



RESTOREJUSTICE.COM

healing and support for everyone affected by the criminal justice system

Justice with dignity for the wounded
Justice with dignity for offenders
Restorative Justice Ministries



*I light a candle
not to overcome
the darkness,*

*but to remind me
that the darkness cannot
overcome me.*

A GROUP DISCUSSION STUDY GUIDE



CHANGING ATTITUDES ON CRIMINAL REHABILITATION



www.restorejustice.com

RESPONSIBILITY, REHABILITATION, AND RESTORATION: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice



UTILIZING:

RESPONSIBILITY, REHABILITATION, AND RESTORATION:

A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice.

To order copies, go to www.usccb.org/sdwp/criminal.htm

A Statement of the Catholic Bishops of the United States,
December 2000. To order copies, go to www.usccbpublishing.org

"RESTORATIVE JUSTICE"

Short documentary video produced by The Archdiocese of
San Francisco, Office of Public Policy, November 2004

To order copies go to www.restorejustice.com

WHO:

This study guide has been developed for use by small groups,
including:

- Parish Pastoral Councils
- Social Ministry Committees
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul Conferences
- Renew Groups
- Individuals

TIME:

The session will run between one and two hours.

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:

- Copies of the study guide
- Copies of the statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops
- TV with VCR to run the documentary video

www.restorejustice.com



FACILITATOR'S ROLE

BEFORE THE MEETING:

- Become familiar with the materials.
- Ensure sufficient supplies are available.
- Check video to make sure it is working and ready to view.
(Video is approximately 15 minutes in length.)

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING:

- Appoint prayer leader.
- Invite volunteers to assist with the scripture readings.

DURING THE MEETING:

- Lead the sharing and reflection.
- Ask how do these readings reflect God's unconditional love for us?
- Ask how do these readings speak to God's infinite wisdom, mercy, and compassion?
- Lead the question period.
- Allow sufficient time for each member to respond.
- Don't allow one person to dominate the discussion.
- Use other good facilitation skills.

AT THE END OF THE MEETING:

- Ensure that all have been heard.
- Review next steps or plans of action.
- Emphasize the website as a resource: www.restorejustice.com
- Thank host site for allowing the presentation.

WE THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR GRACIOUSNESS
IN TAKING ON THIS VERY IMPORTANT ACTIVITY.



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

*Thank You for Joining Us in This Program of Justice,
Mercy, and Compassion.*

OPENING PRAYER (All):

In the name of the Father who creates us,
The Son who redeems us, and
The Holy Spirit who sanctifies us.
Amen.

READING: Psalm 139

“Lord, you have probed me, you know me:
you know when I sit and stand;
you understand my thoughts from afar.
My travels and my rest you mark;
With all my ways you are familiar.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
Lord, you know it all.
Behind me and before you encircle me
And rest your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is beyond me,
Far too lofty for me to reach.
Where can I hide from your spirit?
From your presence, where can I flee?
If I ascend to the heavens, you are there;
If I lie down in Sheol, you are there too.
If I fly with the wings of dawn
And alight beyond the sea,
Even there your hand will guide me,
Your right hand hold me fast.
If I say, “Surely darkness shall hide me,
And night shall be my light”



Darkness is not dark for you,
And night shines as the day.
Darkness and light are but one.
You formed my inmost being;
You knit me in my mother’s womb.
I praise you, so wonderfully you made me;
Wonderful are your works!
My very self you knew;
My bones were not hidden from you,
When I was being made in secret,
Fashioned as in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes foresaw my actions;
In your book all are written down;
My days were shaped, before one came to be.
How precious to me are your designs, O God;
How vast the sum of them!
Were I to count, they would outnumber the sands;
To finish, I would need eternity.
If only you would destroy the wicked, O God,
And the bloodthirsty would depart from me!
Deceitfully they invoke your name;
Your foes swear faithless oaths.
Do I not hate, Lord, those who hate you?
Those who rise against you, do I not loathe?
With fierce hatred I hate them, enemies I count as my own.

Probe me, God, know my heart;
Try me, know my concerns.
See if my way is crooked,
Then lead me in the ancient paths.

GOSPEL: Prodigal Son, Luke: 15, 11-32

SHARING

PRIOR TO VIEWING THE VIDEO

PARTICIPANTS ARE INVITED TO READ AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

"A Catholic approach begins with the recognition that the dignity of the human person applies to both victim and offender."

"RESPONSIBILITY, REHABILITATION, AND RESTORATION" PG. 2

What do I believe about the rights of the offender?

"As bishops, we believe that the current trend of more prisons and more executions, with too little education and drug treatment, does not truly reflect Christian values and will not really leave our communities safer."

"RESPONSIBILITY, REHABILITATION, AND RESTORATION" PG. 2

Do I believe that offenders can change?

"We are convinced that our tradition and our faith offer better alternatives that can hold offenders accountable and challenge them to change their lives; reach out to victims and reject vengeance; restore a sense of community and resist the violence that has engulfed so much of our culture."

"RESPONSIBILITY, REHABILITATION, AND RESTORATION" PG. 2

Do I believe we should support victims and their families?

"The Church should pursue policies and programs that respond to all the needs of victims of crime, just as we do to victims of natural disasters."

"RESPONSIBILITY, REHABILITATION, AND RESTORATION" PG. 59

*What do I know about Catholic teaching regarding crime and punishment?
What do I know about Catholic teaching regarding rehabilitation and restoration?*

"Our tasks are to restore a sense of civility and responsibility to everyday life and promote crime prevention and genuine rehabilitation."

"RESPONSIBILITY, REHABILITATION, AND RESTORATION" PG. 1

Do I believe in justice and mercy?

"The common good is undermined by criminal behavior that threatens the lives and dignity of others and by policies that seem to give up on those who have broken the law (offering too little treatment and too few alternatives to either years in prison or the execution of those who have been convicted of terrible crimes).

"RESPONSIBILITY, REHABILITATION, AND RESTORATION" PG. 1

What do I see as the local parish and parishioners' role in dealing with victims of crime, families of incarcerated, and the men and women released from jails and prisons within our parish communities?



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



- *Restorative Justice* is a way of thinking about how individuals, groups and governments respond to crime, offenses, and even more broadly, conflict or misbehavior in general.
- *Restorative Justice* builds community by providing a constructive framework to guide our responses to crime, conflict, offensive behavior, violations and injustices.
- *Restorative Justice* advocates a view that crime is more than simply law-breaking. Crime creates needs and injuries that can be addressed for the benefit of victims, community, and even offenders.
- *Restorative Justice* values all people.
- *Restorative Justice* seeks to repair damage, (re)establish dignity and (re)integrate all who were harmed and alienated.

SOURCE: Ron Claassen, Director
Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies
Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, California

How do I see the role of faith in restorative justice?

- *Faith in the offender?*
- *Faith in the system?*
- *Faith in God?*

VIEW THE VIDEO.

DISCUSS:

1. *What aspect of this video affected me the most?*
2. *Can I relate to anyone in the video?*
3. *Who turned their lives around in the video?*
4. *Do I know anyone who has a substance abuse problem, either drugs or alcohol?
Have they benefited from treatment?
Have I seen anyone change as a result of treatment?*
5. *Have I ever experienced receiving forgiveness?
Have I ever extended forgiveness to someone else?*
6. *Do I believe criminal justice issues touch my life or my family's life?*
7. *Do I see the role of faith in restorative justice differently after viewing the video?*
8. *How do I feel about rehabilitation?
Do I feel it is feasible or "pie in the sky"?*
9. *Is this a problem that should receive political/public attention?*
10. *How do I feel about victims?
Have I or anyone I know been a victim of crime?*
11. *How would I feel about more resources being allocated for rehabilitation?
Even if this cost me personally (higher taxes)?*

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Appendix: *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration*

“The Catholic Community has a tremendous history and capacity to help shape the issues of crime and criminal justice in the United States...”

EXAMPLES:

Through many committed individual Catholics, prison ministry programs, parish outreach efforts, Catholic schools, diocesan peace and justice offices, community organizing projects, ex-offender reintegration programs, family counseling, drug and alcohol recovery programs, and charitable services to low-income people, the Catholic community responds to criminal justice concerns in a wide variety of ways.

But we can do more.

This list of suggestions and resources is by no means exhaustive. Rather, it is intended to give individual Catholics, parishes and dioceses some directions about programs and policies that reflect Catholic principles and values as we work together to implement this statement.”

Review pages 57–63 of *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration* to see where you might make a difference. The following options are offered:

FIRST

- Teach right from wrong, respect for life, forgiveness, and mercy.
- Stand with victims and their families.
- Reach out to offenders and their families.
- Build community.
- Advocate policies that offer real alternatives to crime.
- Organize (Arch)Diocesan consultations.
- Other?

RESEARCH

How can the State Legislature be approached to start making suggested changes?

REMEMBER

Like the Abbot who carried the Monk back to the community on his shoulders, we can make a difference in how people can grow and change and return to society.

SPECIFIC VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Go to: www.restorejustice.com



For information on Specific Volunteer Opportunities, Crime Prevention, and Community Organizing, please visit www.restorejustice.com for local information.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning,
Is now, and
Ever shall be,
World without end. Amen.

**PRAY AND WORK TOGETHER
TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

**CHANGE MISCONCEPTIONS,
CHANGE MINDS,
CHANGE ATTITUDES.
WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE!**



Study Guide prepared by:
Voice of the Poor Committee
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