



# JUSTICE REFLECTIONS

Worldwide Papers  
Linking Christian Ideas with Matters of Justice  
Registered Charity Number 1091632



## INSPIRATIONS FROM PRISON

Imprisonment is the severest sanction any state can impose on its citizens, other than capital punishment. Deriving from the word 'prise' or 'seize', imprisonment is the exercise of coercive power. As such, the incarceration of any human being, even in apparently reasonable conditions, is a cause of constant concern. This is why statutory provision should always be made for independent inspection of conditions of imprisonment and treatment of prisoners. But that provision is not enough. There is still need for continuous interest and inquiry into moral, philosophical and theological issues raised by imprisonment, especially for those working with prisoners. *Justice Reflections* attempts to explore these issues for chaplains of all faiths whose ministry is in prisons.

*Justice Reflections* began in 2001 under the aegis of the International Prison Chaplains' Association to nurture and encourage prison chaplains everywhere. Three editions are published annually, each containing up to eight varied essays in English from around the world. The publication is ecumenical and open to the views of all faiths. It explores and challenges the relevance of theology to matters of justice in the domain of law and order.

*Justice Reflections* aims to reveal, cumulatively, how theological insights from different cultures can help everyone reflect more hopefully on challenging human experiences. The objectivity of prison chaplains' thinking about human nature, as revealed in the confines of prison, assists standing back and understanding better how humanity has come to where it is and how it might progress. The publication also aims to stimulate anyone in prison ministry to think more about the context of their work. Criminal justice activity can be secluded and mentally confining. Prison work in particular tends to be introspective and narrowly self-interested. Theological thinking, of the sort communicated in this publication, can help overcome the physical and psychological isolation of prison.

*Justice Reflections* responds to the need for theological development among colleagues connected with victims and offenders in parts of the world where working conditions in prisons can sometimes be utterly brutalising. Colleagues surviving in such circumstances can, for their part, share more widely through this publication important insights from their situation. It is a resource for training and a focus for exploring new ideas, including what is inspirational in current work among victims and offenders. It sets out to help everyone working in law and order embrace tensions in the face of widespread pessimism and cynicism.

*Justice Reflections* is unique. Interest in it extends beyond prison chaplains, its primary readership, to people who have an outsider's interest in its aims. Copies are sent to over sixty countries. During its first four years a repository of thinking and writing has been assembled in one concentrated and expanding archive accessible on its website - [www.justicereflections.org.uk](http://www.justicereflections.org.uk)

*Justice Reflections* is assembled in the shadow of Lincoln Cathedral in the Diocese of Lincoln where there has been a long tradition from the early Middle Ages of caring for the disadvantaged. This tradition extends from the episcopate of St. Hugh (1186-1200), renowned for championing stigmatized lepers, through the episcopate of Bishop Edward King (1885-1910), revered for his ministry to prisoners facing execution, to the episcopate of Bishop Robert Hardy (1987-2001), who hosted four large Lincoln Conferences on law and order. Whilst local tradition has influenced the ethos of the publication, its contemporary relevance is global.

*Justice Reflections* is promoted by the Worldwide International Prison Chaplains' Association in conjunction with the International Commission for Catholic Prison Pastoral Care and Prison Fellowship International. There is no charge for the publication but donations are invited for the charity.

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