

REACHING OUT

Remember me

This topic should be approached with care and compassion, as some children may feel uncertain or worried when talking about people in prison. Gently help them understand that for the safety of everyone, some people lose their freedom when they are considered a danger to others, but they are still loved by God and never beyond His mercy.

This resource is **most suitable for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils**. Please be mindful that some children may have family members in prison. We hope this reflection helps them know that they, and their loved ones, are cared for and valued, even when mistakes have been made.

In Preparation:

- Download accompanying slide show
- Prepare appendix 1 (Printable cards for slide 11)
- Consider what call to action the group could take at the end (slides 19–24)

Slide 1: Reaching Out – Remember Me

- Question to ask the children: “Why does the SVP help prisoners?”.
- Purpose: Today, we’ll explore this question and see how children can help too.
- Keep it short and engaging – introduce the theme of caring for those in need.

Slide 2: Who are the SVP?

- SVP = St Vincent de Paul Society.
- Key points to share:
 1. Serve people in need with compassion and generosity.
 2. Mission: To find people who need support; treat everyone fairly; make the world kinder.

Slide 3: The Range of Work the SVP Does

- Key message: SVP helps anyone in need.
- Ways we help (invite children to read each).
- Encourage children to notice the variety of ways we serve.

Slide 4: Vincentian Values

- Go back to the common question asked: “Why work with prisoners?”.
- Summarise the SVP values:
 1. God loves everyone, no matter what.
 2. Prisoners are people who need care and kindness.
 3. Following examples: St Vincent de Paul (our patron) & Blessed Frédéric Ozanam (our founder).
- Focus on compassion and fairness.

Slide 5: Inspired by Church Leadership

- Highlight how even Church leaders show care and respect for prisoners.
- Pope Leo’s example with prisoners:
 1. June 2025: Invited 2 inmates to his Papal Audience in Rome.
 2. Shared kind words that touched his guests.
 3. Received a handmade silver cross as a thank-you.

Slide 6: Bishop Richard Moth

- Role: Bishop for Prisons in England & Wales, supporting Catholic prison chaplains in 142 prisons.
- Key message from him:
 1. God loves everyone, even when we make mistakes.
 2. We should see God in everyone and reach out with understanding.
- Emphasise compassion, understanding, and forgiveness.

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Slide 7: Discussion

- Group activity questions:
 - a. Why do we have prisons?
 - b. What are they for?
 - c. How can prisoners be helped to make better choices?
- Encourage sharing ideas, no right or wrong answers – focus on empathy and thinking about solutions.

Slide 8: Key Purposes of Prisons

- Government outline:
 1. Keep people safe.
 2. Show that actions have consequences.
 3. Help people learn and make better choices.
- Connect to previous discussion – how can the SVP support these goals?

Slide 9: What Some People Think About Prisons

- Common views children may hear:
 1. Prison should be mostly punishment.
 2. People who do wrong “shouldn’t have it easy”.
- It’s about fairness and paying for mistakes:
 1. Helping prisoners might stop them taking responsibility.
- Most prisoners will return to our communities one day – helping them benefits everyone.
- Encourage children to think critically – help vs. punishment, fairness, and compassion.

Slide 10: Helping People Change

- Key ideas to share:
 1. Prisons can help people learn and grow.
 2. New skills and support give hope for a fresh start.
 3. Respect and kindness help people change.
 4. Helping people change makes the whole community safer.
- Ask: *What helps you learn from mistakes?*
- Emphasise: We focus on helping, not just punishing.
- Kindness and support help people make better choices.

Slide 11: Catholic Social Teaching in Action

- Before giving out the stories, look at the slide and invite the children to guess what each one is about.
- Activity instructions:
 - Give each group a card showing an example of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) in action.
 - Children look at the pictures on screen and match their card to a picture.
 - Discuss the questions on the card together.
 - Each group shares their story or idea with the class.
- Encourage teamwork and reflection on how CST guides the SVP’s work.

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Slide 12: Wall of Second Chances

- After feedback, work together on a 'Wall of Second Chances'. This could then be displayed in school or in your parish.

Slides 13–16: Let's Talk Numbers!

- Activity focus: Prison statistics (from government data 2024/25).
- Show each slide one by one. Ask: *"What do you think about this number?"* or *"Does this surprise you?"*
- Encourage short discussions or quick reactions.
- Help children understand the real impact of prison and think about why support matters.

Slide 17: How the SVP Supports Prisoners

- Key ways the SVP helps:
 1. Clothes, books, and music: Giving items to bring comfort and creativity.
 2. Family visits: Supporting families of those in prison.
 3. Christmas cards & Easter eggs: Sending kindness and hope at special times.
 4. Spiritual support: Praying with people, helping them feel close to God.
 5. Prison visits: Being a friend and offering understanding.
- Invite children to notice how simple acts, like a card or a visit, can show love and dignity.
- Ask: *Which of these ways of helping do you think makes the biggest difference?*

Slide 18: Voices from the Field

- Share the short quotes from people involved in SVP prison work.
- Explain:
 1. Their words show that prison ministry isn't about "fixing" people.
 2. It's about being present, showing friendship, and bringing Christ's love to forgotten places.
- Ask the children: *Why do you think just being there for someone can be powerful?*
- Encourage reflection on kindness, presence, and empathy.

Slide 19–24: Potential responses and calls to action.

- A number of ways that your group might like to get involved in supporting the work in prisons:
 1. Learn and Reflect
 2. Pray and Care
 3. Help Families
 4. Give and Share

Slide 25–27: The Bible in Action

- Share the story of the Prodigal Son from the father's perspective and then read out the story about Raihan. Reflect on both stories, using the questions to unpack.

Slide 28: Closing Prayer

- Bring your session to an end with a prayer.