



PRISON VOICE

January 2022

Vol. XIX

Issue 01

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-



YOU ARE MY
BELOVED SON



**National Office Team Visiting
Karunyashram, Ernakulam**



**Christmas Celebration and Blanket
Distribution at Naini Central Jail**



**Christmas Celebration and Saree
Distribution at Women Prison, Bangalore**



**Christmas Celebration at
Juvenile Home, Bangalore**



**Kolbe Boys Visiting Dharmaram
College, Bangalore**



**Christmas Celebration at
Sundhargarh Prison**



**Christmas Celebration at
Idukki District Jail**



**Christmas Celebration at
Udupi Prison**



Christmas Celebration at Perinthalmanna Prison



Christmas Celebration at Attakulangara Prison



Christmas Celebration at Berhampur Prison



Christmas Celebration at Bilaspur Jail



Christmas Celebration at District Jail, Trivandrum



Christmas Celebration at Jashpur Prison



Christmas Celebration at Kakkanad Jail



Christmas Celebration at Kozhikode Prison



Christmas Celebration at Manjeri Priosn



Christmas Celebration at Mattancherry Prison



Christmas Celebration at Moovattupuzha Prison



Christmas Celebration at Pala Prison



Christmas Celebration at Poojappura Jail



Christmas Celebration at Ranchi Priosn



Christmas Celebration at Trivandrum Special Subjail



Christmas Celebration at Women Prison Trivandrum

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PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY



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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.

BANK DETAILS:

A/c Name : Prison Ministry India
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Patron

Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva

Managing Editor

Rev Dr Francis Kodyian MCBS

Chief Editor

Sr Amala DC

Circulation Managers

Fr Benny Thomas Pachanal CRSP
Fr Jaison Puthenpurakal MST

Editorial Board

Fr Shaji Stephen O de M
Fr Wilfred Fernandes
Sr Jobina UFS
Fr George Peter MST

Magazine Staff

Sr Basil SCS
Sr Joanna SCS
Bro Pradeep OFM

Graphics and Layout

Dinto Tom K T

Printing

Sevasadan Printing Press
Koramangala, Bengaluru

Prison Ministry India

**52, Thomas Layout
Sarjapur Road
Carmelaram
Bangalore-560 035
Karnataka, India**

☎ **09447710488
9486604887**

Email

prisonvoice123@gmail.com
nationalpmi2015@gmail.com

Website

www.prisonministryindia.org

HUMAN FRATERNITY



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor

Happy New Year

Happy New Year - 2022 to you all! I am sure you have had a grace-filled and joyful Christmas celebration in the nearby prisons. We too had happy and memorable Christmas celebrations in Bangalore prisons and rehabilitation centres. As we have successfully journeyed through the year 2021, and are looking forward to a bright future as the New Year 2022 unfolds, let us thank God for all the blessings and graces that we received during the year gone past. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks to God at every moment" (1 Thess 5:7). Because "The LORD's love abides unceasingly, his compassion is never exhausted; every morning it is renewed, so great is his faithfulness" (Lam 2:23).

Thank You

I avail myself of this golden opportunity to pen a personal note of gratitude and appreciation to each of you. I am thankful to Abba Father for His many blessings upon us as a PMI family. I must acknowledge that your love and support have been immense. We register our thanks and appreciation to you all for your many sacrifices and commitment to our PMI and its mission during the unprecedented time of the havoc wrecked by the unpleasant Pandemic. Your support and cooperation have always been a source of strength to help build our PMI into a family of love, unity and hope. Thank you also for your tolerance, patience, understanding, goodwill and prayers that continue to be a great source of strength and support for one another.

Fratelli Tutti

As we are at the dawn of a new year, let's set our hearts and minds to reflect on the Holy Father's message - True Human Fraternity. In response to all the challenges facing humanity, the Holy Father asks us to open ourselves to each other and unite "with those who pray according to other cultures, other traditions and other beliefs". As he has said on other occasions, "There is no alternative: we will either build the future together or there will not be a future. Religions, in particular, cannot renounce the urgent task to build bridges between peoples and cultures". The path towards fraternity proposed by the Pope starts with openness "to the Father of all", and with seeing "in the other a brother or sister". He has put forward this idea in his latest encyclical, Fratelli Tutti: "We are certain that only with this awareness we are not orphans, but children, can we live in peace with one another."

In pursuit of this spirit of fraternity, the Pope also reminds us not to forget that, for Christians, "the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ". In this sense, he asks believers to return to what is essential to our faith: the adoration of God and love of neighbour (cf. Mt 22:37-39). Let us pray that the Lord may give us the grace to live in full fellowship with our brothers and sisters of every other religion and culture, especially our brethren behind the bars. I wish you a blessed, happy, peaceful and healthy New Year 2022.



Sr JEMMA GEORGE DHM: INSIGHTS AND INSPIRATIONS



Introduction

Sr Jemma George (1952-2021) born and brought up in Thachil family in Ernakulam-Angamaly Major Archdiocese, joined the Daughters of Heart of Mary (DHM) to live her consecrated life. Her spiritual rays and radiance enlightened many especially many hardcore criminals in different Indian prisons. She was spiritually elevated to transform her sufferings of cancer into spiritual energy and wealth which she utilised to gain many a friend in heaven. Now they have welcomed her into the heavenly abode to praise and thank the Triune God face to face. This article briefly sums up Sr Jemma George's contributions to Prison Ministry India and to the incarcerated worldwide.

Snehashramam Directress

In 1991 Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference (KCBC) decided to establish a rehabilitation centre for released women prisoners in Trivandrum. After many months of prayer and fasting I went from Pastoral Orientation Centre in Ernakulam to Trivandrum to raise fund, purchase land and construct the ashram. Sr Jemma DHM, Sr veronica DM and Sr Maria Paul of Holy Cross were in the forefront of this mission. The administration of this ashram was entrusted to a group of sisters from different congregations under the supervision of the Jesus Fraternity. Sr Jemma DHM was the directress, Sr Margaret MSMI was the spiritual directress, Sr Jaya



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

FCC was the assistant directress and Miss Selina was the field worker. Sr Jemma as the first directress graciously and generously led the ashram for the greater glory of God in collaboration with the PMI volunteers and redeemed many a lost sheep.

PMI National Secretary

In 1994 Jesus Fraternity extended her prison ministry to national level under the leadership of Fr Varghese Karippery with its headquarters in Bangalore. Jemma was invited to serve as the national secretary which she wholeheartedly welcomed and did her entrusted task perfectly well in the year 1996. Serving as the right hand of Fr Varghese they reached out to all the Indian prisoners leading their hearts to repentance, reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration. When Fr Josekutty Kalayil became the PMI National coordinator, again Jemma was invited to serve as the national secretary which she did meritoriously from 2009-2011.

Author

Sr Jemma was a talented writer. She authored two books and was a frequent contributor to Prison Voice, the PMI national magazine.



Her first book *Let Prison Walls Fall* and the second book *Can Any Good Come from Prisons*, were published by PMI in 2005 and 2010 respectively. These books reveal her profound experiences with prisoners, their challenges, problems and their reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration. Sr Jemma together with Sr Mariam wrote an article regarding their Snehashramam experience entitled “Snehashramam: Hope for the Dejected Women” in *Prisoners Our Own Brethren* edited by Varghese Karippery and Sr Lathika published by PMI in 1998.

PMI Suffering Bank Manager

Illustrating Teilhard de Chardin’s concept of seven stages of suffering Sr Jemma wrote an article in the 2020 December issue of *Prison Voice* with the title “A Suffering Warrior”. “Let me share my own experience as a cancer patient. For the last 23 years, my illness has been coming and going. It has never left me completely. For me the first stage was one of shock. But in a day or two, I responded positively and was ready for treatment. Being from a religious order, I found it easy to call on God and ask for his mercy and love. This illness helped me to get closer to God each time I fell sick, it gave me the opportunity to pray for the good of other people in the world. I have experienced God’s healing touch on me many times. God uses me to bring about positive initiatives and thus bring others to him. Today, though my medical report shows that the illness has spread, I get to spend a good amount of time with the Lord

to intercede for humanity everywhere”. Realizing her expertise in transforming sufferings into spiritual energy in 2019 Sr Jemma was appointed as the PMI Suffering Bank Manager.

PMI Lifetime Volunteer

Sr Jemma began her prison ministry with the women prisoners in Trivandrum jail. PMI purchased the land for women prisoners’ rehabilitation adjacent to DHM convent. Discerning Jemma’s commitment to prison ministry we appointed her as the first directress of this ashram meant for searching and serving for released women prisoners. From there she was promoted to national level prison ministry in Bangalore. From Bangalore she went to Delhi and began to visit the prisons in Tihar and received a certificate of appreciation from the prison authorities. Wherever she was appointed she did prison ministry by visiting the nearby prisons. When she was transferred to Jammu Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, she visited the prisons there and took care of the incarcerated brethren.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of prison ministry is redemption of the lost which Sr Jemma clearly understood and did her maximum for their salvation. More than her personal visits to prisons, Jemma’s prison ministry consisted mainly of offering for them her prayers and sufferings. Her spirituality was like that of St Therese of the Child Jesus who offered her daily participation in the Holy Mass, spiritual exercises and mortifications for the conversion of prisoners.




DR KUNJUMON CHACKO – HERALD OF INDIAN PRISON MINISTRY

John Thomas Kottukappally

Dr Kunjumon Chacko, Founder Chairman of Prison Fellowship India, was born in Areeparamb, near Kottayam, Kerala, India, as the first among six sons of Evangelist Mr K.K. Chacko and Mrs Thankamma Chacko, on March 6, 1941. His parents were very conservative Evangelical Brethren Christians, a denomination which hold unshakable faith in God and unflinching belief in the Bible, as the infallible Word of God, the fallen nature of humans, the finished work of Jesus Christ for salvation of humans and in salvation by faith alone. Dr Chacko imbibed the Biblical Protestant ethics of hard and systematic work, faithful tithing, frugal lifestyle and fidelity in family. Dr Kunjumon Chacko did his schooling in M.D.L.P School, Pampady, Government School Areeparamb and college education in C.M.S College, Kottayam, Waltair University and Calcutta Business School. He also holds a Doctorate from Hindustan Bible College and Seminary, Chennai. He started working at the age of eighteen and rose step by step to become an executive, in a well-known Calcutta based Industrial House. In 1966, Dr Kujumon Chacko married Jane (Jainamma), daughter of Rev K.G. Kurian, a renowned Bible expositor, preacher and evangelist. Biju the first son of the couple was born in 1968 and the second son Binny in 1970.

The Call from Above

In 1972, while working at the Vizagapatanam Port, Dr Kunjumon Chacko was invited, by the prison Superintendent to give the Christmas message to prisoners in the Waltair Central Prison. There were 1800 prisoners and 200 staff members in that prison. As Dr Chacko was leaving the meeting one young prisoner - Ramalu - came forward and said



“Thank you sir for coming and sharing the Christmas story” which he was hearing for the first time. Ramalu committed his life to Jesus Christ. Dr Chacko returned home with a heavy heart. He could not forget the crowd of people who listened to him very patiently in a disciplined manner. The seed of a mission to prisoners was sown in his mind. Dr Chacko and his wife Jane visited the Waltair prison regularly and later the institution for juvenile delinquents sharing the message of new life in Jesus Christ.

The call from above and the need of the situation made Dr Kunjumon Chacko leave his business career to commit himself totally to serve God in the prisoner community, in the name of the Risen Christ. It was no easy decision. He could not see any visible financial support to maintain his family. There would be expected and unexpected ministry expenses. The job in the business house was a comfortable cushion to depend on. It took eight months of struggle and prayer before he resigned.

The first thing Dr Kunjumon Chacko did was to meet Mr P. Gopala Menon, then Inspector General of Prison of Kerala State. The I.G. Prison gave permission to visit four sub jails of Kerala to give moral instructions to prisoners as an experiment. For three month the mission field was only the four sub jails. There was wonderful co-operation from the officers and staff. Prisoners did enjoy the programs. Mr Gopala Menon later issued an order permitting Dr Chacko to visit all prisons and jails of Kerala to give moral instruction to prisoners. From 1974 to 1981, Dr Chacko visited the prisons faithfully. The mission at that time was known as Jail Evangelism Fellowship.

When Mr N. Subramanian, a devote religious person became I.G. Prison, the ministry took a very positive turn. Mr Subramanian realized the spiritual and religious needs of the prisoners and was fully satisfied with the strategies used and the results obtained by Dr Kujumon Chacko and his ministry. Mr



DR KUNJUMON CHACKO

Subramanian gave an endorsement certificate, which Dr Chacko could produce before I.G. Prison of other States. Dr Chacko approached the officials of other States. The first to respond was Mr Radhkent Saxena, I.G.P for the State of Rajasthan. The work started in Rajasthan in 1981, after a meeting with the I.G. in Jaipur, along Mr M.A. Thomas, who had established a Ministry in Kota, Rajasthan. After few years, doors opened in Andhra Pradesh, where Mr MAS Khan IPS; DGP was pleased to receive the mission, seeing the effectiveness of several prison chaplains, already working there.

By then Dr Chacko was travelling and visiting all the thirty-six prisons and jails of Kerala once a month. As the work was very hard, Dr Chacko recruited Volunteers, from Churches close to the jails. They visited the jails and carried on the programs. It became necessary to conduct Volunteers Training Programs and the first of its kind in India was held at India Bible Society, when Rev Thomas Mathew was the Auxiliary Secretary. Volunteers needed literature to give to prisoners. Dr Kunjumon Chacko then wrote a booklet in Malayalam titled "*I Was in Rigorous Imprisonment*". Since Kerala's prison population was about 9,500, he needed 10,000 copies, which would cost Rs. 750/-; but, he had only Rs. 36/-. As India Every Home Crusade (IEHC) had a printing press, Chacko approached its head Mr C. George, who read the manuscript, took the Rs. 36/- and after three weeks gave Dr Chacko the 10,000 booklets.

The Call from Abroad

In 1979, Dr Kujumon Chacko was privileged to visit the Moody Bible Institute (MBI), Chicago, where he was interviewed by Mr Paul Murphyn on the Moody TV. Mr Howard Whaley of MBI gave Chacko a letter of introduction to Mr Gordon D. Loux, President of Prison Fellowship, USA. Chacko met Loux and Mr Charles Colson,

Founder Chairman of Prison Fellowship International in Washington. Dr Chacko was given opportunity at PF USA's volunteer training seminar on three occasions. Around that time Prison Fellowship International was formed and India was accepted as a charter member. In 1983, Dr Chacko was appointed Regional Director for Central Asia and Middle East and could visit prisons and meet prison officials in most of the countries in the Middle East and Central Asia. It was indeed a great exposure to prison administration, welfare, correction and rehabilitation efforts in these countries. Chacko also got opportunities to meet Christians from diverse traditions that enriched his Christian life. For the next five years Dr Chacko worked with Mr Charles Colson, Gordon Loux and Ron Nikkel in the global arena. In 1988, Dr Chacko resigned his position as Regional Director for Central Asia and Middle East, to work full time for the development of Prison Fellowship India. The Lord gave him success in the endeavour to reach PF India to all the States in India.

The Call from Arabia

By divine providence, Dr Kujumon Chacko happened to meet Dr Ibrahim Alwaji, Deputy Minister Interior, Saudi Arabia, at the UN Crime Congress at Milan, Italy. Dr Alwaji invited Dr Chacko to Saudi Arabia to share with his prison and police officers the Mission and Vision of Prison Fellowship India. Dr Chacko spent one month in Riyadh. Jeddah and Alkobar. He also taught at the Arab Security and Correction Centre, Riyadh. Later on, he visited other Islamic countries in the Middle East.

The Call from Catholic Church

In 1985, two seminarians, Rev Varghese Karipperry and Rev Francis Kodyan MCBS, from the St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam visited the PF India office. That was followed by an invitation to give an awareness talk about Prison Ministry at the Seminary. Dr Kujumon Chacko and team included Mr John Thomas Kottukapally, well

known Catholic Businessman and Evangelist, who was then board member of Prison Fellowship India and who was representing India in the PF International Board. The talk at the Seminary was followed by several hours of training sessions and visits to all the thirty-six prisons and jails of Kerala. Jesus Fraternity, the prison ministry of Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council resulted from this mission. It grew to become the Prison Ministry India under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. The Catholic Prison Ministry now has more than 8,000 Volunteers, Chapters in all States of India and innumerable Rehabilitation Centres.

The Call from Precious Children

Two million Indian children do not see their first birthday, one million are trafficked across Asia every year, one in four Indian girls are sexually abused before the age of four, five million children aged 5 to 18 have ended up prostitutes, fifty-nine million children have never been to school and a hundred million are child labourers, working 12 to 15 hours, eking out less than Rs 5 a day.¹ Statistics indicate that 70% of the children of prisoners and those of crime victims turn to criminal activities.² In 1987, Prison Fellowship India established the Precious Children's Home to care for these unfortunate little ones victimized by crime and crisis and nurture them into responsible citizens.³ Initially, there were seven children. The staff would use love, acceptance and counselling to tackle the troubled children. PF India went on to establish Precious Children's Homes and Rehabilitation Centres in Bangalore, Vijayawada and Mumbai. In 2010, the Home in Kottayam expanded to become Precious Children International Village, at Areeparambu, Kottayam, set in 3.5 acres of land, surrounded by trees and plants, with five dormitories, a large canteen,

sufficient bathrooms and open areas.⁴ The International Village had 54 boys and 64 girls. About twelve of them had lost their parents in the anti-Christian riots in Kandhamal, Orissa, in 2008. Few were from Northeast India, orphaned by tribal clashes. The Maharashtra Children's Home was set up under leadership of Shaji Varghese with two counsellors and 100 children under the age of 13, which grew to 300 children by 2016.⁵ Unfortunately, the operations of most of the Children's Homes have come to a grinding halt, with the new draconian rules of the Government, which permits only children from the same District being admitted to every Home.

The Call to Diverse Ministries

In addition to being the Chairman of Prison Fellowship India, Dr Kunjumon Chacko is Chairman of India Vision, the India Baptist Convention and India Baptist Theological Seminary. He holds special recognition from Kerala Christian Cultural Forum, Houston and the Leonard Buck International Leadership Award from Prison Fellowship International. His evangelism booklet for prisoners, *Here is Freedom* has been translated into seven foreign languages and has been used by several PF National ministries. He has authored more than 28 books on Prison Ministry, Family Values, Time Management and so on. Dr Kunjumon Chacko has been conferred with the Best Author Award by the Kerala Christian Literary Committee. He has visited more than fifty one countries as consultant, resource person and speaker on prison ministry, prison reforms, prisoner rehabilitation, leadership, and time management.

¹ Sebastian, Shevlin, Children of an absent god, New Indian Express, 20th March 2010, Updated: 16th May 2012

² PF India, "Precious Children", Brochure, Kottayam, India, 2005.

³ Chacko, Dr Kujumon, Precious Children, Jubilee Publication, PF India, Kottayam, 2004

⁴ Sebastian, Shevlin, "Children of an absent god", New Indian Express, 20th March 2010, Updated: 16th May 2012

⁵ Sharma, Varda, "A new bond for prisoners' families, The Hindu, December 13, 2016



Prison Ministry India: Christmas Celebrations

Br Pradeep Anthony L OFM

Origin of Christmas Celebrations

The first Christmas celebration was historically recorded during the reign of Roman Emperor Constantine on 25th December 336. The tradition of Santa Claus started from the 4th century. Santa Claus was the modified name of St Nicholas who lived in the 4th century. Bishop Nicholas of Myra was a generous distributor of gifts to the needy and the poor during his time, particularly during the Christmas season. From then onwards the tradition of gift-giving has been practiced all over the world. Christmas originally meant Mass of Christ. It was St. Francis who conceptualized the crib at Greccio in Italy in 1223 in the 13th century. St Francis couldn't comprehend the humility of Christ who took the human form. Christmas calls each of us to a journey from crib to cross, womb to tomb with the assurance that God is with us throughout. The birth of Jesus in the crib and the death of Jesus on the cross remind us of our true identity as strangers and pilgrims in this world (1Pet 2:11). This tells me also of one of the core identities of the Franciscans. It's clearly imprinted in the Rule and the Constitution of the Order of Friars Minor. This identity makes us to be called minor, humble, and simple.

Planning and Preparation

Our planning and preparation at PMI national office for Christmas was to

celebrate it with the Prisoners. We waited for Christmas since advent began. Then we planned and prepared three cribs: one at Kolbe home, another at the national office and the last at the chapel of RRDC (Reformative, Research and Documentation Centre). Fr. Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the co-founder of the PMI encouraged PMI members all over the country to have the celebration of Christmas with the prisoners. The Celebrations were to be held both inside as well as outside. The celebrations inside consisted of visits to nearby prisons with the help of the respective state and unit coordinators. The various prisons that could be visited were open-prison, central prison, sub-jail, observation home and juvenile home. The celebration outside included celebrations in all our rehabilitation centres for released men and women prisoners as well as prisoner's children (boys and girls). Thus we held Christmas Celebrations all over India.

The spirit of Christmas hovered over the entire country. The regional coordinators of north, north-east, south, central region, were responsible to coordinate and collaborate with the state coordinators to organize Christmas celebrations in their own respective areas of the unit. As the pandemic had made itself manifest in another form called omicron, the celebrations took place amidst the prevailing situation of uncertainty. In many places there were still prevailing restrictions to enter the prisons. However, the persistence and prudence of the volunteers made the authorities give the required permission. Some were very privileged to celebrate Christmas with

the prisoners but others had to content themselves yearning to have those moments.

Executing the Plan

I would particularly focus on the celebration held at Bangalore. From the Gospel we know that Christ is present among prisoners as Jesus Himself acknowledged that when he said, ‘When I was in prison you visited me’ (Mt 25:36). The Bangalore unit team started the Christmas Celebration by collaborating with Bangalore rehabilitation centers, namely: Kolbe Home - Rehabilitation centre for prisoner’s boy children, Premodaya - Rehabilitation centre for prisoner’s girl children, and Jeevodaya - Rehabilitation centre for released women prisoners. All these centres gathered at Jeevodaya for Christmas Celebration on 18th December. It was a well-organized program which brought joy to all the people who gathered there. After this the Bangalore unit team held the celebration of Christmas on 25th December in Bangalore Central Prison. Fr. Clement and only a few of us got permission to enter inside the prison. We were able to provide blankets, cakes and fruits for the 5000 inmates. Besides that, we could provide lunch to all the prison staff officials.

The celebration continued when we visited open prison, Devanahalli on 27th December together with the help of Dharmaram college students to perform a program for the inmates. We provided snacks, blankets, pants and shirts for about 55 inmates. We kept the celebration going by paying a visit to the Juvenile home on 30th December at Child welfare Centre. There were about 85

children and 6 teachers who were present there. The Dharmaram college students performed the program there once again and entertained the children. We provided them with cakes, soup, tooth brush, T-shirts and Bermudas. We left the place with joyous smiles radiating on everyone’s face. We also visited the observation home on 1st January to celebrate a Joyous and Prosperous New Year 2022.

Likewise in other states, The Bishop of Pune, Bishop Thomas Dabre, along with a few PMI volunteers, including Fr Wilfred and Antony Jacob, visited Men’s Central Jail, Yerwada On 24th December and inaugurated the Dust Control Equipment for the 3 flour machines that generated atta for about 18,000 chapatis per meal for 6,000 inmates. PMI volunteers had discerned the need of the inmates for this equipment as they had observed that the mills were throwing up immense amount of dust from the machines. Therefore, PMI volunteers decided to sponsor the ‘Dust Control Equipment’ in order to prevent lung diseases caused by dust as well as reducing wastage. On the occasion of Christmas, Bishop Dabre also delivered a loving Christmas message to all those present. Similarly, celebrations took place all over India as per the need of the prisoners and gifts were purchased and handed over to them. May God be born in each of our hearts when we brighten the face of the incarcerated and attend to the people at periphery.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IN TIHAR JAIL

20 December 2021 - A WITNESS

Sr Prabina

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’” Isa 52:7. For over two decades, the Prison Ministry India (PMI) Team has been a messenger of hope and love to the imprisoned sisters and brothers in Tihar Jail, Delhi. Every year the inmates of Tihar Jail look forward to the Christmas celebrations. During the Christmas week, this year, Sr Inigo along with Sr. Joy SCC (Jail No: 1), Sr. Betsy (Jail No: 6) and Sr. Celine FCC (Jail No: 8) organised the most meaningful celebrations in Tihar Jail, during Christmas week in December 2021.

I was privileged to be invited to be a part of the Christmas Celebrations in Jail No: 4 on 20th Dec, 2021. Sr Inigo set the right tone for the celebration by welcoming with love in her own fascinating style Bishop Deepak - the Auxiliary Bishop of Delhi Archdiocese, Fr George, the Coordinator of Northern Region PMI, other priests, guests and the jail inmates. She shared her Christmas reflections wherein she stated that it's neither the Tihar inmates nor us who take the initiative to go to God but rather it is God Himself who comes down to us - Emmanuel, God with us.

Around forty of us gathered for mass in a small room. Bishop Deepak presided over the Holy Mass with a special intention that our brothers may be able to celebrate the next Christmas with their respective families. The melody of the Christmas hymns filled the room. Our brother inmates had prepared well for the Christmas Mass. The choir with foreigners and Indians sang both in English and Hindi to the accompaniment of many musical instruments. Their singing was vibrant, and full of life, just short of dancing.

Despite the brokenness and mental pain and physical agony suffered by the inmates, the

heartaches and joy, frustrations and hope doubts and faith were paradoxically resounding in the rhythm of their songs. The tears that rolled down my eyes were tears of both pain and joy - the pain of seeing young men behind bars and the joy of witnessing their faith in Christ. I have never experienced such highly sentimental and emotional trance in my life; the Bishop and other guests, who attended the function, expressed the same feeling. May this joy and hope triumph in their lives.

Tihar inmates had also prepared a Christmas program. Fr George Peter (Co-Ordinator of Delhi PMI Unit) welcomed the dignitaries and the gathering. Mr Rajkumar (Superintendent/jail no. 4) was the chief guest along with Bishop Deepak. Bishop gave a gentle yet a profound Christmas message that Christmas is a celebration of the relationship between God and humans and it particularly celebrates “God's love for us”. Mr Rajkumar exhorted the inmates not to repeat the mistakes and on going back home to serve humanity like Christ. The inmates sang carols in three different languages (Hindi, English, and Spanish) and also entertained us with Desi and African dance. Children from Deepti Ashram added a feminine flavour to the program with their graceful dance. Though the program ended the dance of bondage and pain continues. Prison Ministry, with the initiative of Sr. Inigo, offered tasty cakes to all the 3200 inmates; and it brought great joy to the inmates of Tihar. “Let's hope that human sense prevails. If it does not, I am ready and I hope all those who know me who are concerned will also to be ready to face what is to be faced” (Fr Stan Swamy).

All of us can be a part of the Prison ministry through our prayers and also through monetary help; and those of us who are lawyers, social workers, teachers or passionate human beings can come forward and offer their services. Congratulations to Sr Inigo and the members of Prison Ministry for initiating and organizing such an innovative and meaningful celebration of Christmas. This would have certainly brought a change in the inmates' otherwise monotonous and routine life. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” Jn: 1: 5.

Guantanamo Prison

In his interview with Human Rights Watch, Asif said he spent the first two weeks inside his cell, without any opportunity to exercise. Although he was allowed out of the cell for a weekly shower, he was only allowed two minutes to clean himself before he was returned to the cell. Asif said he was eventually allowed to speak with the guards, and was allowed time outside his cell for exercise. However, he was not allowed to speak with anyone else. Pakistani detainee Abdul Razak said some of the guards at Camp X-Ray were reasonably friendly. However, others would withhold necessities, including toilet paper, for no discernable reason. In their interviews with Human Rights Watch, several detainees also said they were forbidden to pray.

Origin

The Guantanamo Bay Detention Center was opened on January 11, 2002, and was originally meant to house suspected terrorists. The Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp is a United States military prison located within Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, also referred to as Guantánamo, GTMO, and “Gitmo”, on the coast of Guantánamo Bay in Cuba. Of the 780 people detained there since January 2002 when the military prison first opened after the September 11, 2001 attacks, 731 have been transferred elsewhere, 39 remain there, and 9 have died while in custody. The camp was established by U.S. President George W. Bush’s administration in 2002 during the War on Terror following the September 11, 2001 attacks. Indefinite detention without



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

trial, and torture led to the operations of this camp to be considered a major breach of human rights by Amnesty International, and a violation of Due Process Clause of the 5th and 14th amendments of the United States Constitution by the Centre for Constitutional Rights.

Structure

As reported by Bridge, the detention centre includes 12 known detention facilities, or camps, including Camp 7, Camp Echo, Camp Iguana, and Camp X-Ray. Each camp has different security protocols and different levels of transparency about their operations and the identities of the prisoners. Camp Delta was a 612-unit detention centre finished in April 2002. It included detention camps 1 through 4, as well as Camp Echo, where detainees not facing military commissions are held. Camp X-Ray was a temporary detention facility, which was closed in April 2002. Its prisoners were transferred to Camp Delta.

Number of Prisoners

Over the 2 decades, Guantanamo has held nearly 780 people, but now just 40 men are imprisoned there, and almost three-quarters of them have never been criminally charged. They’re known as “forever prisoners” and they’re being detained indefinitely. Some have been there for almost two decades.



GUANTANAMO PRISON

Prisoners Died

Between 2002 and 2021, some have reportedly passed away due to cancer, several others have reportedly died by suicide, although the circumstances of their deaths are suspicious and cover-ups have repeatedly been alleged, per Harper's Magazine. And although more than one president has claimed that they would close the detention camp, as of 2022, Guantánamo Bay remains in use.

Released Prisoners

Overall, 780 people have been detained at Guantánamo Bay between 2002 and 2021. Associated Press reports that President George W. Bush released 532 detained people while President Barack Obama released 197 detained people. During his single term, President Donald Trump released only a single person, Ahmed al-Darbi, who was released as part of a plea deal and sent back to Saudi Arabia to serve the remainder of his sentence, according to The Guardian.

Inhumane Living Conditions

The Guantanamo prison has been a point of heated controversy since its inception. As reported by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), unlawful detention, inhumane living conditions, and brutal torture have sparked campaigns to transfer prisoners to other, more transparent, facilities and to permanently close the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp. As reported by Bridge, President Barack Obama signed an executive order in 2008,

which ordered the closure of the detention camp. However, the ACLU reports an estimated 41 prisoners are still being housed at the Guantanamo prison.

Present Condition

Under President Joe Biden, VICE News reports that conditions in the detention camp have further deteriorated, with some people who are detained describing “deteriorating facilities with broken toilets” and a lack of basic medical supplies such as aspirin and adhesive bandages. As of March 2020, 14 of the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base’s remaining 41 prisoners were being housed in Camp 7. When it initially opened, life in Camp 7 was similar to Camp X-Ray. However, as reported by The New York Times, the environment has become more relaxed and the detainees have been given more freedom and therefore have a better quality of life. The prisoners in Camp 7 spend four hours each day in lockdown. However, they spend the rest of their time in what Warden Yamashita calls “a communal living arrangement.” The Times reports that the prisoners are still monitored with surveillance cameras whenever they leave their cells. However, they have access to a food pantry, an open-air recreation yard, and a communal area with books, videos, and games, where they can interact with their fellow inmates. Although the environment has improved, the facility is still a prison, and conditions are far from ideal. A group of House Democrats has publicly called on President Joe Biden to speed up his efforts to close down the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay and humanely transfer its detainees elsewhere as quickly as possible.

Jemma George: A Light Lit among Prisoners

Magy Allesu

Family

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4,7). These lines sum up very well the life of Jemma. Jemma George was born on February 10th 1952, in Ernakulam, Kerala. She was the 11th child of late Mr Kunjuvareed and Mrs Elizabeth Kunjuvareed. She was proud that she came from a large family of 10 sisters and two brothers. Five sisters got married and five of them joined the religious life. DHMs, Maggie George and Litty George, are her elder sisters.

She joined the Society on 12th July 1973 in Mumbai and made her oblation in 1974. She made her 1st vows on 15th August 1976 in Mumbai, Five Year vows on 15th August 1981 in Vimalalayam, Kerala and Perpetual vows on 15th August 1986 in Wimbledon, London. She has completed her MSW, Diploma in journalism, and certificate course in catechetical service. She wanted to do something of her own interest and so she did a correspondence course in Theology and on the Bible.

Daughters of the Heart of Mary

She served the DHM Society for 41 years in various capacities. She started her mission

in Nirmala Niketan as kitchen-in-charge in 1980. Then she went to Wimbledon, London, where she served as the hostel warden along with pastoral work for 6 years. She returned to India and was in Delhi as hostel warden, then in Trivandrum as a social worker and was part of the ex-prisoner’s retreat centre. In 1996 she took up the prison ministry, full time, which was very dear to her heart, and became the National Secretary of the Prison Ministry based in Bangalore. She again went back to Delhi and was given the responsibility as the hostel warden and continued her prison ministry. She responded to the needs of the church and helped the diocese of Jammu and Kashmir to explore social work ministry. From there again she took up the responsibility as the National Secretary of the Prison Ministry and also worked with the drug addicts. In 2013 she was the superior of the Baddi community in Himachal Pradesh, India, and in 2016 she came to Mumbai and was a member of Vasai, Nirmala Niketan and Premankur communities. In spite of her poor health, she helped the community in all their needs. She always felt that her first mission was to pray for the conversion of people. Jemma is known for her deep faith and prayer life. She led many people to God through her simple and strong ways of relating to God.

Suffering Angel

Jemma served the Lord not only when physically well but also through her sickness for the last 24 years. She was diagnosed with cancer in 1997 and from then on, she started her life of physical suffering but nothing



A LIGHT LIT AMONG PRISONERS

could stop her indomitable spirit in serving God's people through her life and ministry. Through her suffering, she gave the best testimony of faith. She never complained about her pains. Nobody could even say that she was sick. Jemma was always at her best.

Eternal Journey

Jemma's health was deteriorating from August 2021 and she was on palliative care. She stopped eating from 13th November 2021 and was surviving only on liquids. We used to fool her saying that Jemma can live only on Holy Communion and she used to be happy to hear that. In fact, that is what happened for almost a month. On 9th December 2021 she attended Holy Eucharist on-line, and received Holy Communion and peacefully went to her Lord. Jemma was a true Daughter of the Heart of Mary and she showed her love for the Society even in her dying moments.

Prison Ministry India

When one spoke to her of the Prison Ministry, her face lit up. She used her favorite quote from the Bible. "And in His name the Gentiles will hope" (Matthew 12: 21). This verse from the Gospel of Matthew had influenced her all through her life especially in her Prison Ministry. Jemma was inspired by our foundress, Adelaide, particularly the transformation Adelaide brought in women during her stay in the jail. Jemma realized that she could do the same. The prison ministry thus became for her, a call within

a call. One instance she remembers is when the inmates of a certain prison in Mumbai, were invited to a prayer session. On that day, there was no distinction between Hindu or Muslim, Christian or Sikh. As she started the prayer, all called on the name of Jesus and were moved to tears. Jemma was emotional herself and was convinced that it is in the Name of Jesus that peace and repentance can return. Twenty-seven years of this ministry has led her face to face with untold suffering of both men and women, many of whom were unjustly put behind bars.

Thanks Jemma

We are deeply grateful to Jemma's family, for the constant love and support they have expressed to her during the moments of her suffering. It has been a beautiful and incredible faith journey for all the sisters of the Premankur community. All of them were there at Jemma's side round the clock till the end. She was a great intercessor for the province. We thank Jemma for all that she has been to each one; to all her family members, to her religious family and to all those who have been a part of her life. She lived her life to its full, till the end. She served the Lord in good health and in sickness. The message Jemma wanted to communicate, an extract from psalm 131: "I, Jemma, am not concerned with great matters or with subjects too difficult for me. Instead, I am content and at peace. As a child lies quietly in its mother's arms, so my soul is quiet within me". Yes, Jemma, go on trusting in the Lord now and forever.



Tony Hoffman: From Prison to Olympics

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

“One of the most common questions asked of me is: how hard was it to get through the prison? It was not very hard; but the hardest thing for me was being homeless. When all your friends are gone, your families are not around and all you have is drug addiction, a needle that goes into your arm, drugs that take away your feeling that you’ve been running for years, that was hard. Feeling hopeless was hard; full of guilt, full of shame, depressed to the point of committing suicide was hard”, says the hero of our article Tony Hoffman, who journeyed from Prison to Olympics, from drug-addict to a professional speaker.

The Early Years

Tony’s BMX career started in high school, as he was a top-ranked BMX (Bicycle Motocross) amateur with multiple endorsements. As a native of Clovis, CA, where he attended Clovis High School, Tony started drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana, and using prescription painkillers such as Vicodin and Oxycontin. His life took a turn for the worse as he became addicted at such a young age, losing everything.

Remarkable Moment

This is Tony’s most vivid memory and he would never forget this moment. He walked into Nate’s room (Tony’s friend, who died that same night due to drugs overdose) and said that he needed a sleeping bag and he would sleep on the street that night. For the next 6 months he slept on the street. He slept behind dumpsters, so people couldn’t find him. He slept in dirt fields, so people couldn’t find him. He was never ashamed of himself.

Tony’s Arrest

In 2004 Tony committed a home invasion armed robbery, and was ultimately sent

to prison for two years in 2007. Tony had violated his probation and knew the depth of his addiction, and understood the despair addicts go through as even a threat of ten-year prison sentence could not stop him from using drugs during his probation.

Tony’s Life-Goals

When he got into Wasco State Prison and walked into his cell 254, laid down on his bunk and looked up to the ceiling and found a quote which read as, ‘be careful on what you think, because your thoughts become your words; be careful on what you say, because your words become your actions’. And he kept reading it over and over, which made so much sense to him. And it is there he set 4 goals for his life. He said, when he gets out from prison (1) he would raise BMX professionally, (2) he would go to the Olympics (3) he would become a professional speaker (4) he would start a non-profit organization called the Freewill Project. But when he decided this at that point of time, he didn’t know that he would be going from ‘Prison to Olympics’.

Life’s Lesson of Redeemed Tony

The life’s lesson the redeemed Tony learned was, ‘if one can be trusted with little, one will be trusted with much’. He told himself that he was not going to learn how to brush his teeth, but he was going to treat brushing his teeth like it’s going to the Olympics. Then he learned how to make his bed; after he learned how to make his bed, he learned to organize the things. After he learned to organize his things, he learned to physically train hard every single day in prison without taking any days off. If one wants to be successful, work that routine every single day and sacrifice everything else that doesn’t fall into your routine, says Tony. He focused on his dreams and his gifts.

Tony's Dream Realization

He was out on parole on 13 December 2008 after two years of being in prison. Hadn't touched a bike for 7 years, and he took third place. That first year he won 5 races at the lower pro division and he moved up to the Olympic level in 2010. In 2011, he made 6 finals before he blew his knee out and he had to have knee surgery which caused him not to be able to race BMX professionally anymore. He was crushed, as his biggest dream was to go to the Olympics. But he kept himself focused. He started coaching BMX athletes in 2012. In July 2016, he got a phone call from his top female athlete, Brooke Crain who said to him to pack his bags as he was going to the Olympics. He made the Olympic Team, not as an athlete, but as a coach.

When he got off the plane, he started crying. He said that he would never forget when he got to the BMX track where the Olympics was going to be raced. He started crying, because he was so overwhelmed with gratitude. He had worked so hard and sacrificed so much and gave even when he wasn't getting paid for it. He believed in his gifts. "It doesn't matter how gifted you are at something; you are going to fail 1,500 times before you actually get to see your dream the way you see it. And if you don't learn how to fail and get back up, you're never going to get to where you want to go in life. One choice can change the rest of your lives", says Tony, a dreamer from prison cells.

Redeemed Prisoner

His story is full of redemption as he has seen some of the highest highs, and the lowest lows. Tony has presented on the prestigious TEDx stage and his Goal-cast video that went viral in February of 2020 has been viewed more than ten million times. He is the Founder and Director of the Freewheel Project, a non-

profit organization that mentors thousands of youths through action sports. Today, Tony is one of the most requested substance abuse speakers in the country, traveling over 200 days a year to share his inspiring story with various audiences. In 2021, he will be finishing his highly anticipated autobiography, "From Prison to the Olympics - The Tony Hoffman Story." Tony's future goal is to open the Tony Hoffman Wellness Center where he hopes to redirect the lives of those struggling with addiction onto the path of sobriety and purpose.

Freewheel Project Founder

One of Tony's "Great" visions while in prison was to start a program for youth, after he paroled. In 2012 the Freewheel Project became a reality. FWP mentors youth in Fresno County, the home-town Tony grew up in, through action sports.

World Class BMX Coach

Tony raced BMX at the highest level of the professional ranks for several years before stepping away from racing to begin his coaching career. Since 2012 Tony has coached world-class athletes from all over the world, leading them to National Championships, World Championships, and Olympic finals.

Professional Speaker

35 years old, Mr Hoffman travels around the United States sharing his story with various audiences, spending about 200 days a year for the past nine years recounting the tale of becoming addicted to drugs and eventually landing in prison before turning his life around.

Podcast Host

In 2018, Tony launched "One Choice" his personal podcast. Each week he posts episodes that outline the mental skills it has required for him to not only maintain sobriety but go from Wasco State Prison to the Rio Olympic Games in 2018



In Appreciation of Sr Jemma DHM

Sr Antoinette Araujo, DHM

Jemma, a Religious belonging to our Congregation of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary was presently a member of our North Province, India. On behalf of our Provincial Magy Allesu and all DHM of the Province I feel privileged to share some glimpses on the life of our Sister Jemma. Jemma was a woman of deep faith which stemmed from her intimacy with Christ, full of courage and conviction as she lived passionately for Christ and reached out to one and all with passion and compassion. She worked zealously in different ministries whether in India or in London, always caring for the people she served. Like our Foundress Adelaide de Cice she said “It is the Lord in every situation and again like Adelaide who transformed prisoners while she was in jail for 4 months, Jemma was inspired to work in the Prison Ministry.

Of the 45 years as a DHM, she was involved in this ministry for 27 years praying constantly for the conversion of the prisoners. Prison Ministry became for her a Call within the Call and even though she was not directly involved she continued to pray for the conversion of people. Due to her failing health, she spent the last few months here in our Community at Goregaon, Mumbai, and she was often seen in the Chapel at 3 o’clock reciting the chaplet of Divine Mercy. She continued to deepen her faith in God listening to charismatic talks and online prayer sessions. Jemma, forgetting her pain and suffering would enthusiastically lend a helping hand in the community, attending to meetings, listening and encouraging sisters and praying for the concerns of the prisoners and the concerns of the world. She found consolation in the words of Jesus; “I am with you always”.

Later in the last month, when unable to move around, she continued to be strengthened by the Word of God, heard online Masses, received Holy Communion daily and we who sat by her bedside would see her whisper a prayer or recite the Rosary. Jemma is believed to have said to our Postulants as they sat beside her, “Jesus will take me after I have saved 100 souls in purgatory.” As I sat beside her and held her hand, I could feel vibrations of peace as she prayed silently. Her favourite hymn was: “All to Jesus I surrender” and as we sang this hymn she too prayed for this surrender to the Lord. Jemma’s sisters, relatives and many who visited her also shared about the peace and serenity they felt near her. She lived her life fully till the end praying for the conversion of souls, even during her illness. This she considered was her mission.

In her final moments after having heard the Online Mass and received Holy Communion she peacefully entered into the arms of the Heavenly Father. The Lord must have certainly said: “Come you blessed of my Father, come and possess the Kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world... I was in prison and you visited me”. It can be said of Jemma, as I quote the poet James Lowell: “Hope assumes responsibility, uplifts the heart, enriches the spirit, raises faith in the future and makes dreams come true. Hope enlightens the darkness of the day. It does not allow us to be conditioned by the surroundings”. Yes, Jemma lived this life of hope, giving hope to many whom she encountered on her earthly journey, making her dreams a reality. We thank God for the witness of her life and pray that Jemma continues to intercede for us as we live our lives of Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity with dedication, daring and determination and thus bring hope to all we serve. Wishing you dear Fr Francis and team of collaborators in the Prison Ministry God’s blessings as you reach out to enliven and transform the life of the prisoners. Be assured of our prayerful support.

Fasting and Prayer Days in Preparation for the National Convention

3.5 Rajasthan

No	Diocese	Coordinator	Telephone	Prayer Days
149	Ajmer	Fr Raju Sastya SVD	9425065190	28 February 2022
150	Jaipur	Sr Lavita	9828343943	1 March 2022
151	Udaipur	Fr Cosmos Shekhawat	9928092353	2 March 2022

3.6 Uttar Pradesh

No	Diocese	Coordinator	Telephone	Prayer Days
152	Agra	Fr Mathew Kanjirathinkal	9410052762	3 March 2022
153	Allahabad	Fr Bona Jacob	8318220120	4 March 2022
154	Bareilly	Fr Derek Pinto	9457873242	5 March 2022
155	Gorakhpur	Fr Gregory	8765727713	6 March 2022
156	Jhansi	Fr Lawrence	7903016929	7 March 2022
157	Lucknow	Fr Dominic	8009426835	8 March 2022
158	Meerut	Fr Jesu Amirtham	9412200908	9 March 2022
159	Varanasi	Fr Kaspar Manimaran	9807612393	10 March 2022

3.7 Uttarakhand

No	Diocese	Coordinator	Telephone	Prayer Days
160	Bijnor	Fr Jesu Amirtham -	9412200908	11 March 2022

4. NORTH EAST COORDINATORS

4.1 Arunachal Pradesh

No	Diocese	Coordinator	Telephone	Prayer Days
161	Miao	Fr Thomas Erambil	9436256707	12 March 2022
162	Itta Nagar			13 March 2022

4.2 Assam

No	Diocese	Coordinator	Phone	Prayer Days
163	Bongaigaon	Fr Lineesh Chacko	9101304048 9480520553	14 March 2022
164	Dibrugarh	Fr Nicholas Kerketta	9101432634	15 March 2022
165	Diphu	Sr Ranchitha	7384654705	16 March 2022
166	Guwahati	Sr Protima Lakara	9706059751	17 March 2022
167	Tezpur			18 March 2022

4.3 Manipur

No	Diocese	Coordinator	Telephone	Prayer Days
168	Imphal	Sr Rosin Mulayolickal	7629851288	19 March 2022

4.4 Meghalaya

No	Diocese	Coordinator	Telephone	Prayer Days
169	Jowai	Fr Francis Dhar	6009416377	20 March 2022
170	Nongstoin			21 March 2022
171	Shillong			22 March 2022
172	Tura	Fr Bernad Sangma MSFS	9774280176 9366195069	23 March 2022

4.5 Mizoram

No	Diocese	Coordinator	Telephone	Prayer Days
173	Aizawl	Fr Praveen Fernandes	9862415254	24 March 2022

4.6 Nagaland

No	Diocese	Coordinator	Telephone	Prayer Days
174	Dimapur	Sr Clare Jose FCC	9774479605	25 March 2022
175	Kohima	Fr Suresh Innocent	8610567227	26 March 2022

4.7 Tripura

No	Diocese	Coordinator	Telephone	Prayer Days
176	Agartala			27 March 2022



The Magnificat (Lk 1:46-56)


Bro Reagan Martins

Introduction

The Magnificat or Mary's hymn of praise is one of the deepest and profound expressions of praise that has ever been sung. It is a hymn that echoes in every corner of the world today during the celebration of the vespers. This is a hymn that is full of gratitude, hope and assurance but above all it is a hymn that celebrates God's Love, His salvation, His Faithfulness and the fulfilment of the promise of Salvation. In order to understand the beauty, the depth and the emotion of the Magnificat, we need to place it in the broader context of the History of Israel, the Experience of Mary as a Jewish Teenager, the Annunciation and the beauty of her response.

God's Hand in the History of Israel

The very moment that our first Parents fell was the moment that God planned the salvation of the Human Race and in that very instant God Dreamt of Mary. (cf. Gen 3:15) in order to bring this plan to fruition. God Chooses a man named Abram (Gen 12:1) and promises to make of him a great nation and a means of blessing for the entire world (Gen 12: 2-3). And Abram placing all of his trust in the promise of God leaves his home town of Har'an and obeys the command of God, and against all odds we see the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham. Through his blessing Jacob




prophesies that a great King shall arise from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:8-12). However, by the beginning of the book of Exodus we see all of Israel is enslaved and oppressed in Egypt. God plans to free the Israelites from the Egyptians through his servant Moses, and leads the Israelites out of Egypt on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. (Ex 14:29) and leads them into the Promised Land. God remains with them and guides Israel through the judges. God Eventually chooses David who is from the house of Judah and through the prophet Samuel anoints him King (1 Sam 16).

Mary as a Jewish Teenager

As a Jewish teenager Mary must have been familiar with the History of Israel and the promises made by God with regard to the salvation of Israel and the Messiah, and just like any Jew of her time she too must have prayed for the Messiah with an earnest longing in her heart. And in this context the angel of the Lord comes to Mary announcing the birth of Jesus and says, "Greetings favoured one! The lord is with You" (Lk1:28) - an expression that we use in the Eucharist. The gravity of this Greeting must not be lost on us because it is with this assurance that we see the great mission given to the people God chooses.

The Annunciation and Mary's Response

When Mary heard the greeting of the angel she was perplexed and pondered on what this greeting could mean (Lk1:29) which is the crux of Marian Spirituality. Even though the message of the Angel was a death sentence, (Deut 22:23-24) this pondering




led Mary to understand the plan of God for her and respond with the greatest act of surrender which is “Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). This experience does not make her complacent and proud but rather makes her go out to serve her relative Elizabeth who, as the angel told Mary, was in her sixth month of pregnancy.

The Visitation

Mary’s journey from Nazareth to the Hill country of Judah mirrors the journey of the Arc of the Covenant in 2 Sam 6:2. When Mary greets Elizabeth the child in her womb leaps for Joy and she is filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaims “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb (Lk 1:42) and it is after this Greeting that Mary hymns the Magnificat.

The Magnificat

In Lk 1: 46-49 Mary redirects the Praise given to her by Elizabeth to God. Mary recognizes the great things that the Lord has done for her, for Israel and for all of humanity, and as the new Eve and the mother and representative of a new creation through Christ, she sings the hymn of Praise recognizing that the salvation of God has already come. Realizing that despite her nothingness God has looked with favour on her and chosen her to be the mother of the messiah that was promised, she exclaims, ‘My soul magnifies the lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. In



Lk 1:50–53 Mary speaks of the revolution that is to be brought and how God has worked in the life of Israel redeeming them with the strength of his mighty arm (Ex 14:29) and how the lowly are lifted and the powerful are thrown from their thrones reminding us of the fall of king Saul and the rise of David.

Lk 1: 54-55 speaks of the faithfulness of God throughout the History of Israel and the final fulfillment of his promise that took place when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. This is the true meaning of salvation in genesis when we read of Paradise, where God walked with Adam and Eve (cf. Gen 3:8). The Salvation that God promised is the restoration of the same relationship that was strained by sin and therefore Jesus who is to be called Emanuel {God with us} (Mt 1:23) is the salvation and the restoration of the relationship that was strained. In verse 56 we see Mary, the Arc of the New Covenant, remained with Elizabeth for three months just as the Arc of the Covenant remained for three months in the House of Oded-edom in 2 Sam 6:11.

Conclusion

Mary through her spirituality of pondering on the great works of God gives us an example of her reflective nature, and how we too need to learn to ponder on the words and the works of God in our lives. Her spirituality is characterised by humility, service, gratitude to God and complete trust in Him. Let us ask God to give us the Grace to imitate Mary in our day to day lives so that we too may find our role in God’s plan and do it whole heartedly.



Open Jail Christmas Celebration


20.12.2021

Fr Arogyaswamy

Prison Ministry India, Buxar Unit had its Christmas Celebrations in the Open Jail, Buxar on the 20th of December, 2021, having Most Rev. Archbishop William D'Souza SJ, the Chairman of Prison Ministry India, Bihar as the Chief guest. The program was a collective effort by PMI, Buxar unit and Pastor Paul and his associates. Christmas program with the inmates of the Open Jail, Buxar was an attempt to share the Christmas Joy and also to enhance the relationship and respect for the members in the prisons.

His Grace Archbishop (Emeritus) William D'Souza SJ, Apostolic Administrator of Buxar diocese was solemnly welcomed by the Prison Officials. Mr. Tribhuvan, Jailor of the Central Jail, Buxar and Mr. Ram Vinod Singh, Jailor of the Open Jail, Buxar welcomed the Archbishop with flower bouquets. Along with the officials, the Chairman of PMI, Bihar was led to the program hall, where the associates of Pastor Paul were already singing Christmas hymns for the inmates gathered in the hall. The 74 inmates along with their family members were already immersed in the singing.

In the Opening Prayer, referring to the Biblical text of Luke 4: 18, where the Word of God announces liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners, Fr. Anil Benet Cruz, the Rector of St. Mary's Cathedral, Buxar invoked God's blessings on everyone. He prayed for the divine gift of joy, peace and love to all the family members of the inmates too. Pastor Paul, considering the Christmas Program as a divine blessing, welcomed all for the program. Children of the group 'Christ's Doves' welcomed all



dignitaries and guests, by giving bouquets and rose flowers. Fr. Arogyaswamy Gotluri, Prison Ministry India, Bihar State Coordinator, welcomed all present with his words of welcome.

Christmas Program had a variety of programs, such as Prayer song by the Parish Choir; Action Songs by Christ's Doves; Christmas skit by the associates of Pastor Paul; Dance by the children belonging to Christ's Doves group etc. Archbishop William, D'Souza SJ, in his Christmas Message, focused on the point 'Who is Jesus?' He said that Christmas is for all, beyond the boundaries of creed, caste and colour. Jesus came for the entire suffering humanity. Archbishop also appreciated the volunteers working under the umbrella of Prison Ministry India, for the welfare of the inmates behind bars. Jesus is born in the world to share the love of God with one another. Archbishop also expressed his wish that PMI shares that divine love with the inmates through many activities.

In the sharing of Christmas joy, Archbishop William invited the inmates, men & women for cutting the Christmas cake, and he shared the joy of Christmas with the inmates by eating from the same cake piece. PMI, Buxar unit also distributed 100 blankets to the inmates as Christmas gifts, which was sponsored by Sewa Kendra, Patna. All participants also enjoyed cake and sweet packets, sponsored by Pastor Paul. Sr. Celina Kerketta concluded the program with her vote of thanks. She added a special note of appreciation and gratitude towards Mrs. Shalini, the Superintendent of Open Jail, who gave an opening to the Prison Ministry in Buxar jails. Sharing these wonderful moments of joy and love, Christmas Celebrations in Buxar Open Jail ended with singing few songs of Christmas season.



Christmas Celebration at Mananthawady Sub Jail



Christmas Celebration at Beggars' Home, Pune



Christmas celebration at Khandwa Prison



Christmas Celebration at Tihar Prison, Delhi



Christmas Celebration at Women Prison, Pune



Marriage of Rosa at Jeevodaya, Bangalore



Christmas Celebration at Birsa Munda Prison, Ranchi



Christmas Celebration at Calicut Prison



Christmas Celebration at Coimbatore Prison



Christmas Celebration at Dongri Shelter Home, Mumbai



Christmas Celebration at Neyyattinkara Special Jail



Medicine Distribution at Adharwadi Prison



Christmas Celebration at Ambikapur Prison



Christmas Celebration at Bangalore Central Prison



Christmas Celebration at Ernakulam Subjail



Christmas Celebration at Aluva Jail