

Dear Friends in Christ,

The ACTS retreats have been an integral part of St. Anthony's over the past few years for our men, women, and teens. These retreats have done wonders in bringing so many of our parish to a deeper union with Christ. The time that the planning team puts into these retreats never ceases to amaze me. A couple of months ago I got a phone call from a lady in Fredericksburg asking for me to hear confessions for a women prison ACTS retreat in Lockhart. Up to that time I had no idea that ACTS retreats were done in the prison system.

Those who are in prison have made mistakes; that's why they're in prison in the first place. Their time away from society can be seen as a punishment but also an opportunity to reform their lives. Part of this reform has to do with establishing a relationship with the Lord. Most of these men and women are spiritually empty upon their imprisonment. Forced into cutting themselves off from the temptations of the world, they now have time to open themselves to His grace. Years ago a priest who had done prison ministry told me about his own experience. He made the remark that "some of the holiest people I've ever met were in prison. They become prayerful to the extent that they seem like monks in a monastery." The prison ACTS is a means for these inmates to continue their spiritual growth so that when they do go back into the world they are grounded in their faith.

It's quite easy to look down upon those in prison or forget they even exist. They are out of sight and out of mind. I'm delighted that parishioners of St. Anthony's have begun getting involved in this aspect of prison ministry. They are putting their faith in action by guiding these men and women to the foot of the Cross. Many of them have no concept of just how much God loves them. My recent visit to the prison this past weekend for the ACTS retreat was again a humbling experience. There was an enormous amount of healing that took place over those three days for these women. God's mercy is boundless and His presence was most definitely felt by all who attended.

In Christ,

Fr. Jason