

- 1 In the early 1800s a child could be hanged for stealing. Society's attitude to those committing crimes was very harsh.
- 2 Elizabeth Fry set out to visit the women in Newgate Prison in London. The governor of the prison told her that the women were wild. He himself never entered except with soldiers to guard him, but she was determined to go to them. There she found 300 women living in filthy conditions, and without heat or light or fresh air. There were no places for washing, and no beds - just straw on the floor. Perhaps worst of all, the women's children lived with them in the prison.
- 3 *"Together we can make this prison a better place,"* Elizabeth Fry said to the women. *"Let us work together and ask for God's help,"* she said. Others volunteered to visit the prison and help improve conditions there, along with the prisoners themselves. Medicines, clothes and food were brought in. Elizabeth showed the women how to sew and knit, and they began to make clothes for themselves and their children. One of the prisoners became a teacher for the children there.
- 4 Elizabeth Fry approached Members of Parliament, newspaper editors and other influential people, to help in reforming prison life. *"Prisons are not just places for punishing people,"* she said. *"We must help them to lead better lives. Kindness will do far more than cruelty."*
- 5 Elizabeth told of the need to provide work materials for the prisoners. She brought about so many changes for the better that she was asked to visit prisons throughout Britain and other European countries.
- 6 Elizabeth Fry shared with the women her great faith in God's love, and she prayed

with them. She died on this day in 1845, having influenced many people to change their attitude towards prisoners.

7 *Let us pray:*

**God our Father,
one of the greatest yearnings
of the human spirit
is to be free,
and we know
that there are many kinds
of restriction
that limit and confine us.
Inspire us today to help others
to grow in freedom
through the respect
and understanding
and kindness
that we can offer.
Amen.**

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org