

Theology of the Prison Apostolate*

JESÚS MERINO ANTOLÍNEZ, O.P.

The "Prison Apostolate" is nothing new in the Catholic Church, and it would be absurd to think that there is nothing in Theology concerning it. All across the Bible we meet men and women of God languishing in prison. The history of the Church is filled up with martyrs, confessors, men and women of every age and condition that spent a long and at times glorious part of their lives behind bars. Nay, the Son of God Incarnated was a prisoner...! Thus the Kingdom of God dwelt in prison. And from the times of Christ and the Apostles, all along the ages when prison was and is an institution in Christian countries, the projection of the faith in God and of His salvific action unto the life within the jail has been at work. In other words, the Prison Apostolate has always been a pastoral task in the life of the Catholic Church: in supporting and directing it there has been a doctrinal motivation; and therefore a Theology of the Prison Apostolate.

We are not going into abstracting the rich literature devoted to the spiritual welfare of the inmates of prisons. From the letters of the Fathers addressed to the "Confessors" in prison, like those of St. Cyprian, passing through the Instructions on the spiritual

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care of the inmates in jail, like those of Tomas de Torquemada for the prisoners of the Inquisition; and the sermons preached to them that we find in *sermonaries*, till the very literature distributed for numerous Conventions, abundant material for a Theology of Prison Apostolate has accumulated in the Church. Perhaps what is lacking is a clear and systematic formulation of it. This is precisely what we will try to sketch.

Nowadays we are confronted with two different "theologies," namely, the Theology that is greeted as "modern" and "scientific," and the Theology that is branded as "conservative," "essentialist" and similar surnames. The former is understood to be a science like Physics or Medicine, and consists in "doing Theology," that is, in reflecting upon life in order to project into it theories and ways derived from a sense of God and of the divine. The other Theology consists in the knowledge of God and of everything in life and in the universe under the light of the divine revelation, completed by reason with every truth on the subject naturally known, systematized into a logical body and directed towards the sanctification of man and women.

Our "Theology of Prison Apostolate" will not be like the "Theology of Liberation," the "Theology of Revolution," the "Theology of Development," or some other "theologies" so common in our days: a body of reflections, an analysis of situations and statistics, a hint of opportunities and a panorama of possible ways of alleviating the fate of those in prison through the exercise of Christian mercy and piety in active pastoral activity. Such procedure is good and merciful, but it is as ephemeral as the conditions upon which it reflects.

A true "Theology of Prison Apostolate" has to go to the sources of the divine revelation and try to find in the Holy Scripture and in the doctrinal and magisterial teachings of the Church, the principles, the nature and the ways of salvation that are to operate in the Christian life of those who are in any way inmates of prisons.

We have therefore to see: (1) the Theology of Prison; (2) the Theology of the Prisoner; and (3) the Theology of the Prison Apostolate.

I. THEOLOGY OF PRISON

The *Prison* is a social institution far older than the first line written on the Bible. We cannot pinpoint where on the earth, or when in time human beings started to put other human beings behind bars, or to confine them within some dungeons of a prehistoric cave.

Prison in the Bible

The first instance of imprisonment the Bible mentions is the jailing of Joseph, son of Jacob, first by his brothers inside the dried cistern of Dothaim (Gen. 37:12-28), and then as a result of the calumny of Putifar's wife (Gen. 39-41:16). In this last instance the jail appears as an institution of long standing, of social relevance, and functionally well organized. The stay of the Israelites in Egypt after they began to be persecuted was described from that time on in the Sacred Scriptures as living in a "house of bondage" and in prison.

The next mention, and the only testimony we have that the institution existed during the *Exodus* journey across the desert, is the incident of the blasphemer kept in prison until he was put to death (Lev. 24:10-16).

Since then we find frequent mentions of the jail along the Scriptures. Samson (Jg. 16:21), Jeremias (Jr. 20:2; 32:2-15; 37:14; 38:6; 39:15; 40:4), John the Baptist (Mt. 14:3-10), the Apostles (Ac. 5:17-26), Peter (Ac. 12), Paul (Ac. 16:19-40; Ac 22-38) were imprisoned. On the other hand the stay of the Israelites in Egypt, as well as their captivity in Babylon are been referred to as "jails" (Is. 42:7; Ws. 18:4). The prison is described in the Bible as painful and oppressive; yet nowhere we find any condemnation of it as an institution. On the contrary, its existence and justification is just taken for granted.

One occasion is extraordinarily instructive in this respect. It was at Philippi, in Macedonia. Paul and his companion Silas had been thrown into prison because of their fulfilling their divine mission. At midnight a strong earthquake shook violently the jail opening its doors, disconnecting chains, making the guards to escape for safety. The jailer, taking for granted that his prisoners

had escaped and fearing the consequences, took a sword and was going to kill himself when he heard the voice of Paul telling him that all his inmates were staying within. (Ac. 16:19-40).

Such loyalty to existing institutions was a matter of principle, and Paul explains it in his Epistle to the Romans (13:1-5): "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not terrors to good conduct, but to bad. Would you not have fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrong doer. Therefore one must be subject not only to avoid God's wrath, but also for the sake of conscience."

The Apostle Peter is as positive: "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to the governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God. Honor all men. Love brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor." (2 Pt. 2:13-17).

Such acceptance of the institutional good order, even in the exercise of coercion, the prison is one of the many forms of coercion by authorities, was the norm imposed and strictly followed in the Apostolic Church. We are not aware of any treatise or sermon of any of the Fathers condemning the prison institution.

When the persecutions were over, and the Roman society became Christian, prison survived as one of the features of every city, big town and state. The Fathers and pastors naturally extended their spiritual care to the christian who had become prisoners. And from that ministry the christian spirit permeated and mollified the stern provisions of the Roman legislation on the subject. It would be a worthy research to undertake a study of comparison between the prison regulations of the Roman law and penal history before and after Rome's christianization, so as to trace back the

humanizing traits and retouches to the directives of St. Paul in his tiny and almost forgotten Epistle to Philemon.

Onesimus was a slave, a man who was not free. He had fled away from his master, Philemon, and in consequence he had become a stowaway bound with the double chain of his slavery and of the penalty for his flight that could be death at the request of his master. Now Paul met him, converted him to Christianity, and sent him back to Philemon, respecting the institutional rights yet demolishing them by injecting into their implementation the demands of Christian life. The Apostle recommended in behalf of Onesimus:

"In consequence, having great assurance in Christ... I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner for Christ Jesus, request you about my son, whom I brought forth in my chains, Onesimus. He was once upon a time useless to you, but now he is most useful to you and to me. Him I send to you, as it were my one heart... Presently, then he left you for some time so that you get him back for ever, not as a slave but rather as something more than slave, as a brother beloved by all means to me and so more to you, in flesh and in the Lord. Therefore, if you hold me as a fellow of yours, receive him as you would receive me. If he wronged you or owes anything to you, charge it to me... Surely, brothers, I am at your service in Christ; refresh my heart." (Phm. 8-20)

A brother in Christ, heartily beloved and being restored to the love and dignity of a Son of God, such is the man in chains to Christian eyes. And this is the master principle of a Christian approach to prison life.

Consequent with the principle, Paul commands squarely to the Christian Hebrews: "Let the love of brothers be constant... Have the prisoners in mind as if you yourselves be in prison." (Heb. 12: 1-3) In this manner Paul applies simply but beautifully to our subject matter the supreme rule of the Master: Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mt. 19:19)

Imprisonment in Theology

Rather than wandering across theological treatises gleanings for observations and teachings, a work that would be edifying

indeed, we prefer to concentrate upon the clear and direct treatment of imprisonment by Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Upon reflection, the two articles that he dedicated to the subject appear contradictory in approach. Both are within the 2nd Section of the Second Part of the *Summa Theologica*, which deals with virtues and their opposite vices, as well as with the divine help and ways leading man towards God. In q. 65, art. 3: *On Incarceration*, St. Thomas considers imprisonment as a sin against the human person, second to homicide and mutilation and, therefore, a violation of justice in its aspect of right relationship between human beings. In another article (q. 108, art. 3), imprisonment appears as a means of "vindication," which is a virtue emanating from Justice. This apparent contradiction is not real. It is like the looking at a coin by the front and the reverse, a look that makes one see existentially the totality of the question. In our case St. Thomas makes us see imprisonment as it simultaneously hurts and redeems human beings.

The concision of II-II, q. 55, a. 3 is very pregnant with meaning and needs some displaying:

First of all, the exact *notion* of imprisonment, which is declared to be, not the temporary detention of a person in order to prevent the commission of a crime or the fall into a mistake, "as when someone withholds a man lest he jumps into a precipice" (*ad 3um*), but rather the "forceful restrain of the proper movement and use of the bodily limbs, either through binding, jailing or any other manner of arrest." (*in corp.*)

Second, the *wrong made to the person* by imprisonment, through which he/she is prevented not only from doing wrong, but also from doing right (*ad 3um*), something for what he/she is naturally born free (*Obj. 1*)

Third, the observation that the *guilt deserving* imprisonment should be grounded on the principle that "the man who by sinning has abused the free use of his bodily faculties is the properly subject for incarceration." (*ad 1um*)

Fourth, the *standard and purpose* of imprisonment: "To jail somebody, or to detain him in any way is immoral unless it be done

according to the order of justice, either for punishment, or as a prevision in order to avoid wrong." (*in corp.*)

A fifth provision is that there must be a *proper authority*: "To put simply someone in jail, or to put him in chains, belongs exclusively to the one to whom it belongs to regulate in an universal manner the actions and the life of others, because the man held is stopped not only from wrongdoing, but also from the performance of good things." (*ad 3um*)

Still there is a sixth requirement for *necessary moderation*: "In the same way that God at times stops, according to His wisdom, sinners from carrying on the implementation of their sins..., but sometimes He allows them to do what they want, in like manner, following the human justice, people are jailed not for every wrong, but only for some misdeeds." (*ad 2um.*)

The evident conclusion from the teaching of Saint Thomas in the preceding article is that imprisonment is in itself a violation of the dignity of the human person, who is naturally free and master of the movements and the use of his own body. Done by an authority who is entrusted with the control over the free life of people, it is subject to rigorous conditions and besides to a manner similar to the understanding and wise ruling of God over our actions.

In II-II, q. 108, art. 3, St Thomas completes the doctrine he has established by analyzing the imposition of imprisonment as a *vindication*. This consists in that an authority proceeds to curtail the freedom of a man who has abused his freedom by erring and committing wrong.

As a first principle, St Thomas asserts "Vindication is licit and virtuous only inasmuch as it tends to prevent evil" (*Vindicatio in tantum est licita et virtuosa inquantum tendit ad cohibitionem malorum*). Surely the Angelic Doctor would have never justified imprisonment because of pure political differences, but on the contrary, he would have positively approved of the putting in chains of traitors, rebels and troublemakers.

A second postulate of his is: "Those who do not love virtue for its own sake are compelled not to sin by the fear of losing something they love more than the things they get by sinning; otherwise fear would not be a repression of sin. In consequence, the vindication of sin is to be made by depriving man of the things

that man loves most. These are the things that man loves most: life, body integrity, freedom, and external assets like riches, fatherland and his good name." (*in corp.*)

So far the vindication and the imprisonment are justified. Nevertheless we must not separate the doctrinal statements mentioned from their context, because the personal dimension of the agent of the law in the fulfillment of his task has a great impact in the matter, as St. Thomas will stress.

The *mind of the avenger*, from the legislator to the prison guard, is to be taken into account: "If his mind is set mainly on the harm done to the one who is undergoing the revenge, and he relishes it, avenging is completely unlawful, because delighting in the harm of someone else belongs to hatred, which is contrary to the charity that compels us to love all men... Now, if the intention of the avenger is set mainly towards the good that is been attained through the suffering of the sinner, as for example his own correction, or at least his repression and the tranquility of others, as well as the maintenance of justice and the honor of God, the vindication might be justified, provided that the proper conditions be observed." (*art I, in corp.*)

Discipline is not forgotten by Saint Thomas: "Zeal," he writes, "in as much as it implies that force of love, implies also the ground foundation of vindication, for someone avenges the offenses of God and of his fellow men in so far as he considers them to be his own out of charity" (*art 2, ad 2um.*). Yet, two vices can spoil discipline, otherwise good: "One by excess and that is the sin of *cruelty and perversity* that over-passes measure in punishment; the other by defect, when someone is *demise* in punishing. The virtue of vindication consists in that man pays due attention to all conditions while punishing." (*a. 2 ad 3um.*)

St Thomas puts to himself the prickly question: "Should vindication be exercised on those who have done wrong unwillingly?" In answering it he advances an observation that is of golden relevance in regard to prisons. He writes: "Punishment could be regarded as medicine, not only for healing the sin that is past, but even more for the preservation from sinning in the future and for promoting some good" (*art. 4, corp.*). Such medicinal and redemptive functions of prison life are the seed of the most modern and christian development we will see in Prison Apostolate.

The Prison Theology

The statements and the reminders of the Angelic Doctor have put us in the right track for formulating the theology of prison.

The common *notion of prison* that pictures it as an enclosure of four strong walls decorated with chains, iron doors, and high windows closed by iron bars, within which a human being languishes under the watchful eyes of angry jailers – even if it be extended to town-like concentration camps, or to the restricted movements of fiduciary detention – is utterly insufficient for any theological treatment. For Theology, the prison is not a place nor an external restriction of movements, but rather the *state* of a human being, who, although by nature is born free and master of his own whereabouts, has become constricted by the force and pressure of other human beings into a rudimentary freedom of action, good enough just for going on existing and exercising some controlled and permitted activities.

The prison is not a casual occurrence that happens exceptionally to a rare person; it has become a permanent and universal social institution.

Several elements build up and make the prison function. They are:

- a) The authorities duly constituted to lord it over their fellow men, and who act through a set of *penal laws* providing imprisonment;
- b) The teams of *law-enforcing officials*, who take hold of the guilty person, put him into custody, guard him, and control the further activities of his life;
- c) The *aids*, who keep the buildings, compounds or fields in good shape for the purpose;
- d) The *attached personnel*, who assist the inmate in living on his human life and in attaining the curtailed welfare that is his/her, like the relatives and acquaintances, providers, doctors, teachers, ministers of God, and even the friends or kind visitors.

Besides those human elements of the prison institution there is another element that appears vague and remote at first sight,

but that looms as the most relevant of all, namely, *society at large*: that body of men and women of all ranks who live together and share with every human being. Society, the one that eliminates the inmates from its midst; the one that profits from their confinement; the one that mills around bewaring of them; the one that should care for them physically and morally, and the one that on the day the sentence is over has to welcome them back into normality. Society is the beginning and the end of the prison institution.

It is the concurrence of all those elements that hinders the mastery of an individual over his/her actions and movements, rather than the presence of walls, grills, and guards what truly makes the prison be the disgrace that it is.

Theology now comes in to state that all these human elements must become christian or at least christianized in the prisons of a christian society. The existence of those elements comes from God, who is the supreme authority of law and the author of society, and they are meant to assist God in His administration of the humanity created and redeemed by Him, specially of the erring humanity in need of redress.

The *reason for imprisonment* is not the human nature, either in general or in a given individual, nor man's individual or social needs and demands; it is rather the abuse by a human being of his/her natural freedom, misdirecting it towards evil doing, which is harmful to neighbor and God. In his purely private life man is responsible to himself and to God, his Creator and Lord; but in his social life, which is connatural to him, he belongs also to his fellow men as well as to God, and consequently he is responsible to himself, to his social authorities and to God. His *personal* abuses, if they are strictly personal, must be repressed and mended by himself and by God; but his *social* or socially projected abuses have to be repressed and mended besides by the social authorities, who exercise visibly God's loving care and are empowered by Him, the author of society, with the purpose to integrate the erring individual into the life of mankind He created for His glory.

Thus, as the purpose of imprisonment in a christian perspective is ultimately the elimination of evil from human social actions; and, on the other hand, as evil is not eliminated from them by sheer repression but rather by the conversion of the human being who

errs, it follows that penal codes, courts, correctional personnel, all the elements of prison and prison itself must aim at the transformation of the criminal into an honorable citizen. In other words, prison in christian Theology is essentially correctional and redemptive.

It follows as a corollary of the preceding observations that prison is by nature transitory, a temporary state of the inmate to be apportioned according to the gravity of the guilt in the wrong done or intended, and proportionate to the danger of reincidence. Life imprisonment, which is equivalent to social death, is justifiable only as a substitute of death penalty. In general, the granting of all opportunities to redress is very much in conformity with the christian spirit, which will favor at times the total pardon and freedom of the prisoner if there is founded hope that he will redeem and restore himself unto an honorable man.

The *way of handling* the prison must be mindful always of the dignity it has as an agency of the justice and honor of society. On top of it the Christian sense of divine values should enliven every aspect of it. The dungeon means and the manners might be shown so forceful and awful that they do not befit the dignity of a public institution, and far less the image of God's justice. A seriously enforced sanitation and even beautification of the premises and procedures would show a truer face of prison.

Pain – moral and physical – is commonly connected with prison as its characteristic element. From the point of view of christian Theology such connection is not acceptable. Putting aside cases when the despondency and criminal rebellion of the offender demand and justify a violent enforcement of law and security, the tormenting of inmates with chains, with sophisticated devices either physical or psychological, and with other similar cruelties is theologically condemnable, no matter how much it might be accepted and taken for granted by popular social beliefs. God's authority is not entrusted to man and to society to torture people and disrupt their lives, but to collaborate with Himself in directing them towards righteousness.

In this line a keener theological consideration of prison will require that it becomes a source of inspiration for the inmate. Prisoners have gone into crime at times because of ignorance about

higher ideals; some other times, because of mistrust and hate for their fellow human beings; and still further because of despair and disgust of their very selves. Prison, to be true to its redemptive mission, has to bring to the inmate's consciousness, and impress upon him/her most forcibly, the possibilities he/she has for happiness and greatness as a citizen before the eyes of society and under the blessings of God. Indeed religion, art, knowledge, development of sound skills and the like must be an integral part of the life within prison.

The prison, being a needed institution in society, must contribute to the progress of the same. To be a wastebasket wherein people rotten is not to contribute to such welfare progress. The usefulness and real contribution of prison to the society that supports it must be the reshaping of its inmates and the sending them back into social life as well meaning and well trained citizens. The inmates within the prison boundaries are supposed by a good Theology to be winning back for themselves a decent and resourceful conscience that will render for them a life of crime useless and a life of decency, a constant goal. Christianity understood prison as a source of hope for humanity.

Summing up the Prison Theology, we see that the imprisoning authority has the place of God as an enforcing father, and hence can never become a tormenting despot; that penal law must be a wise and well grounded ordination for man's redress and not a blind and dictatorial indictment; that the correctional officials are bound to be the firm and effective power bringing about a lost person's recovery; that the attendants are projection of God's providence for people handicapped in their freedom; that the inmate's relatives, friends and benefactors should bring into his/her life the radiant beams of the understanding and providence of God; and that society at large, particularly if it is Christian or at least christianized, must deal with the guilty inmate both with the inviolable faithfulness and righteousness of the Judge of the Living and the Dead, and with the tender understanding and acceptance of the Father of the Prodigal Son, so well described by Jesus. (Lk. 15:11-32)

The preceding picture may look utopian, but it is not; it is simply theological. Theology is ideally and really beautiful since it

implies the acknowledgement of God's plans and truths. Surely, in our modern world, leaving aside electric chairs, barbed electrified fences, electronic detectors, lethal injections, gas chambers, brain-washing practices, torture, and cheating statistics and reports... and relaying instead on the loving hearts of God and people sounds fantastically unreal. But Theology is unwaveringly certain that man alone, without chains or force, is the lone master of his own actions and convictions; that God, through his grace and inspiration, works closely within the hearts of man the inmate and of man the jailer; and that the divine law has such light and strong appeal that is capable of uplifting the spirits of downcast human beings. Theology has faith in God and in man and sees that beyond blindness and failures, even beyond perversity, there is redemption.

II. THEOLOGY OF THE PRISONER

The main character in prison is the prisoner. Theology has to study him, because his is a very peculiar case of human life, a life that comes from God, progresses towards God and ends eventually in God.

Prisoners seem to be human beings buried alive. The way they are treated, their talents and energies, their initiatives and feelings, their very physical movements constrained by a trend of regulations dictated from outside, their garments and grooming made to conform to standardized derogatory patterns, etc., place them off limits with the living civilization. They appear to be persons going on living without a personality.

But such is not the case in the eyes of Theology. Legal or factual "offenders" as the prisoners may be, in reality they go on being men and women in their double character of human beings and children of God.

Consequently we must consider in the prisoner (a) the Offender; (b) the Person in Jail; and (c) the Son of God in prison.

The Offender

The reasonable man who is law-abiding is by nature free, for he has a place and a mission to fulfill in the universe God has created for him. It is only when a man freely comes out of his

place to disrupt the harmony of his universe with actions and procedures that destroy, nullify, break or violate that has to be curtailed, made to step in the line, or even suppressed. He has become the "offender."

Had he forgotten himself and his duties in a purely private matter without any projection at all into the rights of other people and the world outside, he would have to answer to his conscience and to God; but the moment he hurts someone else, society, which is by divine institution intended for the welfare and life of mankind, has to intervene.

The law, therefore, against which the guilty person is an offender, is mainly the law that God has incorporated into the very nature of the social man. The rights each human being has to his/her own life, integrity, means of livelihood or property, good name and honor preexist any humanly dictated law, and have to be formulated or recognized. It likewise has to be protected, made functional against possible obstruction, be efficiently applied, and finally conveniently extended for the advantage of the human community. Hence the additional regulations and laws that, although promulgated by the social authorities, are grounded in and borrow their force from the society's constitutional law. The offender of them, too, has to be met by force.

The offender becomes a prisoner when the combined efforts and means put at the disposal of the social authority fall on the wayward violator of others' rights and strip him of his freedom, first to compensate for the harm done; second, to prevent him from further wrong doing; and finally, to mend his unsocial ways.

Besides offense implies in the willful offender a misconception of his very natural sociability, a disregard of others' dignity, a misdirection of his own actions, and confusion in his mind as well as in his knowledge of moral principles. Perhaps there is also in the offender a crooked tendency to delight in the pain and suffering of others, born otherwise for happiness and not for misery... All these deviations demand a correctional, enforced isolation from the rest of the "normal" society.

There are different categories of offenders as there are differences in the offenses. Without entering into juridical precisions, it is evident that between the violation of fundamental rights

by murder, raping, armed robberies, on one hand, and the transgression of traffic rules, on the other, there is an immense span of culpability. Equally evident is that factors such as sex, age, education, social standing, economic situation, etc., blend into different levels the guilt and responsibility of the offender. But one aspect is of peculiar value to Theology in this respect, and it is the degree of perversion in criminality, because the large range of malevolent intentions comes from the heart, whose healing is the aim of the godly mission. Great wisdom, tact and vision are required at work in this line.

Forming a category of its own, and completely apart for Theology, is that of the prisoners who are innocent. Those prisoners may appear legally guilty and offenders, yet they are actually honorable citizens whose imprisonment is unjustifiable. They might be victims of personalities or circumstances, or of the system itself. They have to submit themselves by force and civic self-respect to a legal situation that in their own conscience is branded as tyranny, perhaps well meaning and intentioned. Such was the case of the Apostles and of the christian martyrs, imprisoned for their faith. Theology can never justify the wrong done, privately or legally, to an innocent. However, Theology cannot shatter the foundations of the legitimate authorities through cantankerous denunciations. Theology has the most delicate task of discerning the truth from the mess by means both sure and honorable. Still Theology is bound in these cases to protect the conscience of the innocent prisoner whom bitterness might lead into a moral downfall; for Theology, unlike the law and society, looks directly at the wounded heart of the offender in need of enlightenment and redemption.

The Person in Jail

Offenses against God and society do not destroy man's nature, although they spoil human life and disrupt it. People in jail, whether innocent or culpable, go on living their existence. A consequence of this basic fact is that human dignity and responsibility abide in the prisoner.

Society, through prison, exercises forcibly on the erring individual its legal sovereignty. Yet, sovereignty is a moral dealing

that has to be acknowledged by a mind and accepted by a will. Acknowledgement and acceptance are human vital deeds. Social institutions cannot depersonalize prisoners. The artificial, juridical personality of society can never take the place of the fundamental, physical personality of the individual.

Theology is positive in proclaiming that the image and likeness of God is in each human being, not in the aggregates of persons or things. Each sinner stains the image of his Creator, but they do it by staining first their very selves.

From the above observation it follows that the fundamental human rights to life and dignity, although they could be directed forcibly to their right purpose, have to be respected. From a theological perspective, the correctional authorities are the depositories and custodians of that dignity; a dignity that may perhaps have been misunderstood and maltreated by the prisoner himself.

Prisoners treated as beasts, exploited like plants or minerals, sacrificed to scientific experiments, or in any way dealt with in a manner other than the one proper to rational beings are monstrous demonstrations of criminal inhumanity.

Human dignity has always to be safeguarded, Theology continues stating, but all the more in the case of prisoners since they are rendered impotent to protect it due to the imprisonment conditions. The society that deprives man of his potentialities assumes the responsibility before God and mankind of defending him.

Prisoners on their part have to sense and honor their own dignity. The acceptance of their status, the submission to the normal discipline, the firmness in retaining their individuality against the gregarious vulgarity that develops in prison, the kindness and friendliness towards their co-prisoners, the composure of their personal demeanor, all these human and Christian virtues are their dues. Surely the surroundings and the psychological setting that prevail in prison will obstruct such uprightness, but if any one has to respect his personal dignity, the prisoner himself must be the first one in doing it.

The prison creates a complex of psychological impressions and reactions that alter the normal development of human personality. First among others is the forced *inaction*, a repression of the

natural self-expression, tending to blunt the faculties, to extinguish vital interest, and to annihilate the instinct for creativity and the sense of responsibility. After it comes the *continuous hurt* the prisoner experiences by the ominous presence of coercive agents and surroundings that lead naturally towards insensibility, drying up the emotions human beings need to enliven their existence. Then the *passivity* generated by the routinely occurrence of events, which leads to some sort of purely mechanical unconcern. The natural thirst for freedom and self-determination that bursts inside the inmate's soul, at times fierily, and that is watered down and never quenched by the consciousness of an overwhelming impotence, brings in a *mental fatigue* that withers away the very roots of self-confidence. Prisoners are in the most conducive conditions to become broken people.

From another psychological angle, prison brings into the prisoner's soul a real tempest of conflicting energies capable of bringing down to shambles the best knitted personality. The awareness of pressing obligations now left behind the walls unfulfilled becomes piercing by the solitude. The longing for reciprocating love and care of persons whose memories shine brighter in the darkness, coldness and indifference of the surroundings becomes an agony. The urge for personal reaffirmation and rehabilitation rises up to become furiously blind at the verification of total current hopelessness. The prisoner's mind is very likely to burst out.

The hording together of characters hailed from all corners of the globe and from all levels of society aggravates the conflict of instincts and personalities, and, as lowliness and neglect are easier and quicker than respectability, the deleterious influence of prison life increases. Here is to be found the source of deviation into base immorality that rots prison life through times and places. Dirty gratification of flesh urges is an easy release of tensions in idleness.

Bad company is always dangerous. But the association with people prone to violence and crime, people in continuous search for trouble and obsessed by how to bring it about in the worst possible manner, who delight in perverting the minds of their colleagues... being enforced in prisons, only a miracle of divine mercy can avoid the transformation of jails into hells.

If bad company is always dangerous, the enforced association in prison with people prone to violence and crime, with people in continuous search for trouble and obsessed by how to bring it about in the worst possible manner, with people who delight in perverting the minds of their colleagues... brings as a result, unless a divine miracle intervenes, the transformation of jails into hells.

The combination of all preceding elements explains the atmosphere of boiling passions that pervades many correctional institutions and at times shows up in real tragedies.

Society and its authorities cannot remain unaware of the human destruction prison brings about when it is not properly handled. After all, the great loser in the process is society itself, when it takes the suicide path of killing morally its own citizens. Theology has to remind all social institutions that the mission they have received from God is to help people become honorable and happy.

Theology must be realistic in its application to life in general and, in our case, to prison life. Living, even in a well-ordered world, is already a battle where man has to make use of all his courage and energy (cf. Math. 11:12) in order to enter by the "narrow path that leads to life" and to avoid the "broad highway that leads into perdition" (Math. 7:14). Living in a prison, where evil is pressing from all sides, requires the assistance of all the means God has given for mankind's salvation.

The Son of God in Prison

Any prisoner is, by divine design, a Son of God. Society may not know it or may have forgotten it. Theology proclaims this truth as a perennial reality.

No legal sophistication, no amount of guilt, of neglect, of depression or of perversion can destroy the relationship that God has established between Himself and every human person, whom He loves and means to bring up back to Himself. That relationship is grounded on His infinite and omnipotent sovereignty.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnated, came to the world to proclaim the Good News of salvation to all men and women of good will. He redeemed them and saved them freely. In conse-

quence, every person has the inalienable right to avail of the privileges of His salvation. Now, since Jesus made his Church the depositary of those means of salvation, the presence of the Church and her apostolate are demanded by the fundamental right every human being has to his own salvation.

The principle of the separation between Church and State applies to the political and administrative fields, but not to the intimate relation between man and God, which is a matter of conscience, far above politics or administration. There have been instances when the principle of separation has been invoked to hinder, if not altogether to bar, all religious assistance to prisoners. Such practice, apart from being a gross mistake, is an open crime against some divine and human rights that are previous and fundamental to the very existence of society.

The prison inmate, more than any other person on earth, is in need of the comforting inspiration of religion. The sharp and vivid pains he has to endure, inherent to the state in which he finds himself, tend to blur his sense of the divine realities that are relevant to him; yet a serene consideration of them will clean up his conscience with the light of God's forgiveness. The religious consideration of his life condition in prison will appear as a providential twist that gives him the opportunity of amendment and redress. Religious duties fulfilled and religious activities shared will bring to the inner folds of his mind the refreshing sense of enjoyment in the good deeds performed. With all these rays of hope from religion, a badly needed peace will bloom in his heart.

The prisoner is bound to religious duties primarily because he is a human being, a condition previous to and above his being a member of the human society or his being enclosed behind bars. And since the inmate becomes in many aspects unable to fulfill those duties because of the repression by the prison authorities, it is a serious obligation of those authorities to provide ways and means through which the inmate may fulfill them within the jail regimen.

The benefits of religion to prisoners' life become obviously benefits to the society at large. The inmates' good spirits render the enforced discipline within the jail precinct accepted and easy. The sense of God and heavenly values that piety inspires and

develops softens the hardships and frustrations connatural to life behind bars. Wherever God reigns, the authority is acknowledged and honored; where authority is respected, people cooperate. A prison where cooperation between jailers and inmates exists will bring about the real purpose of reforming wayward persons, rebuilding honorable citizens who will go back to society as assets because of their realization of the advantages of using rightly their freedom.

We should mention also the absolute necessity of religion within prison in the supreme instance of someone having to get ready to meet God and his eternal fate through the execution of death penalty. It is simply obvious. Nothing remains for the doomed man except God; and God and he must come close to each other. Society exercises its ultimate rights over the life of a man, a life that is sacred because it belongs exclusively to God. Therefore society must bring God into the scene.

What we have just said about the prisoner being a Son of God in prison is not only applicable to christian or catholic prisons and prisoners. True, the understanding of the principles stated and the richness of a godly life are overwhelming alive in christian societies and in christian prisoners. But religion is for man as such; and in the process of human effort to reach the divinity many beliefs are sincerely accepted by people as their way of serving God. A Catholic would wish that everyone shared in the privileges he fully acknowledges; but the enlightenment of human conscience and the stirring of man's heart is God's business. Authorities have to respect and support the prisoner's honest conscience in all its forms. God alone is to judge, accept and reward the honesty with which man attaches to Himself.

III. THEOLOGY OF THE PRISON APOSTOLATE

Apostolate is a word derived from *Apostolos*, a Greek term meaning "messenger." It has been used in the gospels to translate the Aramaic word *SHALIHA*, chosen by Jesus Himself to designate those He chose from among his disciples to carry on his mission into the world. Now, this Aramaic word implies a far deeper meaning than its Greek counterpart. The radical *SHALAM* means that a being stretches itself or somehow projects itself. Thus branches are named *SHALIHA* of the tree. *Apostolate* then, in

Christian milieu, is the prolongation, if not the impersonation of Jesus Christ in saving the world. In the Last Supper, Jesus explained it as well as the life that is its very foundation (John 15).

Apostolate then in the Christian context is the process of "christianizing" the world as Jesus wanted it christianized. "Go and preach to all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and so I am with you always, till the end of the world." (Math. 28:19-20)

The Prison Apostolate is therefore the process of christianizing prisons. Now, the prison as an object of christianization consists in the set of human beings capable of living under the influence of Christ, and the institution itself, which is an element of the society, as something that must be christianized.

In consequence the Prison Apostolate must deal with the:

- a) Apostolate for the Correctional Personnel;
- b) Apostolate for the Prisoners;
- c) Apostolate for Society at large;
- d) Apostolate for the Penal Institution.

Apostolate for Correctional Personnel

"Correctional Personnel" is a euphemism by which we try to avoid the implication of hardness that goes with the name "jailer." Such denomination is besides justified by the fact that those in charge of the life in the prisons have in the society of today a role far more complicated and honorable than the job of enforcing imprisonment.

In the "correctional personnel" are included all those men and women who are officially entrusted with the implementation and the enforcing of the social rules and regulations that penalize a person with isolation from the rest of free citizens. Directors, warders, guards, soldiers, jailers etc., are here included as well as the outsiders employed for the maintenance of the facilities, assistance and care of the physical or moral welfare of the inmates, etc., and whose life is linked officially with the life of the prison institution. Chaplains must obviously be included among the correctional personnel.

There must be a peculiar apostolate for these caretakers. Some of them might not be even Christians; but many inmates are, and the society they represent is; henceforth, the life in the prison whose leaders they are, must be endowed with a Christian character. Besides, the function of the correctional personnel has a very deep influence into the inmates' conscience, spirit and honor. Prison caretakers must certainly be endowed with all the divine assistance and grace to which they are entitled as Christians and as human beings; the more so as they have before God and men a tremendous responsibility.

Jailers, in certain measure, have at their disposal authority and power to bend and direct the precious faculty human beings have: their freedom. They have to maintain discipline and good order among their prisoners and subordinates. Determination and enforcement are supposed to be their means of action if and when necessary. Now, the fact of having to deal in their work with persons whose sense of duty, orderliness, and respect for others' rights and sensibilities have become blunt or lost; with persons who are intent in looking for trouble and to challenge any will different from their own, forces the jailers to be constantly on watch and ever ready to make use of their authority. On the other hand, many of the inmates entrusted to their care are mislead people who, whether by a mishap or by a human unmindful thrust of passion, have left themselves to be at variance with the law or even to commit crimes; and for these unfortunate ones the jailers' discipline and authority must have a fatherly character. On their part, jailers are themselves human beings with a connatural inclination to repel violence with violence when challenged and also prone to bend rebellion with cruelty... To keep faithful to an honorable life of justice, rectitude, understanding and Christian uprightness God's grace and light are absolutely necessary. The task of the Apostolate for correctional personnel is to make that grace and light functionally available to all those concerned.

As far as the administration of sacraments, religious services and Christian charity services concern, the apostolate might be common to all correctional personnel. But we must not forget that, in the higher levels, the personnel concerned are educated people whose guidance must have an intellectual character. Doctrinal

apostolate then among the correctional personnel is a must, and should be articulated according to levels.

The ecclesiastical authorities, as pastors of the People of God, have to be the first Apostles for the correctional personnel. They have to supplement the penal laws of society with a properly organized and well-articulated divine ministry. Theirs is the sound formation of chaplains and careful administration of faculties and spiritual assistance; and theirs again is the task of dealing with the highest civil authorities to ensure that prison life is imbued with Christian values.

Apostolate for the Prisoner

The popular concept of Prison Apostolate is that it consists in the ministry of salvation exercised on the prisoners. We have seen that such concept is too narrow and inaccurate, as the ministry of salvation within prison has to reach some more persons. Yet, there is some truth in it, because the ministry of salvation within the jail premises is addressed primarily to the prisoners.

The nature of such ministry, when carefully considered, appears to be a rather complicated activity that demands to be articulated with utmost prudence.

For the Church's ministers the people behind bars fall into two main categories, namely, the one integrated by those inmates who happen to have fallen into prison due to a human accident or incident; and the second formed by those inmates for whom crime, violence and lawlessness is a career, not to say an ideal.

The character, manners and mentality of the prisoners of the two categories are quite different, almost opposite to one another. We are tempted to call the prisoners of the first category "bonafide" prisoners, because their mind is not "criminal" in the sense that the evil that they committed had not been planned, rather it burst out of passion or befell due to want or weakness, and because their conscience is not dead. In contrast, the consciences of the other category have become perverse and crooked into the pursuance of their own gratifications and profits regardless of God, of laws, of values, of peace and order, of right and wrong, of life and death; and, in consequence, the crimes they committed were premeditated violations still treasured as achievements.

Putting together both categories of prisoners for a common pastoral action will be a tactical mistake that could become tragic, as the "innocent" prisoner could easily be carried away by the bitterness of the hardened ones and end into perversion. A common apostolate would become rather an occasion of corruption for the redeemable inmate. Therefore the first step for the evangelization of prisoners must be to classify them and to apportion the spiritual care to be imparted according to each kind or group.

Surely some general Christian practices, the reception of the sacraments, the celebration of the Mass, the recitation of prayers and devotions, etc., respond to the innermost needs and wants of the man, child of God, that is in every inmate; and so they are by nature common. Besides, for those outcasts from society, these encounters with other persons who mind God and goodness produce an overwhelming power of refreshment and nostalgia for lost ideals, which could mean the start of a psychological and moral revitalization. However, the apostolate for prisoners goes far beyond these common practices.

The apostolate for the "bonafide" prisoners has to be a message of Christian rebuilding. The juvenile delinquents, those culpable of passion crimes, the violators of penalized regulations, thieves, troublemakers, the victims of political deviations, transgressors of security measures, etc., are children of God carried away from righteousness by either ignorance or disregard of the demands of their own dignity and of the law. Catechism and religious instruction, both basic and advanced for adults, seems to be, theologically speaking, the core of such an apostolate. It should be complemented with activities wherein true welfare is carried out. For people forced into inactivity, such activation of the innermost human impulses towards God and neighbor, good and beauty, friendship and mutual acceptance, means salvation.

On the other hand, the apostolate for the inmates of the second category, those for whom crime, lawlessness and violence have become a second nature, is more difficult and delicate. The love that "stands all, accepts all, and hopes in all" must be the guiding light along a line of preparatory steps before reaching the point of a real and direct apostolate. Winning acceptance and some sort of respect, entering into somehow pleasant conversations, becoming a welcome visitor, starting being favored with casual

confidence until reaching the point when the inmate reflects upon himself and the predicament of his life and seeks for the assistance or guidance from the man of God is a path that, unless shortened by the grace of the Almighty, takes a long time to be trodden. This one is an apostolate of recovery, of a new birth of a child of God; and, therefore, its peculiar subjects of instruction should be the great truths that awaken and strengthen the consciousness of the human dignity, like God's Providence, the mystery of Redemption, the call to a heavenly life and the greatness of the destiny divinely planned for humankind. Still a great obstacle has to be faced in this apostolate, namely, the fact that these prisoners suffer the full force of the repressive and punitive measures in prison life. And since a suffering person is not disposed to devote himself to heavenly considerations, the subtle and effective use of inspirational Christian practices should be at work. Notwithstanding all this, and even the resistance that the inmate may offer, the grace of God has often worked in this field wonderful fruits.

We have failed so far to mention a prison apostolate that is perhaps the most impressive. We refer to the assistance given to those prisoners awaiting execution of death sentence. It is evident that the truths of salvation have to be presented to them in all their splendor and comforting power. Likewise, the sacraments and every means of salvation given by God to his Church have to be made available to them who approach the transit from earthly life to eternity in full awareness and deliberate surrender. God has to be presented to them in the tremendous clearness of a real sacrifice. Theology knows well that for those who are about to end their temporal life at the gallows the last days of their existence are days of judgment, when disappointment, disillusion and despair might creep in and ruin completely their faith. But Theology knows as well that those very days are redemptive days, when a wholly rotten life can be mended fully before the eyes of the Almighty, and when death itself can be transformed into a supreme offering of reparation and glory. The apostle of prison becomes then an angel of light introducing God to his own children.

All in all, the apostolate for prisoners has in itself all the splendors of the free and missionary apostolate joined to that of pastoral care and, in addition, the peculiar reward of having faced and solved hard and decisive situations.

Prison Apostolate for the Society at Large

Society, in casting the prisoner off from itself, becomes an agent and an element of imprisonment. In this regard it needs to be Christianized.

Society is related to the prisoner while he is an inmate, and afterwards when he has fulfilled his sentence and come back to a normal citizen's life.

Prisoners, while in jail, are still citizens, although enclosed and reduced to civic inaction. Besides being fully endowed and capable of exercising their rights and duties, they are in the way of reinstatement. Society must care for what is its own, and prison life and welfare must always be one of its concerns. Prisoners languishing in jail are parasites of society, and prison, with all its expenses and requirements of personnel and facilities, a burden. Prisoners rotting behind bars and becoming hostile to justice and good order are serious threats to peace, welfare and prosperity. It is only when prisoners are well guarded and well treated that they are being prepared to enjoy the benefit of freedom in society; it is then when prison life contributes its share to the welfare of everyone. When society shows interest in their well-being, prisoners start realizing that they are members of the society.

Now, Jesus Christ himself formulated the behavior standard Christian society must show to those in chains. He described Himself, acting as supreme Judge of the living and the dead, saying to the blessed ones: "...I was in prison and you came to me..." And to the damned: "...I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me..." (Mt. 25:36, 43). That will be His reason for reward or condemnation, because "...as you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me" (Math. 25:41). The visit mentioned here is not just an inspection: the Aramaic word used by Jesus means a visit for a service to be displayed to the person visited. It is a visit of effective Christian charity; a visit helpful to the prisoners, who are brethren of Christ in need. Prisoners are in need of comfort, because they are shipwrecked persons; in need of affection, because they are behind walls, irons and heartless enforcements; in need of help, because they are unable to procure it; in need of inner light and inspiration, because they are envisioning and longing for a normal life; in need of courage and strength, because they are confronted with the arduous task of redeeming themselves; in need of expe-

riencing a foretaste of the kindness dwelling in the human heart and of the blissfulness of a peaceful social life, because they are meant to share both of them; and in need, above all, of God, of His blessing and His grace. In Jesus' mind every human person – and especially Christians – share in the responsibility of affording those in jail that quality visit of concerned love.

The ministers of God have the task of making His people, and society at large, aware of it and facilitate its realization through a well-organized apostolate.

Where a prison apostolate for the Society at large is most needed and will be most fruitful is in the case of those prisoners who have fulfilled their sentence and go back into society. They had been dead to society, are they going to live on as social cadavers? Is that Christian? As they went into prison they lost their job, their connections and, above all, their good name and probably even the affection of their own families and friends. The sore fact is that the convicts' stigma stay on them, branded by a society that refuses to take into consideration that they have painfully and honestly repaid society for their wrong; that they have undergone and experienced the hardship of being cast off but that they are longing for rehabilitation and reacceptance as honorable citizens. Here is where a thorough apostolate must be done in Christian societies, because, although many show their mercy and compassion towards former prisoners and ex-convicts, however, very few are those who accept them back confidently as reliable persons. One beautiful example: To the late President of the Philippines Ramon Magsaysay it was presented for presidential pardon a well-behaved and repentant convict guilty of having assassinated a Dominican Father after having robbed him of the payroll for the laborers of Calamba. The President pardoned him, and having acknowledged him in the process as a former comrade in arms during his guerilla days who had erred misled by a gang of criminals, hired him as driver of his family car. Surely such a noble recognition is not to be easily expected from the common Christian employer; but a prudent apostolate would eliminate from our society the sweeping, bureaucratic prolongation of bars and chains in the restrictions and suspicions against the ex-convict. The "police records" should become *complete*, that is, stating not only the details of the charges and the extent of punishment, but also the

inmates' behavior, their acceptance of guilt, their efforts for betterment, their deeds and cooperation with the authorities and their fellow inmates... in one word, their positive attitude towards the social purpose of their imprisonment. From the Christian point of view, repentant sinners have often become most proficient saints, like St. Paul, St. Augustine, etc. On the contrary, when honest ex-convicts are denied a decent recognition and are barred from fair employment just because they were in prison, the unfortunate consequence is that, for surviving and earning a living, they are compelled to fall back into crime. Such compulsion into evil is not Christian. Certainly the matter demands prudence, because there are confirmed criminals, like those who some years ago assassinated Msgr Antiporda, who have made of crime a goal and a way of life; but these "police character" are a different case.

It is for the honest, repentant ex-convict for whom the spirit of Christ should become, in Christian society, the application of Jesus' conduct towards the woman caught in adultery. "Woman, where are they? Has none condemned you?" She said, "None, Lord." And Jesus said: "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again" (John 8:10-11).

Lastly an apostolate for winning back honest citizens is very much needed in our society, where the possible offenses penalized with imprisonment have been carried to a tremendous sophistication of traffic rules, city regulations, tax evasions, political differences, security measures, etc. Without a real Christian acceptance of the "petty offender" back from prison the very enforcement of modern welfare provisions could be transformed into a school of crime.

Apostolate for the Correctional Institution

What has been previously said is that, for an effective Prison Apostolate, there must be close collaboration between the correctional personnel and the apostolic workers. What is added now, proceeding somewhat further, is that the whole correctional system has to be imbued with Christian values, first of all in Christian societies and then in the world society at large.

The correctional institution that we know today is mostly punitive and preventive in character. Yet, punishment and repression are just the first steps in mending an erring personality. As

long as the rehabilitation of the conscience, of the sense of social responsibility and of the dedication to duty is not attained, social evils are not extinguished; neither, far less, good citizens are regained.

In the so called "model prisons" of our days the traditional, calculated misery and pain of the inmate has been fairly eliminated, but in the ordinary prisons we have still the hording of prisoners into communal cells, the forcing of them into sheer inaction, and the exploitation of their energies in forced labor. Violent hostility is inflicted still, and for no practical reason, on the helpless convict. These correctional procedures, excused and accepted as concomitant to prison life, produce in the prisoner's mind deleterious sentiments and reactions that are far from humane and Christian, namely, a sense of uselessness in life, an indolent passivity, a slackening of demeanor, an urge for compensating self gratification, and an intense rebellion against dictated discipline; in one word, a loss of moral personality and of self dignity.

It is just by a wise and prudent apostolate directed to the higher spheres of the penal institution (lawgivers, directors and guardians) that the correctional system can be set aside and christianized.

A rational and functional jail decongestion and the articulation of prisoners into sections according to gender, age, social status and moral conditions would be an initial step; then, the provision of exacted regular work activity that the inmates have to perform; the apportioning of the profits of that work so that both the society at large and the prisoner have a share in it; a credit system by which prisoners might receive recognition for the work done and for the diligence and good behavior showed; a whole educational and vocational formation intended for the inmate's personal self betterment; a harmonious blending of hard work schedules with proper entertainment and art activities within the prison routine; etc. All these dignifying and reconstructive programs will eventually transform prisons into Christian avenues of human and social redemption.

A good precedent in that direction was achieved in Spain at the end of the civil war (1936-1939) by the "Obra de Redención de Penas" (Penalty Redemption Program). The idea was to systematically reduce the length of the imprisonment period in proportion

to the work honestly done in prison. The work was besides paid in such a way that part of the payment was allotted for the inmate's maintenance and welfare, another portion went to the prisoner himself and still another was given to his family and dependents. The idea behind the project was that prisoners should never languish and rot in prison; on the contrary they should reinstate themselves and bring about the reconstruction of their fatherland as soon and as well as possible. The system so devised and implemented became a grand success. Its basic principle was that those who work and earn, grow aware of their own value and profit, and become honorable citizens. All the more if they are christianly provided with religious, cultural and national formation.

In line with the christianization of the prison system, especially relevant for a good Prison Apostolate is the declaration of principles guiding the mentioned institution or program as well as its juridico-political foundations:

"Applying to the penal field the principles ... of human freedom and of the capability of all men for redemption, calling also on the efficiency of grace and upon the unity of human race ... we have established this system, within which the convict may acquire the pardon and the grace of society (redemption) through a double ransom, that of repentance (spiritual redress of the guilt of sin) and that of work (physical redress or reparation of the punishment deserved because of the harm inflicted both to the society at large and to the victims of the crime).... The classical penal doctrine... does not embrace completely the Christian penal concept. The Christian penal concept states, maintains and propounds the classical penal theory, as it is an application of the natural rights, for redemption and the everlasting order of divine justice, yet it adds a supplement that is precious...

JURIDICO-POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS. ...Every prisoner accomplishes a duplicate number of days of punishment on the days he works and besides he sends during that time an assistance of two pesetas daily to his wife, and one peseta for each of his sons under 15 years of age, or older if the child be handicapped ... In this manner the punishment retains its *punitive* character, because, although it has to be in good humane conditions, equal to those of a free worker, yet it is performed in prison, that is in painful reclusion. But the punishment attains a *social reparative goal*, as the prisoner works for his own interest and for the society ... It attains also

a *social charitable level* and that of preserving the moral integrity of the family, as it retains the bond of paternal authority of the prisoner over his family, because the imprisoned head of the family goes on supporting them from within the bars... It provides also for the prison *medicinal or corrective purpose*, because, besides the redemptive force work has in itself, it completes, through religious and national or political formation of the highest level the recovery of the convict ... It likewise attains a *moral end*, by removing the occasion and danger of vices and aberrations, sexual or otherwise, so endemic in jails, for which systematic inaction is the best incentive ... It also brings about the preventive role of prisons, because in many an occasion the lack of a decent job and of decent means of self-supporting has led men into the continuation of crimes or falling back into it; the vocational training imparted inside jails shall diminish greatly the number of reincidents."

(La Obra de la Redención de Penas. La Doctrina, la Práctica, la Legislación. Published by the Patronato, 1941. Introduction, pp. XI-XIII)

The task of the Prison Apostolate for the Correctional Institution as such should aim further. It must attempt to extend the Christian principles of imprisonment and of the penal redemption system to all prisoners, mainly to those jailed because of violations against purely civic or social regulations or of those induced into guilt by human passions and weaknesses.

As a result of such an Apostolate prison will change its face: The image of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, will transpire through the apparently ugly face of the jail.

CONCLUSION

Summing up the Theology of Prison Apostolate we have just sketched, we must make clear that we have stated only its guiding principles and doctrines. The methodology and various forms of application, as well as the auxiliary mechanism of works and associations that might come into that apostolate, are another rich field in the hands of the dedicated men and women who work at bringing Christ into the prison life.

After having seen what Theology has to say about prison, both from the Bible or from the Tradition and doctrine of the

Church, considering it as a social institution with a respectable function, notwithstanding its painfulness, we have tried to formulate the Theology of the prisoner as he is, not only an offender, but a person as well as, above all, a son of God; and then we have come to define the Theology for the functional life of a prison Apostolate at all levels of prison life of the correctional personnel, of the inmate himself, of the surrounding society and of the legal and social institution that should be enlightened and regulated, not only by the commands, but also by the spirit, redemptive and saving of Jesus Christ.

If we were to revise the emblem used to symbolize the Prison Apostolate, we would suggest a little change, perhaps a little bit modernistic. Instead of the Christ crowned with thorns behind bars, we would have a radiant Jesus Christ transparent, within whose chest, behind the shadow of crossed bars, the face of a prisoner-Christ would appear crowned with thorns yes, but with eyes sparkling with joyful hope. That would mean the real spirit of Christian prison.

Travelers who after having enjoyed the magnificence of the *El Escorial* go to the *Valle de los Caídos* (Valley of the Fallen) find themselves facing an immense cross that has a rough, imposing mountain as pedestal, within which there is a grandiose basilica hewn in sheer rock. There, amidst magnificent beauty and splendor, the bones of many who died in the Spanish civil war are enshrined. It was the work of people in prison; prisoners of good heart and of good hands who redeemed their sentences working for redemption. It is a glorious monument to the greatness of a Christian Prison Apostolate.

Were we to close by offering a model for the Christian Apostle of Prison, we would call to mind that Jesus Christ Himself was a prison chaplain in the most delicate of a chaplain's task. Jesus was dying upon the cross. At both sides He had two prisoners being executed for their crimes. One of them blasphemed in despair and released his bitterness on the agonizing Prophet. Jesus kept His silence and His irradiating mildness. The other crucified shouted and scolded to his desperate mate and then turned to the dying Savior: "Lord, remember me, when You were in your Kingdom!" And Jesus answered: "Amen, I say to you today you shall be with Me in Paradise!!" ... The undying song of Prison Apostolate! □