NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Children's book explains process of visiting a family member in prison

Mary Ann McGivern | Nov. 11, 2013 NCR Today

Rebecca Myers has written a children's book, *Someone I Know Lives in Prison*, about making a trip to a prison to visit a family member. The color illustrations by John C. Crews are muted with sepia tones. The people are white, black, Asian, Hispanic -- though the judge is very white.

It is a beautiful book about visiting family in a men's prison. It is also a tough book, telling tales of the barbed wire at the top of the fence, going through metal detectors and carrying change for the vending machine in a clear plastic baggie. During the visit, the prison count occurs, and all the inmates stand in line while the families sit at tables and watch.

The book is about the experience of going to the prison, not about the family visit itself. But the page about carrying in change and leaving everything else in the car says, "It is simple when you visit prison because only people matter, not the things that were left in the car." I'd say it's for ages 4 to 8, but I can see older kids studying the drawings closely to prepare themselves or to test if the book matches their experience.

I've asked around, and nobody I know in the children's literature field has seen a book like it. If a parent is in prison, the odds are great that the children will grow up to be incarcerated themselves, but until now, nobody has given the children a tool to make some sense of the experience of having a parent locked up or to open the possibility of conversation with other kids or teachers or family members about that parent.

"What's it like?" is always a good place to start a conversation, and this book is about what it is like to visit someone in prison. It is beautifully made and meets a need for several million children.

The books are $12 each and can be ordered here [1]. The bulk rate for 50 or more is $7. I hope a lot of schools and groups that work with the families of prisoners get this book for Christmas.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/01/2015 - 01:49*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/childrens-book-explains-process-visiting-family-member-prison

Links:
[1] http://www.asca.net/system/assets/attachments/6121/Book%20Order%20Form.pdf?1375408369