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Cuba OKs organized religious services in prisons

by Tom Gallagher

NCR Today

My most recent mission management article, describes the importance of prison ministry, especially in helping ex-offenders find jobs.

Today, Cuba announces that Catholic and Protestant inmates will now be allowed to attend Roman Catholic Mass and Protestant services inside prisons. This is a substantial step forward by the Cuban government. However, Jewish inmates and other believers are not included in this new policy for unknown reasons.

According to Jose Aurelio Paz, a spokesman for the Protestant Cuban Church Council, who attended the meeting with Cuban government officials, "Cuban prisoners could previously worship "on a personal level." When inmates sought guidance from a Catholic or Protestant leader, they were allowed to meet with one individually. Now they are going to not only be able to meet, but also use hymn books, Bibles and crosses as part of ceremonies," Paz said by telephone.

The policy change follows a 2007 request by representatives from the Latin American council of Catholic bishops for the right to celebrate Mass in Cuba's prisons.

Let's pray that non-Christians can enjoy the benefits of this rule change as soon as possible.

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