

## Chapter 6

# Spiritual Help During Detention: Specific Responses to Different Stages and Types of Imprisonment

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**Abstract** The provision of spiritual advice in prisons must be adapted to a number of factors and, hence, cannot be reduced to a one-fits-all strategy for prisoners in various settings. This chapter describes the major topics and issues arising when providing spiritual advice. Two variables are of particular importance and must be taken into account by spiritual advisors: the type of facility in which the person is imprisoned and the duration of the imprisonment. After presenting an overview of the main issues encountered by those who provide spiritual advice in modern correctional institutions, the authors discuss possible solutions to existing problems. They argue that spiritual help in the correctional context should be understood within a wide context that cannot be reduced exclusively to religious ritualism but must also take into account other cultural and psychological considerations. An interdisciplinary approach for spiritual advice is proposed that combines more specifically spiritual or religious communication strategies and care solutions with those from other humanistic and care-providing disciplines.

The goal of this chapter is to show that the issues faced by those providing spiritual advice in prisons are not generally the same concerning all prisoners<sup>1</sup> and are not influenced only by individual needs. Nevertheless, for we can specify topics and issues that arise during encounters with imprisoned people when two dominant factors are taken into account: the type of facility in which someone is imprisoned and the duration of his or her imprisonment. In this paper we describe the issues with

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<sup>1</sup>In this chapter the terms prisoner and prison will be used synonymously with detainee and detention facility, including both pre-trial and sentenced prisoners and the related detention centers.

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which those who provide spiritual advice are confronted in modern correctional services named and solutions for the encountered problems and discuss. Spiritual help in this context has to be understood within a wide context, including work with religious symbols as well as work with methods from other humanistic and care providing disciplines.

## 6.1 Introduction

Spiritual advice in prisons is a form of counselling offered to every prisoner irrespective of religious affiliation (or absence of any). It is provided free-of-charge and the involved personnel are completely independent of the prison itself and of the justice system. The encounter with the spiritual advisors is non-judgemental during all phases during and after the judicial procedures. Prison spiritual advisors are sworn to secrecy: confidentiality is of very high importance for the credibility of any spiritual advisor and of the most precious value to prisoners. Knowing this allows prisoners to feel at ease and to discuss their concerns within a protected relationship. The problems reported by prisoners are mostly personal, prison or family related, autobiographical or of a religious nature. Personal guilt is the main reason for spiritual advice requests among prisoners. The fact that the spiritual advisor doesn't write reports of any sort for the authorities, for the prosecutors or for law enforcement, reduces mistrust.

Two factors affect the main challenges of spiritual advice in prisons: the type of facility in which someone is imprisoned and the duration of his or her imprisonment. In this chapter, we will outline questions and problems emerging with time, stage and type of imprisonment (e.g. remand, pre-trial and prior to deportation) and suggest ways in which spiritual advice for prisoners should react and take into account those factors. The second main part of this chapter will examine cases of convicted prisoners sentenced under Swiss Criminal Law (SCL) to undergo psychotherapy in a maximum security facility (Art. 59.3) or preventive detention (Art. 64). We will explore the challenges posed by these legal measures to spiritual advice in prisons with regard to the country of origin and religious affiliation of the convicted person.

Spiritual advice for prisoners requires different and expanded competencies in its work for promoting what we will call here the 'inner freedom' or 'spiritual balance' of imprisoned persons. This chapter focuses on the specific issues of spiritual advice in the context of Swiss detention facilities. Nevertheless, a significant degree of generalizability is recognizable as detainees in Switzerland come from many countries and religions. Our experiences in the Swiss context are similar to those described by colleagues from Germany, whose preventive detention mechanisms are comparable to those in Switzerland, and also consistent in some ways with lifetime convictions in other countries such as Canada (with the Dangerous Offender Designation).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>See Public Safety Canada. <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/crrctns/protctn-gnst-hgh-rsk-ffndrs/dngns-ffndr-dsgntn-eng.aspx>.

## 6.2 The Role of Spiritual Advice for Prison Health

Spiritual care in prisons is part of the care system in facilities containing accused and/or convicted prisoners. Spiritual advice for prisoners is often considered part of the task of social workers or of the care provided by psychologists. While it is true that both professional groups will be confronted with questions related to spiritual well-being, advice provided by personnel with specific religious training should be defined within a broader perspective. Those who provide spiritual advice work at the nexus of prison and society. They provide beneficial services not only to prisoners, but to the wider system. Similar to health care workers in general, they also have to acknowledge dual loyalties to the correction systems and to their religious entities such as for example the church that employs them. Such dual loyalties create particular work conditions, especially within a prison, a place that has been described as 'Total Institution' (Goffman 1968).

Spiritual advice in prisons cares as much about the development of just and efficient correctional systems as about its 'clients,' including their concerns about the criminal procedures, their prison experiences and their personal needs. The scope of advice is not limited to the spiritual dimension, but considers everything that threatens or restricts the 'inner freedom' of the accused or convicted client at a socio-cultural, economical, religious, ideological or personal level. The spiritual help provided addresses all these levels. Spiritual advisors have to be aware of the reality of a prison (its system and its life) as well as the objective and subjective reality of the prisoner in order to react in an adequate manner that offers personal attention to the individual detainee. The purposes of spiritual advice are defined within the context of imprisonment and of the personal distress of the clients. Sworn to secrecy, the chaplain cares about his or her clients in a healing, comforting, encouraging, liberating way and offers comfort, carefully regarding the client's autobiography and addressing the burdensome weight of guilt (Green 2013; Mitchell and Latchford 2010; Todd and Tipton 2011). All this should be done in a non-judgemental manner based on the resources of the advisor's background, faith and culture. Given this, we defend the approach that spiritual advice in prisons undertakes the major task to facilitate 'inner freedom' which can be reached through a form of (spiritual) healing that affects both the body and the soul.

## 6.3 The Main Problems in Prison Chaplaincy – Reasons for Today's Issues

In 1993 a prisoner committed a murder while on an unescorted leave of absence.<sup>3</sup> This incident, which is known in Switzerland as the 'murder of Zollikerberg,' has deeply affected the public and those working in the correctional system

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<sup>3</sup>Firstly reported in: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1. November 1993, S. 22.

(Röthlisberger 2005). The reaction of the prison system had significant consequences for prisoners. Since the early 1980s, i.e. before this crime, spiritual care for prisoners had already begun to change into a more professionally-equipped and specially trained profession. In the 1990s, Patrice Demestral and Dr. Willy Nafzger, both prison chaplains and pastors, introduced their educational programs for prison spiritual advice, raising it to a professional level. Since then, a post-graduate degree 'Pastoral Care in Swiss Correctional Systems' of a high academic standard is still offered today at the University of Berne. As a result of this innovative educative program and of the new ideas that emerged from it, the work of prison spiritual advisors was separated from that of parish ministries. Whoever wants to work in this field in Switzerland today, even as a part-time chaplain, is required to take this course and obtain certification (Advanced Studies of Prison Chaplaincy).

After the 'murder of Zollikerberg' in 1993, public safety and the need to prevent new victims became the top priority in the correctional system of Zurich and Switzerland in general. As a consequence, the staff in the psychological and psychiatric services of the canton of Zurich increased in number from 5 to more than 65 professionals at the present time. The professionals working in this service, jointly with other similar services offered in different cantons, have also developed a program focusing upon the psychological factors of dangerous criminal behaviour. The objective of this program is to reduce the inmates' probability of re-offending upon release. The pursuit of this aim is based upon a risk assessment and a prognosis of the probability for re-offending at present and within the subsequent 10 years.

Risk assessment has also become the main focus in social work. To this purpose, for example, a 'Dangerous Offender Commission' has been created in the canton of Zurich to make decisions concerning detainees who are assessed as dangerous to society. The purpose of the commission is to advise on the threats posed by these detainees and to assess the possibilities of success of their potential release trajectory (e.g. if they can be considered for moving a further step towards release in their trajectory). Its recommendation is based solely on existing files, without direct contact with the detainee.

These important developments greatly affect the practice of spiritual advice in prisons and required chaplains and other spiritual advisors to change and adapt to them. In this perspective, a 'spiritual only' line of work (i.e. working strictly with religious symbols like prayers and blessings) is too limited of a definition of the chaplaincy practice in prisons; hence it no longer represents a valid option. In contrast to that traditional and limited approach, appropriate spiritual advice, nowadays, must address real-life topics such as guilt and forgiveness, grace and reconciliation without fear of using methods from other disciplines. Prison chaplaincy has been enriched by competencies from various fields including psychology, psychotherapy, social work and community chaplaincy.<sup>4</sup> In addition, basic knowledge in the field

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<sup>4</sup>For more information visit the website of the Swiss churches for advanced training. [www.weiterbildungkirche.ch](http://www.weiterbildungkirche.ch).

of law enforcement and immigration policies has also become a required element in a prison chaplain's curriculum.

### ***6.3.1 Spiritual Advice and the Type, Nature and Timeframe of Imprisonment***

In the canton of Zurich facilities for pre-trial and sentenced prisoners are separate. The journey of a pre-trial detainee leads from the arrest – during the first 3–7 days in police custody – to investigative custody. The length of each phase depends on how quickly law enforcement makes the decision to pronounce criminal charges. The accused person remains in investigative custody until the trial date or until a decision is made regarding the possibility of transferring the person into a remand prison or a (forensic) psychiatry facility prior to the trial date.<sup>5</sup> The next step is sentencing. The sequential transfer into long term prison or a security facility depends on the outcome of the sentence: in case of sentences of up to 24 months, the person will be transferred into a standard security prison; those sentenced to indeterminate security measures will be transferred into a medium or maximum-security facility based on the detainee's perceived dangerousness. From the perspective of prison chaplaincy, there are specific differences between people serving custodial sentences and those for whom a court ordered indeterminate security measures, in most cases in the form of therapy in a closed facility. These clients are under the jurisdiction of SCL Art. 63, 59 or 64 (für Statistik 2007). Another specific case are individuals who are under immigration law and unwilling to leave the country; they are held in a deportation centre. Furthermore some people could also remain imprisoned because they are unable to pay a fine.

We will start with examining the main issues that arise during pre-trial detention. During the first days of imprisonment two different types of prisoners are prevalent. First, there are prisoners who were involved in drug-related crimes. These clients often live on the margins of society and know the procedure of imprisonment well. Their crimes are mostly small in legal terms: theft, drug abuse or drug dealing to finance their own drug addiction. More detailed information about this group will be provided in the paragraph on alternative custody.

The second type of pre-trial detainees prevalent in the first days of imprisonment is represented by the neophytes, i.e. detainees who are in prison for the first time. These prisoners usually lack experience regarding their current situation and often experience high levels of distress. Frequently, they are under shock due to the imprisonment and appear disoriented; many of them are in denial, show incredulity about the entire situation, or feel ashamed and desperate. If there is a

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<sup>5</sup>Those remarks are related to the group of accused who are actually imprisoned. There is a significantly larger group of accused people who are not imprisoned while waiting for their court date.

risk of collusion or the possibility that an accused prisoner might interfere with the investigation, the investigating administration can order restrictions. Examples of restrictions include: ban on reading newspapers, watching TV, having visitors or making phone calls. Only a few people are allowed to visit the detainee during this period; among those few is the spiritual advisor. Often, prison staff will call the chaplain or another spiritual advisor if they realize that prisoners are in need of human contact. Visits of spiritual advisors often interrupt the immense isolation of such prisoners and prevent them from deep brooding over their situation and from obsessive behaviour (e.g. the unceasing walking around in circles). During these visits the atmosphere is so tense that the task for the chaplain can be twofold: providing relief through techniques of crisis intervention and reassuring prisoners that they are not left alone. It is usually at this stage that praying provides strong relief. At this stage prisoners are relieved by the experience of not being judged by the chaplain but being seen as a human being, and not being defined by the accusation of having committed a crime regardless of whatever burden of guilt detainees may carry. The visit, which is in most cases offered spontaneously by the chaplain, shows to prisoners the existence of a world in which they are not exclusively seen as rejected and forgotten but as human beings in a crisis who still need and are worthy of affection and attention. Knowledge of the new Swiss federal criminal procedure law of 2011 allows the chaplain to provide some orientation help by pointing out existing possibilities for action, in addition to the crisis intervention and prayers. This means that a chaplain needs to acquire some knowledge about legal procedures, not in the sense of counselling in a strong legal sense, but in the sense of being a voice of reason in a time of great insecurity. This task of chaplaincy remains important throughout the entire first phase of imprisonment, especially because about 80 % of men in investigative custody are foreigners, hence accustomed to often very different justice systems and jurisdictions (Achermann 2009).

### **6.3.1.1 Concepts of Spiritual Advice During Investigative Custody: Dealing with Distress**

From the perspective of spiritual help, investigative custody presents a situation of escalation and consolidation. In Switzerland, investigative custody may be prolonged for as much as 3 months at a time, depending on considerations of risk of flight or collusion.

An important procedural opportunity in many encounters of spiritual advisors with the pre-trial detainee is the fact that, in Switzerland, the Bureau for Counsel for the Defence appointed by the court is part of the prosecutor's office. Seeing through the eyes of pre-trial detainees from a foreign culture who may not be accustomed to the same legal standards or procedures to which they are now subject, it is easy to perceive that detainees lack trust in this form of defence that seems too close to the prosecution authorities. Therefore, a recurrent task for the chaplain is to explain the justice system as well as the criminal procedural law to the detainees in order to minimize the psychological effects of suspiciousness and insecurity.

Of course this task should primarily be the duty of the legal counsel, but the frequency of contacts with the defence attorney varies based on the ability of a detainee to pay for those services. For detainees who depend on the obligatory and free defence attorneys, such contacts are often reduced to only once a month. In contrast, chaplains are usually able to visit a detainee once a week. As a consequence, it is easy to understand why these questions emerge repeatedly in spiritual advice. One pressing challenge for chaplains is to maintain and build helpful contacts with various actors of the legal system.<sup>6</sup>

In the process of investigative custody there are two main elements of interest: the first follows from the challenges caused by frequent interrogations that often lead to special emotional distress. Many detainees experience an urgent need to talk about their stressful experiences. It is important to recognise that prisoners can talk to spiritual advisors in a very different way than they may with prison guards, social workers and other prisoners (whom they may encounter during their daily hour's walk). Co-prisoners are part of a forced community that follows its own unspoken code. A major rule of this code is that prisoners have to conceal any weaknesses. In addition, the forced community has developed its own system of values concerning sexual offences; accordingly, prisoners accused or convicted of sexual offences rarely tell anyone about their past, as that would trigger violence from other prisoners. Detainees often think that guards are part of the criminal investigation and suspect them of being informers. Conversations about current events during the encounter with a spiritual advisor are highly important during this phase and may be accompanied and supported by religious acts such as prayers or blessings.

In general, the longer the period of imprisonment lasts, the more the shock of imprisonment decreases. This phenomenon can be better grasped through the following anecdotal evidence from one of the authors (FS) regarding the spiritual advice of a man imprisoned in a small Swiss remand prison for an attempted sexual offence. The man went through different and typical phases during his encounters with the spiritual advisor during pre-trial detention. When starting the spiritual advice sessions, this detainee offered the chaplain (FS) a cup of coffee. This act gave some kind of normalcy to the situation, evoking the freedom of an encounter outside a context of incarceration. In that situation, the detainee was able to view himself not exclusively as a person in need, but also as host. Conversations in this first phase may appear superficial, but serve to establish a basic relationship and trust. Only in the second phase of the encounters the detainee became able to talk about the crimes he was accused of. Because of the shameful and sexually violent connotations of the criminal charges he started to tell his story only when he came to realise that the chaplain's response was free of negative judgements and moral accusation. The description of the crime provided by the detainee at this stage, however, was still significantly different from reality. Only in the last part of this

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<sup>6</sup>See Street Level.

phase, when the prisoner was experiencing the relationship with the chaplain as stable, he was able to tell the facts and events in a transparent and reliable way.

In this phase of pre-trial detention it is useful for the spiritual advisor to be knowledgeable about the procedures and speed of a criminal inquiry, the frequency of contact with the officially appointed legal counsel, therapeutic measures according to SCL (Art. 63 and 59) and the advisability and possibility for the detainee to obtain a private defence attorney.

After that, there is in general a longer phase after the final interrogation when – in a legal sense – the detainee is mostly waiting for the next event, the court appearance. During this time the focus of prisoners tends to shift to their social, professional, private and family-related environment. For example, the prisoner mentioned above happened to have very little opportunity for contacts with the outside world, partly because of the criminal inquiry, and partly due to his family situation. Indeed, many families react in a hostile way to accused sexual offenders and family members and friends may refuse to stay in contact with the detainee.

Experiences in this last phase can be very depressing for detainees. In the case just described, the prisoner's ex-employer let the work place of the detainee stand empty for a while before firing him; in addition, his girlfriend abandoned him shortly after learning about his accusations. The only person who maintained a connection with him was his mother. She occasionally came to see him, but communicating through the glass caused difficulties for both of them. The father remained absent. The prisoner had to give up his apartment due to lack of income; friends from a club emptied it for him. Social pressure upon the whole family became enormous when the media made the case public and the isolation of the detainee increased further.

The events experienced by this detainee illustrate two main typical problems: first, the accused experiences what Goffman (1968) calls 'social death.' Second, the question is raised what should and can be the role of social work in remand prisons. If a pre-trial detainee lacks any intact familial or social structure – which experience shows is often the case – the individual is in danger of losing his or her social standing and self-definition or even their previous identity or position in life altogether. In addition, it is important to remember that the presumption of innocence must apply at this stage: the accusation could be false or perhaps cannot be proven sufficiently. Spiritual advisors have a duty that they will barely be able to fulfil: to offer or coordinate assistance with a high range of social problems emerging from imprisonment. To address them, their communication skills are highly needed in prison cells, partly to complement the lack of sufficient time of social workers, partly because they offer specific advice that goes further than the professional advice provided by social workers. From the point of view of prison chaplaincy it would be desirable to make available a community chaplaincy *outreach* project. Such a project would be mandated to establish and coordinate much needed links between prisons and the world outside, in cooperation with the prison chaplain.

During this phase of imprisonment pre-trial detainees may free themselves from the fixation on criminal inquiry and court procedures and begin to question the reasons and motivation which brought them into that situation. Usually, these questions

focus on the material causes of imprisonment, with little (moral) evaluation in terms of guilt or innocence. This reflection deals first of all with the reality of a detainee's life. Detainees start to examine factors, decisions, attitudes and ideas, which have contributed to their current situation.

During investigative custody, psychological care is mostly delegated to psychiatric emergency services. The reason for that seems to be related to the (not necessarily justified) perception in the canton of Zurich that therapy can rarely begin in a serious way before a detainee is sentenced, except in the special case of court orders to start therapeutic measures before the end of the trial. Other cantons in Switzerland have established psychiatric services that provide regular supportive care also to pre-trial detainees (Elger 2008). Pastoral and therapeutic competence of the spiritual advisor is challenged by the lack of therapy. If the relationship between the detainee and the chaplain is solid in this last phase of investigative custody and profound life-concerning topics arise, some form of minimal therapeutic competence is needed. However, spiritual advice does not systematically raise therapeutic issues nor avoids them in case they are raised by the detainee. It should be added here that minimal competence means that a spiritual advisor should be able to recognize severe psychological dysfunction of a detainee and advise or obtain directly professional help, e.g. in the case of acute suicidal intentions or a psychotic decompensation of a detainee.

As time in investigative custody is limited, pastoral and therapeutic skills should be used in a well-defined setting. Solution-oriented methods offer important competencies and skills for questioning and defining a contract between client and chaplain.<sup>7</sup>

### 6.3.1.2 Possible Solutions

The main problem with clients in investigative custody is the incredible stress level that this type of imprisonment causes: at this point of the encounter between the spiritual advisor and the detainee the future of the latter is unclear. This causes a very high distress for detainees, even if they are aware and admit the crime they committed. The question remains for them: what will happen to me and will there ever be a possibility of returning to my life, my family or my job? In investigative custody there are few options for dealing with the problems usually faced by detainees. To solve the issues of insecurity and existential questions with clients, it would be ideal to engage in interdisciplinary councils bringing together several professional groups including prison medical doctors, social workers, psychological staff, lawyers and chaplains in a manner that is respectful of the boundaries between those disciplines and the legal obligations of confidentiality for the different professions. The presumption of innocence is a prerequisite for this type of case management.

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<sup>7</sup>For more information see [www.weiterbildungkirche.ch](http://www.weiterbildungkirche.ch).

Such form of case management would contribute to a broader assessment of the needs of detainees. For example, the need for sleep medication could be mitigated if the social worker had knowledge of private information such as familiar pressures or job-related matters and could alleviate insomnia of detainees by providing help with the causes for it. At the same time, detainees would need fewer psychiatric interventions if anxiety can be avoided because the attorney helps a detainee to know the next steps and to have a realistic picture of time frames. For chaplains and other spiritual advisors, participation in this process would lead to a necessary widening of their skill-sets. In addition to their pastoral skills, chaplains need to gain competencies in various fields of expertise. For example, a cursory knowledge of foreign languages is becoming a fundamental requirement. The translation of legal documents and the promotion of the client's understanding of those documents are also crucial.<sup>8</sup>

Opportunities for psychotherapy during investigative custody are sadly lacking at the present time in many detention facilities. Therefore, spiritual advisors must have competencies and experience in crisis intervention as well as deeper therapeutic knowledge of a relevant psycho-therapeutic system (e.g. systemic, client centred, solution oriented or others) and be sensitive to time and frequency of visits in this setting.

The bond between social workers and spiritual advisors should be strengthened. For example, one frequent challenge for clients is that there are very few people willing to give a hand with the task of cleaning out the detainee's flat while he or she is imprisoned. Local parishes are often able to support social workers with volunteers who are happy to help.

### ***6.3.2 Being Sentenced and Beginning a Prison Term***

During trial and sentencing, spiritual advice has to face new and varied situations and to choose among different approaches. There are many issues to tackle for spiritual advisors that become exacerbated in closed prisons and forensic psychiatric facilities.

In this paper, the discussion will be limited to a few distinct types of detention, each of which raises specific questions to be addressed by spiritual advisors: halfway houses, semi-detention,<sup>9</sup> and other (alternative) types of custody including minimum security.

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<sup>8</sup>In some countries, there is a council of three men: inmate-selected, nominated and elected by other inmates and approved by wardens. This council could provide the basic help others need with translation etc. inside prisons.

<sup>9</sup>This term refers to semidetention ('Halbgefängenschaft'), describing a sentence serving 12 months or less. The prisoners are free during the day to do their work for a maximum of 13 h. At weekends and evenings they are imprisoned.

### 6.3.2.1 Halfway Houses and the Experience of Shame

With halfway houses we refer here to a form of open custody where sentenced detainees have the obligation to follow different types of treatment for addiction disorders or a program of resocialisation. In general, a certain time often elapses between sentencing and the beginning of the detention in a halfway house. Everyday life runs its course – and all of a sudden the start of the sentence is due. Experience in chaplaincy shows that details of the client's offence as well as the treatment requirements during the stay at the halfway house are kept secret as much as possible among detainees and the people with which they are in contact. Many detainees refuse to acknowledge their feelings of shame. For spiritual advisors this implies that any work on the reasons and the mode of delinquency, or any dialogue about the disturbing situation of imprisonment with the detainee is difficult. Spiritual advisors have to carefully and sensitively search for openings that permit to start a conversation in order to begin the process of working through the problems of the clients. Experiments with electronic monitoring in Basel and (soon) in Zurich with the aim to permit detainees to live in their own homes suggest that these problems will become more pronounced in the future, but will be thereby removed from the responsibilities of institutional spiritual advisors. Committal of the sentenced detainees to halfway houses will probably occur less frequently, because detainees are rather 'detained' to stay within a defined distance of their homes thanks to electronic monitoring. These offenders will be invisible to chaplaincy, and the challenge for spiritual advisors in those cases will be to find a way to know about those cases and to get permission to contact them at home in order to continue offering pastoral care in this special situation.<sup>10</sup> As reported in the literature, the issues of shame (Wurmser 1994) and secrecy are preoccupying detainees and can have harmful effects on mental health if they go untreated and unnoticed.

We report on the case of a man in a halfway house who was found guilty of having committed fraud and was sentenced to stay in this type of institution for 6 months. The fraud had been committed almost 2 years prior to the conviction. During the 2 years between the offence and the conviction, the man had been able to return to his normal life in an unconscious attempt to deny the sentence. He had more or less managed to live a life without contact with the justice system, found a new girlfriend and a new job and appeared very proud of what he had achieved so far. But then, suddenly, he had to start his halfway house detention. This event challenged his ability to handle the situation. The man felt overwhelmed by questions and doubts: What should he tell his girlfriend? How much should he tell his employer? As it is often the case, the first question to rise was: 'is there any person with whom I could talk?' Shame is an extremely powerful emotion and is known to discourage sharing this experience with others. Spiritual advisors have to

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<sup>10</sup>Canadian community chaplain Patricia Wilson in Halifax /NS, speaking in a private interview about her work in this field with electronic monitoring and people under house arrest, reported that both types of punishment often lead to shame.

be sensitive to these difficulties and find ways to subtly inquire about the detainees' well-being. Shame can make detainees take far-reaching decisions, for example, to leave a partner, the girlfriend in this case, in order to avoid disclosing information about the committed crime. The risk, in this context, is that such a decision of secrecy about someone's present situation can lead to loneliness in a time when the comfort and encouragement of other people is strongly needed.

### 6.3.2.2 Resolution of the Issue

Halfway houses are not necessarily offering the service of spiritual advice, due to the prevailing opinion that such form of detention is *easier to support* than detention in a closed prison. However, even in a halfway house, detainees have to face a high level of distress because of social and family-related issues, possible upcoming financial problems, shame about what has happened and unresolved autobiographical issues.

In this context, two points must be clarified. First of all, the service of spiritual advice should be accessible for everyone. The thought that, in open forms of detention, whoever is in need of support could speak to a spiritual advisor in his or her religious community overlooks the reality that shame often prevents otherwise instinctive and rational help-seeking behaviour. Therefore, the initiative has to be on the side of the help-offering person: spiritual advisors should come and offer counsel and advice on pressing matters and should actively explore feelings of shame concerning past crimes. They should help their clients to accept and not to suppress their feelings of shame and to understand that emotions have a meaning and can be overcome with time.

Second, spiritual advisors need specific competencies in dealing with shame. They need to learn how to encourage detainees to be mindful and to acknowledge their emotion and to take responsibility for their own lives. Studies have shown that this type of psychological approach in which spiritual advisors could take part, has an effect to facilitate reintegration and to prevent further offences (Kesten et al. 2011).<sup>11</sup>

### 6.3.3 Other Types of (Alternative) Custody

In order to analyse the challenges for spiritual advice in other types of (alternative) custody, including semi-detention where a detainee only spends the night in prison, we will have to consider again the difficulties faced by detainees in the beginning of any prison or alternative custody sentence. Many detainees are from vulnerable populations, they come from the margins of society and have never found – or have

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<sup>11</sup>See also the program 'start now' under the direction of RL Trestman: [http://cmhc.uchc.edu/programs\\_services/startnow.aspx](http://cmhc.uchc.edu/programs_services/startnow.aspx).

lost – access to the so-called *civil world* due to risky behaviour such as (poly)drug-abuse or alcoholism. These detainees tend to serve short sentences. Therefore, spiritual advice should mainly concentrate on helping offenders to reflect on and initiate discussion of possible further and imminent steps. Here, spiritual advisors must take the initiative in reaching out to and collaborating with other services for the good of their clients. They should aim at working collaboratively with social services, as well as with federal and non-governmental providers of housing and care after prison discharge. From the point of view of prison chaplaincy, it is an obvious step to put into place an outreach office that works on the threshold between prisons and the community in order to develop solutions for and with the client who is willing to risk an (other) attempt to restart his life. The concept of this service is well-known in the Anglo-Saxon correctional and church services under the label of ‘community chaplaincy’ (Bunniss et al. 2013).

### **6.3.3.1 Solutions**

Since the prison sentence is usually relatively short (from a few days to 6 months), time is usually a crucial factor in alternative custody. The time spent in prison may be seen by some marginalised clients as a period for rest and renewal of mental and physical strength. During this time, it is important to work together with social workers and medical personnel. The main task of spiritual advisors is to help everyone to think about the situation together and to discern possible next steps in the collaborative process. As spiritual advice compared to other professionals has specific means and a specific explanatory context – spirituality – to address and interpret the situation, it is recommended that a qualified community chaplain or other type of spiritual advisor is available and ready to accompany the client through these steps if the detainee agrees.

In collaboration with social workers and institutional chaplains, community chaplains could address the need for a bridge between the world within the facilities and the outside world, with the task of providing outreach programs or discussing opportunities with the client. In other words, a major goal is to work towards a new and less self-destructive life for the client.

### **6.3.4 Custody for Deportation and the Issues of Rage and Grief**

This kind of imprisonment, in Switzerland, is a purely administrative measure within immigration law and not, strictly speaking, based upon the violation of criminal law. Therefore, it should be clearly distinguished from investigative or prison custody. The time frame of custody for deportation is limited, and since the agreements between the EU and Switzerland have been in place, the duration of stay for people detained under immigration law has shortened considerably. New regions of crisis emerge continually worldwide, with changing socio-cultural and

geographic or religious conditions. Nonetheless two key issues remain constant: personal fate and the question of justice in the world. These two issues repeatedly produce tears and rage in the men and women with whom spiritual advisors come into contact. Fear arising from the uncertainty of the trip to the country of origin is common. Reasons for such fears may be related to complex family contexts, as well as the experience of failure, or the question of whether or not suppression of threats to the life and integrity of the persons themselves or their ethnic group will continue. Questions surrounding economic realities may also be at stake. With regard to this kind of custody, the question of justice is important at several levels: personal, social and economic. It is the task of the spiritual advisor to bear and to support this reflection, the rage and helplessness of the detained persons. But it is also necessary for spiritual advisors to be able to explain some of the realities of the global world and its disparate systems of society and economy in a realistic and knowledgeable way. Moreover, these answers need to be framed in a theological or multi-religious context. Justice in a secular belief-system can reflect different contents than in a Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu system.

Men and women in this type of custody usually show emotional responses such as rage and frustration (Graf et al. 2013). Typical claims heard in custody for deportation according to the first author's own experience include: 'I've done nothing!'; 'I didn't steal!'; 'I didn't kill!'; 'I've just tried to build myself a new life in this part of the world!'; 'Now I'm imprisoned for nothing and I don't know when I am allowed to go!'; 'Do you think this is right?'

It is a great challenge for spiritual care in a multi-cultural society to gain fundamental knowledge of unfamiliar systems of thought, while remaining open to personal encounters that reflect broad and diverse perspectives.

#### **6.3.4.1 Solution**

The key problems related to injustice in the context of custody for deportation obviously cannot be entirely and exclusively solved by the spiritual advisor. However, in this kind of custody, the chaplain must actively mobilize and expand his own knowledge and empathy resources. With many clients coming from foreign countries, there is a way to ease their pain by connecting with them: namely, by remembering that the chaplain is a pastor and responding spiritually. Even when those in custody are believers in a non-Christian religion, the chaplain can establish a connection with them by relating moments of grief and pain to the blessings of a 'Supreme Entity' that are pertinent to the clients and their situation. In this way, clients can usually find a common ground for joining in prayers and intercessions. In such moments in life, it is not the differences between religions that matter, but rather the encounter with another human being and the shared connection to the spiritual world. Prayers, blessings, rosaries, crosses and representations of other faiths are extremely important as is the reassurance that the 'God,' or 'divine presence' in the client's worldview is present in time of need.

Yet, even this may not be sufficient. In addition, it is important to be very *serious* about the issues of justice. Discussing the lack of justice in this world is a way to bring reality back into the situation of the imprisoned client. Since lack of justice occurs at almost every level of human experience, it is important to be able to relate to it in a multilevel way, including the personal, the economic, the socio-cultural and several other levels. These are the competencies which a spiritual advisor should acquire in order to be truly helpful in the context of custody for deportation.

## **6.4 Challenges in Closed Facilities and Forensic Psychiatric Therapeutic Facilities**

### **6.4.1 *Conditions for Chaplaincy: Cultural and Religious Factors***

In Switzerland, up to 80 % of pre-trial detainees and 70 % of sentenced prisoners come from foreign cultures (für Statistik 2010). While the multiplicity of languages is a relevant topic in investigative custody and requires multi-lingual abilities of the spiritual advisor, this problem vanishes almost completely in closed facilities. The average duration of a stay in those high security prisons is 3 years (not including the time detainees have already served in investigative custody) – long enough to learn the national language sufficiently for conversations with the chaplain.

In this multi-cultural setting the primacy of a Christian chaplaincy service has been questioned. The answer provided is partial and refers to the understanding that the chaplaincy mandate in Switzerland is aimed at the care of the whole of society and that it is an agreed fundament of the Swiss constitution that in many situations the confederation and church share a task (Widmer et al. 2008).<sup>12</sup> Within the mandate of spiritual advice for society, all ethnic, cultural, and religious diversities are included as a matter of course.

In contrast, among prisoners sentenced to a therapeutic measure under SCL Art.59.3 or Art.64 – Swiss people are predominant (around 70 %); this group is around 70 % Christian (für Statistik 2010).

### **6.4.2 *Persons Sentenced to Indeterminate Security measures***

Persons sentenced to indeterminate security measures are in general under the obligation to undergo mandatory psychiatric and other types of treatment.

In Switzerland, criminal law distinguishes two types of indeterminate security measures. Clients belonging to the group of people under Art 59.3 of the Swiss

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<sup>12</sup>See also See Nationale Forschungsprogramme Schweiz (2011).

criminal law code are sentenced to an in-house therapeutic measure that is to be re-evaluated after 5 years. Courts may produce a request of release from prison, or decide that the security measures should continue in an appropriate form (für Statistik 2007). The experience of the last author during 20 years of prison medicine has shown that reluctance is often considerable to release prisoners who have been considered dangerous in the past, even if the risk of a re-offence is low. Indeed, those who have to decide about release are often held responsible if a released prisoner commits another crime and media attention is very high. In this context, detainees may feel under extensive psychological pressure which can be intensified by the fact that annual therapeutic reports will be established to inform the annual re-examination of the sentence by the office responsible for the security measures.

We need to distinguished are the cases of clients in indefinite detention under Art 64 of the Swiss criminal law code that became part of the revision of the code in 2006 in the context of an increased focus on protection of society over the last 10 years.

The statistics summarizing sentences under Art 59.3 during the past years show that the number of prisoners under security measures is steadily growing.<sup>13</sup> That means clients needing intense care from chaplaincy will increase further in the future.

#### 6.4.2.1 Challenges for Spiritual Advice

Any comfort that comes from the certainty of a definite time frame of incarceration lacks completely during indefinite imprisonment. In his book 'Ärztliche Seelsorge' (1946), the Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl reflected upon a personal observation he made while being a prisoner in a concentration camp: the pressure of indefinite imprisonment can induce a feeling of no future (Frankl 1946). It becomes almost impossible to set goals, existence is reduced to the present moment, and life threatens to lose its content and meaning. This feeling that there is 'no future' can lead to dramatic consequences including total neglect and suicidal tendencies (Frankl 1946). The absent or unknown date of release is a common factor between indefinite detention under SCL and Frankl's observation.

Indefinite sentences lead to more persistent and pressing existential issues for spiritual advisors and the health care team, in particular issues of ageing and death. In this context, one of the most urgent questions for spiritual advice in prison is if and how age, sickness or dementia will affect risk assessments concerning re-offence. It is often recognised by experts that age is a soft factor in re-offending prognosis tools (Lösel 2010; Tinik and Hudak 2014). Yet, even if it is possible to weigh age as an important factor in prognosis, such an analysis tends to neglect

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<sup>13</sup>See Bundesamt für Statistik: Kriminalität, Strafvollzug – Daten, Indikatoren, Sanktionen und Untersuchungshaft: Erwachsene (<http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/19/03/03/key/ueberblick/03.html>).

that there are many unknown factors, especially in the context of mental and physical illness. From direct observations made by the first author in the context of imprisonment, it can be inferred that acute phases of disease cannot be predicted accurately, since actual physical and mental changes in the course of disease and the slow machinery of administrative evaluation are almost never in mutual accord. The low chances of being released once a security measure is decided lead to many cases of virtually indeterminate imprisonment and this has significant effects on the personal dignity of ill prisoners. The first author has observed several cases where dignity was negatively affected, especially from a chaplain's perspective. Imagine, for instance, a person transferred to the outside hospital 2 days prior to death; since the person is judged as extremely dangerous because of his or her status of indefinite detention, the routine security procedure is applied. That means that two police officers are appointed to keep watch at the door of a dying human being, a situation that would appear paradoxical and morally problematic.

Nowadays, there is a consensus between correctional services and spiritual advisors that such a scenario is morally not acceptable because it is not in line with respect for human dignity. From the perspective of the dying prisoner, a new inner existential process has begun – and the violation of human dignity resulting from the application of the standard procedure is seen as endangering this process in an unjustified way. In addition, from the perspective of the divine (however conceived) the existential condition of a dying human being demands the same respect for all persons, independently of the legal definition of 'dangerous person.'

In light of what has been said so far, the following normative claim is advanced which unites spiritual advisors from various backgrounds: Human dignity shall be inviolable. This claim must hold true for every single person, including the most violent criminal.<sup>14</sup> Human dignity is an intrinsic value. It is violated when a certain group is denied the opportunity to die with dignity. The protection of human dignity must be one of the greatest duties for society.

Being a constitutive component of the life cycle, the process of dying must be allowed to unfold in the most dignifying state possible for as long as the dying person is under the custody of the government. Indeed, true respect for human dignity would mean that human beings should die outside of detention facilities. However, the fear that a detainee could still be dangerous even at the end of life has led to increased reluctance of authorities to pronounce an interruption of the sentence upon medical advice at the end of life. This has significant implications for the education of prison staff given the enormous amount and quality of care required by vulnerable persons such as people affected by dementia, critical illnesses or displaying peculiar needs during the dying process.

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<sup>14</sup>See German constitution Art 1(1): 'Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.'

From a prison chaplain's perspective, it is recommended that the following merciful procedure should be acknowledged as minimum standard of care: a shortened risk assessment for at least the three following categories of people:

- (a) Detainees suffering from acute or chronically-acute conditions
- (b) Detainees diagnosed with dementia or presenting severe age-related cognitive decline
- (c) Dying prisoners

The main question to address is how such decisions can be made responsibly in prisons where security issues have to be balanced with respect for the dignity of dying prisoners. The first step would be to request a medical evaluation of the prognosis and of the remaining physical abilities of the detainees. Problematic in this respect is the lengthiness of administrative procedures. It is crucial to be able to make decisions timely based on the changing conditions of an ill prisoner. A place where prisoners can die with dignity should be found in advance and proportionate security measures should be decided in advance. Spiritual advisors in prison can help to engage in the dialog with authorities to find humane solutions that are possible within the legal context.

The following case observed by the first author can serve to illustrate the difficulties spiritual advisors encounter when taking care of detainees sentenced to indeterminate security measures. A man who had been imprisoned for over 20 years and was suffering from the conditions of his imprisonment advanced a request to share with the spiritual advisor his feeling about indefinite detention. From the resulting conversation it emerged that his suffering was primarily of social and psychological nature because he blamed a lack of contact with the world. Because of his social isolation he increasingly experienced prison as a hostile environment. This individual experience is not rare. As human beings' well-being depends on the benevolent 'you' of the other it is understandable that prisoners suffer from the fact that their 'you' is restricted to other prisoners and guards who are rarely in a position to represent a benevolent 'other.' Despite the varying conditions throughout Swiss prisons it is a common experience that restrictions and prohibitions (e.g. diminished possibilities to be visited or to make phone calls, prohibition of cell phones, censoring of mail, impossibility of writing and receiving e-mails etc.) are for many prisoners very hard to bear. Indefinite detention is a security measure imposed in the interest of public safety to prevent the inmate from re-offending. However, the concept of punishment applies to crimes that have been already committed, not for those one might commit in the future. Knowing this, the situation of a prisoner with a limited sentence is clearly different from that of a prisoner who has served his time but remains detained not because he deserves further punishment, but in order to prevent a risk to society. This risk may be statistically small but since the consequences can be severe, i.e. sexual abuse or physical harm to others, those who have to make these decisions often tend to be risk averse and to decide in favour of prolonged detention in doubtful cases.

For the detainees this often results in feelings of helplessness and the impression of having lost control over their lives. The situation of being imprisoned for over

20 years with only four hours of visiting time per month, with only 120 min per month for phone calls, the knowledge that every written word will be read by the prison staff, and the impossibility of using modern communication tools (such as cell phones, text messaging or e-mails) is very likely to generate a partial or even total loss of social contact. As time passes, it becomes hard to find anyone who is willing to visit or who wants to be called. Imprisonment can lead to the social death of a person (Liebling and Maruna 2013). Prolonging this situation for an indefinite amount of time is, in itself, a very strong interference with human rights and has the detrimental consequences on physical and mental health and spiritual wellbeing. From the perspective of spiritual advice, this situation is perceived as endangering the spiritual health of a person as the social and communitarian context is a key element of the spiritual dimension. Having committed a crime and being incarcerated leads to being reallocated to a facility (i.e. the prison) and a community (i.e. prisoners and guards) which have not been freely chosen by the detainee. Nonetheless, it is possible and even desirable to provide prisoners with the opportunity to celebrate and live their personal spiritual life within and despite of these constraints. This function can be primarily implemented by the spiritual advisor. Spiritual care, indeed, can introduce a new element of sense even in the context of indefinite incarceration. Since indefinite detention also implies the difficulty to determine where punishment ends and security measures begin, detainees may be facing indeterminate feelings of shame. Sometimes the experience of prolonged punishment is only relieved by death. Some form of perceived inner freedom, i.e. the feeling to remain the 'captain of [one's] soul,'<sup>15</sup> to have maintained control over their own spiritual life, is for inmates one of the most important issues that spiritual advisors in prison must address, not only with regard to the clients themselves but also to the community at large.

To appreciate what it means to address freedom as a spiritual help issue, the following case of a sentenced paedophile may be paradigmatic. This person had undergone many years of therapy in the prison system and experienced over 20 years of various psychological approaches. After a first, more favourable evaluation, he faced the threat of being re-assigned and falling back into indefinite detention during his next re-evaluation. At that stage, true spiritual help appeared crucial to maintain contact with the client and to be aware of the client's fear and desperation without minimizing or worsening it. This goal was accomplished by more frequent visits of the chaplain. In that specific situation, it was fundamental to help the prisoner discover the range of (inner) freedom, albeit limited, to which he could have access.

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<sup>15</sup>See in this context the famous poem 'Invictus' by Arthur Quiller-Couch that helped Nelson Mandela to keep his inner freedom during his long imprisonment. Its last part was cited by B. Obama: 'It matters not how strait the gate/How charged with punishments the scroll/I am the master of my fate/I am the captain of my soul' (Memorial 2014).

## 6.5 Conclusion: Spiritual Help and Freedom

The search for spiritual healing calls upon the role of the spiritual advisor to support and favour contacts of detainees with people outside prison. This role is crucial for facilitating connections with the world outside prison and for supporting the families of prisoners. Authentic spiritual help would also include working in multiple ways to address the issue of (inner) freedom. This issue should be addressed in several ways: philosophically, psychologically, theologically or in whichever way it presents itself in the client-advisor encounters. The purpose of this freedom-creating work is to assist and support prisoners in the process of understanding how the meaning of life can be preserved within prison walls and how life after imprisonment is still worth living. Freedom, in this definition, is primarily conceived as *inner freedom*, that is the possibility to understand who you are, what your life really is about, the act of trying to live in the current situation without fear and the perception to remain ‘captain of one’s soul.’ Creativity is the key to this kind of spiritual work. This is illustrated by an emblematic case that occurred during a spiritual care project in which the first author was personally involved and which used rap as a means of self-expression. A young man was enrolled in the project with the goal to help him to increase his inner freedom. At the beginning, however, he was only capable to rap about drugs and violence in a way that was not helping him to perceive the deeper meaning of his life. But after discussing his rap lyrics with a group of fellow inmates, he was able to move forward and to find the confidence and inner freedom to address the deeper issues that were underlying those lyrics. The group discussion motivated him to accept being confronted with values and meanings related to his experience of imprisonment, his future and the people he loved, such as his mother. This generated in him the desire to make his mother proud of him again.

‘I find myself standing at the prison gates feeling so helpless. Where should I go now? What’s happening to me next? Freedom so endless – but there will be no help. Who needs a prisoner from the compound? Thank God I have mother in my life. Still one more chance to make her proud.’ (by Level Zero)<sup>16</sup>

Connected with the issue of indefinite detention and its place within the correctional system is the issue regarding the anthropological stance of spiritual care (Geist 2010). This issue represents a constant challenge for chaplaincy and spiritual care in general. For example, the Christian anthropological stance in prison chaplaincy finds its starting point in the biblical notion of *Imago Dei* (Gen 1, 26ff).<sup>17</sup> According to Christian anthropology what could be said about God can also be said about men. From this perspective it is believed that, although it may be hard

<sup>16</sup>Song ‘for my moma’ by Level Zero from the CD ‘Through the walls’ edited by prison hope, release planned for spring 2013.

<sup>17</sup>See the Bible Gen 1.26ff: ‘And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them’ (Jacob et al. 2007).

sometimes to see a man as an image of God, it is the task of the spiritual advisor to emphasize the potential that every human being has, even if it is unseen for the time being. In this anthropological stance, no man can be viewed as forever defined the same, unchangeable and therefore untreatable. Part of the fundamental work of every spiritual advisor in prison must be to proclaim this anthropological approach of creative freedom that each single human is to be conceived as *imago Dei* and to help and support prisoners independently of their crime. Failing to accomplish this goal would have profound consequences for society.

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