



PRISON VOICE

January 2020

Vol. XVII

Issue 5

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹ 20/-



**CELEBRATION OF
LOVE
BEHIND THE BARS**



Christmas Celebration



Attingal Sub Jail, Kerala



Goa



Guwahati



Idukki



Neyyatingara



Kerala

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Are You Willing?

*"Help a Prisoner's Child
Prevent a Potential
Criminal"*

*80% of the children of
prisoners are potential
criminals unless somebody
takes care of them. Prison
Ministry India has begun
a scheme to educate 1000
children of prisoners:*

Kindly contribute

*Rs. 5,000/- for the education
of a child.*

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Editor's View

Jesus Christ gave the world the lesson of love!! He taught us that we are all from the same source and are related to each other in some way or the other. That is the reason we, the PMI volunteers, reach out in love to our brethren behind the bars, to share the divine love of the little babe from the manger to these broken beings in our society. Christmas was the best occasion for each of the PMI volunteers to actualize this lesson on love as we were well prepared, beginning with our prayers for our brethren and the jailors. We had walked many a time to get permission from the superintendents and our Lord had made it possible for us to carry on our mission in many of the prisons.

The jingling of bells and the adorable decorations at every corner of the city indicated the onset of Christmas season. As we prepare for Christmas our hearts would be filled with excitement and joy. Decorating Christmas trees with ornaments, welcoming guests, baking cakes and cookies, singing carols, and exchanging gifts make Christmas the most awaited holiday of the year.

But what about for our brethren behind the bars? Does it make any difference in their lives? Morning to evening seems to be the same for them behind the thick walls of prisons. Are they all going to decorate their barricades? Are they going to make a special plum cake? I went to the Bangalore Central Prison to meet the superintendents to exchange new year greetings and to provide them with the PMI calendar. I had carried 10 pieces and

when I reached the women's section, I was surrounded by many of the women prisoners who requested a calendar. In response, I said that it had been brought for the superintendents.

To my surprise, the women prisoners stated, "We are here inside without any inkling as to the days and dates. We have nothing in our room to tell us which date it is. Please give us one piece for our room." I distributed all the calendars to the prisoners.

I salute at this moment all our PMI volunteers who made this Christmas a joyful and grace-filled one for the people who are behind the bars by sharing little gifts, cakes, prizes and messages of love. We admire your commitment and hard work in organizing this event of love in various prisons and making them happy. In this issue, we have highlighted the reports of Christmas celebrations from various prisons, and the celebrations with released prisoners and their families.

Thank you, dear volunteers, for responding and living this invitation, "Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them" (Heb 13: 3). A child has been born for us and he is named Jesus. May our Lord Jesus bless each of you and your families.



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
Chief Editor

**We are here
inside without
any inkling as
to the days
and dates**

WISHING YOU ALL BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS, TREASURED MEMORIES AND ALL THE BLESSINGS FROM ABOVE. MAY GOD'S LOVE GUIDE YOUR WAY IN 2020.

REDEEMING MISSION: 40 DAYS PROGRAMME



Rev Dr Francis Kодиyan MCBS
National Coordinator & Secretary to CBCI
for Prison Ministry India

December 12, 2019. I was in Delhi. It was 4 PM. Fr David, Sr Kokila, Sr Winnifred and I were in Tihar prison campus. We were waiting at the main gate of Prison Number Two for the Christmas programme. A blue-coloured police bus slowly came and stopped near us. Two prisoners came out of the bus. They were guarded by many policemen with guns. These prisoners were chained on their legs. Their waists also were chained. There was another chain connecting their legs to the waist. The scene was frightening. The very sight reminded me of hardcore criminals such as those condemned to death, terrorists, mafia leaders, serial killers, rapists and so on. Usually, when we visit prisons, we see only the small fishes such as petty case offenders, robbers, murderers, and so on. Like how the big sharks and whales remain under the deep-sea, the hardcore criminals are in high-security prisons and are not permitted to come to our programmes. What does PMI do for those condemned to death living in the death-row? What do we do for the reformation of terrorists? What shall we do for the transformation of mafia gangsters?

DRC - Death Row Commandoes

There are more than 250 people who are condemned to death in Indian prisons. There are more than 2500 condemned-to-death prisoners in the USA. All over the

world, there are more than 20000 death-row prisoners. PMI has a great role to play in their reformation and redemption. With this intention, PMI launched a new mission called DRC - Death Row Commandoes. Their duty is to pray and fast for the reformation of those that live in death-rows. The most important spiritual weapon for this mission is the Holy Mass - the offering of the body and blood of Jesus for their transformation. Eucharistic adoration and voluntary sacrifices will be very beneficial to this mission. In the course of time, we will seek the possibility to personally visit and counsel them. St Therese of Lisieux, patron of this mission, was such a commando who by offering Holy Mass and mortifications led to the repentance of Pranzini, a hardcore triple murderer. The 1996 Oscar Award film *Deadman Walking* distinctly depicts the role of DRC. This film presents Matthew Poncelot, a cruel criminal, murderer and an inhuman rapist. He was in prison, condemned to death for the brutal rape and murder of a young girl and her boyfriend. Susan Sarandon, the heroine who got the 1996 best actress Oscar Award, plays the role of DRC - an exemplary Catholic Nun, Sr Helen. If you are ready to be part of this mission, please let me know. To begin with, please visit your neighbouring contemplative communities and invite them to pray for this intention.

TSS - Terrorists Saving Squad

The number of terrorists and terrorist groups is on rapid growth. Every day there emerge new terrorist groups. We are familiar with Islamic State, Al-Qaida, Boko Haram, Taliban and so on who do heinous crimes of killing innocents, raping women and demolishing religious monuments and cities. All the more alarming is that there is always a long queue of youngsters ready to join them. PMI has a vital role to play in their salvation. We thought of forming a new squad - TSS - Terrorists Saving Squad - for their transformation and salvation. You are most welcome to join this squad. As an initial step, please visit your nearby perpetual adoration centres and retreat centres to speak to them about this new PMI mission and ask them to offer their adoration and prayers for this intention.

MR - Mafia Redeemers

There are innumerable mafia gangs who do smuggling, drug trafficking, human trafficking, hawala, money laundering, and all other illegal atrocities. Jesus called us to be members of PMI to work for their spiritual transformation and salvation. PMI would like to form a special task force known as Mafia Redeemers to work on the transformation of those working with/ in the mafia. If you are interested to be part of this mission, please let me know. Please visit the nearby formation houses such as minor seminaries, major seminaries, novitiate houses, institutes for aspirants and postulants and invite them to offer their spiritual exercises for this intention.

Reformation Warfare

Transformation of death-row prisoners, terrorists and hardcore gangsters is neither

an easy task nor an impossible mission. It is spiritual warfare, reformation warfare. To do this impossible mission, we propose a 40-days programme as shown below. First of all, we should have a clear picture of our intention that is, the prisoner in death-row or a mafia gangster or a terrorist or terrorist group. We do what is possible from our part and then we ask the assistance of others especially those who lead profound spiritual life such as contemplatives, those who do perpetual adoration of the Most Holy Eucharist, consecrated people, priests, seminarians, novices, aspirants, postulants, prayer group members, and laypeople.

40 Days Programme

- 40 Holy Masses and Communion
- 40 Chapters of the Gospel: Luke and Mark
- 40 Creed
- 40 Rosaries
- 40 Divine Mercy Rosaries
- 40 Mortifications
- 4000 Glory be to the Father
- 4000 Thank you, Jesus

The Father God sent his only begotten Son to the world so that mankind may have life, life in abundance, that no one may perish but have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3: 16). Let us be part of this redeeming mission of Jesus by saving daily the lost sheep and thereby experiencing heavenly joy. "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance (Lk 16: 7).

A CUP OF COLD WATER: A SEA OF WARM LOVE



Mr Jesuraja
State Secretary, Tamilnadu PMI

Introduction

Prison Ministry was started as a prayer group and it is not a mere social service group. It is only after visiting the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament do our volunteers go to visit the inmates in the prisons. We do the same while visiting the houses of the inmates also. We have the experience of God doing miracles in our ministry. We do not deal with things but with human beings who are under distress or have been suppressed by circumstances and society. It is equally difficult to deal with prison officials as it is with prisoners.

Prison Ministry Permission

In Tamilnadu, the Prison Department had given general permission as per order No 51861/PW3/2007 dated 16 April 2007 to the state coordinator, Prison Ministry India to visit the central prison and sub-jails to help rehabilitate the prisoners. The order is open and there is no time limit. It was also pointed out in the order that “the number of visitors should be restricted to the barest minimum subject to proper and strict identification by the leader of the party”. As per the order, since the last twelve years, all the jails of Tamilnadu are visited by nearly 350 volunteers who offer their services irrespective of caste,

creed and religion, spending their own time and money. The Prison Department was happy and was cooperating with our ministry. Many of the prisoners and their family members, particularly the children of the inmates, benefitted by our ministry as witnessed by the officials.

Then all of a sudden, we received a circular on 3 August 2019 that said we must renew our permission. We applied for permission on 14 August 2019. We received the permission letter on 14 November 2019 stating that the following members, namely Dr George Antonysamy (president), Fr G.J. Antonysamy (coordinator), Mr A. Jesu Raja (secretary), Sr. Josephine (treasurer), Mr R. Dominic (joint secretary) and Mr G. Gaspar (joint secretary) are permitted to visit all the prisons for one year. It took three months to get the police verification for these members. We met the prison official and requested that the order be issued like it was done in the previous one. He said he will look into it. On 9 December we received the letter stating that we must produce the list of all the volunteers. We compiled the list which came to around 360 members and it included only the regular volunteers. We are submitting the same to the department.

Basilicas

In Tamilnadu and Pondicherry, we have seven Basilicas. As it is our strong belief that only God can do wonders and miracles we thought that we should make a pilgrimage to all the seven Basilicas. It is the tradition of our Catholic Church that whatever we ask will be given.

Holy Eucharist

The most important form of prayer is the Holy Eucharist. 'God with us' Immanuel wanted to be with us always and he comes to us in the form of the Holy Eucharist. We plan to offer the Holy Eucharist in all the seven Basilicas for the singular purpose of gaining general permission.

Pilgrimage

Even though initially we planned for twelve members, it was a small group of five members including a priest that started the pilgrimage on the morning of 7 January 2020. At 6 am we celebrated the Holy Eucharist with Fr G.J. Anthonysamy, the state coordinator, Fr Varghese Rozario, the Chennai coordinator and Fr Thomas SDM, the director of the Rehabilitation Centre in the Tomb Chapel at **Santhome Basilica**. After that we reached Pondicherry. At 11 am we celebrated the Holy Eucharist in the **Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pondicherry** with Fr Arumai Selvam, the Pondicherry coordinator and Fr Thomas SDM. Sr Lourdhu Mary arranged everything for us. We had lunch in PMSSS and left Pondicherry. We reached Karumathampatti. At 7.15 pm, Fr Thomas SDM offered the Holy Eucharist for us in the **Basilica of Our Lady of Holy Rosary, Karumathampatti, Coimbatore**. The next

day, on 8 January 2020 at around 12 noon we had the Holy Eucharist in the **Basilica of Our Lady of Snows, Tuticorin** celebrated by Fr Benjamin, the Tuticorin coordinator along with Fr Thomas SDM. We were Wprovided lunch by the TMSSS. We reached Trichy around 6.30 pm We had the Trichy unit meeting. At 8.00 pm we had the Holy Eucharist in the **Basilica of Holy Redeemer, Tiruchirapalli** celebrated by Fr M.S. Antonysamy, the Trichy coordinator along with Fr Thomas SDM. We had supper at St Paul's Seminary. The next day, on 9 January 2020 at 6 am we participated in the mass at the **Basilica of Our Lady of Lourdes, Poondi**. We reached Velankanni. There we had a private Holy Eucharist at 11 am by Fr Thomas SDM in the **Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health, Velankanni**. Sr Melchios FBS arranged everything for us in Velankanni. We reached Chennai at 9.00 pm.

Conclusion

The pilgrimage was extremely tiring and expensive. But we believe nothing is impossible to God. With a word, he created the whole world. The same word that was present in all the Seven Basilicas where we offered the Holy Eucharist will do miracles for us. In the beginning, the spirit was with the word. The same spirit will inspire the prison officials to give us the general permission to continue our ministry as we had done previously. We are very thankful to the Lord Almighty for the successful pilgrimage. We also thank all the priests, sisters and volunteers who had taken part in our pilgrimage.

"With God all things are possible" Mt 19:26

New Year: Impossible to Possible



Bro. Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar
S.J.R. Seminary, Hyderabad.

“Behold, I make all things new” Rev 21: 5. Peace and joy in the name of the Lord to all as we begin the New Year 2020. The Lord speaks to each of us that he is going to make all things new in our life. This is God’s life-giving promise and he invites everyone to be witnesses to God’s love and to be evangelizers of his Word. “From this day on I will bless you” Haggai 2:19. God speaks to us these words of courage and wishes that everyone is blessed in a special way this New Year.

The flood brought destruction Gen 7: 12-23. Immediately new life and new creation came into existence with a covenant between God and Noah. Everything that was old and corrupt had been wiped out completely and everything new had come into being. It is a sign that God does not leave anything to remain static or completely dead. But he teaches that “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” John 12: 24. He always wills to make things new so that they bear fruit in abundance. In Isaiah 55: 10,11 God speaks about making the earth fruitful and full of life with the word of God. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, the lives of many judges, kings, prophets and disciples turn anew with God’s intervention and God’s spirit.

Life of David: He was just an ordinary shepherd boy, but when he was anointed by Samuel, the spirit of the Lord took control of him 1 Sam 16: 13 and he went on to become one of the greatest kings of Israel.

Life of Matthew: He was hated by all because he was collecting more taxes than the dues that people had to pay. As a result, he was considered to be a big sinner. But a look from Jesus, a word from Jesus, made Matthew a new person Mt 9: 9.

Life of Zacchaeus: He too was considered to be a big fraudster and had amassed wealth by cheating innocent people. But a look and a call from Jesus, “Zacchaeus hurry, come down, for I must stay in your house today” Lk 19: 5, made the life of Zacchaeus new and transformed his entire life.

Life of the Disciples: Christ’s death and resurrection experience become an eye-opener for the disciples Lk 24: 31. They grow strong in their faith and their lives were renewed. That experience led them to take up with great zeal the proclamation of the Word and the healing ministry Mk 16: 15-17.

New Creation in Christ: St. Paul writes, “So if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!” 2 Cor 5:1. Whoever in the ‘company of Jesus’, were all transformed. Zacchaeus, who with one word from Jesus could give up his old self of sin Lk 19, the Samaritan woman, with one meeting with Jesus, could be transformed and could transform her whole village John 4, one word from Jesus could bring joy to the sorrowful widow by restoring life to the young man who was dead (Lk 7), and one could go on and on. During this year, let us decide to be in the company of Jesus in



New Year Message

whatever we do. Then we will experience a New Year with newness. Two questions to reflect on: Firstly, what would be the newness God expects me to work on this year, in my thoughts, words and deeds? Secondly, what are the new things I am hoping to receive from God this year for my personal life, family, society and the world at large?

The promise of a new heaven and new earth with God's presence among the people was a beautiful vision that St. John received from the angel of God in Rev 21: 5. The greatest promise we see in that vision is that God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. "Death will be no more. Mourning, crying and pain will be no more" Rev 21:4.

My dear faithful, do you believe in these above promises? One who is full of faith can truly believe these. And we can make our lives anew day-by-day by having faith in these promises. When Thomas Edison was inventing the bulb, there was a fire and all his hard work and his entire lab was destroyed in flames. Everyone was frightened to face him as to what would be his reaction. But to their surprise, he remained calm and said that all the mistakes were wiped away and they could start anew. At that time, he was 67-years-old. Yes, dear faithful, let us look ahead to the New Year with a positive outlook, positive thought and positive confession for a bright, blessed and grace-filled year so that we could make our lives beautiful and new always. May the Lord strengthen our faith and grant a year of favour.

BACK AGAIN

Sr. Heather Aranha FC
Volunteer, PMI, Goa

We surely take Christ into prisons, when we, the prison ministry volunteers, visit the prison. However, when we are in there, we discover, He is already there. We go into the prisons to bring blessings to those inside; but more often, we come away richly blessed ourselves, having received more than we had given.

Visiting a prison then, as a prison ministry volunteer, firstly, brings about a transformation in us and then, in our brothers and sisters whom we meet there. This transformation in them is obvious especially when they reach back home, either when

they are released or out on bail.

Mr Sunder (name changed) was imprisoned for having mercilessly beaten his wife, literally causing her great physical, mental and emotional harm. Naturally, the wife with her teenage son went to her mother's home never to return. Sunder was released after a period of time. He was a transformed person, started working hard and wanted to be reconciled with his wife. With prayer, counselling, family visits, and family support, the couple finally met just before the New Year to be reconciled with each other, bringing joy and peace to their children and

to their home once again. This was a welcome reunion just before the daughter's wedding.

Mr Iqbal (name changed) was also released and is back again with his family, wife and two sons, who are happy and peaceful. Mr Iqbal has started to work again.

In addition to meeting some of their basic human needs, the ministry programmes give the inmates a sense of self-confidence and hope for the future and also helps them to be instruments of peace and reconciliation in their families and neighbourhood.



Sr. Jane Agnes Singh SJC
National Team Member

From His fullness, we have all received,
grace upon grace. John 1:16

Give thanks with a grateful heart, Give
thanks to the Holy One

Give thanks because He's given Jesus
Christ, His Son

Give thanks.

With the onset of 2020, an appropriate song 'Grateful Heart' by Don Moen is, to recall grace upon grace in the year 2019. Though the year has passed, yet the blessings have been bountiful.

As a PMI volunteer, beginning with the intensive 'Full-timer Volunteer Course' for 15 days in the month of May, really equipped me to take up the challenge along with the 7000 PMI volunteers, offering their services in different states of India, bringing hope and assistance, giving a very positive approach to their life, including in our rehabilitation centres like the Kolbe Home.

How God paved his way for me to be a part of the National office and Kolbe Home, Bengaluru! The gift of the Holy Eucharist every day, common adoration and the chain adoration were the daily routine we followed, apart from the work assigned to us in the office. I could really experience how the house is taken care of by Divine Providence as it is rightly called 'Providence Home.' With no bank balance but people with generous

heart, who feel with others, are our donors and benefactors! The new block adjacent to Kolbe Home, recently blessed and inaugurated, known as 'RRDC' is built with the contribution from good hearts. 'Begging is our lifestyle' was another unique experience like the mendicants of old; on Prison Ministry Sunday, extending our buckets for collection in different parishes! Visiting the Central Prison, Bengaluru, listening to the stories of the inmates and how they were touched by the Word of God and willing to change themselves, yes only Jesus can change! Salute to Sr. Marina for staying all alone in the prison quarters and Srs. Adele, Rose, Lima for their regular visits to the prison in spite of their age!

The highlight of the year was the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the National Office, Bengaluru. Bishops, priests, sisters, and lay volunteers were awarded a certificate of appreciation and mementoes. It was a great day to know them and their selfless service.

Finally, I am grateful to have met and worked with all the visionaries and dynamic PMI leaders like Fr. Francis Kodiyan and Fr. Varghese Karipperry, the cofounders, Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan, the previous national coordinator, Sr. Lini Sheeja, the national secretary, Sr. Clara and Sr. Fidelis from Jeevodaya. I am grateful to all the national team members and the Kolbe Home staff and children who have made a big difference in my life.

Success Story

A tribal woman named Joshna, aged 35-years, a widow was in Kalyan prison for a murder case. She said she was innocent. Our volunteers counselled her and tried to find out how she landed in prison. She has four girls and a boy. The elder girl who was studying in 10th Std had stopped going to school and was collecting leaves to sell to look after the younger ones. The second girl was studying in the 9th Std, the boy was in the 8th, the fourth child in the 3rd and the youngest in the 1st. After listening to her story, we asked her to pray daily for relief because God loves her and would hear her cry. Our volunteers visited her house in search of the truth. Finally, we found out from the villagers that the real murderer was not the woman, but a powerful man in the village. And she was put in prison because she had no one to support her. She worked hard collecting leaves to run the family. There was no one to help them. We tried our best to get her out. After 1 year and 3 months, she was released and reached home. While she was in prison, the family was supported by the Sanjeevani Foundation. The Sanjeevani Foundation is grateful to Fr. Alwyn D'Silva (presently Bishop) who was ready to help the Prison



Sr Dhanam
Volunteer, Kalyan PMI

Ministry in Kalyan at any time. Joshna was taken to her family in the late evening and the joy of the children on being together with their mother after a long time was worth witnessing.

Once she reached home, both the older girls were trafficked by a middle man who promised them good jobs. When we went for the follow-up, we found the girls missing. Joshna told the volunteers that they were taken

by a man for a good job, they had not come back in two weeks and she did not know where they were working. So again, our volunteers went in search of them to different places, especially in the entire brick kiln (where bricks are

made) area. After 6 days, they were found in one of the brick kilns, the younger girl was carrying bricks on her head. They searched again for the other girl and she was found in another brick kiln. We could not bring them home because the brick kiln owners refused to release the girls. So, over the phone, we threatened them saying that the girls have to be sent home by the next day, and if not, action would be taken and punishment would be severe. Though the owner wanted to meet the volunteers, we never met. We, the Sanjeevani Foundation volunteers, believe in the power of God and do our work with God and for God. Hence, our interventions are successful. All of us strongly believe in God's presence with us.

WORK WITH GOD AND FOR GOD



WHAT MORE?



Sr. Shanti Pulickal SCC
Coordinator, Berhampur Diocese

Jesus said, "Let my joy be in you so that your joy may be complete." Bringing joy into the lives of prisoners in various jails in Berhampur diocese has been the goal of our ministry. The culmination of it was the Christmas celebration.

We had a happy celebration of the Prison Ministry Sunday at Berhampur Circle jail. Our bishop, Most Rev. Sarath Chandra Nayak offered Mass and we distributed fruits to all. The prisoners wanted something spectacular to mark this day as well as the forthcoming Christmas event. They suggested a volleyball match as some of them excelled in it. The seminarians from Vinnay Bhavan, Bro Rajesh and Bro Sujith, who teach them spoken English, were also excited and Sr. Shanti the coordinator offered full support as it would make the prisoners happy. The jail authorities were also happy and they scheduled a match between the convicted and undertrial prisoners on 24 November 2019. The prisoners prepared themselves well and waited eagerly for that day. What a superb match it was! Almost all the 800 prisoners were present among the audience. The seminarians made lively commentaries which made the prisoners laugh heartily accompanied by thunderous clapping. It was indeed a day of rejoicing for all the inmates in the jail. Our Bishop had sponsored the trophy and we gave prizes to the winners, sports jersey for all the players and a new set of volleyball net and ball for the jail.

On the next Sunday was the spiritual preparation for Christmas. Sr. Shanti took Fr. Jusman of Vinnay Bhavan to the jail for

the sacrament of confession for the Catholic prisoners. After that, we discussed the preparation for Christmas celebration: The selection of Mass hymns, musical instruments, sound system, decoration and so on. They wanted to have mass in an open area with a tent. We expressed, "Why waste money by hiring a tent when you have a beautiful prayer hall?" Their answer was very touching, "What other joys do we have in the jail? This is our best celebration of the year. Please help us to have it." So, we agreed.

Only 20 of us were allowed to enter the jail for the Christmas celebration which was arranged on Sunday, 22 December 2019. The prisoners welcomed us with bouquets and songs and accompanied us to the beautifully decorated place for Mass. Our Bishop offered mass for them. Fr. Jusman and two seminarians played the keyboard, guitar, and drums. Some of the prisoners were excellent singers. The choir was perfect and heavenly. In his Christmas message, the bishop spoke about the gift of joy which Jesus came to give. He differentiated it from happiness which comes from the satisfaction of desires. Joy is the gift of God and it has the power to tide over all negative emotions such as anger, revenge, fear or depression. It empowers one to go out to others in forgiving love and humble service. It enables one to become an angel of good news for others even in prison. Soon after Mass, the little angels from Holy Cross Hostel were on stage making our joy double with a Christmas dance. This was followed

by a wonderful fusion dance by the boys of St. Joseph's School. The leader of the prisoners thanked the bishop, Sr. Shanti, the jail authorities and everyone present for the beautiful programme and for spending time with them.

After mass, they conversed freely with all of us, sharing their joys and sorrows. Then, we visited the female section of 30 inmates, enquired about them and their families and gifted sarees to all of them. We also offered cake to all the prisoners and the staff. When it was time for us to leave the prison, we left promising to pray for them and visit them again.

In Chattrapur sub-jail, Christmas celebration took the form of an Eye Camp. Fr Henry OCD,

Sr Shanti SCC and other PMI volunteers from different institutions helped to provide eye care and joy to many prisoners over there with new spectacles and medicines. At Suruda, the parish priest was new and so could not do much for the prisoners. But he met the jail authorities and offered them Christmas message and some snacks.

Christmas is an occasion of joy. We hope to continue it all through the coming years by strengthening our ministry so that the joy of Jesus may be experienced by all the prisoners and that their joy may be complete. We wish a Happy New Year 2020 to all the PMI volunteers, jail authorities and prisoners. May many prisoners be released and may all of us receive hundredfold blessings for the noble service we do for the prisoners.

DOES THE SUN SHINES FOR ITSELF OR FOR OTHERS?



Mr. M. D. Vincent
*First General Secretary
PMI-Andhra Pradesh*

Under the leadership of Fr. Dion, the unit and state coordinator and assistant state coordinator, the heads, staff and students of four institutions: St. Anns Providence, Nirmala sisters, St. Pius X and Christopher High School, a lot of joy and cheer was brought into the lives of eighty inmates in the juvenile jail for girls at Hyderabad on 15-12-2019. Let us delve deeper into the experience of the participants:

St. Ann's Providence: Apart from singing Christmas carols and enacting the nativity

scenes, games were organised with presents for winners, many gifts and snacks were distributed to the inmates. Keeping in mind the season, they distributed beautiful and quality warm clothing - sweaters to all the inmates.

St. Pius X, Ramnagar: Under the direction of the headmistress Sr. T. Usha Rani, Sr. Arogya Showrilu and Mrs Regina Pushpa, 12 students joyfully danced with the carols and enacted the nativity events gracefully in three languages [Hindi, Telugu and

English]. "With mercy and forgiveness, God goes beyond justice," says Pope Francis. The students mingled with the inmates and enjoyed lots of indoor games. The inmates were so happy to meet and mingle with the students. Their glowing faces resembled Christ reminding one of, "When I was in prison you visited me." Their joy doubled on watching the live enactment of the birth of Jesus. The staff and students felt fulfilled as they distributed fruits, Christmas cakes and gifts to the inmates.

Nirmala Sisters: Encouraged by the invitation of Pope Francis to reach out to the poor and underprivileged, Sr Superior Leena Fernande MSI, and Jeya Kolandaisamy MSI said, "Our interaction with these little ones at different occasions has enriched our consecration and given us powerful meaning to life. The distribution of gifts, snacks etc. gave them great joy which brought more meaning to our Christmas celebrations."

St. Christopher High School: The principal, Mrs Brighth spoke to the children and asked them to take the good resolution on the New Year to renew their lives, study hard and become productive and responsible citizens of the country. She, along with her staff and students, distributed gifts to the inmates.

A skit on onion: Sr. T. Pushpa and Mr M.D. Vincent enacted a skit to bring in some laughter into the lives of the inmates. Pushpa asks Mr Vincent to serve her an onion dosa. After being served, she said, "Where is the onion in the onion dosa? There is no onion at all! Then why should I pay you?" Vincent replied: "Yesterday you paid for Mysore Bonda, no? Was there Mysore in Mysore Bonda?" The inmates burst into loud laughter.

The students remarked: "It is better to give than to receive". With this as our motto, we the students of YCS/YSM visited the juvenile

home for girls on 15 December 2019. Well, a juvenile home is a place where children below 18 years are kept under observation. Children who are found guilty of some offence, anti-social behaviour or whose conduct is beyond parental control, are brought here. We organised a canteen in our school [St. Ann's High School, Secunderabad] [S.S.C.]. With the money raised, we procured sweaters and snacks for the inmates in juvenile jail. We sang, we danced we enacted besides conducting indoor games to bring smiles to their faces. At the end of the day, we realised the importance of parents and elders who mould and guide the paths of our lives. We thank our principal, superior, teachers and the volunteers of Prison Ministry India [Vimochana] who gave us this great opportunity to experience the values of giving and serving the needy.

Special guest: The special guest Fr. Bala from Eluru mentioned that he wondered at the unique services of Prison Ministry India known as Vimochana in A.P. He said that the day's programme motivated him to start similar services in his diocese in Eluru. He asked the inmates, "Does the sun shines for itself or for others? Does the tree yield fruit to eat by itself or for others? Just as it is in nature, Pope Francis has advised that we should be helpful and useful to others.

The superintendent Mrs Savitri thanked the organisers, heads and students of all the institutions. Tears were rolling from her eyes as she experienced and saw the amount of love and concern showered by the PMI on the inmates who sang thanksgiving songs in appreciation of the day's events.

The programme was concluded with a recital of the national anthem before which Fr. Bala and Fr. Dian said blessings over all present with the concluding prayers.

On 16 December 2019, a large gathering of inmates from the convict block, undertrial and NDPS blocks, including some of the jail authorities gathered in a large hall at the Central Jail at Colvale, Goa bringing gaiety to the annual Christmas celebrations organised by the PMI, Goa branch. The gathering was addressed and greeted by the coordinator, Mr David Fernandes.

Everyone was dressed in festive Christmas colours of green, red and gold; the message of Christmas "Rejoice, the Saviour has come; and peace, hope and love will follow" was gently ushered in.

Three groups from Mary Immaculate Church, Panjim, St. Alex Church, Calangute and St. Jose De Areal got the spirit of Christmas going with the inmates, regardless of their religious diversity, singing and clapping along to the Christmas carols sung by these groups with video presentations; it was a true Christmas experience indeed!

In gratitude, the inmates performed for the audience. A self-composed solo by an inmate, Valerian Baretto was accompanied by Rudolf on the keyboard, and Abhijit held the audience spellbound with his juggling skills along with two other inmates. Amit Das with his rendering of a filmy dance was an absolute entertainer, all of which were well received and applauded. A unique picture quiz was conducted for the inmates by Sr. Melisa, wherein equal chances were given to inmates from different blocks.

At the end of the function, Fr. Savio of Caritas, Goa proposed the vote of thanks and distributed prizes to the winners. Gift hampers of Goan Christmas sweets which included neureos, cake, dodol, and doce de grao, and other gifts were distributed to all the inmates including in the women's cell. The jailor, Mr J. Tari showed great interest and took the time to attend the festivities in spite of his busy schedule. The function was compered well by the inmate, Jaya Kumar.

Dr Astrid Monteiro
Volunteer, Goa PMI

Admiration: Involvement and cooperation

Sr Jenny UFS
Volunteer, Hubli PMI

To actualize the above phrase in the lives of people who belong to the Hubli sub-jail, Sr Jenny UFS, along with the Provincial Superior Sr Sunitha Fernandes, the Councillor Sr Lucy D'Souza and with them, a good number of sisters from the St Michael Community and a few staff members organized a beautiful programme to share the Christmas message on 23 December 2019.

The day began with the active participation of the inmates in arranging the seating for the dignitaries. I was very happy to see the inmates, their involvement and cooperation. It was wonderful to see how each one was involved in their own creative way in the preparations.

We began the programme with a prayer dance performed by the students of St Michael's. The president, Rev Sr Sunitha J. Fernandes spoke to the inmates kindly and compassionately. She told them that it was

not the walls of the prison that bind us, but rather the cruel attitude within us that binds us to prison. As humans, everyone commits mistakes; that is part of each and everyone's life. But what we needed to do was to learn new lessons in our lives, and to lead a peaceful life once we were out of prison. She promised them her constant prayerful support. The superintendent Shri Ashok Bhajantri assured his full support to us to organize various programmes and activities for the welfare of prisoners.

The event was made more meaningful and creative by the students of St Michael School, Shanthi Nagar. A beautiful Christmas tableau was presented by them. The students presented a clear message on the need to be compassionate. The inmates were touched by the idea of the importance of compassion towards others. Many of them said that they were hearing about the concept of compassion for the first time. Sr Jenny compered the whole programme and welcomed the people gathered. Sr Janet thanked everyone. Finally, Sr Lucy, the Superior thanked Sr Jenny for organizing the beautiful programme. Sisters Fatima, Priya, Jennifer and Priyanka actively joined the preparations for the smooth running of the programme. Food for all the inmates of the sub-jail was sponsored by Rev Fr. Alwyn Sudhir, from the parish of Infant Jesus Church, Shanti Nagar. Due to ill health, he could not attend the programme and he promised to give his full support to carry on the programme.

I am grateful to all those who were part of this programme, for all the moral and financial support that I received from everyone to carry out this great task of reaching out to our brothers and sisters that are inside the bars. May God bless us all!

Pre-Christmas Celebration at the Central Jail Guwahati - 23 December 2019 - Assam

On 23 December 2019, we, the PMI volunteers organised a pre-Christmas celebration in the Central Prison Guwahati which has 1452 (including women) inmates. The programme was held on the open ground of the campus. It began with the Holy Eucharist officiated by Most Rev. John Moolachira, bishop of the archdiocese of Guwahati. It was followed by an entertainment and cultural programme by students and other people from various institutions who entertained the inmates. The inmates were also given the opportunity to showcase their talents. At the end of the programme, light refreshment was provided to all the inmates by the PMI.

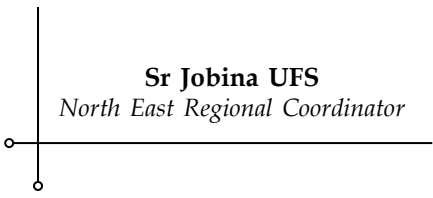
Christmas Celebration with the Christian inmates of Central Jail on 25 December at Guwahati, Assam

On 25 December, the PMI volunteers held a prayer service along with the Christian brethren in the Central Jail of Guwahati. After that, we had the lighting of the lamp and cake-cutting ceremonies, followed by carol singing. They were very happy and expressed their joy by singing and dancing. On this special occasion, the PMI Guwahati unit provided 250 kg of chicken for the inmates. We express our gratefulness to all those who had contributed and supported us in this endeavour to celebrate the birth of Jesus with our brethren behind the bars.

Christmas Celebration at Golpara District Jail, Assam

Seasonal greetings to all! We, the PMI volunteers of Golpara unit, had the opportunity to celebrate Christmas and share the joy with the inmates of the District Jail Golpara on 28 December 2019. Our students entertained the inmates through different cultural programmes. After the programme, we distributed snacks to all those who were present there. We are happy that we could provide blankets to about 400 inmates. We thank all those who had generously contributed to help buy the blankets. We also thank the officers who helped us by giving permission and making the necessary arrangements to conduct the programme.

Sr Jobina UFS
North East Regional Coordinator



Christmas Celebration at Sub-jail Khonsa, Arunachal Pradesh

On the occasion of Christmas, we, the PMI volunteers visited the sub-jail at Khonsa and conducted prayer service and prayed with our brethren behind the bars where all of us experienced the joy and peace of Christ. They were very happy after the prayer service. We had carol singing after which the PMI volunteers distributed refreshments to the inmates.

Christmas Celebration in District Jail Aizawl, Mizoram

We, the PMI volunteers, were blessed to have been able to celebrate pre-Christmas with our brethren behind the bars on 12 December 2019 at the District Jail Aizawl. The celebration began with a prayer service followed by a speech given by the jail superintendent. After that, we had cultural shows and prize distribution for the winners of the volleyball competition. At the end of the programme, light refreshments were given to all. The prizes were donated by St. Paul's HSS, Aizawl. We express our gratefulness to all those who contributed generously towards holding this programme.

Christmas Celebration in Central Jail Aizawl, Mizoram

We, the PMI volunteers, had the privilege to celebrate Christmas with our brethren behind the bars on 21 December 2019 at the Central Jail of Aizawl. The morning session was chaired by Shri. Dominic Lalmangaiha, adviser PMI Mizoram and the sermon was given by Fr John Zoduha, assistant parish priest of Cathedral Parish. In the second session, the M.C. was Francis Thantluanga, secretary. This session began with a Bible reading followed by a volleyball competition conducted for the inmates, after which, prizes were distributed to the winners. The programme also included solo singing by a local artist and the inmates. Concurrently, Christmas gifts were given to the inmates like shirts, shoes, warm clothes, etc. The final blessing was given by the Bishop of Aizawl.

The Faithful Gathered at the Manger



Fr Pasala Lahastraya
AP State Coordinator

Andhra Pradesh State Prison Ministry India conducted state-level Santa Claus Dance competitions on Sunday, 8 December 2019 at Jeevasudha Pastoral Center, Venkayapalle, Kurnool, under the leadership and with the blessings of Most Rev. Dr Anthony Poola, bishop of Kurnool and chairman of Prison Ministry India under TCBC.

A month prior to the competitions, the Chairman-Bishop had granted the approval and his blessing. Invitations were sent to all the schools, colleges and parishes in Kurnool diocese. Through social media, using WhatsApp and Facebook, we issued invitations for the Santa Claus Dance Competitions throughout Andhra Pradesh. From near and far districts, youth enrolled and actively participated in the competitions. We received great response and appreciation for the programme.

Fr. Pasala Lahastraya, the AP state coordinator, mentioned the purpose of conducting the Santa Claus dance competitions. Most of us do not know

the catholic tradition of the Santa Claus dance, the rhythm of the dance of Santa Claus. Mostly we depict Santa Claus as a fun-maker, comedian, etc. hoping that our catholic faithful will know the catholic tradition of the Santa Claus dance. The Santa Claus Dance competitions were held to bring to the forefront the catholic beginnings of this tradition. Through the Santa Claus Dance Competition, we would like to present Santa Claus as the forerunner of Christmas who serves the needy, poor, destitute, prisoners, etc., during Advent and Christmastide in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ to fulfil the words of the prophets and the agenda of our Lord (Luke 4: 18-19).

The Chairman-Bishop said in the opening ceremony, "Santa Claus competitions will definitely bring everyone closer to Infant Jesus. This is aalf was present for the entire programme until the culmination which astonished every one. He was filled with joy on watching the fabulous and mind-blowing performances by the children in the competition.

At the end of the competition, the Chairman-Bishop expressed his amazement, and with overwhelming joy appreciated and admired all the celebrities with Christmas gifts. He declared and awarded the winners and runners-up with prizes and mementoes of Prison Ministry India.

He praised and appreciated the initiatives of Prison Ministry India in bringing awareness of Prison Ministry through the conducting of the Santa Claus dance competition, and mentioned the various forms of prison ministry: visiting prisons, helping prisoners by paying bail amount, helping prisoners' families, educating prisoners' children, raising local contributions for the Prison Ministry, etc. Before concluding his message, he congratulated Fr. Pasala Lahastraya, AP state coordinator, the volunteers and donors for making this event successful.

Fr. Pasala Lahastraya, the AP state coordinator, mentioned the benefits of and achievements gained by conducting the Santa Claus Dance competition:

- Bringing awareness about Prison Ministry India and various forms of prison ministry
- Inspired donors to contribute more to the prison ministry
- Create awareness about the catholic tradition of the Santa Claus dance
- Great response and applause from the bishop, priests, nuns, teachers, parents, youth, etc.

- Active and dynamic participation
- Inspiring and impressive dances
- Knowledge about the role of Santa Claus in Christmas celebration and the ministry of Christmas
- Acknowledging donors request to have such initiatives annually

Grateful acknowledgement to Mr Wilson Augustine, director of Indus School, Mr Pasala Anthony Raju, and Mr Suresh, choreographer for their genuine judgment of the fantastic and mind-boggling performances.

Rev. Fr. Pappula Sudhakar, the diocesan coordinator of Divyavani TV, anchored the entire competition with his wit and wisdom. He fascinated the celebrities and participants with his skill of event-management.

Fr. Pasala Lahastraya, AP State Coordinator thanked the God Almighty for his blessings, the Chairman-Bishop for being present throughout the competitions, Rev. Fr. Ery Balaraju, diocesan coordinator-PMI for whole-hearted involvement in the work behind the scenes, Rev. Fr. Pappula Sudhakar for anchoring the competitions with his keenness, alertness, wit and wisdom, Mr Wilson Augustine, director of Indus Higher Secondary School, Mr Pasala Anthony Raju, and Mr Suresh, choreographer for their genuine judgment and all the priests, nuns, teachers, parents, youth, children - the celebrities and participants - for the great success of the Santa Claus Dance Competition.

Awakened: A Sense of Mercy



Sr Mary C J
Volunteer, Jhansi PMI

“I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25: 37). The CRI Jhansi in collaboration with the diocese is committed to a number of charitable work. Prison Ministry is one of them. We involve our students and teachers in this noble work. Visiting and interacting with the confined brothers and sisters awaken in them a sense of compassion and mercy. Further, such visits impel them to be generous and contribute even in small ways to help them.

This year, on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan and Independence Day, various schools in Jhansi organized a programme which provided entertainment to the inmates of the jail. The students mesmerized them with patriotic songs and dances. Rev. Peter Parapullil gave an inspiring message and told them to trust in the Almighty God who has a plan for every human being. He exhorted them to open their hearts and minds to God who will find ways and means to release them. He assured them of our prayers and help.

On the occasion of Christmas, Nirmala Convent Inter College presented the nativity play through dance. The jail authorities

were very positive and co-operated to provide a joyful time to the inmates. Fr. Lawrence gave the Christmas message of peace and forgiveness. He reminded them that they were close to our hearts, we were there for them and wished them speedy release from their bondage. The deputy jailor, Mr Subhash Pandey, in his message emphasized two points: “Firstly, knowingly or unknowingly, if one has done something wrong, he/she must repent of that action. Secondly, if anyone feels that he/she is unjustly trapped by someone and feels innocent, believe that God is just and he will bring you justice; and remember, once you are released, you should not trap anyone by dishonest means.” He pointed out to the example of Jesus who always did good for others, but was crucified by his enemies.

Mr Subhash Pandey appreciated and thanked the various institutions for their love and concern and for bringing the message of peace, love, joy and hope. He also acknowledged the generosity of the children and for their contribution of various small items - soaps, biscuits, muffins etc.

Present on the occasion were: Rev. Fr Rinoy SDB, the president of CRI Jhansi unit, Rev. Fr Lawrence, in-charge of Prison Ministry Jhansi diocese, Sr Thomsy CTC, principal of St. Joseph’s School, Sr Elsita CTC, principal of Carmel School, Hasari, Sr Vimla MC, other nuns and staff members of various schools.

We are grateful to the superintendent, Jailor R.K. Singh, Deputy Jailors R.N. Gautam and Mr Subhash Pandey and others for allowing our students and staff to share their joy and love with the lonely, forlorn and friendless. Mrs Renu Robert of Nirmala Convent Girls Inter College anchored the programme.

Report from PMI Vasai



We are the PMI Vasai Group. We regularly visit the Bhiwandi jail which is the correction centre for prisoners who are under 18-years of age. This time, it being the Christmas visit, we focused on forgiveness as our central theme. All the inmates participated actively in the skit based on forgiveness. We also had a session on proactivity and the importance of living a surrendered life. In the boys' section, there was a surprise visit made by the Principal Magistrate. She was very impressed by our work and appreciated the efforts our team puts in. She also invited us to visit the jail frequently for the benefit of the children.



TESTIMONY MADE A DIFFERENCE



Sr Mary Lobo SCCC
Volunteer, West Bengal

The world today, particularly India, is experiencing so much unrest. In spite of the turmoil around, the volunteers of Prison Ministry India (PMI) and Krishnanagar Society for Social Reconstruction (KSSR) had the joy of imparting Christmas message in eight prisons of Kolkata and Nadia districts of West Bengal. In the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, "Christmas is the perfect time to celebrate the love of God and to create memories that will last forever". Well, we made this occasion a most meaningful and joyful one, together with our sisters and brothers languishing behind the bars.

The superintendents of the respective prisons arranged the premises in such a way that as we entered the portals of the prisons, we could feel the living presence of Jesus. The wonderful performances by the volunteers made the Christmas celebration more meaningful - mainly through the Christmas message, dance, carol singing, recitation etc. In every prison, either the superintendent or the chief controller spoke about the personal touch of Christ

in their own lives. Their testimony made a difference. As a whole, the Christmas celebrations brought new hope and joy to all the inmates. At the end of a meaningful birthday celebration of Jesus, a snack packet was offered to each inmate and staff, consisting of cake, fruit, chocolate and sweets sponsored by KSSR.

I sincerely thank Fr. Robin Mondal, Pastor Stobok, the office-bearers and the coordinators of KSSR units for extending their kind cooperation and for sponsoring the delicious snacks for the inmates of all the prisons. Heartfelt thanks to Srs. Hema, Zita and Alicia belonging to the Sisters of Holy Family Convent (Kalyani) and Sisters of Charity (Maliapota and Ranaghat) respectively for preparing their hostel children so well with standard items. Their meaningful performance brought immense delight to the inmates. The mighty blessings of our Saviour and the wholehearted cooperation of everyone enabled us to complete the programme on a note of success and satisfaction.

Success Story

Susan (name changed) was picked up from the roadside by someone. She has no idea about her parents or about her childhood. She was set to work in a house and she had a Christian name there. She grew up there and later Susan was sent to a Muslim house for work. At that house, she was called by a Muslim name. Since she was a minor, someone noticed that she was being over-worked. So, she was rescued by an NGO and sent to an institution and later taken to the Government reception home. The nuns from Jeevodaya used to visit the reception home. Therefore, after a few months, Susan was referred to Jeevodaya ashram for rehabilitation.

Susan has never been to school. We tried to teach her to read and write. Finally, after a few months, we had to be satisfied with her learning to write her name. Then she was given the opportunity to undergo different skill training like candle making, paper bag making, tailoring, jewellery making, etc. She was not able to comprehend or do any of these things by herself. Hence, she was encouraged to be efficient in household work. Later she was sent to help in an institution to take care of disabled children. She did that comparatively well. After that, she worked in different places, but wherever she worked, after a few months, she would feel homesick and return to Jeevodaya. Whether it was near or far, she would somehow make it back to Jeevodaya. Even when she had no money, she would manage to come home safely. Susan is calm and quiet by nature. She is grateful and loving.



Sr Clara Alappat
Directress, Jeevodaya
Ashram, Bangalore

Treasure and Beautiful

As years passed and she saw her companions getting married, she also expressed the desire to have a family. Since she was not conventionally fair, it was difficult to get positive responses for her proposal. She was aware that all of us were praying for her wish to be fulfilled. Anyway, as it is said, "This poor man called and God heard him". So, a good proposal came for Susan. The boy and family found her a treasure and beautiful, "Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder". The whole family accepted her joyfully. The marriage was arranged and many people came forward to help. Her marriage was held in a grand way.

Now Susan is very happy. The boy and his family consider her a gift to them from God. Since she is in another state, she always keeps in touch with us at Jeevodaya over the phone and conveys her happiness and gratitude. God is so great and nothing is impossible for God.

RRDC PROGRAM

JANUARY

- 10 Intercessory Prayer
- 18 Seminar on Human Rights of Prisoners

FEBRUARY

- 1 Intercessory Prayer
- 29 Seminar on Human Trafficking

MARCH

- 7 Intercessory Prayer
- 28 Seminar on Detention Centers

APRIL

- 4 Intercessory Prayer
- 25 Seminar on Death Penalty

MAY

- 2 Intercessory Prayer
- 4-18 Full-timers/ Volunteers Training Program
- 30 Seminar on Prisoners' Reformation

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RRDC Director
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2020 FULL TIMERS/VOLUNTEERS COURSE



- The last date for submitting the applications is on 15 March 2020.
- Who can apply? - Priests, Sisters, Brothers, Lay people, new and regular volunteers who are willing to extend their compassion and care towards the brethren behind the bars.
- Registration Fee: Rs 5,000/-

Yours in Christ, who came to seek the Lost.

Rev Dr Francis Kodyan MCBS
National Coordinator

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
National Secretary

Fr George Kalassery VC
RRDC Director

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www.prisonministryindia.org



Christmas Celebration



Ambikapur, Chattisgarh



Andhra Pradesh



Marriage of Mary from Jeevodaya



Gujarat



Tamil Nadu

Kerala



Christmas Celebration



Bangalore Central Prison



Bangalore Open Air Prison



Buxar, Bihar

Launching of New Mission of PMI, DRC



Yerwada, Maharashtra

Maharashtra



Marrage of Viji from Trivandrum, Snehashram