



A striking Easter tradition in **Antigua** are the intricate sand designs called alfombras (Arabic for carpet) that line the streets. The multi-coloured 'carpets' are made of sawdust and sand and come in patterns of all kinds. Locals spend days creating these masterpieces only for them to be trodden through during the procession of people on their way to Church on Good Friday. They symbolise the fleetingness of life.



In **France**, chefs make a giant omelette on Easter Monday using thousands of eggs and feeds up to 1,000 people.



Predominantly Catholic **Poland** goes all out at Easter. On Palm Sunday, the congregation at Mass receive dried flower bouquets or pussy willow branches in lieu of palms. Home made Easter eggs are intricately painted with delicate multi-colour patterns [pisanki]. On Easter Saturday Polish families take baskets of food to be blessed by the Priest called swieconka [Shvjen-tzon-kah].





## **EASTER - A TIME FOR CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY 'FINDING DISMAS AT BELMARSH PRISON'**



In the Gospel of Luke 23.39-43 we read of the two thieves who were crucified alongside Jesus. One hurled insults to Him in despair to get him off the cross if he were indeed the Messiah. The other 'good thief' [known as Dismas] said that they had deserved their punishment but Jesus had done nothing to deserve His and asked Jesus to remember him when He comes into His kingdom.

Jesus' response is what we would all wish to hear on nearing death. 'This day you will be with me in paradise'. The beauty of our faith is that when we fall we are forgiven - when we make genuine atonement in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

At Easter and Christmas, Canon Victor visits prisoners both at Brixton and Belmarsh Prisons to say Holy Mass. For several years [since COVID] and up until last year, Catholic prisoners at Belmarsh were not allowed to celebrate Holy Mass but instead took part in an ecumenical service led by an Anglican deacon. Each one was invited to speak out in prayer. What was amazing and humbling to observe, was their thankfulness to God, saying for example, 'I am grateful that my loved one is coming to visit me with our baby who I have not yet seen' or 'I thank God I had a fair hearing at trial' or 'I am grateful for a roof over my head and food every day'. These men know they deserve their punishment but know also that they are accompanied by the triumphant and glorious Jesus.

Visiting those imprisoned is a corporal work of mercy, and is particularly meaningful on Divine Mercy Sunday, the second Sunday after Easter. Having a member of the family in prison places great financial and emotional stress on families, particularly on children. If you have a loved one in prison you can get help through PACT.

Pact is a pioneering national charity that supports prisoners, people with convictions, and their children and families. PACT provides caring and life changing services at every stage of the criminal justice process: in court, in prison, on release, and in the community.

Shockingly, over 100,000 children in the UK have a parent in prison. If you are affected by having a family member in prison call the PACT family helpline 0808 808 2003



### **Prayer**

If you want to know God, look at the Crucifix

If you want to love God, look at the Crucifix

If you want to know the infinite, eternal love of God, look at the Crucifix

If you wish to have a part in giving that same love to others, look at the Crucifix

If you want to know who you are and what you are worth, look at the Crucifix

If you want to know how you were saved from the jaws of hell, look at the Crucifix

If you want to know how much God wants to save your immortal soul, look at the  
Crucifix

If you want to know Who will lead you to Heaven, look at the Crucifix

If you want to live well, look at the Crucifix

If you want to die well, look at the Crucifix