

State Bishops Issue 'Criminal Justice' Guide

By the State Catholic Committee

Albany — A 12-page "Study and Action Guide" on criminal justice has been issued by the State Catholic Conference. It is designed to accompany the Pastoral Statement on Criminal Justice issued by the state's bishops in January.

The statement considered many of the problems in the state criminal justice system as they relate to adults accused and guilty of crimes, and the victims of those crimes.

The study guide is intended to be a "resource and a catalyst," said J. Alan Davitt, executive director of the State Catholic Conference. The guide is aimed at "individuals and groups as they wrestle with the Christian's response to crime in our society in the light" of the bishops' statement.

The statement provides a careful examination of the state's criminal justice system and contains detailed steps for reform.

"It is a sign of their commitment to leadership in solving these problems," Davitt said of the bishops. "They not only issued the statement but have given guidelines for implementation in such a detailed and specific way."

For total Church involvement, the study guide encourages a task force or commission to aid in implementing the statement. It also suggests involving all the diocesan agencies including schools, religious education, charities, press, communications, peace and justice groups.

At the parish and community level, the guide suggests things as simple as regular visiting or becoming pen pals or even parish sponsorship of needy families or prisoners.

For discussion and study groups as well as for "individual reflection," the guide divides the topic into four parts. The first, called general, covers everything from biblical references in both the Old and New Testaments, to whether the Church should even be involved in criminal justice. It discusses punishment, penalties, the purpose of the state correctional system.

The other three parts deal with victims, offenders and prison employees. They raise the issues of restitution, community concern, demands placed on correction and probation officers as well as on others involved in the state system.

The final section of the guide provides a wide variety of resources which are available to aid in the study. Included are excerpts from Church documents dealing with reform of U.S. correctional institutions, the difficulties with capital

punishment and why the bishops have recommended an end to it in the United States.

Among the reasons for reform listed in the bishops' January statement are:

- State prisons are "substantially overcrowded" with large numbers behind bars for nonviolent offenses. 60 percent of them are between 16 and 30, more than 70 percent are minorities (53 percent black and 20 percent Hispanic), and more than half are drug users.

- Christians must make a "just and charitable response" to the criminal offender.

- The criminal justice system must not be founded on revenge but must contain both mercy and forgiveness. "We do not advocate ignoring crime or casting up on criminal offenders. We affirm the rights and responsibilities of society to protect its citizens."

At the same time, however, the bishops "oppose simplistic responses to fears and frustrations regarding crime." New programs and policies "must also address the needs and rights of the victims of crime. "If we wish victims to be forgiving and compassionate we must demonstrate to them our attention to the harm that has been done to them."

How to Help On Parish and Community Level

1. Identify from within your parish structure persons involved or concerned, through vocation or otherwise, in the criminal justice area — such as lawyers, court and correction officers, prison and jail volunteers and, most particularly, crime victims and offenders and/or families.
2. Consider convening the persons identified in Point 1, with the knowledge and support of your pastor and parish council, around the Statement and Study and Action Guide. The group then might also consider examining one or more local or community criminal justice issues, educating themselves on such issues and even taking some local group, parish or community action. The group may wish to offer to the wider parish community educational programs with speakers from the diocesan list of individuals identified in Part 1.
3. Consider forming a prison or jail volunteer visiting group and be in contact with local prison and jail chaplains on voluntary help.
4. Visit your local jail, halfway house or juvenile detention center and find out about the conditions in such places, their programs and resources, their use of volunteers, their religious and worship resources and programs. In this process, find out whether there is a Catholic chaplain serving the facility.
5. Become a correspondent with a prisoner or jail inmate.
6. Consider suggesting that your parish sponsor the family of an incarcerated person, making sure their food and housing needs are being met and that they are able to visit their imprisoned family member.
7. Consider helping through the parish or your own family an ex-offender in adjusting to post-incarceration life. Meet with the ex-offender and his/her family and determine their needs, economic and otherwise, and offer to help find housing and employment. Most important, provide a family environment where his/her family can mix with others.
8. Learn more about prison work-release programs and see if your employer or other employers will participate in such programs.
9. Reach out individually and at the parish and community levels to the victims of crime in your community to provide financial, material and spiritual help.
10. Determine what crime victim programs exist in your community and volunteer your help.
11. Keep informed regarding proposed changes in federal and state statutes relating to crimes and the funding of criminal justice programs. Make known your opinions to your federal and state elected representatives.
12. Be aware of and even keep a diary of how often you break a law or "cheat," such as pad an expense account, take home office supplies, exceed the speed limits while driving or at least how often you are tempted to do so.
13. Monitor public media to see how crime is sensationalized and depicted; how the criminal, the ex-offender and correctional systems are portrayed. How does this reporting square with the principles in the bishops' statement? Is "white collar" crime treated differently than "blue collar" crime? Does there seem to be equal justice meted out to the middle and upper class as against the lower social economic class? Do probation, parole, community services and other alternatives to incarceration seem more available to white, middle and upper classes?
14. Obtain and read the criminal justice statements prepared by the U.S. Catholic Conference.

Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

Religious In Public Office

Our local daily gave banner treatment to the public demand by Detroit's Archbishop Edmund Szoka that the director of Michigan's welfare program resign.

His reason: she had given no public evidence of her opposition to her program's funding of some welfare abortions. The director of the welfare program is a member of a religious

Diocese

Continued from Page 1

dates. If there were a 60 percent release rate for inmates who come up for their first eligibility hearing in 1983, instead of the current 31.7 percent, the state would save \$41,551,455 and gain 2,200 cells.

"Provide alternative sanctions for minor parole violators who do not need to be returned to prison. Conservative projections for 1983 suggest that at least 682 parolees will be imprisoned, not for new criminal activity, but for violation of technical parole rules, such as failure to report a change of address. If they are not sent back to prison, the state will save \$6,070,620 and free up 341 beds.

"Pass a standby release act, permitting the governor to release carefully screened inmates 30 to 90 days early when the prison system is operating over capacity for an extended period. Implementation of such a measure over a nine-month period would enable New York to free up 1,107 cells."

The program concludes: "By implementing these measures, the state would save \$75,957,075 to \$83,975,075 in operating costs for the Department of Correctional Services. In addition, by gaining from 4,401 to 5,561 cells, the savings to the state in capital construction costs would range from \$154,035,000 to \$194,635,000."

community. Sister Agnes Mary Mansour.

In this controversy I'm in a fairly comfortable position. I disagree with both parties.

Right or wrong, religious communities (particularly communities of women) have significantly re-thought their responsibility to the church and the meaning of

their vow of religious obedience.

Whether they are objectively right or wrong, we can assume that Sister Mansour and members of her religious community have given serious thought to her decision to accept this office. We can assume that she is acting out of deep convictions not easily surrendered.

By the time this appears, the facts might prove me wrong, but I suspect that there will be no quick resignation, that the public tension will increase, that the church will suffer. Some people will see the archbishop as excessively

authoritarian; others will be scandalized in their harsh judgments about what is happening to members of religious communities.

Regardless of all the distinctions which might be offered as justifying her acceptance, the public perception is an important element in any prudent, conscientious decision. And there's not the slightest doubt that for many people her acceptance was seen as compromising the clear teaching of the church that a direct, deliberate attack on the person within the womb is always immoral.

I just wish it had been handled differently.

GREECE Residential Improvement Program

Home Repairs Now Cost up to 90% Less With GRIP

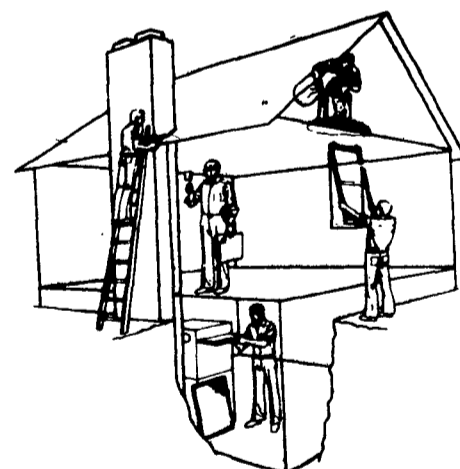
The Town of Greece has initiated the Greece Residential Improvement Program for its 7th year. Under this program you may be eligible for a subsidy that will pay up to 90% of your home repair and improvement costs. A 90% subsidy would mean that the Town could pay you \$2250 on improvements costing \$2500. Note: Maximum total that can be paid for all repairs is \$2500.00.

YOU QUALIFY IF:

The home to be improved is in Greece, is owner occupied, used only as residence and the taxes are current. Also, your gross household income* cannot be over the amounts listed below:

INCOME* ELIGIBILITY

Household Size** No. of Persons	MAXIMUM HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
	Very Low 90%	Low 60%	Medium 35%
1	\$5700	\$8500	\$13,100
2	6500	9500	15,250
3	7300	10500	17,000
4	8250	11550	18,700
5	8650	12350	19,150
6	9100	13200	20,250
7	9500	14000	21,900
8+	10000	14850	23,050



HOW DO I APPLY

If you are going through a lending institution you must bring 3 estimates for each type of work you want done to one of the participating banks and fill out an application at the bank.

However, if your improvement is small (less than \$1000) or you want to use your personal savings you should submit 3 estimates for each type of work to the GRIP Program Office at the Greece Town Hall along with a completed application. The program is open to small families as well as large.

*Includes income from all sources including Social Security for all persons, related or unrelated residing at the applicants address who are over 18 and not full time students.

**Number of members in applicants household.

Ask for GRIP today! Call GRIP PROGRAM
Greece Town Hall 225-2000, Ext. 282 or 280