

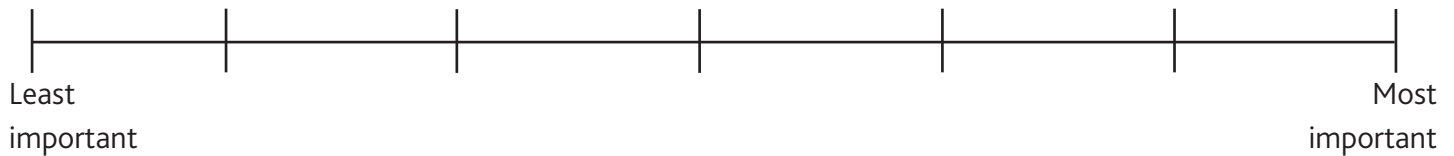
# Youth workers

Prisoners' Sunday - 15th November 2009

On this sheet you will find suggestions for activities you can lead with a youth group in your parish. Be prepared to explain ideas or words to the young people that they may not know.

## 1. Sliding scale: "What is prison for?"

On a large piece of paper, draw this scale:



Then on separate smaller bits of paper, write the following statements:

Prison should help protect the public from dangerous people.

Prison should help put people off offending (or re-offending).

Prison should help change offenders' attitude and behaviour to make them better citizens.

Prison should help give skills to prisoners to help them make a better life for themselves when they leave.

Prison should help victims of crime, and their families and friends, to feel peace of mind.

Prison should help criminals get the justice they deserve.

As a group, or split into smaller groups, their task is to place the statements along the scale in the order of priority they would like to see in an ideal world. Encourage them to explain and discuss their reasons as they work together.

**Please turn over...**

## 2. Scenario: “Taking the law into your own hands”

Clear a space in the room. Tell the young people that during the activity, they will stand at one end of the room when they want to answer “yes”, and the opposite end when their answer is “no”. (You could stick big signs up on the walls to remind them if it helps.) Read the following scenario one statement at a time, asking at each point, “Should she be imprisoned for 6 months?” The young people then move, and once they are standing in their chosen position, ask them to explain why they chose that response.

- A woman has been caught driving without a licence.
- She was driving her husband to hospital in an emergency.
- Her husband was seriously ill because of alcohol and substance abuse.
- Her family was in a very difficult situation financially and some members were involved in drugs and petty crime.
- Previously, her licence had been taken away for dangerous driving.
- She has 3 children under the age of 10.

**Suggestions:** To extend the activity, or make it more appropriate for the age group, you could make up another scenario. With a slightly older group, you could run the scenario as a courtroom scene, appointing characters such as defendant, victim, judge, witness, lawyers, and everyone else acting as jury. You could give the above statements on small bits of paper to the relevant characters at intervals during the game, to act as fresh evidence being brought forward, and see how it affects their decisions.

## 3. Final discussion “What can we do?”

**Ask the question:** Jesus said, “I was in prison and you visited me” (Matthew 25:36) – how can we show support to prisoners in a practical way?

**Ideas:** Use the Christmas card in the pack to offer messages of support. You can send as many cards as you like.

Read the whole gospel passage (Matthew 25:34-46) and get the young people to put themselves in the position of someone in the following situations:

- people in prison
- families, children and friends of prisoners
- people leaving prison
- people who work at prisons
- young offenders

Then get them to write prayers for the people above, perhaps to be used at a Mass.

*Ideas on this sheet were partly devised by Olivia Cumberbatch [olivia-cumberbatch@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:olivia-cumberbatch@hotmail.co.uk)*