



PRISON VOICE

February 2021

Vol. XVIII

Issue 2

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-

LENT WITH LOVE



Ashasadan Girls, Noida



Christmas Gifts to Deathrow Prisoners, Bengaluru



Farewell to Fr Mathew Puthiyedath from Pala Subjail



Mrs Tresa Paul Teaching Kolbe Children



PMI Bihar Visiting Buxar Open Prison



PMI Hyderabad Visiting Juvenile Home, Hyderabad



PMI Hyderabad Visiting Juvenile Home, Hyderabad



PMI Kozhikodu Zonal Gathering at Karuna Center

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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
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Lenten Message 2021
His Holiness Pope Francis

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem” (Mt 20:18)
Lent: A Time for Renewing Faith, Hope and Love

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus revealed to his disciples the deepest meaning of his mission when he told them of his passion, death and resurrection, in fulfilment of the Father’s will. He then called the disciples to share in this mission for the salvation of the world. In our Lenten journey towards Easter, let us remember the One who “humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). During this season of conversion, let us renew our faith, draw from the “living water” of hope, and receive with open hearts the love of God, who makes us brothers and sisters in Christ. At the Easter vigil, we will renew our baptismal promises and experience rebirth as new men and women by the working of the Holy Spirit. This Lenten journey, like the entire pilgrimage of the Christian life, is even now illuminated by the light of the resurrection, which inspires the thoughts, attitudes and decisions of the followers of Christ. Fasting, prayer and almsgiving, as preached by Jesus (cf. Mt 6:1-18), enable and express our conversion. The path of poverty and self-denial (fasting), concern and loving care for the poor (almsgiving), and childlike dialogue with the Father (prayer) make it possible for us to live lives of sincere faith, living hope and effective charity.



Poper Francis

1. Faith calls us to accept the truth and testify to it before God and all our brothers and sisters.

In this Lenten season, accepting and living the truth revealed in Christ means, first of all, opening our hearts to God’s word, which the Church passes on from generation to generation. This truth is not an abstract concept reserved for a chosen intelligent few. Instead, it is a message that all of us can receive and understand thanks to the wisdom of a heart open to the grandeur of God, who loves us even before we are aware of it. Christ himself is this truth. By taking on our humanity, even to its very limits, he has made himself the way – demanding, yet open to all – that leads to the fullness of life. Fasting, experienced as a form of self-denial, helps those who undertake it in simplicity of heart to rediscover God’s gift and to recognize that, created in his image and likeness, we find our fulfilment in him. In embracing the experience of

poverty, those who fast make themselves poor with the poor and accumulate the treasure of a love both received and shared. In this way, fasting helps us to love God and our neighbour, inasmuch as love, as Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches, is a movement outwards that focuses our attention on others and considers them as one with ourselves (cf. Fratelli Tutti, 93). Lent is a time for believing, for welcoming God into our lives and allowing him to “make his dwelling” among us (cf. Jn 14:23). Fasting involves being freed from all that weighs us down – like consumerism or an excess of information, whether true or false – in order to open the doors of our hearts to the One who comes to us, poor in all things, yet “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14): the Son of God our Saviour.

2. Hope as “living water” enabling us to continue our journey.

The Samaritan woman at the well, whom Jesus asks for a drink, does not understand what he means when he says that he can offer her “living water” (Jn 4:10). Naturally, she thinks that he is referring to material water, but Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit whom he will give in abundance through the paschal mystery, bestowing a hope that does not disappoint. Jesus had already spoken of this hope when, in telling of his passion and death, he said that he would “be raised on the third day” (Mt 20:19). Jesus was speaking of the future opened up by the Father’s mercy. Hoping with him and because of him means believing that history does not end with our mistakes, our violence and injustice, or the sin that crucifies Love. It means receiving from his open heart the Father’s forgiveness.

In these times of trouble, when everything seems fragile and uncertain, it may appear challenging to speak of hope. Yet Lent is precisely the season of hope, when we turn back to God who patiently continues to care for his creation which we have often mistreated (cf. *Laudato Si’*, 32-33; 43-44). Saint Paul urges us to place our hope in reconciliation: “Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20). By receiving forgiveness in the sacrament that lies at the heart of our process of conversion, we in turn can spread forgiveness to others. Having received forgiveness ourselves, we can offer it through our willingness to enter into attentive dialogue with others and to give comfort to those experiencing sorrow and pain. God’s forgiveness, offered also through our words and actions, enables us to experience an Easter of fraternity.

In Lent, may we be increasingly concerned with “speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement, and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn” (Fratelli Tutti, 223). In order to give hope to others, it is sometimes enough simply to be kind, to be “willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference” (ibid., 224). Through recollection and silent prayer, hope is given to us as inspiration and interior light, illuminating the challenges and choices we face in our mission. Hence the need to pray (cf. Mt 6:6) and, in secret, to encounter the Father of tender love.

To experience Lent in hope entails growing in the realization that, in Jesus Christ, we



LENTEN MESSAGE 2021

are witnesses of new times, in which God is “making all things new” (cf. Rev 21:1-6). It means receiving the hope of Christ, who gave his life on the cross and was raised by God on the third day, and always being “prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls [us] to account for the hope that is in [us]” (1 Pet 3:15).

3. Love, following in the footsteps of Christ, in concern and compassion for all, is the highest expression of our faith and hope.

Love rejoices in seeing others grow. Hence it suffers when others are anguished, lonely, sick, homeless, despised or in need. Love is a leap of the heart; it brings us out of ourselves and creates bonds of sharing and communion. “‘Social love’ makes it possible to advance towards a civilization of love, to which all of us can feel called. With its impulse to universality, love is capable of building a new world. No mere sentiment, it is the best means of discovering effective paths of development for everyone” (Fratelli Tutti, 183).

Love is a gift that gives meaning to our lives. It enables us to view those in need as members of our own family, as friends, brothers or sisters. A small amount, if given with love, never ends, but becomes a source of life and happiness. Such was the case with the jar of meal and jug of oil of the widow of Zarephath, who offered a cake of bread to the prophet Elijah (cf. 1 Kings 17:7-16); it was also the case with the loaves blessed, broken and given by Jesus to the disciples to distribute to the crowd (cf. Mk 6:30-44). Such is the case too with our almsgiving,

whether small or large, when offered with joy and simplicity. To experience Lent with love means caring for those who suffer or feel abandoned and fearful because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In these days of deep uncertainty about the future, let us keep in mind the Lord’s word to his Servant, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you” (Is 43:1). In our charity, may we speak words of reassurance and help others to realize that God loves them as sons and daughters. “Only a gaze transformed by charity can enable the dignity of others to be recognized and, as a consequence, the poor to be acknowledged and valued in their dignity, respected in their identity and culture, and thus truly integrated into society” (Fratelli Tutti, 187).

Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father. May Mary, Mother of the Saviour, ever faithful at the foot of the cross and in the heart of the Church, sustain us with her loving presence. May the blessing of the risen Lord accompany all of us on our journey towards the light of Easter.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 11 November
2020, the Memorial of Saint Martin of
Tours

FRANCISCUS

LENT : A CALL FOR METANOIA

It's my hope that each of us might enter into deeper prayer this Lenten season so that the Lord may lead us closer to His heart. Lent is a time of renewal which brings about spiritual healing in our relationship with God, the Church, our fellow brethren and the creation. We don't have to be perfect or fully recovered or healed in order to approach the Lord. He wants to heal us of the mess and the brokenness brought about by our sins of commission and omission. To do that, we ought to open ourselves unto Him through prayer. It means to have an open and sincere conversation with God. It's a gift God desires to give us out of love. What are the areas of our hearts that the Lord desires to touch and heal that will bring us to a deeper intimacy with Him? God is waiting to receive you and me in mercy, love and with his arms wide open. Our intimate moments of silence will urge us to hearken to God's voice.

When we have a regular routine of prayer, we become more sensitive to God's voice, and our life becomes more vivid and vibrant. St Teresa of Avila said that prayer is the launching out of the heart toward God, which means we can be our authentic self with Jesus. We can be honest because that is what he desires. He desires to see us precisely as we are at the present moment, namely, the raw version of ourselves. And we present that to Him and he will meet us there. So, we bring Him this brokenness, hurts, pains, mistakes, and missteps that we want to be cleansed of. And we lay them at the foot of the Cross.

In this regard, I would like to recall what I love most in the parable of the Prodigal Son. When the prodigal son returns home after living a life of sin, his father is still waiting for him with bated breath. The moment the son returns, the father is there waiting to embrace him and shower him with unconditional love. So is our

EDITOR'S VIEW



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor

heavenly Father, who desires to unload our burdens and heal us of our pain. Let's give Him thanks for all he has already done in our lives, and in sincere surrender, ask Him where He is leading us next; trust and follow Him there. Dear friends I would like to propose some of the following as Lenten Practices:

- 1) Frequent Confession with a humble and sorrowful heart;
- 2) Daily Participation in the Holy Mass;
- 3) Daily Recitation of the Rosary;
- 4) Reading the Bible and reflecting on what is read;
- 5) Praying the Stations of the Cross;
- 6) Learning to fast regularly;
- 7) Eating moderately healthy foods and as a family;
- 8) Forgiving and praying for those who hurt us;
- 9) Encouraging Lenten almsgiving through volunteer service;
- 10) Opening a food bank for the poor and organizing donations.

Let's thank God for this season of grace which encourages and motivates us to search our hearts so that we might have a deeper communion with Him throughout the coming 40 days but more importantly, a rejuvenated lifestyle for the rest of our lives. The one thing that we often take for granted is the free gift of Salvation through Our Lord Jesus Christ which we fail to remember. May this season bring new hope and new healing and may we journey toward the Cross prayerfully and purposefully even through our pain, doubt, questions and our constant seeking. We shall then find resurrection springing up from this old dusty ground of sin and sorrow and be surprised by the joy it unfolds for us.



LIVE LENT WITH LOVE



LOVE QUOTIENT

Pope Francis in his Lenten message of 2021 invites us to Live Lent with Love. “To experience Lent with love means caring for those who suffer or feel abandoned and fearful because of the Covid-19 pandemic”. To do this we need high degree of Love Quotient - LQ. The LQ, the ability to love willingly, is the simple act of being kind towards people, be it at the workplace or with one’s own family or in ministry. We are familiar with many human intelligences such as physical quotient, emotional quotient, intelligent quotient, spiritual quotient and so on. Among all these human intelligences the most important human intelligence is LQ, the Love Quotient, the capacity to be compassionate, the capability to be human and the ability to be empathetic. In this age of robots and palmtops love quotient has great significance. Everybody has LQ but often dormant. Whenever an opportunity comes it becomes dominant. For instance, consider when people are troubled with floods, typhoons, hurricanes and earthquakes. The dormant love quotient suddenly becomes dominant and forgetting their name, fame, color, caste and religion all come together and help each other.

JESUS’ LOVE QUOTIENT

Love Quotient was the supreme message of the Old Testament, “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall



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

love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). This was the prime message of Jesus in the New Testament, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 13, 12-13). St Paul illustrates the LQ, “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends (1 Cor 13, 4-8). St John defined God as love (1 Jn 4,16). Significantly LQ is the ultimate criteria in the last judgement, “Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me” (Mathew 25,34-36). “For whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25, 40).



LOVE BOMB EXPLOSION

St John reveals in a beautiful way God's love quotient, "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" (John 3,16). All scriptures can be summarized in one-word love and its manifold expressions such as mercy and compassion. Pope Francis wrote that *The Name of God is Mercy*. We find the highest statement of LQ in Jesus' teaching, "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also" (Lk 6, 27-29). Jesus reached the highest stage of LQ in his self-sacrifice on the cross at Calvary. Here Love Quotient becomes Love Bomb (LB) explosion.

PRISON MINISTRY – A LOVE BOMB EXPLOSION

The birth, growth and the fruits of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India is nothing but the love of God, especially His love for the lost. "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mk 2, 17). PMI is born out of the overflow of Jesus' divine love for his lost sheep. PMI is grown out of this deep divine love. PMI brings forth innumerable fruits out of this love and grace from the Lord. All initiatives and new ministries are the result of Jesus' love for the lost sheep. All its volunteers are only instruments in the hands of God to share this LQ with others by becoming LB, love bomb. The growth and spread of PMI were the result of the LQ and LB reigned in the clergy, religious and laity. The more LQ and LB the PMI volunteers have the better they will bear fruit in the ministry for the lost, least and last.



FROM NATIONAL COORDINATOR'S DESK

PRISONERS' REFORMATION – A LOVE BOMB EXPLOSION

Love quotient and love bomb are the golden keys to reformation, rehabilitation and redemption of the lost sheep of Jesus such as prisoners, prostitutes, and the like. They are people who had less opportunities to experience the love of God and love of neighbor. They are to be overwhelmed with this love to reform them. This is what PMI volunteers do when they visit prisons and when they deal with released prisoners in rehabilitation centers. Bernard Lonergan a Canadian Jesuit theologian illuminates that conversion is nothing but falling in love with God.

LOVE CIVILIZATION

Every endeavor to grow in love quotient will lead to a civilization of love in a world where hatred and disunity reign. Prayer, penance and works of charity are the best means to grow in love quotient and love bomb thereby establishing the kingdom of love. If the passion and death of Christ was the first and most powerful super dynamic love bomb explosion the only means of continuing a similar lifestyle is by participating in His Paschal Mysteries. The more we participate in His way of the cross and in His crucifixion, the better we bring forth peace, harmony, love and life, the fruits of His resurrection. This love explosion shall gradually become a revolution of love and that in the course of time will develop a culture of love instead of a culture of death. To lay the foundation for this revolution and civilization of love, we need to deepen our friendship with Jesus, with one another, and with the most suffering and neglected of the society.

Lent: The Season of Cleansing

Moses spent forty days in the presence of the Lord. By His Word and by the fire from the bush, God cleansed Moses and gave him power to lead the people of Israel in the wilderness for forty years. Let us also spend these forty days in the presence of the Lord and plead with the Holy Spirit to cleanse us. If we live a pure and holy life we will see the miracles of God. God loves holiness because He is the Holy God of Holiness. Therefore, Joshua says, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you" (Joshua 3:5). Here we need to understand that living a holy life means having love, kindness, goodness and patience. But an unholy life is full of hatred, jealousy, vengeance, selfishness and worldly pleasures and such people will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God (Mt. 5:8). Pure in heart means those who have been cleansed from all unrighteousness. If the heart does not function properly, the doctors operate and set it right. Similarly, the filth in the hearts of people can be cleansed only by our Lord Jesus. We have to cry out to the Lord like David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24). Above all, guard your heart, for it is the well spring of life (Prov. 4:23). We must ask the Lord Jesus to remove every kind of evil from our heart like hatred, fear, selfishness and envy.

At this juncture, we always need to remember that God's spirit will make us holy. God's Spirit will make us holy through the blood of Jesus and by His word. All we need to do is to confess our sins to Jesus and He who



Fr Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar

is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9). The blood of Jesus will cleanse us from every sin (1Jn. 1:7). For instance, we see in Luke's Gospel on the Prodigal son that he lost everything by going away from the Father. He distanced himself from the love of the Father. When he was suffering from hunger, and had to eat the pods that the pigs were eating, his eyes were opened. He returned to his Father with repentance in his heart and asked forgiveness with open arms; his Father forgave him and celebrated his return joyfully. Let us also confess our sins and ask for forgiveness from our Heavenly Father. This is the time of Reconciliation and Repentance.

Indeed, during this gracious season of lent, it is particularly important to help the poor. The Lord declares "Is not this kind of fasting I have chosen; to lose the chains of injustice and unite the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter; when you see the naked to clothe him and not to turn away from as our own flesh and blood?" (Is 58:6-12). Let us do the kind of fasting, prayer and almsgiving which is chosen by the Lord and receive His abundant blessings. During this holy season of Lent, let us purify our hearts and turn them into God's temple. Let us read and meditate on God's word to live a victorious life over sin and worldly pleasures. Let us also follow our Lord's teaching and help the poor and destitute and bear fruit for the Lord and bring Glory to His Holy name.

FROM FILTHY TO HOLY



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Many poverty-stricken children leave home in search of a good fortune and end up in prisons as they grow, on committing a series of crimes. It was the same with Ravi (name changed), who left home and landed on the streets in the bad company of street children. He lacked the guidance of his parents, being in the hands of pickpockets in the streets and leading a miserable life. He learned to be totally on his own and earned his living from the street and became totally a child of the street. They took him to their masters who were professional pickpockets. He was apprenticed to them and eventually excelled in the nefarious art of pick pocketing so that he was later named pickpocket Ravi. It was behind the bars of dark cells within prison walls that pickpocket Ravi was finally picked by God and redeemed to live today a witnessing life, leaving all the old ways behind.

Ravi started to be receptive to the promptings of the Spirit and his thirst to read the Word of God nourished it. Whenever PMI volunteers visited the prison, he was present there. These frequent meetings with the PMI volunteers in jail paved the path for his transformation later in life. He opened himself to the outpouring of graces from the Lord and miracles happened. As he stayed behind the bars, the prayers of his mother and wife redeemed him. During this time, he spent much time with the Lord and gave heed to the suggestions of PMI volunteers. He began to realize gradually the plans of the Lord for him. He repented of all his wrongdoings and decided to work

hard in looking after the family that was in his care. He is today a living testimony of the power of the Word of God in saving the lost. Ravi who was faithful in doing bad things became faithful in doing God's work and saving souls for God. Ravi who was addicted to money and wrongdoings became addicted to the Word of God and works now for the conversion of hearts.

God Speaks to Everyone

God of the Lost in whom we believe, speaks not only to holy people, good people, and virtuous people. Our God speaks to sinners too. Many a time we tend to think God speaks only to people who are normally considered good, namely: bishops, priests, religious and other holy people. But the truth is God speaks to everyone. Even the redemption of a hardcore criminal is not too hard for God. God speaks even to Serial Killers, Human Traffickers, Death Row Prisoners, Hired-Killers, Pick Pockets, Drug addicts and Alcoholics. Even if one is a sinner, not accepted by one's relatives, rejected by the community, branded as criminal by family members, God can still redeem him or her. No one is beyond redemption; God is busy 24x7 for 365 days in His work of redemption.

Rising from Dirt

The Prodigal Son, being in the father's house, didn't realize the treasures that were



FILTHY TO HOLY

within it. He thought that the world away from his father's house would be more colorful. He didn't realize in the meantime that everything the Father had belonged to him too. But rather, he asked for his share and his Father divided the property and gave it to him. The younger one (prodigal son), going to the distant country with his share thought that he was free and could live his life the way he wanted. The child of a rich father, who had so many servants in his family, was now in the dirtiest place. The son had become a slave. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I'm dying of hunger!'" (Luke 15:17). When he came to himself and realized the worth of himself as the son of a father, he decided to rise and go back to his father. In the pig shed, in the dirtiest place, we see the prodigal son coming to a realization, coming to himself and rising up to go back.

Filthy to Holy

When Mathew the tax collector was in a foul circumstance, Jesus went there and spoke to him. He picked him up from there for a cause as he said to him, "Follow me". Jesus made Mathew to wake up to the realization of who he was as he uttered the words, "follow me." Mathew realized that his call was not to follow the Roman Government; not to accumulate money for the future; not to crave for the positions of the world by choosing the wrong path. But his one and only call was to follow the Master. The moment Mathew realized his call, immediately he got up from the dirtiest

place and embraced holiness. The wealth he had embraced became nothing. He didn't bother about his family, security, stability and the future. The man who considered tax collection more valuable than his identity as a Jew, left everything when he heard the voice of the Master, "Follow me". He rejected the most valuable thing in his life hearing the two words addressed to him, "follow me."

True Conversion

Mathew surrendered everything at the feet of the Master for a cause and followed Jesus. Mathew denied himself everything when he found Jesus. The Prodigal Son sitting in the pig shed remembered the Father's house. The story of the Prodigal Son is told by Jesus to show that God will accept any sinner who repents, no matter what they have done. The father in the story is meant to represent God, and the prodigal son is meant to represent a sinner. The people who witnessed the miracles of Jesus' multiplication of five loaves, healing of the leper, restoring of sight to the blind and walking on the sea, abandoned Jesus when He was on the Cross. But the Centurion, who never saw any miracle of Jesus proclaimed, "Truly He is the Son of God" (Mt 27:54) when he saw Jesus crying out from the cross "Abba Father" and witnessed the death of Jesus. This is conversion of heart; looking at the agony of Jesus, gazing at the way He died for humanity, he changed himself and became an ardent follower of Jesus. God came down in the form of Jesus and the first message He preached was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Mt 4:17).



PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF PRISONERS' GIRL CHILDREN



Sr Jerline Joyce SSAM

The Unwelcomed

In many parts of India, the birth of a girl child is not welcomed. Right from her arrival into this world, she faces discrimination, humiliation, and oppression at every stage of her life. Gender disparity is the key parameter when it comes to healthcare, education and growth opportunities, in which she is neglected because of her gender. Some manage to survive and pursue new paths. Most, however, surrender hopelessly to the sad fate assigned to them. In a country, rife with gender inequalities and the underlying patriarchal mindset, girl children often find themselves at risk of being abused and harassed. Discrimination against girls is rampant and due to the fear of abuse and exploitation, they are kept at home instead of being sent to school; this situation easily lends itself to domestic violence. In the given situation, the girl children hailing from prisoners' families are in greater danger than anybody else as they are in the critical situation of threat. They stand to lose their right to protection as their parents are incarcerated for various reasons. The expectation of a responsible society is to ensure utmost care and protection to its girl children who stand vulnerable in the eyes of antisocial elements

Threat to Protection

The opportunity to be born, the opportunity to grow in a safe and secure environment and the opportunity to develop one's full



potential are some of the major issues concerning girl children in India. The children of prisoners do not have a safe and secure environment to grow up. The girl children particularly face the threat of losing the safe family environment and care of their parents. In fact, if the children of prisoners go uncared for, it would result in dire consequences for their childhood. The child in normal circumstances would feel safe amidst their family members, particularly among their parents and natural guardians. This sense of safety is sadly absent once the parents are incarcerated following due processes of the law.

The Commitment of our Nation

In 1995, during the World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Beijing Platform for Action had resolved to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girl children and to promote their rights. Further, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the international commitment of the 'World Fit for Children' adopted by the UN General Assembly's Girl Child in India are issues concerning children. India is a signatory to all of the above international instruments. Besides this, India has taken a number of steps for ensuring the growth of the girl children through various legal and constitutional measures. Along with Fundamental Rights on right to life, liberty and equality... and the right against exploitation are to be ensured with prime concern. Further, the Directive Principles of State Policy direct the State to ensure



PRISONERS' GIRL CHILDREN

that all children are provided with services and opportunities to grow and develop in a safe and secure environment. Thus to ensure protection of children, each State has established State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) and State Child Protection Society which monitor and provide guidance on protection issues of children. Thereon, each district has District Child Protection Units (DCPU) and Child Welfare Committees (CWC) to ensure care and protection to those children that are in unsafe situations. The Prison Ministry India (PMI) is also a timely response to assure quality protection to children of prisoners in line with various initiatives of the State.

Protection of Girl Children of Prisoners

The girl children of prisoners are quite vulnerable since they are deprived of receiving the care and affection of their parents. Besides, the social stigma attached to the children due to the incarceration of their parents, makes them feel discomfited and uncomfortable in their neighbourhood. In most cases the grandparents are forced to shoulder the responsibility of caring for these children. Leaving the care of children to grandparents or relatives is an unstable situation and often ends up in children remaining uncared for. In many cases they are led to become cheap labour force in society and end up by getting married in their childhood which makes them prey to abuse, domestic violence and teenage pregnancy. It is the responsibility of the State and society to extent utmost care to the girl children of prisoners in order to ensure their future through adequate care of their present stage of life. Premodaya, patronized by PMI, does

extend a warm welcome and effective child care to girl children of prisoners.

Care and Protection at Premodaya

Premodaya is a spacious and joyful home for the girl children of prisoners, ever welcoming them with a warm heart. The Sisters in charge and the Staff make sure that the girl children who are enrolled there are given homely care and love that they stand much in need of. The protection of girl children is the most important aspect of child care in Premodaya. Children are made to feel they are safe and secure in the hands of the Sisters of St Anne who are volunteers. The emotional and psychological longings that make children emotionally insecure are set at rest through the familial care and individual attention given to them. Children are also made to interact with their family members in order to sustain in them family based emotional support. The institutional care is fused with love and care along with professional support provided by child psychologists and volunteers of PMI. Thus every girl child feels safe and secure and remains protected in Premodaya with its fusion and child care. Since protection is ensured, child development becomes sustainable through education and extracurricular activities. Thus Premodaya is committed to ensuring quality child care through its well designed protection system to its kids. Herein, a girl child feels welcomed loved and cared for and her holistic development ensured. She is trained to be a leader who becomes a 'change maker' in the spheres of her movements. Premodaya functions on the basis of creating and developing the potential of children.

Prisoners' Release by PMI Volunteers

Prisoners' Release

Releasing people from Prison is easier said than done! There is a giant hurdle ahead for those who would wish to release prisoners now. As a PMI volunteer release of a prisoner means not only helping them to be released out of the prison, but also offering them help to be free of their inner tensions. A committed volunteer should help the brethren to be released from their inner bondages before they go out of prison. Every incarcerated brother or sister suffers from several factors smothering them from within. Hence, they need to be free from their inner tensions arising from the feelings of loneliness, guilt, fear, anger, inability to forgive, hatred, sinfulness and so on.

Frustration

The presence of a person who can give them a patient hearing can help them in their moment of frustration. Though it is not possible for the volunteers to be available to all the inmates of a prison, the persons who are in a difficult mental disposition can be helped from suicidal tendency, if they are given the needed attention at the proper time. Our presence is the greatest help to those who are in distress. Some come to us searching for someone to share their emotional burden. By listening to them without any judgment, they will find relief and thus get release from their tensions.



Sr Adele SCCG

Loneliness

Many suffer from loneliness because he/she was a brother or sister, or father or a mother, or a friend of someone before entering the prison. Now they have become 'NOBODY'; some of them have been written off their family book too. They feel isolated, hated, rejected, and ignored by all because of the stigma of being a prisoner. They feel frustrated due to fear of losing their job. Many are tortured by the police though some are innocent. In order to force them to admit the crime, they are given electric shock and even threatened of capital punishment. An experience of God's unconditional love through the presence of volunteers, the assurance of help in contacting their dear ones, along with counseling and prayer will help them in their initial disturbances.

Consolation

Acceptance of their own failure in overcoming their impulsive nature and sinful tendencies, acceptance of God's forgiving love, and God's plan in their life will go a long way in regaining peace. When they are helped to reflect on the word, "For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plan for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope Then when you call upon me and come and pray



PRISONERS' RELEASE

to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me” (Jeremiah 29;11-13).

Our Own Brethren

When we consider the inmates languishing in prison as our own brothers and sisters, our very attitude and approach give them release from their distress. The tensions arising from their fear of rejection by the family members are reduced, when we start building bridges between the inmates of the prison and their relatives through phone calls and visits. Whenever possible we try to trace out the children of the inmates in children homes run by the Government.

Catharsis

Another way of releasing the inner turmoil of youth who are languishing in prison is Physical and Outdoor activities within the four walls of the prison. We find a large number of youths in prison who have no activities and waste away their precious time. Those who are inclined to read and have a desire to study, may attend classes and grow intellectually. But we find a large number of youths who are idling away their time and get into drug abuse and other immoral and illegal activities to avoid boredom. Outdoor activities in the prison can be of great help to give them inner release.

Listening

Listening attentively without judging them will be of help for any inmate who is accused of a crime and kept under custody. The presence of a volunteer who is willing to listen to their burden, will free them from their anxiety and pain. They can be given help to accept their present situation,

especially if they are not guilty of the crime they are accused of. When they are enabled to understand that God has a plan in their life for their own welfare (Jeremiah 29:11-13), they start grasping and accepting the Divine plan for them.

Forgiveness

Release from anger and hatred. Forgiveness of all those who were the cause of their imprisonment will help them to free themselves from hatred and desire to take revenge. When we meet a prisoner, who is unable to forgive, we have to help them out in their struggle. By sharing God's powerful Word with them I have seen them giving up such evil desires and becoming people of forgiveness.

Repentance

When volunteers approach the inmates of a prison with the compassionate and unconditional love of God, they become the genuine reflection of God's love. It will be a great relief for the prisoners who are rejected by their dear ones and friends. The influence of such persons will touch the hearts of criminals and they will draw closer to God and repent for their sins which took them away from God's love. Thus repentance of their sins and resolving to begin a new life bring them release from the burden in their hearts.

Conclusion

Though it may not be possible for PMI volunteers to see that every brother and sister whom she/he serves in the prison is released, our goal should be to aim at the total release through the Reformation, Redemption and Reintegration of the people whom we serve. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives” (Luke 4:18).



PMI RAIPUR CHHATTISGARH

Alexander Ekka SJ

Activities



Prison Ministry India (PMI) comes under the Justice, Peace and Development Commission Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI). Hence the Church has taken up PMI as an important and major ministry. Chhattisgarh has 5 dioceses comprising of Raipur, Jagdalpur, Ambikapur, Jashpur and Raigarh dioceses. The Head Office of the Archdiocese is in Raipur the State Capital of Chhattisgarh with His Grace Most Rev Victor Henry Thakur, DD as the Archbishop. All the bishops are very open and cooperative with the activities of PMI. We are thankful for their supportive guidance and blessings. They have recognized and approved it as the main apostolate of the Church.

Central and District Jails

PMI units are actively involved in the cities like Raipur, Bilaspur, Ambikapur, Jashpur, Jagdalpur, Kanker, Raigarh, Durg, Bhilai of Chhattisgarh State.

PMI-Jashpur

Fr Sergius Kindo is the coordinator for the PMI Jashpur District headquarters of Jashpur district. He visits the prison regularly for counselling the prison inmates. He has a good team comprising of priests and nuns who cooperate very well in the works of PMI. Besides, they have donated clothes to the poor and orphans, donated 100 kg rice and warm clothes for 60 inmates



during Christmas. They also have donated 30 sweaters during Christmas and New Year winter on Jan 02, 2021. The PMI team is also involved in rehabilitation of the prisoners.

PMI Ambikapur

Sr Sheeba OSU is the Coordinator of Ambikapur PMI unit. In Chhattisgarh Ambikapur unit is very active in PMI activities. Other than Christmas, Good Friday, Deepawali, Women's Day etc are celebrated. PMI volunteers are also busy in counselling, rehabilitation, education and income generating activities for the inmates, both in men and women's sections. On Deepawali 2000 socks were distributed for men and 200 scarfs for women. They also celebrated Holy Mass with the Christian inmates and distributed eatables on December 28, 2020

PMI Raigarh

Sr Jwala is the Coordinator of PMI ministry in Raigarh. They always have programs for the inmates during the big feasts like Christmas, Easter, Deepawali, Raakhi, Women's Day etc. Besides they are busy also in rehabilitation of prisoners, educating the children of the inmates, taking care of their health and hygiene, distributing warm clothes in winter etc. During Christmas, the Raigarh unit has paid the fine for 3 convicted prisoners and helped them to be released.

PMI Kanker

Fr Dilip Minj is the coordinator for the PMI ministry in the district prison of Kanker. He has a good team of active Religious

Sisters and priests who arrange programs on special feasts like Christmas, Easter, Deepawali, Raakhi, Women's Day etc. Other than this they also organize prayer meetings, children's games, counselling, rehabilitation etc.

PMI Jagdalpur

During Christmas and Easter, Mass and prayer services are conducted for the Christian inmates. Due to the Naxalite inmates present there, it is difficult to enter the prison in Jagdalpur. But we always look forward to opportunities for extending our hands to the prisoners.

Challenges

Due to strict government laws and regulations, it is difficult to enter the prisons very easily and organise meetings and activities for the inmates. In some prisons Naxalites are in big number. In such jails it is all the more difficult to enter inside. Due to the Corona pandemic our PMI activities have drastically slowed down. We have to abide by the Government protocol, rules, regulations and guidelines. The Pandemic Covid-19 has obviously curtailed our PMI programs drastically. Lack of an organised PMI committee in some dioceses also becomes a hindrance to get actively involved in the prison ministry.

Opportunities

PMI activities depend upon our relationships with the government officers. If we have good rapport with the jail authorities, we have easy access to the prison inmates. The

relationship of the Church authorities has been very cordial with the Government. The Government authorities too have been very cooperative with PMI activities. Bishops and Provincials of different Religious Congregations have taken up PMI ministry as an important ministry of the Church. The Conference of Religious India (CRI) in all our dioceses of Chhattisgarh actively participate in the PMI activities for the inmates of the prisons under their care. CRI, Parish priests, Deans, Parish Catholic Sabha, Mahila Sangh, youth groups etc. play very active and vital roles in the PMI activities of the diocese.

Works of Mercy

Corporal Works of Mercy

1. To feed the hungry.
2. To give water to the thirsty.
3. To clothe the naked.
4. To shelter the homeless.
5. To visit the sick.
6. To visit the imprisoned, or ransom the captive.
7. To bury the dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. Counselling the doubtful
2. Instructing the ignorant
3. Admonishing the sinner
4. Comforting the sorrowful
5. Forgiving injuries
6. Bearing wrongs patiently
7. Praying for the living and the dead

A Leaf from my Prison Ministry Diary: A Year Ago

Lt Col Jennifer James

29th Jan, 2020 1130 Hrs

I entered Bangalore Central Prison, Parappana Agrahara for the very first time along with Sr Rose, Sr Lini & a few students. I came to know about a hospital within the jail and went in with Sr Rose. Everybody seemed to know her as we walked past a few gates and doors... winding through corridors, past some rooms where prisoner patients were in bed mostly. Sister was reaching out to a prisoner in the terminal stage of illness, with some Horlicks and fruits. This man lost his battle with life, but by HIS grace and the love relentlessly shared by Sr Rose, he had definitely saved his soul.

It was then a walk back to the main compound where there were more gates, sentries and prisoners walking up & down. It seemed a very normal place except for the fact that the whole place was heavily secured, guarded, monitored; bounded with high walls and iron gates and secured definitely by alarm bells. It reminded me very much of the 'Army grounds' where the Military Parades used to be carried out.

We entered a building where on the first floor is a 'Church'. A Church?? I was told there is a 'Temple' too; and around

afternoon I could hear the muezzin call for prayer i.e., the 'Azaan'. Is there any place in the free world where such a blend of religions can be found? The Holy Mass was in progress and basic musical instruments were being played with fervor while the inmates were singing passionately. Around 10-12 of the inmates were inside but the whole atmosphere reverberated with their rendition. My mind was racing back to our Churches in the free world with heavy musical instruments, at least half a dozen microphones, overhead computer screens... And probably even all of these collectively fail to evoke a response from a multitude of the unrestrained.

Following the 'Holy Mass' Sr Marina, Sr Lisa and Sr Rose occupied the chairs in the verandah and the inmates sought them. Not quite knowing what to do and how to go about, I occupied one of the empty chairs armed with my Bible and a prayer in the heart to my Lord to help me 'reach out'. 'Swarn' (name changed) a Hindi speaking inmate, engaged me in conversation, a basic talk regarding his family and where he belonged to. He confided that he was 'inside' since 2 years. Willfully I did not enquire regarding his case, crime or prod him concerning his sentence.

Thereafter 'Prakash' (name changed) came along. I could feel the reluctance to speak out in both these men, enabling

me to discern that establishing a ‘rapport’ is very important. Prakash was quite much into Bible reading. As it was time for us to leave, I greeted the Sisters and walked back the same path along with Sr Rose who had impressed upon me the nitty-gritties of Prison Ministry.

The end of my first day was eventful enough and I thanked and praised my Savior for all His countless blessings. I was charged enough by this experience to fix my appointment with Sr Rose for the next prison visit. My heartfelt gratitude goes to Mrs Veera Pinto, Secretary Bangalore PMI Unit, who made this visit possible. My heart is filled with gratitude to all the people who are placed by our side in the walk of our life to edify us; and most of all to our Abba Father for HIS countless promises, most of all in - Isaiah 30:21 “Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”

3rd Feb, 2020, Monday

Once again armed with the Armor of The Lord, I entered the Prison gates; it was followed by security checks, depositing of electronic gadgets, further more checks at other gates and then we went inside. I was keen to visit the ladies’ section and hence went in there, where the entry procedures too had to be followed. There was some song being played on

the speaker, women were gathered on the steps conversing with each other, grooming themselves or others. The sight of women from foreign nations attending to their curly locks confounded me.

I almost forgot it was a prison except for the presence of the female cops/guards and the fact that it was a highly secured and walled premise. It seemed like a normal day in the life of women living in a residential area. In the olden days when the women would gather around the village well and pour out their woes & blessings; contrast this scene with the young ‘Samaritan Woman’ who came to ‘The well of Joseph’ in the heat of the day to keep away from prying eyes and cynical tongues. Little was she aware of her ‘Savior’ waiting there for her who would eventually give her ‘The Eternal Living Water’.

A young lady brightly dressed, happily walking up and about with henna on her palms, made an impression upon my mind and made me ponder as to why such a person should be inside, and so also all the other women. ‘The Only Savior’ Christ Jesus was waiting patiently for each one of them beside their own cisterns.

One lady by name Archana (name changed) followed after us into the hall, following her was her toddler son. I was indeed appalled to see a small child inside; had this child committed a crime too? Or should we ponder upon- John 9:1-3 *Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind.*






Prison Ministry India: Mysore Unit Activities Report January 2020 to January 2021

Dr Michael Noronha

Covid-19 pandemic disrupted lives putting a halt to all economic and social activities. For the volunteers of PMI it was all the more a blow as the prisons became a totally restricted area for entry which is understandable. Within the prison too there were instances of prisoners infected with Covid-19 ringing the danger bells to the volunteers to stay off the pandemic. There was pain and agony the world over and needless to state about the situation in India as well, especially with the daily wage earners and migrants in various States. Yet, the desire to reach out to the prisoners was overwhelming among the volunteers, each one resorting to "Prayer" as the only weapon to overcome this precarious situation. The lockdown which was inevitable added to the entry restriction and the permission to resume our visits remain unanswered. However, within the limited scope available, the Mysore PMI Unit could reach out to the prisoners in the following ways:

1. The Government of Karnataka permitted release of prisoners on grounds of good conduct and the Prison authorities sought the help of Mysore PMI Unit to contribute towards the release of nearly six prisoners amounting to Rs 44000 which was paid in the month of May 2020.
2. The Mysore PMI unit responded to the request of the National PMI Office by helping a rehabilitated



prisoner who needed help for his operation. A sum of Rs.10000 was contributed to the National PMI office by the Mysore PMI Unit in July 2020.

3. In the month of August it was a sad day for the PMI Volunteers. One of the prison inmates Mr Belavendra imprisoned for life in the Palar Blast case expired. The unit contributed Rs.5000 towards his funeral expenses. May his soul Rest in Peace!
4. Apart from helping the prisoners and their families, the Mysore Unit Volunteers help an NGO AWMD – Association for the welfare of the Mentally Disabled, by contributing old newspapers which they use to train the mentally disabled children in the presence of their parents in skill development like making paper bags, candles etc. A huge volume of old newspapers was donated to them in Sept 2020.
5. There was misery and hunger due to the pandemic in the homes of the prisoners. The National PMI office had embarked on providing ration to the families of Children in the Kolbe home. Mysore Unit collaborated in this project by contributing Rs.5000 towards this noble cause in Oct 2020.
6. One of the women prisoners requested rehabilitation and Sr Lily D'Souza, SJT, a regular Counselor at the Mysore Prison Women's cell helped her to stay in her convent for a month and then arranged rehabilitation thereafter.

7. Mysore PMI Unit is fortunate to have religious and laity who are actively associated with social work apart from Prison Ministry service. One of our volunteers has an Old age home – (Paid as well as free). A prisoners' mother who needed to join the home was taken by them and is now looked after.
8. The only pre-lockdown program organized by Mysore PMI Unit was "Women's day" celebration for which a few competitions were conducted and prizes distributed.
9. The Mysore PMI Unit is grateful and respectfully acknowledges the services of late Fr Benedict Mari Joseph who passed away. Fr Benedict offered Mass and heard confessions of the prisoners, giving spiritual solace to the Christian and non-Christian prisoners who attended the services.
10. We also, acknowledge the silent services of Fr Rahul, a Pallotine Priest, appointed as Spiritual Assistant by the Diocese of Mysore for a year. He is now transferred to Chhattisgarh.

Mysore PMI Unit ever since its inception in July 2000 has shunned media glare or publicity, firmly believing in the Gospel message: "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Mt 6:1-4). Our volunteers are strictly instructed not to speak or meet the media for any work of charity they do to the prisoners.

**DONATE A BRICK TO
REHABILITATE A PRISONER**

Pope Francis during his recent meeting with prisoners and prison authorities urged greater efforts to address the root causes of crime and ensure acceptance and reintegration once a person completes his or her sentence. Prison Ministry India, born on 8th December 1981 with the motto "Be a Love Bomb" has been endeavoring well in this direction by releasing, reforming, rehabilitating and reintegrating our incarcerated brethren. Working under the CBCI, PMI outreaches 1350 prisons in India and provides them spiritual, psychological, educational and material assistance and takes care of hundreds of prisoners' children and released prisoners in our rehabilitation centers and homes for prisoners' children.

This year PMI celebrates its ruby jubilee with many projects for the integral human development of prisoners such as 40 houses for released prisoners, 400 scholarships for prisoners' children, releasing 400 prisoners with legal and financial aids, and establishing 4 more Kolbe homes for prisoners' children.

One of the proposals of the PMI Ruby Jubilee Fundraising Committee is raising fund through raffle sale. Coupons for PMI Ruby Jubilee Projects are ready. Please inform us how many books you would like to purchase and forward your address. You can also purchase them online by forwarding money to PMI Account. Rs 40/- will be given as incentive for the sale of every coupon. All those who sell ten or more books will be awarded with a certificate of appreciation. Those ten who sell the highest number of books will have special awards. Let us work hard to wipe away the tears of suffering prisoners by raising fund for their integral human development. Please forward your collection in the name of Prison Ministry India. Bank account No: 0416053000001419, South Indian Bank, Sarjapur Road Branch, IFSC: SIBL 0000518; Bengaluru – 560035, Pan No. AAATP 7433J. Million thanks to each one of you and may the God of the Lost bless you and your families.

Odisha Jails to go Digital

The normal picture people have of jails is that of dark dungeons with no access to any of the benefits of modern technology. They are simply unwanted places where anti social people are locked up. But in recent years there have been some prison reforms which give us reason for much joy and hope. In December 2020 we had been to Berhampur Circle Jail with some face masks and sanitizers. The Superintendent was highly appreciative of the services of PMI volunteers. They had installed 4 solar water heaters to provide hot water for the prisoners all through the day. We saw light shining in their eyes as the prisoners narrated the joy they experienced and how much they appreciated this facility in winter and particularly at this time of the pandemic. Another reform that was published in the newspapers this week was the government's plan to introduce digital services in all the jails in Odisha. There would be an online platform to fast-track the process of applications for parole and premature release of prisoners. The Superintendent would forward these to the officials concerned to take further steps. The software for this is being developed by the 'Odisha Computer Application Center (OCAC)'.

There are about 20,000 prisoners lodged in 86 jails across the state. We were happy to hear that the government has stressed the need for prison reforms, use of technology and foolproof security arrangements in all the jails. The superintendent told us that they had already implemented the e-Prison initiative and the new Prison Manual in the State. Achieving normality in a prison is a challenge and achieving this through technology is even more a greater challenge. Managing their money, applying for jobs, interacting with family and friends are



Sr Shanti Pulickal SCC

normal digital behaviors. Prisoners should not be deprived of digital interactions that have become a part of the world outside.

It was also delightful to note that more emphasis was given to providing vocational training to the prisoners so that on release from prisons, they would be able to join the main stream of society with self confidence and contribute their share for the wellbeing of others. At present the prisoners are engaged in micro and small-scale units for fish and agricultural farming, manufacturing dairy products, handloom, blankets and carpets. New food processing units of wheat flour, gram flour, turmeric powder and other local products have also been set up.

The Berhampur Circle Jail has a weaving section where male prisoners work. They produce good cotton cloth which is being sold at the prison outlets. We were happy about these reforms in the jail and were planning to start some income generating programmes for the women. Since jute is available in our district, our plan was to make jute table mats and dolls as there is a good market for these. We are hopeful of carrying out our plans very soon. It is a sad fact that most of the prisons in India are considered merely as places of punishment. Prisons should rather be places of reformation and renewal.



Juvenile Home for Boys Saidabad, Hyderabad

Sr Shantha SAP & Miss Maria Regina

**“The fruit of love is service which is
compassion in action”**

St Teresa of Calcutta

“I will guide you and teach you the way you should go” (Ps 32:8). The voice of God which stirred the heart of Samuel to be His instrument /prophet, stirred the hearts of the members of Vimochana, Hyderabad unit of PMI, under the guidance of our State and unit co-ordinator Fr. Dian Isaac to be an instrument of Providence to the 100 young boys who are in Juvenile Jail at Saidabad, Hyderabad. It was a great opportunity to be with the little ones and spend some time to make them happy and make them feel that they too are loved by God immensely. After a good introduction by Miss Regina, and scripture reading by Sr Shantha, we sought God’s blessings upon the children and the staff. Fr Dian Isaac addressed the inmates explaining how the young Samuel was called by name for a purpose. This message was translated into Hindi by Mrs Brigit Michael, Assistant State Co-ordinator of Vimochana. We conducted singing and action competition. First second and third prizes were presented to the winners along with hygiene kits, fruits and snacks to all inmates. Miss Regina proposed a brief Vote of thanks.

Mr Rajeswar Rao the superintendent received us with warm welcome. The environment

was very neat and pleasant. He introduced us to an elderly lady who cooks for the children like a mother. The superintendent, a very soft-spoken official was happy with our agenda. Children had enormous respect and at most obedience to his simple whispers. He spoke well and thanked us saying that he has never experienced such a unique and different programme though several other NGOs visited them before. So much so children never wanted to leave us. Even the superintendent who served us delicious tea, requested us to stay for some more time and have lunch. He said though he has two children at home, in reality he is loving and caring 100 kids.

We are grateful to Mr MD Vincent our ex-officio who planned and co-ordinated this programme efficiently from the beginning to end. We appreciate Sr Suprabhath and Sr Sharely for their active participation. Thanks to Miss Diana who is always behind Camera, providing good picks. Our heartfelt thanks to Fr Allam Arogya Reddy and Monsignor. Swarna Bernard for their generous helping hand. May God bless our ever-encouraging Archbishop Poola Anthony who is also our Chairman for Prison Ministry in both the Telugu States.

In order to continue our visits to other four major jails in Hyderabad we met Mr Basker the DIG on 20-01-2021. He was kind enough to permit us to meet the superintendents and staff only at the entrance of each prison and handover the hygiene kits to them at the gate. He informed us that there are 280 inmates in women jail, 1150 inmates in Chenchalaguda men Jail, 2500 inmates in Cherlapally Central Jail and 150 inmates in Cherlapally Open air jail. May the prudent Prison Lord guide us on our next step.



Evangelizers in Iran's Evin Prison

Sr Amala DC

Search for Truth

Around the world today over a hundred million Christians are persecuted because of their faith in Jesus Christ; and of the ten countries where persecution was at its worst, Iran was one such country way back in 2009. Maryam Rostampour and Maryiyeh Amirizadeh were born in Muslim families in Iran and both were desperately seeking for the truth and find meaning for their lives. Reading the Quran, Maryam never felt the presence of God, and struggled to find the answers her heart longed for.

Finding Truth in Jesus

Maryam's sister came home one evening and gave her a booklet, which contained a portion of Luke's Gospel. Her sister, having her own doubts, told her to read the book but not the last page, as it was a conversion prayer to Christianity. Maryam remembers being exhausted from all the searching for the truth. As she started reading that little book, she believed that Jesus revealed the truth to her that day because she felt every word she was reading was talking to her heart. Maryam and Marziyeh both found hope in Jesus Christ and were converted to Christianity.

Becoming Evangelizers

Seeking to learn more, they both moved separately to Turkey in 2005 to learn more about their faith in Jesus. This is where the two women met for the first time. From the first day they met each other, the women became great friends instantly

with an interest in sharing their faith with the Iranian people. With that, they moved back to Iran to start their journey across the country, sharing the Gospel with thousands of people. Their journey started in Tehran. They started in the North of the Province, giving out over 20,000 copies of the New Testament until they had covered the entire area. During that time, they had to run literally for their lives and hand out Bibles under cover of darkness. They extended their ministry with mission trips to India, South Korea and Turkey.

Incarceration

In 2009, Maryam and Marziyeh were arrested in Tehran for promoting Christianity, a capital crime in Iran. They recall the horrendous nights sleeping under urine-soaked blankets; and being threatened, fearing they might be tortured to death. Maryam recalls that they were sleeping on freezing filthy floors, when they did find blankets, most of which strongly smelt of urine. On more than one occasion, the women were pressured to revert to Islam and deny their faith in Jesus.

Evin Prison

Eventually they were transferred to Evin Prison, notorious for raping, torturing, executing many innocent people, sleep deprivation, electric-shock and severe beatings and were imprisoned for 259 days. They were legally charged with apostasy, anti-government activity and blasphemy and were sentenced to execution by hanging. However, they understood that God had a purpose for their being in that dark place. Despite the threat of the gruesome gallows looming large, the women were determined to share the Gospel and thus converted the prison into a Church. They brought many

EVAGELIZERS EVIN PRISON

people to Christ and made friendships that would last a lifetime. Maryam believes that it was God's plan for them to be in that prison for nine months and also grateful for the great opportunities to share the message with many prisoners. They believe that God made them see those injustices to bring awareness about the situation of many in Iran, especially women who have no rights. They believe that God wanted them to see all those injustices and work for justice.

Release

As many around the world prayed for their freedom and as a result of international lobbying, Maryam and Marziyeh were released in 2009 and cleared off all charges the following year. They consider it an honour to have experienced in some

small way Christ's sufferings by being imprisoned in His name. They emigrated to the United States after their release. The victims of Tehran's persecution are mainly religious minorities, but all Iranians have been oppressed by the government since 1979. However, after over forty years of oppression, the time for suppression has come to an end. Today people in Iran understand their rights. They are tired of the Islamic regime and are standing up for freedom, going to the streets and fighting for their rights. Anti-government demonstrations began to spread across multiple cities in Iran in November, 2020 and Iran's security forces have responded by killing about 1,500 protesters, according to Reuters. They believe and hope that one day Iran will be a free country.



PRISON MINISTRY INDIA
International Webinar on Death Penalty Abolition
27 February 2021, 8 PM-10:15 PM



REV SR HELEN PREJEAN CSJ
The Nun behind the Oscar Awarded Film
Deadman Walking
The Leading American Advocate
Promoting the Abolition of Death Penalty



PROGRAM	
2000 - Prayer	Lt Col Jennifer James, PMI Death Row Commandoes Chief
2005 - Welcome	Rev Dr Francis Kodyan MCBS, CBCI Secretary to PMI
2015 - Conference	Rev Sr Helen Prejean CSJ, American Social Activist & a Passionate Nun for Death Row Prisoners
2100 - Response	Rev Fr Brian Gowans, ICCPPC President, Scotland
2115 - Response	Honourable Justice Kurian Joseph, Former Supreme Court Judge
2125 - Response	Rev Dr PD Mathew, Supreme Court Lawyer
2135 - Redeemed Prisoner Book	Video Presentation
2140 - Clarifications	Open to the Floor
2150 - Presidential Address	Most Rev Gerald Almeida, Chairman, CBCI Justice, Peace & Development Commission
2205 - Vote of Thanks	Rev Sr Lini Sheeja MSC, PMI Former National Secretary
2215 - Prayer for Death Row Prisoners	Rev Sr Amala DC, PMI National Secretary

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Google Meet <https://meet.google.com/btu-getz-dia>




From Ruby to Golden Jubilee

Rowena Luis

In 2009 when I was teaching the Gospel of Matthew from chapter 25, I had a clear message... 'Go to prisons, go to hospitals.' The moment I finished my term in my Parish council in 2013, I joined PMI Dongri Unit in Mumbai. The Lord couldn't be wrong, because only when I read the PMI publications I realised that this was the correct ministry to the marginalized that my spiritual director was encouraging me into.... WHY! Because I learnt that Prison Ministry India is not a social work organisation, but a ministry from the heart of God, to the lost, least and lonely.

To know that the origins of this ministry sprang from a tiny overflow of God's mercy before the Blessed Sacrament was my rejoicing and resting place. That all the activities came forth only from the voice of the Lord was the greatest sign for me that this is where I want to be. For what mattered is, "as the Lord speaks, so the ministry moves."

I missed meeting the founders of this movement at the National Convention in Guwahati. But the Lord is always good. I was blessed to meet a great Apostle of God's Mercy, our dear Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS on my birthday at the Pune 2020 Marathon. A priceless treasure I got from him was when he told me, "Obstacles will come, do not look left or right. Look forward and keep going."



In November of the same year another wish was fulfilled at the Silver Jubilee of the National Office at Bangalore. More blessings poured into my heart when I encountered this ever-vibrant Apostle of Faith, Fr Varghese Kariperry, who said to me, "This ministry is a Faith dance... The Lord, the universe and You. All three work together to make things happen". I'm entirely enriched.

But... I have to let the Lord free me from 'the shackles and chains' like the demoniac in today's gospel. There are always obstacles and roadblocks which tend to keep me down. The word of God from Acts 14:22 says, 'Only through many trials can we enter the Kingdom of heaven.' The Spirit says to my heart, 'Only through trials, you can know it was the Lord who made everything possible and not Rowena.'

It is also a great blessing to Prison Ministry India to have one of our founders leading from the front at the National Office. Fr Kodiyan has extended many opportunities to all volunteers to build this ministry in our diocese. I humbly urge you, "Let our Faith lead us to take up what the Holy Spirit inspires us and we will see the impossible come into reality." I'm looking forward not only to the Ruby Jubilee, but to the coming decade to the Golden Jubilee. Rise up Prison Ministry volunteers.

"Leave the numerous limitations in the heart of God, take the innumerable inspirations from the mind of God. The Almighty Triune God, we salute thee."



BLESSING IN DISGUISE

The current pandemic has affected many countries, societies and the health system very badly. It has brought numerous challenges and troubles to our social, political and economical lives. In the midst of these challenges the covid-19 pandemic has offered us an opportunity to reflect upon God's plans and ways in every aspect of our life and mission. As PMI volunteers we are called upon to respond to the challenges, seeing God's grace and mercy in all the circumstances of the present scenario. In order to do this we are called to take daring steps; we need to walk through narrow roads and walk over stones and thorns which give us pain. But at the end of it we find the joy of reaching our destination. Every pandemic and challenge in our life is a blessing in disguise. It is a moment of grace for us to experience the mighty hand of God in our life and mission.

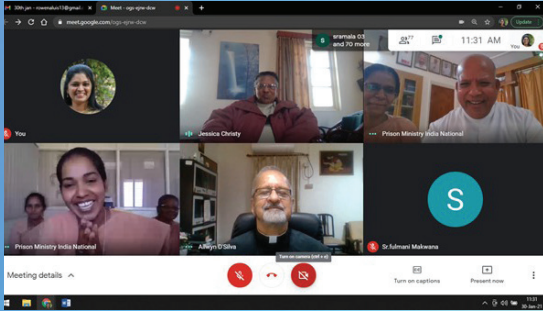
At the beginning of the year 2020 we made our plans to carry out our activities and mission systematically, but the small Covid-19 virus has completely altered our plans. When most of us were in panic, fear and confusion, we were made to realize that all our name, fame, power, and wealth are nothing. We are just fragile human beings who need to depend upon God and entrust to him all our plans so



Sr Jobina UFC

that He will show us a way to progress in our life journey.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has offered us a challenge to think differently and forced us to go beyond our boundaries to discover new innovative ways of continuing the mission of Christ for our brethren. Thus, the use of social media has played an important role in realizing our day to day programmes and plans. Whenever one door of our life closes, God always opens another. When Covid-19 pulled us down in many ways God made us open to several other possibilities and opportunities which we had perhaps overlooked. Let us make use of every opportunity in the midst of the present pandemic to go ahead discovering all the avenues open to us, bearing well in mind that inconveniences are our conveniences. Let us continue to witness Christ in our life by reaching out to our brethren with hope and trust that every event of our life has a purpose.



Book Releasing : Redeemed Prisoner



PMI Special Task Force Meeting



PMI Volunteers Distributing Mikeset to Mananthawady J-aill



PMI Volunteers Distributing Tailoring Machines to Sambalpur Prison



PMI Volunteers Organising Health Camp at Shimoga Prison



PMI Volunteers Visiting Cheemeni Open Jail, Kazargodu



PMI Volunteers Visiting Devikulam Prison



PMI Volunteers Visiting Sabarmati Prison

PRISON MINISTRY INDIA
INCESSANT INTERCESSORY INVOCATION FOR THE INCARCERATED

LUKE 18: 1
AND HE TOLD THEM A PARABLE TO THE EFFECT THAT
THEY OUGHT ALWAYS TO PRAY AND NOT LOSE HEART.



The collage consists of numerous small photographs. At the top, there are several rows of individual portraits of men and women. Below these, there are larger group photos of people, some in what appear to be prison uniforms or simple clothing. In the center of the collage is a large, vertical image of a man in a brown robe, holding a long staff, standing in a vast, open landscape under a dramatic, sunset-colored sky. This central image is flanked by more portraits and group photos. At the bottom, there are more portraits and a group photo of people sitting on a bench or in a similar setting.