

- **In relation to working within the prison estate?**

Several specific needs were discussed, including:

- Nice spaces for one-to-one pastoral meetings
- Ability to access residents (for them to be unlocked) in exceptional pastoral circumstances (e.g., bereavement)
- More authority for Chaplaincy HQ, beyond the merely advisory
- Better staffing levels (to reduce lockdowns and to make more group gatherings possible)
- A clear statement of the role of a prison chaplain (in terms of purpose, not only the list of duties in the relevant Prison Service Instruction)
- More links between chaplains and groups outside, including bringing in more volunteers, connecting more leavers with community chaplaincies, and assistance in finding housing and work
- Prayer resources

#### **B.6. What sorts of training and resources would help?**

Resources which would be helpful were named as:

- Accessible, flexible resources (e.g., Catholic Faith Exploration, but more accessible; and Faith Inside, but more flexible)
- A book for prison chaplains on CST
- Links to online resources
- DVDs or online videos which could be downloaded and used in prison groups
- Spiritual and liturgical year resources (e.g. rosary cards, resources for Advent and Lent)
- More opportunities to gather with other chaplains, especially lay prison chaplains

Training needs to be met were named as:

- Theological and spirituality groundwork training prior to chaplaincy
- A course in CST for chaplains
- An accessible and applied introduction to Catholic doctrine to be used in prison
- Training in bringing hope
- Training in good boundaries
- Basic pastoral skills training with examples of good practice
- Introductory training on mental health issues and learning difficulties
- Training in dealing with anger, aggression, and conflict transformation
- How to support the bereaved
- A course on what prison chaplaincy is and what it is for

#### ***Overall themes emerging from practitioners***

The responses and discussions of the practitioners were recorded, transcribed, and coded using NVivo to establish the central and recurring themes across the day. These were:

- sacraments and spiritual practices
- individual pastoral care
- personhood

- listening
- bereavement
- non-judgemental
- seeing change and outcomes
- presence
- structural and systemic problems and frustrations, including poor treatment of and attitudes towards residents and undignified, humiliating
- lack of resources (spaces, volunteers, staff)
- time
- bridge (importance of and need for more connections)
- although majority of problems, frustrations, needs, desires, issues discussed had to do with structural/systemic/staff realities, when asked what resources they wanted the majority were liturgical and spiritual

### ***Former Resident Responses<sup>4</sup>***

Former prison residents were interviewed individually using the following interview schedule. Interviews were recorded and transcribed with each participant's permission.

#### **Were you actively involved with a chaplaincy inside prison? How were you involved?**

The participants engaged in a wide spectrum of chaplaincy involvement, from one who was never involved with chaplaincy until release, to others who worked closely with chaplains inside, and one who stayed in close contact with chaplains after release. Types of involvement described included:

- A visit from a chaplain upon entry (though one participant described his memory of the absence of such a visit)
- Visits from chaplains to notify a participant about deaths in his family
- Attending weekly services/mass
- Weekly pastoral conversations with a chaplain during a vulnerable time
- Helping in the chapel as an orderly
- Attending a baptism preparation course and being baptised
- Attending Remembrance Sunday services

#### **What did you most appreciate about the chaplaincy?**

- One participant appreciated how the chaplaincy made provisions for all the **key festivals** for many faiths.
- Some participants noted **religious items** provided by chaplains, such as bibles, literature, and posters.

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<sup>4</sup> Six former prison residents (all men) were interviewed. Two were interviewed in person at a community chaplaincy, and four were interviewed by phone. Original plans for the research were for a much larger and broader group of participants, however the research began in February of 2020 and the first COVID lockdown began in March. Plans to visit additional community chaplaincies and women's centres to interview additional former prison residents were made impossible by the pandemic.

- Some participants appreciated that they felt **needed or called on to help** by the chaplains. One was asked to paint and hang pictures, another played piano during the service (which he noted was the only time he was able to play a keyboard while he was in prison).
- Two participants most appreciated weekly services, one referring specifically to a Quaker meeting and the other to a Catholic mass.
- Two participants appreciated **special events and programmes**, such as strong connections between the chaplaincy and creative arts, and a chaplaincy that would invite celebrity guests.
- Two participants appreciated that the chaplains showed **empathy** and were **non-judgemental**.
- Another noted that they were '**neutral**' and would keep **confidentiality**, which related to another participant who said he was able to **trust** the chaplain.
- Two participants appreciated the **fellowship** experienced in chapel.
- Several answers had to do with support received from chaplains during **bereavement**, including one chaplaincy organising a service for a beloved resident who committed suicide in prison, and another chaplain who would remember significant bereavement anniversaries.
- Two participants told stories of **particularly moving moments** in the chapel. One was asked to speak at a funeral in the chapel and felt it was 'the only time in my life really' when he was given (by God) exactly the right and most important words to say. Another was the participant who played piano, who told of a fellow resident coming over to where he was sitting apart from the group to thank him for his playing but was stopped by an officer who said, 'You do know he's a sex offender, don't you?' to which the resident replied, 'Yeah, and?' and continued to speak to him. Remembering this moment, the participant said, 'It was the moment that I realised the prison hierarchy and the stigmatisation and all the rest of it is as entrenched by staff as it is by the majority of the prisoners, but actually in that scenario in chapel, Christianity overrode all of that and for an hour or whatever a week that division, despite being visible there because of being divided by the prison officers and sitting somewhere else, was overcome and didn't matter. . . So it was the **sacraments** and **fellowship** and the sense that divisions that existed in every other way were somehow overcome in that.'
- Several other answers had to do with connections **outside**, such as help speaking and corresponding with **family**, being able to meet **volunteers** and visitors from outside, and being offered **tangible help** on release.
- One participant credited going to services and being baptised in prison with his ability to forgive his parents for abuse and violence.
- Chaplains were also referred to as reassuring, as having **time** to give.
- In his description of what he most appreciated, one participant referred to the chaplaincy as '**the heartbeat of the prison**'.

#### **Was there anything you found frustrating or unhelpful about the chaplaincy?**

- Two participants spoke of particular, individual chaplains they did not 'get on with', both of whom were described as unkind.
- One participant highlighted the need for more volunteers to come in and work with the chaplaincy, as well as the lack of enough time in the daily/weekly regime for faith activities.
- One participant contrasted a prison where he perceived the chaplaincy to be well-funded and supported which put on a lot of special events with other prisons where the chaplaincy

‘had their hands tied’ by ‘loads of paperwork and security’ and did not do much else. (This may have had to do with different categories of prisons, and another participant described how he was offered nothing by the chaplaincy in a remand prison but had a different experience in the prison to which he was moved.)

- This same participant had been in prison three times and described how he had been offered no help by chaplaincy (or anyone else) upon release the first two times, but had been introduced to a community chaplain the third time and it had made all the difference.
- Another participant felt that there was some poor behaviour by residents in chapel groups and services which the chaplain did not recognise or handle appropriately.
- This same participant also described a managing (Anglican) chaplain saying, ‘I never saw her on the wing at all and I got the sense she wasn’t particularly comfortable going onto that wing’ where the sex offenders were housed.
- He also noted that the religious elements of the chaplain’s role seemed to be ‘the minority’. ‘They struck me as pastoral firefighters really’ because ‘any remotely pastoral issues that arises for a person is immediately, unthinkingly handed across to the chaplain’. He felt this had the systemic consequence of the prison resident as person with emotions not being seen or dealt with by most staff other than the chaplain, and he also wondered whether a person could/should be a chaplain for very many years because ‘you deal with such unrelenting misery and trauma every day of your working life that ultimately, inevitably, you begin to desensitise to that kind of thing’.

### **Do you feel being involved with chaplaincy contributed to your well-being during your time inside?**

All participants answered this question positively. Their explanations of how chaplaincy involvement contributed to their wellbeing overlapped significantly with the answers listed above under what they most appreciated about the chaplaincy (particularly the themes of **non-judgement, neutrality, empathy, care, taking time**, and the importance of both regular **services** and special **events**) and additionally included:

- Chaplains **treat everyone the same**, no matter what.
- Chaplaincy involvement helped sustain a **spiritual life**.
- The chapel provided a **place of peace, quiet, and solace**.
- Chaplains acted as **advocates** within the system.
- One participant noted, ‘I’ve always said the two things that **got me through** the four and a half years I was inside was **rediscovering a faith** I think that had always been there and that was with the help of the chaplaincy, the support of the chaplaincy, and the other area was my interactions with the Samaritans and being a listener.’ Similarly, another participant said, ‘I **couldn’t have got through it** without regular **services** and contact with chaplains’.
- Another spoke about how the treatment of residents by chaplains differs from most other prison staff because they take **time** and they engage with residents as persons.

### **Has it contributed in any way to your well-being since release?**

Several participants spoke of the **difficulty of not having tangible help after release**; the three who did feel that tangible help arose from chaplaincy involvement were those who were introduced to a community chaplain, connected with a local parish, and whose chaplain kept in touch after release. One participant spoke of how chaplaincy involvement had ‘given me that **connection back to faith**’.

### Was there a particular chaplain who impacted your life the most?

- If yes, who and how?

When people spoke about a particular chaplain who most impacted their lives, many different themes emerged, most only in one person's narrative.

- One participant was not involved in with the chaplaincy inside but happened to meet a community chaplain who was coming to see his cellmate, and became involved in community chaplaincy. He named the community chaplain as most impactful, and he felt an immediate '**connection**' with her, and she **met him as he came out of prison**.
- One spoke of two chaplains who became '**friends**' and kept in touch over the years after release.
- One spoke of a chaplain who welcomed him into his parish for community service prior to release, where he said 'I was **always made to feel like one of the parishioners** even though I was going there on a daily basis, I was picked up on a bus and taken back to the prison every night.'
- One spoke of a chaplain who was '**empathetic**' and would speak with him every time they crossed paths and if something was going on in his life he would say, 'Let's just go to the office and have a chat'.
- One described an impactful chaplain as '**genuine**' and not 'false', and who took **time**: 'He would sit there as long as you wanted with him. He wouldn't try and rush you . . .' This chaplain was also described with themes that were shared with other participants: **care**, **tangible help**, and **support during bereavement**. He was described as someone who 'did proper **care**', who helped secure grants for clothing, and who helped him speak with relatives when there was a death in the family.
- Another **bereaved** participant described how a chaplain helped him connect with family members when his mother died, noting that the chaplain '**trusted me**' and '**cared**'.
- Another participant described how he 'got a lot of help' from the chaplains, who were 'very good and supportive towards me', and another described the **tangible help** of the community chaplain upon release.
- One participant said of his involvement with the chaplains inside, 'I think it **saved my life**'. He **attempted suicide** because he 'couldn't come to terms with what I'd done', and he credits the chaplains with helping him through that time.

### What do you think would make chaplaincies better for people in prison? How could they improve or have more impact?

Only two answers were given about how the chaplains themselves do their work:

- There should be more space in bible study for difficult questions.
- The best chaplaincies are proactively engaged and collaborate with other departments such as education and creative arts, putting on special programmes and events.

The other answers were all related to chaplains needing better support and resources:

- More chaplains
- More volunteers (this figured in three answers)
- More support/less derision on the wings for those who want to attend religious services and groups
- More resources for intensive one-to-one pastoral care in remand prisons
- More resources for group activities and programmes in other categories of prisons

- Better support network for chaplains (this was mentioned in two answers)
- Better training and qualifications for managing chaplains

### ***Overall themes emerging from former prison residents***

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded using NVivo to establish the central and recurring themes. These were:

- special events and programmes
- empathy and non-judgemental
- neutral and keep confidentiality
- bereavement
- fellowship
- connections outside: family, volunteers (appreciate and need more)
- kindness and presence (only criticised chaplains if not)
- time
- place of peace, quiet, solace
- advocacy
- lack of similar support after release (unless in community chaplaincy)
- care
- tangible help
- trusted and treated as anyone else

### ***Significant areas of thematic overlap between former residents and practitioners:***

- non-judgemental
- bereavement
- connections/bridges with outside
- presence
- time
- personhood/recognition



## 4. Outcomes

### a. Website: <https://fi.mbit.cam.ac.uk/>

In fulfillment of the project aim to create ‘a discrete collection of digital resources, hosted on the MBIT website, publicly accessible, focused on theology and ethics of prison chaplaincy,’ we have created the Flourishing Inside Website. Contents of the website were determined based on:

- our desire to share the content of the research project in an accessible format
- input from practitioner participants on what they would find helpful on such a website
- gaps identified in resources and training for prison chaplains related to CST
- and creating a platform through which to advertise and take bookings for training and resourcing days at MBIT.

WHAT IS CST? CST RESEARCH WHAT DOES CST HAVE TO DO WITH PRISON CHAPLAINCY? BOOKING INFO FOR PRISON CHAPLAINS CST AND PRISON SECURITY INFO SHORT COURSES AT MBIT

# FLOURISHING INSIDE

CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT AND PRISON PASTORAL WORK

What do incarcerated people need from pastoral workers? What resources do pastoral workers need? How can they work better with the prison system? What can Catholic social thought contribute? And how can Catholic social thought be enhanced from listening to the prison context?

These questions were explored in a unique research project, *Flourishing Inside*, completed during the calendar year 2020 at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology (Cambridge, United Kingdom) led by Dr Sitaporn Phillips (2020 Research Fellow) with oversight from Dr Kierika Soane-Cox (Director of Research).

One of the central commitments of Catholic social thought is that every human being has inherent dignity and worth which need not be earned by anything they do and cannot be taken away by anyone or anything external to them. Another central commitment is that human beings are inherently social. We need one another and our interrelatedness makes us who we are. Both of these commitments, for Catholics and other Christians, arise from belief in the Trinitarian God in whose image all human beings are made. Human beings flourish when their dignity is recognized and upheld, and when they have strong and healthy social bonds and relate to just social structures. What does it mean, then, to flourish inside a prison? Can chaplains and others who work with prison residents encourage and contribute to human flourishing even inside structures and conditions which deprive humans of some essential aspects of dignity and sociality? How can chaplains themselves flourish in their work inside? And what can people outside prisons learn about flourishing in life by listening to voices from inside prisons?

This website includes the project findings as well as resources for chaplains which the research identified as areas of need. The research included three areas of exploration:

- listening to experiences from inside prisons through a focus group event with practitioners and individual interviews with former prison residents
- overviewing introductions to and resources for learning Catholic social thought
- reviewing previous research on prison chaplaincy in particular, as well as chaplaincy more generally and religion in prisons more broadly

Flourishing Inside gratefully acknowledges our host institution, the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, a thriving community of women scholars and learners.

We also gratefully acknowledge the Charles Plater Trust, a charitable fund supporting education and social justice, for the grant which made the entire project possible.

NEWBURY COLLEGE INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY

PLATER TRUST

## b. MA Module

We have developed a new module for the suite of [MAs offered by MBIT](#), validated by Anglia Ruskin University. The module will be available to those pursuing an MA in Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy, as well as the other MA courses. This will contribute to filling the gaps we identified through the project in knowledge of CST amongst chaplains, literature relating critical social analysis to chaplaincy, and attention to critical aspects of chaplaincy roles in training.

### Module Description

Catholic Social Thought (CST) includes the body of official social teachings of the Catholic Church as well as a wider body of thought and practice related to economic, social, and political life. Much of CST has been explicitly addressed not only to Catholics, but to people of all faiths and none, as it addresses issues of our common sociality and our common political structures. CST has been a resource for people within and outside of the Catholic Church for social analysis, activism, and political engagement. In this module we will introduce official documents (Catholic Social Teaching) as well as other sources, thinkers, and social movements (wider Catholic Social Thought), focusing on key themes which characterise CST. Throughout, students will be encouraged to connect this body of thought and its key themes to praxis in particular contexts, depending upon the focus of their MA (e.g. to the role of chaplaincy, to pastoral care, or to a particular ethical issue). Sessions will include a mixture of lecture, seminar discussion, and student presentations.

### Module Outline

#### UNIT 1: Encyclicals and other Official Documents

- 1) Pre-Vatican II
- 2) Vatican II and Liberation Theology
- 3) John Paul II to the Present

#### UNIT 2: Sources, Thinkers, and Movements

- 4) Scripture and Tradition
- 5) Liberative Catholic Thought and Movements

#### UNIT 3: Key Themes

- 6) Framing Themes: Human Dignity and the Common Good; Peace and Justice
- 7) Emergent Themes: Subsidiarity and Solidarity
- 8) Emergent Themes: Dignity of Work; Family and Community
- 9) Emergent Themes: Preferential Option for the Poor; Care for Creation
- 10) Emergent Themes: Human Rights; Participation

### Core Texts

J. Milburn Thompson, *Introducing Catholic Social Thought* (Orbis, 2010).

Judith A. Merkle, *From the Heart of the Church: The Catholic Social Tradition* (Liturgical Press, 2004).

Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis* (Georgetown University Press, 2002).

### c. Short Courses

In fulfilment of the project aim to offer ‘an improved training programme and increased access to that programme’, we have developed the following series of short courses which can be taken individually, as a one-off study day, or together as a full training programme. The courses are intended to be delivered annually beginning in 2022. Bursaries will be available for applicants to the courses.

The content of the programme was determined by:

- input from practitioner participants on their training needs and desires
- input from former prison residents on their experiences of chaplaincies in prison
- gaps identified in resources and training for prison chaplains related to CST
- and learning from the literature reviews in both CST and prison chaplaincy

#### I. Prison Chaplains and Critical Presence: Resources for Prison Chaplaincy from Catholic Social Thought

In the first half of the day, themes from CST will be introduced, particularly human dignity, the common good, the preferential option for the poor, human rights, solidarity, participation, and family/community. The second half of the day will relate these themes to how chaplains can critically analyse and engage with prison contexts within the parameters of the chaplaincy role.

#### II. Chaplaincies Inside and Out: Connecting Prison Chaplaincies, Community Chaplaincies, and Faith Communities

To discuss the centrality of the ‘bridging’ role of prison chaplains, with half the day looking at chaplaincy as a bridge between the prison context and faith communities, and half the day looking at chaplaincy as a bridge between the prison context and return to society (with a focus on connecting prison chaplains to community chaplaincies).

#### III. Bereavement and Prisons: Resources for Pastoral Care

An introduction to bereavement to equip prison chaplains in caring for prison residents dealing with current and past bereavements inside and outside of prison.

#### **d. Away Days**

One of our findings during the focus group day with practitioners was that most prison chaplains have only one annual opportunity to see chaplains from outside their own prison, and would value additional venues for building relationships and sharing good practice. Even in the format of a research-based focus group, the participants valued the time together and expressed the desire for additional gathering opportunities, particularly for women in prison pastoral work. We decided that we should use the resources of the lovely MBIT facilities to provide at least one such opportunity annually, beginning in 2022.

These days will have minimal programming to allow time and space for:

- meeting with other women in prison ministry in a space for lay Catholic women
- reconnecting through meals and conversation
- sharing concerns, needs, advice, and resources
- and joining in prayer and worship together.

## e. Book

In fulfillment of the project aim to ‘an internationally significant collection of theological reflections on CST and prison ministry, newly shaped by the research,’ we are in the process of completing the following book, which will be published by Routledge in 2023.

***Catholic Social Thought and Prison Ministry: Resourcing Theory and Practice***  
**edited by Elizabeth Phillips and Férdia J. Stone-Davis**

This book is a collection of scholarly essays exploring two questions: What resources might Catholic social thought (CST) bring to pastoral work in prisons? And, what might listening to the prison context bring to Catholic social thought? An interdisciplinary group of contributors from the UK and the US bring insights from theology, criminology, and prison pastoral work into the exploration of these questions.

The work of Christian prison chaplains and volunteers in prisons is practised at the intersection of pastoral care and action for social justice, yet is often framed in terms of pastoral care alone. This collection of essays explores how the themes and insights of the long traditions of official Catholic Social Teaching and non-official Catholic social thought might illuminate – and be illuminated by a deeper engagement with – the context of prisons. Scholars of CST discuss the relevance of its themes and principles for prison ministry; an interdisciplinary group of scholars and practitioners discuss the relevance of prison ministry for CST; and critical questions are discussed concerning the roles and shortcomings of CST, prisons, and prison chaplaincy.

Together these essays provide an original contribution to Catholic social thought while also providing a resource for those who practise or train lay and ordained people for pastoral work in prisons.

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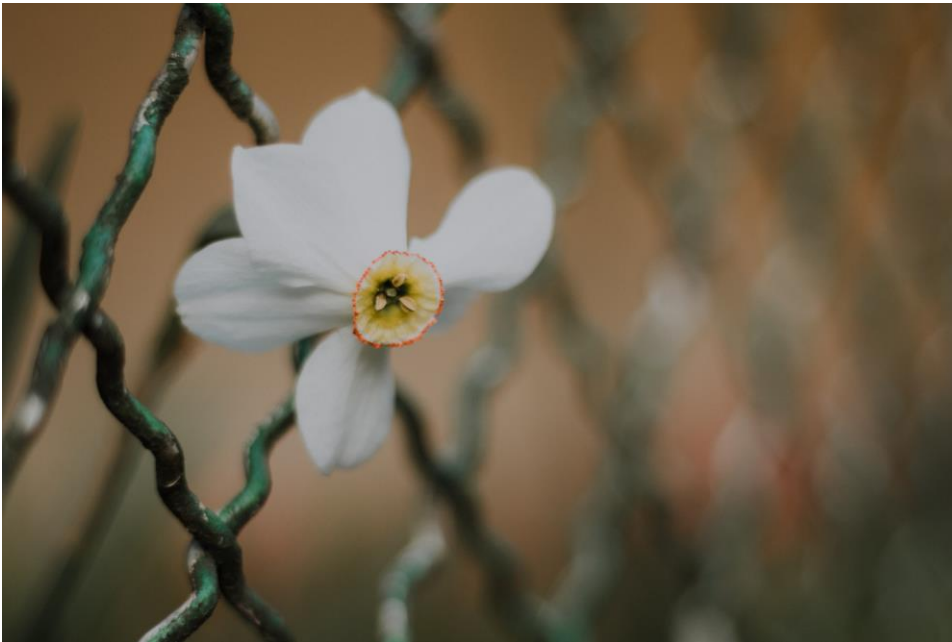
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## Appendix 1: Project Information Sheet



# FLOURISHING INSIDE

## DEVELOPING THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RESOURCES FOR PASTORAL WORK IN PRISONS

### About the Project

What do incarcerated people need from pastoral workers? What resources do pastoral workers need? How can they work best within the prison system? What can Catholic social thought contribute? How can Catholic social thought be enhanced from listening to the prison context?

We are exploring these questions in order to develop rich, targeted theological and ethical resources and training for pastoral work in prisons in England and Wales which draw from and make new contributions to Catholic social thought. Our method is participative and iterative, involving processes of consulting with pastoral workers, theologians, criminologists, and former prison residents.

### Researchers

Dr Férdia Stone-Davis, Director of Research

Dr Elizabeth Phillips, Research Fellow



## Appendix 2: Research Day Programme

# **FLOURISHING INSIDE**

## **DEVELOPING THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RESOURCES FOR PASTORAL WORK IN PRISONS**

### **Practitioners' Event**

**9 March 2020, Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology**

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 10.30-11.00 | Arrivals  |
| 11.00-11.15 | Greetings and Introductions                                   |
| 11.15-12.30 | Session One: Sharing perspectives on pastoral work in prisons |
- 
- A.1. What is most important and impactful about your work?
    - In relation to working with incarcerated people?
    - In relation to working within the prison estate?
  - A.2. What most motivates you to work in prisons?
    - In relation to working with incarcerated people?
    - In relation to working within the prison estate?
  - A.3. In what way do you feel best equipped and resourced for your work?
    - In relation to your pastoral work?
    - In relation to theology and spirituality?
    - In relation to multi-faith team work?
    - In relation to working within the prison estate?
  - B.1. What do you most wish you could accomplish in your work but feel you cannot?
    - In relation to working with incarcerated people?
    - In relation to working within the prison estate?
  - B.2. What is most limiting and frustrating about working in prisons?
    - In relation to working with incarcerated people?
    - In relation to working within the prison estate?
  - B.3. In what way do you feel least equipped and resourced for your work?
    - In relation to your pastoral work?
    - In relation to theology and spirituality?
    - In relation to multi-faith team work?
    - In relation to working within the prison estate?
- 
- |            |                                      |
|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 12.30-1.30 | Light lunch provided on site at MBIT |
|------------|--------------------------------------|

## 1.30-3.15      Session Two: Seeking ways forward

A.4. Given the themes arising from A questions, what are the central strengths and impacts of prison pastoral work?

- In relation to working with incarcerated people?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

A.5. What sorts of training and resources are already well in hand?

- In relation to your pastoral work?
- In relation to theology and spirituality?
- In relation to multi-faith team work?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

B.4. Given the themes arising from B questions, what are the central difficulties and shortcomings of prison pastoral work?

- In relation to working with incarcerated people?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

B.5. What is needed to address these?

- In relation to working with incarcerated people?
- In relation to working within the prison estate?

B.6. What sorts of training and resources would help?

## 3.15-3.30      Closing Thoughts and Goodbyes

### Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

#### **Flourishing Inside Participant Consent Form (Version 2)**

This form is provided as a record of your consent to participate and preferences related to your participation in the research project **Flourishing Inside: Developing Theological and Ethical Resources for Pastoral Work in Prisons**, based in the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge.

**Your signature below indicates agreement with all of the following statements:**

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet (Version 2).
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.
- I agree to take part in this project.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw such participation at any time during the project without giving a reason.
- I understand that my contributions to conversations or interviews in phase one of the project (meetings and interviews with practitioners and former prison residents) may be used anonymously in documents and conversations in subsequent phases of the project (consultation with practitioners, theologians, criminologists and former prison residents; and in the development of training and resources for prison chaplains) unless I withdraw from participation within one month of giving my contribution.
- I understand that my personal data will not be shared with any parties outside this project, and that my contributions to the research will be anonymised.
- I understand that all data in this project will be held confidentially and securely in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

With the consent of all participants, we will record structured group conversations during research events and informal interviews with individuals. Persons being recorded will always be informed when the recording begins and ends.

**Do you give your consent for the audio recording of your participation in the Flourishing inside project, whether in structured group consultations or individual interview with a Flourishing Inside researcher?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

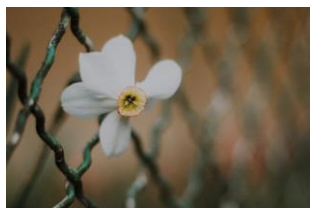
**What are your contact preferences? (Tick one box.)**

- ☐ Please contact me only regarding this project during its duration (not after 2021).  
☐ Please contact me only regarding this project, during or after its completion.  
☐ Please contact me regarding this project and future training and events related to prison chaplaincy at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the appropriate person listed on the Participant Information Sheet. If you wish to withdraw, please do so in writing to Dr Elizabeth Phillips at: [erp31@cam.ac.uk](mailto:erp31@cam.ac.uk) or Margaret Beaufort Institute, 12-14 Grange Road, Cambridge CB3 9DU.



## Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet



# FLOURISHING INSIDE

## DEVELOPING THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RESOURCES FOR PASTORAL WORK IN PRISONS

### Information for Participants (Version 2)

#### About the Project

This project is based in the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology in Cambridge. It is funded by the Plater Trust ([plater.org.uk](http://plater.org.uk)). Our research questions are: What do incarcerated people need from pastoral workers? What resources do pastoral workers need? How can they work best within the prison system? What can Catholic social thought contribute? How can Catholic social thought be enhanced from listening to the prison context?

We are exploring these questions in order to develop theological and ethical resources and training for pastoral work in prisons in England and Wales which draw from and make new contributions to Catholic social thought. Our method is participative and iterative, involving processes of consulting with pastoral workers, theologians, criminologists and former prison residents.

#### Your Participation and Data

We are asking practitioners (prison chaplains and pastoral workers) to reflect on their experiences of and needs in their work. We are asking former prison residents to reflect on their experiences of and views on prison chaplaincies. These conversations will be audio recorded with each individual's permission. Notes from these conversations and transcripts of the recordings will be used to create a report of our findings. This report will be used to consider how Catholic social thought can inform pastoral work in prisons, how the prison context can inform Catholic social thought, and how the Margaret Beaufort Institute might best develop training and resources for chaplains. The resulting resources will be shared with all the participants in the project (practitioners, theologians, criminologists, and former prison residents) for their feedback before final versions are developed.

Data arising from your contribution to these conversations will always be anonymised before it is shared with other research participants or quoted in reports or resources arising from the research, unless you explicitly choose to make a named contribution (e.g. some theologians may contribute book chapters). During the research we may also collect the following personal data: your full name, phone number, work affiliation, email and postal address, length of time and category of the prison/s where you work/ed or were incarcerated. We will not ask anyone to name their offense or the specific prison/s in which they were incarcerated. Your personal data will never be used for any purposes other than recording your participation and contacting you concerning this project. We will not share your personal data with any other parties. We will not contact you after the project unless you opt in to further contact. All data will be stored securely in accordance with data protection legislation.

### Your preferences and consent matter:

#### Consent

*You will complete a consent form with options for expressing your preferences about being contacted, recorded, and named.*

#### Concerns

*If you have any questions about the research at any point in the process, contact Elizabeth Phillips. If you have any concerns about the research, contact Dr Phillips and/or Dr Férdia Stone-Davis in the first instance. If you wish to contact someone with a concern you feel you cannot bring to us, please contact Dr Anna Abram. Contact information provided below.*

#### Opting Out

*Your participation and contributions are entirely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from the project at any point for any reason. Please notify us if you want to remove your data from our records or your contributions from our findings. However, note that during the project anonymous reports or draft resources may already have been circulated, and withdrawal of contributions to findings will not be possible once final resources are disseminated (projected late 2020).*

### Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology

[margaretbeaufort.cam.ac.uk](http://margaretbeaufort.cam.ac.uk)  
01223 741039

#### Research Fellow

Dr Elizabeth Phillips [erp31@cam.ac.uk](mailto:erp31@cam.ac.uk)

#### Director of Research

Dr Férdia Stone-Davis [fjs23@cam.ac.uk](mailto:fjs23@cam.ac.uk)

#### Principal

Dr Anna Abram [aa2008@cam.ac.uk](mailto:aa2008@cam.ac.uk)

**Appendix 5: Project Information Form****Flourishing Inside  
Participant Information Form (Version 2)**

This form will be kept securely as a record of your participation in the research project **Flourishing Inside: Developing Theological and Ethical Resources for Pastoral Work in Prisons**, based in the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge.

Full name:

Email:

Phone number:

Physical address:

Do you prefer to be contacted by email, phone, or post? (circle one or more)

I am participating in this project as a/n:

- ☐ Practitioner (prison chaplain or pastoral worker)
- ☐ Former prison resident
- ☐ Theologian
- ☐ Criminologist

Job title and institution (if relevant):

Category of prison/s in which you have worked or been incarcerated (if applicable):

Length of time working or incarcerated in prison/s (if applicable):

---

**SECTION BELOW TO BE COMPLETED BY FLOURISHING INSIDE RESEARCHERS:**

Type of participation (event, consultation, interview, or explain other):

Date and location of participation: