**RELIGION IN PRISON**

Research and assessment of this phenomenon indicates that has a **positive effect** on the organization of prisons, the behaviour of individuals and on treatment.

Historically, religion in prison has had a prominent position. The **Philadelphic System** (s. XVIII – XIX, William Penn, head of the Quaker religion) was **based on** solitude and silence, leading to reflection and so to repentance. Prisons should have a chapel where cell isolation 24/7 was the ideal for the **only allowed activity**: the study of the Bible.

**VOLUNTEERING IN PRISON**

Volunteers are considered **essential** by the Prison System to carry out the fundamental objective of imprisonment: **reintegration into society** (Circular 1/2001, Volunteer Management prisons of Catalonia).

In Spain, since its origin, volunteering in prison has been made from a **Christian evangelical motivation** (Martinez, 2001).

The first people were linked to religious organizations, especially the Catholic Church. They were gathered mainly to accompany the prison chaplain to perform activities to humanize and evangelize the inmates.

Today, the organization is through the Diocesan Pastoral Secretariat Prison (SEPAP), that **encourages and coordinates** those members who want to **work as volunteers** in prevention, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

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**RELIGION AND DESISTANCE**

Specific research on the relationship between religion and desistance determines that **there is a positive impact** on the process, but it is not stable over time. Results have been found in the first year after release.

Chu, (2007) found it about drug abuse, and Giordano (2008) points out the effect on the social network to help the individual to desist: the contact with a religious institution provides assets like a job, a home, emotional support, counselling, etc.

In Catalonia, over **30 %** of inmates use religious services.

A Cultural and Religious Diversity Committee was formed by Catholics, Pentecostals and Muslims.

**93 % of the research literature in this topic published since 1969 shows an inverse relationship between religiosity and recidivism** (Sturgis, 2008).

Why is this data significant? It indicates that **93 %** is positive, **7 %** is negative.

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**… IN CATALONIA**

In 2009, the Catalan Justice Department explored the situation, unfolding interesting results in the **inmate’s perceptions**. This results are the same in the English context (Home Office, 2001; Burnside, 2005).

- They value the non-profit work, solidarity and the fact that the volunteers do not belong to the Criminal Justice System
- They also appreciate the emotional support
- All these make them feel confident

This data gives a perspective that the volunteer work can be a **trigger for the desistance process** of those convicted.

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**RESEARCH DESIGN**

This project aims to **analyse religious practices** in the Catalan Prison System, especially with the lens focused on religious volunteering and the way it affects the **desistance process**. Our questions are:

- Does religion have an impact on the desistance process?
- What is the causal mechanism? Is it the same for all individuals?
- Do the work of religious volunteers have different impacts on inmates at release?

**1st** religious and non-religious volunteer programmes will be analyse to compare them (contents, teaching materials, the volunteers’ education, hidden curriculum) using **content analysis technique**.

**2nd** the desistance process will be study to examine the influence of those programmes. 3 typologies will be constructed: individuals who have participated in religious programmes, those who have participated in non-religious ones, and inmates that have not participated in either one, regardless the type of offences. To delimit the size of the sample **saturated speech technique** will be utilized.

**3rd** all members of the Cultural and Religious Diversity Committee will be **interviewed** to determine the management of the religious practice and their personal perception about the influence on treatment.