



# PRISON VOICE

March 2021

Vol. XVIII

Issue 3

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-

The background of the cover is a vibrant, low-poly geometric pattern in shades of blue, purple, and green. In the center, there is a stylized illustration of a bearded man with long hair, wearing a blue and brown robe. He is holding a baby in his arms, looking down at the child with a gentle expression. The illustration is composed of many small, overlapping triangles, giving it a mosaic-like appearance.

**WITH A FATHER'S  
HEART**



**Fr Sergius Kindo Celebrates his Birthday with the the Jail Staff**



**Health Camp Held at Shimoga Prison**



**Kolbe Kids Visiting Bennargatte Biological Park**



**Mission League and KCYM Members of Charity Parish Visiting Vaithiri Prison**



**PMI Kottayam Zone Donates Fridge and Fans to Kottayam District Prison**



**PMI Volunteers Celebrating Women's Day with Vijayawada Bishop**



**PMI Volunteers Distributing Towels and Sweets to Narinikethan Inmates, Ambikapur**



**Women's Day Celebration at Buxar Prison, Bihar**

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## PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY



Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1,19-20).

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

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## **ST JOSEPH THE CREATIVELY COURAGEOUS FATHER!**



**Sr Amala DC**  
Chief Editor

The newly declared Year of St Joseph is a great blessing for the Church. It provides a beacon of hope during this dark time and an opportunity for people of faith to focus on a just and righteous man who has much to teach us. In his surprise announcement on December 8, 2020 at the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St Joseph as patron saint of the universal Church, Pope Francis said it was the coronavirus pandemic that encouraged him to write and reflect on St Joseph, whose strong presence in salvation history accomplished so much so quietly. Each of us can discover in Joseph the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence, an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. Pope Francis wrote in his apostolic letter *Patris Corde - With a Father's Heart*: "St Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation."

In his letter, Pope Francis, defining Joseph as a father, reiterates that the saint was ennobled with virtues such as: being beloved, tender, loving, obedient, accepting and creatively courageous. While reflecting on St Joseph, Francis also shows how we can emulate him. For example, describing how Joseph accepted Mary unconditionally, trusting in the angel's words that her son had been conceived through the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis counsels: "Joseph set aside his own ideas in order to accept the course of events, mysterious as they seemed, to embrace them, take responsibility for them and make them part of his own history. Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to take a single step forward, for we will

always remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow" (No. 4).

What are some ways to take advantage of the Year of St Joseph? We can take advantage of the Year of St Joseph by emulating a few of the many good qualities of St Joseph: Chastity and Justice, Prudence and Bravery, Acceptance and Creativity, Obedience and Loyalty. These are excellent virtues for anyone to imitate. These are outstanding assets for volunteers, husbands and especially fathers; and the reason is that these are virtues of inter-dependency. Each one of them is based on some concepts that portray how a person can be relied upon. St Joseph is very much the patron saint of people who are reliable. St Joseph is an excellent model for all of us who are trying to be frankly reliable and wish to be grateful to God for it. So, we certainly ask St Joseph to help us and grant us many graces during this year specially dedicated to his honour and particularly in this month of St Joseph. I think during the month of March it would be appropriate to reflect on the difficulties that St Joseph had to face and how his creative courage helped him to surmount them victoriously. And we will understand why he is a great intercessor for our times. While coping with Covid-19 that has done away with what was normal, you and I need to bring out now the best of ourselves for the life of those at the periphery, especially prisoners. Let's pray to St Joseph for the fruitfulness of our ministry for the lost. Wish you a blessed year of St Joseph.

# WITH A FATHER'S HEART

On the 150th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Holy Father Francis wrote an apostolic letter entitled *Patris Corde*, 'With a Father's Heart'. The Holy Father highlights the seven virtues lived by St Joseph which are very significant to PMI volunteers in our ministry for the lost. I invite all our volunteers to contemplate on these virtues which I briefly summarise and explain together with their relevance in prison ministry.

## 1. A Beloved Father

The greatness of Saint Joseph is that he was the spouse of Mary and the father of Jesus. Saint Paul VI pointed out that Joseph concretely expressed his fatherhood "by making his life a sacrificial service to the mystery of the incarnation and its redemptive purpose. He employed his legal authority over the Holy Family to devote himself completely to them in his life and work. He turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of himself, his heart and all his abilities, a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home". Let us strive to be a beloved father to prisoners and their children as well as to victims and PMI volunteers.

## 2. A Tender and Loving Father

Joseph saw Jesus grow daily "in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favour" (Lk 2:52). As the Lord had done with Israel, so Joseph did with Jesus: he taught him to



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

walk, taking him by the hand; he was for him like a father who raises an infant to his cheeks, bending down to him and feeding him (cf. Hos 11:3-4). In Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God: "As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him" (Ps 103:13). In the synagogue, during the praying of the Psalms, Joseph would surely have heard again and again that the God of Israel is a God of tender love, who is good to all, whose "compassion is over all that he has made" (Ps 145:9). Let all for whom we serve experience a tender loving father in us.

## 3. An Obedient Father

God revealed his saving plan to Joseph by using dreams. In every situation, Joseph declared his own "fiat", like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. In his role as the head of a family, Joseph taught Jesus to be obedient to his parents (cf. Lk 2:51), in accordance with God's command (cf. Ex 20:12). During the hidden years in Nazareth, Jesus learned at the school of Joseph to do the will of the Father. That will was to be his daily food (cf. Jn 4:34). Even at the most difficult moment of his life, in Gethsemane, Jesus chose to do the Father's will rather than his own, becoming "obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8).

#### 4. An Accepting Father

Joseph accepted Mary unconditionally. He trusted in the angel's words. "The nobility of Joseph's heart is such that what he learned from the law he made dependent on charity. The spiritual path that Joseph traces for us is not one that explains, but accepts. Only as a result of this acceptance, this reconciliation, can we begin to glimpse a broader history, a deeper meaning.

#### 5. A Creatively Courageous Father

Joseph was the man chosen by God to guide the beginnings of the history of redemption. He was the true "miracle" by which God saved the child and his mother. God acted by trusting in Joseph's creative courage. Arriving in Bethlehem and finding no lodging where Mary could give birth, Joseph took a stable and, as best he could, turned it into a welcoming home for the Son of God to come into the world (cf. Lk 2:6-7). Faced with imminent danger from Herod, who wanted to kill the child, Joseph was warned once again in a dream to protect the child, and he rose in the middle of the night to prepare for the flight into Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-14). God always finds a way to save us, provided we show the same creative courage as the carpenter of Nazareth, who was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting always in divine providence.

#### 6. A Working Father

An aspect of Saint Joseph that has been emphasized from the time of the first

social Encyclical, Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, is his relation to work. Saint Joseph was a carpenter who earned an honest living to provide for his family. From him, Jesus learned the value, the dignity and the joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one's own labour. Saint Joseph's work reminds us that God himself, in becoming man, did not disdain work. The loss of employment that affects so many of our brothers and sisters, and has increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, should serve as a summons to review our priorities.

#### 7. A Father in the Shadows

The Polish writer Jan Dobraczyński, in his book *The Shadow of the Father*, tells the story of Saint Joseph's life in the form of a novel. He uses the evocative image of a shadow to define Joseph. In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father: he watched over him and protected him, never leaving him to go his own way. We can think of Moses' words to Israel: "In the wilderness... you saw how the Lord your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you travelled" (Deut 1:31). In a similar way, Joseph acted as a father for his whole life.

#### Prayer

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To you God entrusted his only Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man. Blessed Joseph, show yourself a father to us too and guide us in the path of life. Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen.



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## International Webinar on Death Penalty Abolition

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**Sr Helen Prejean CSJ**

Sr Helen Prejean CSJ, the nun behind Oscar awarded film 'Dead Man Walking' was the chief speaker of the International Webinar on Death Penalty Abolition convened by Prison Ministry India on 27 February 2021. Her experiences of accompanying death row prisoners right up to the execution of their death sentence, were zealously vehement about the cruelty that is being meted out to our brethren on death row in the name of justice for the victim.

The Supreme Court of the US reinstated the death penalty in 1976 despite there being a good number of Catholics in the Supreme Court, who perhaps did not allow their faith to interpret the words of the Constitution. It took the Catholic Church quite a long time to recognize that no government can be given the power to decide who is to live and who is to be killed. The law cannot in fact conclude that a person is beyond reformation. Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis affirm that when we end their earthly life we cut them off. How can we be sure that the other will no longer grow in love and truth? It was only in August 2018 that Pope Francis changed the Catechism of the Catholic Church about the death penalty saying that it can never be sanctioned as it attacks the inherent dignity of all humans.

Sr Helen recounted how after accompanying him for 2 years, with her hand on his shoulder, reading out to him from Isaiah 43, she walked

Mathew Poncelet down to his death chamber. He was surrounded by 6 guards, hands were handcuffed, legs were in chains and there was a tight iron belt around his waist. After walking a few yards he turns around and tells Sister to pray that God holds up his legs. It must have been heart-breaking, to say the least. When Sister met Pope John Paul II, she asked him, "Your Holiness, where is the dignity for this son of God, in rendering him defenceless and in a premeditated way killing him? Does the Catholic Church only uphold the dignity of innocent life?" We are pro-life, people for life, upholding life right from that of the unborn child to the one with Alzheimer's who doesn't even remember his name. Our God is a God of life, not of death. It was this witnessing of the execution that kindled a passionate fire within her that awakened her to the Gospel of justice that spurred her to work the rest her life to end the death penalty. In 1984 she also witnessed Patrick Sonnier being electrocuted to death on the electric chair in Louisiana. He was strapped to a wooden chair; electricity was then pumped through his body until he was dead. And that killing was purportedly a legal act, because he had killed. No religious leaders protested. Sr. Helen saw it with her own eyes, as she was there. What she saw set her soul on fire, a fire that continues to burn even today.

"Even the guards and wardens have started loathing their job of walking the Death Row Prisoner down from his cell to his death chamber", says Sr. Helen. They do not relish going to the cell after the execution to collect the dead man's simple belongings like clothes, books, Bible, toothbrush etc and handing it over to the family. They are trained to



## Death Penalty Abolition

handle it both ways - when the prisoner goes peacefully and when the prisoner resists. The jail Psychiatrist tries consoling and convincing the warden with, "Look you are only doing your job. Think of the terrible crime that he has done. You are carrying out the will of the people." One guard called up Sr. Helen after triggering 5 executions and told her he was going to quit his job. He said he couldn't eat or sleep after coming home from the executions. He knew in his heart that he had helped to render defenceless and then kill a human being!

Another warden from Florida said he had taken up the job thinking it would be an honourable profession to be able to help the prisoners to reform their lives and become good citizens. He had given the signal for 2 executions; one was a prisoner he had grown close to. He watched the prisoner struggle. He told the man that it was a lethal injection that would not hurt, that it would just put him to sleep. However humane we term it, it is torture for sure. They cannot fight back. Torture is defined as extreme mental or physical assault on someone rendered defenceless. And what greater mental assault than telling a person he is going to be killed in 2 weeks, in 3 days, or "tomorrow will be the last Tuesday of your life here..." These men on the Death Row have the same nightmares - the guards are coming, it's my time, I say "No, no, no!" I struggle, and I wake up. I look around. I am in my cell. It was a dream. But...they will certainly come for me, soon.

"Witness to Innocence" is a group of exonerated death row prisoners who are

also in the fight to abolish the death penalty. There have been mistakes too. One for every 8 executions was wrongly convicted. One was sentenced to death row, was in jail for 20 years, but by the grace of God, a good lawyer and the preservation of DNA evidence by the prosecution, he was saved. Manuel Ortiz is innocent and has been in prison for 30 long years in Louisiana's death row. When he finally did get a hearing of his Habeas petition in the federal court, the judge made a mistake, a human mistake. She missed it.

The U.S. is supposed to have the best court system in the world; they execute only the 'worst of the worst', not any run-of-the-mill murderers. Now what does the worst of the worst mean? Who decides on that? Whatever be the 'guidelines', the fact remains that it is cruel to kill. It is almost as close to an eye for an eye. When the death penalty was reinstated it was decided that discretion will be given to the prosecutors. Lisa Montgomery was executed just 8 days before Joe Biden, who is against the death penalty, took office. So she missed life only because of the discretion vested with Trump. Derisory it is!

Jesus taught that God is to be found in prison. Pope Francis said the Church should be the field hospital where the wounded are. The wounded are more in the prisons, especially in the death chambers. The Pope defines a holy person as one through whom God passes. We are the hands of God, we are the eyes of Christ, and we are the voice of the voiceless. When we look into the eyes of the prisoner, grace passes to us from them too no doubt. 90% of the death row prisoners are victims who have been abused as children, who have faced violence, witnessed violence, and



finally they act out that violence which has been all too familiar to them and the cycle is completed. The killer it seems did not respect the human rights of the victim. So he will be killed. That is supposed to be justice for the victim's family. It is not surprising that in the hurt, the trauma and anger that the victim's family go through they are jubilant to hear the verdict. The death penalty of the killer is justified by saying that the dead victim gets justice. And that is alleged to heal! Ironical is not the word. To wait fifteen to twenty years and then get to sit on the front row and watch as the State kills doesn't heal anyone!

But there are contrary examples too. Bud Welch whose daughter Julie was killed in the Oklahoma City bombing by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols says, "Even if I had watched Timothy being executed, when I would come home, the chair that my daughter Julie sat in would still be empty. I would still have to deal with the fact of her death." More and more victims' families have testified before state legislatures. "Please don't kill for us, on our behalf."

As Christians we help each other, we forgive, we ask God's forgiveness. There is a deep sense of guilt once the perpetrator gets the conscience to realise that he has taken the life of somebody and can't replace it. A common thing a death row prisoner says is, "If I could only turn back the clock..." But there's going to be no turning back the clock. The deed is done. There's no undoing it. And that is where prayer and grace and our visits help. The prisoner is a human being and worth

much more than the worst crime that he has committed. Every human made in the image of God has that divine spark which is the capacity to love. God's energy is love. St John says God is love, where there is love there is God. In a death penalty there is no love. It is whimsical to claim that I am killing a person out of love for him.

A big awakening has happened with the killing of George Floyd. What the eye does not see the heart does not feel. That 8 minutes 46 seconds video, which was watched by many, shows the white policeman putting his knee on George Lloyd's throat as his life is squeezed out. The black people have been facing prejudice and bias in the legal system, in the criminal justice, banking, housing, job discrimination. Every aspect of life is affected by racism in the United States. We cannot just do anything fruitful from a textbook. It is only when we go to them in the prison that we are moved. It is grace that awakens, that animates. Sr Helen accompanied 6 men who were executed. That is what ignited her heart and soul to rescue death row prisoners. She cannot just walk away indifferently after witnessing the horrific. It became her moral responsibility. And she firmly believes that that is what Evangelization is all about. Let us love more deeply, for God is love. May God bless the work of our hands, legs and hearts. May God bless us all!

## Bearing the Light of Christ to People in Darkness



**Sr Adele SCCG**

### Family

From my childhood days, I had a longing in her heart to serve the least and the lost. I was the third one among thirteen children and was brought up in a devout Catholic family. My parents regularly attended holy Mass along with all their children. As I grew up, I felt every Eucharistic celebration as a heavenly experience, not just a routine. When I dwelt deeply on the love of Jesus and on the last breath of Jesus, I felt Jesus telling me, "Now it is your turn Adele to live as I lived carrying my love to others, especially to the sinners who have not known my love for them so that they too may be saved." I took it as a personal call for me and so I prayed daily after Holy Communion, "Jesus, help me to carry your light to all those who are living in the darkness of sin and ignorance."

### Vocation

After graduation I joined the congregation of Sisters of charity in Mangalore. Soon after my first profession I was sent to teach in schools and later on to take charge of a D.Ed. college for training students after PUC to become teacher. As I was conscious of my call to bear the light of Christ to people who are living in sin and in darkness, I made visits to the prison in Mangalore with the help of a priest who could hear the confessions of the Catholic prisoners there and to give them Holy Communion. After my retirement from the field of education in Mangalore and later in Nepal, I joined Prison Ministry India to be a bearer of the light of Christ to the rejected brethren living in prison cells.

### Prison Quarters Ministry

During the first year of my fulltime ministry in the prison, I worked hand in hand with late Sr. Carmelita, a veteran and experienced sister from St. Ann's congregation. Along with her I learned to serve in the prison and both worked selflessly for the welfare of the inmates of the prison without counting the cost. In the first year of my ministry, I stayed with Sr Carmelita in the staff Quarters which was provided by the Director General of prisons, Government of Karnataka for the religious sisters who serve in the prison. That was the year when I lived in practice the principle of the Prison Ministry, namely, "Inconvenience is our convenience." There was no cooking facility and so we had to depend on the food prepared in jail for prisoners. There was no proper toilet in the room where they lived. We had to use a toilet outside the room which had a broken commode. No running water was available in the room, but we had to collect from outside in buckets.

### Seek and Save the Lost

People who see me going in to the prison, specially the police constables, ask me, "Sister, don't you have any other place to go? Why do you want to serve these criminals?" Her answer to them is another question, "Who made them criminals?" None of them was born as a criminal. First of all, those within the prison are not all criminals. Majority of them are under trial. They were brought inside the prison walls, but have not

been declared by the court as guilty of the crime they have been accused of. Several of them do not know why they were brought in, because they were arrested on the way back home after their work. Even if many of them had a sinful past, she felt that she who follows Jesus who came to seek sinners has called her to continue his ministry in her life too as a good Shepherd and bring back the lost ones to their Savior who wants no one to be lost.

### **Reformation and Reintegration**

My mission in the prison is geared towards Release, Reformation, Rehabilitation, Redemption and Reintegration of the brethren behind the bars. I could facilitate the inner release of a number of brethren from the fetters of guilt, sinfulness, anger, lack of forgiveness, hatred and from the desire to take vengeance on those who were the cause of their imprisonment. I turned to Jesus the healer in trustful prayer, besides praying with them and guiding them with appropriate Word of God. The Lord of love and forgiveness touched their life and set them free from their bondages gradually. "If the Son makes free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36). They went through a process of inner transformation gradually and came to a firm decision to turn from their crime filled life. The lost sheep who had turned away from the right path and were caught up in the thorn bush of crimes were touched by their loving God and were able to take U turn in their life. She was convinced of the fact that no human being can transform a hardcore criminal, but the grace of God and the touch of a living God can give them a new heart and a new spirit. My deep faith and trust in God was rewarded as I witnessed the change in the hearts of double murderers, hired Gundas and serial killers.

### **Reformation**

Persons who accept themselves and come to understand what led them to criminal

activities at the counseling sessions in the prisons showed drastic changes in their conduct. A few of them became catalysts within the prison and were turned to be powerful agents to find out others who need to be brought for counseling and prayer. I found many persons who are filled with hatred towards persons who made their life miserable. But their hearts turned towards them all in forgiveness when they listened to God's word. I met many inmates who were baptized Christians in their childhood, but had never read the Bible nor received any other Sacraments. Some of them who had fallen in to a life of crime were gradually transformed during their life in the prison, when they participated in the prayer meetings conducted in the prison chapel regularly. They received the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation for the first time in the prison. When they experienced God's love and healing touch, they started responding to the call of God to walk in a new path according to the living Word of God which were broken to them in the prayer meetings. After their release they have returned to the society as torch bearers of the light of God they received in their prison life and are well integrated in their families and are living a renewed life in the society.

### **Divine Providence**

"God never left me in want. I had not a single rupee in my pocket, when I entered the ministry, but the good Lord supplied all the needs of my ministry through generous people of good will, and with St. Paul I can say, "My Lord will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. God's providence is our bank balance. Providence of God never fails one who puts her trust in an all loving God who has chosen us to serve the last and the least behind the bars.

## SERIAL KILLERS' REFORMERS (SKR)

### Introduction

A serial killer is typically a person who murders three or more people, usually for abnormal psychological gratification, with the murders taking place over more than a month with a significant period of time lapsing between them. Psychological gratification is the usual motive for serial killing, and most serial killings involve sexual contact with the victim, but the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) states that the motives of serial killers can include anger, thrill-seeking, financial gain, and attention seeking.

### Are Serial Killers Born or Made?

Serial killers are not born; it's a mix of environmental factors that activate the evil in a person. One gets a combination of factors, environmental and intrinsic, that create a very violent person. Childhood abuse would create killers by causing physical damage to the brain.

### Causes

Serial Killers will get a sense of happiness or satisfaction after killings. A history of childhood abuse, cultural conditioning, and uncaring relationships with parents are some of the strong factors that play a great role in turning a person into a serial killer.

### Types of Serial Killers

The four main types of serial killers based on the type of crime they commit are as



**Sr Lini Sheeja MSC**

follows: thrill seekers, mission-oriented, visionary killers, and power/control seekers. Depending on the nature of their crime, they are either categorized as organized or disorganized. Organized serial killers tend to be rather intelligent, usually having IQ scores ranging from 105 to 120. Every detail of their crime is planned out well in advance, and the killers take every precaution to make sure they leave no evidence behind to link them to the murder. It is not uncommon for this type of psychopath to watch potential victims for days to find someone they consider a good target. Disorganized serial killers rarely plan out their actions, and they appear to kill at random, usually people that happen to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. They usually do not take the extra precautions to cover up or remove any evidence of the crime, and they tend to travel from State to State, or even to other countries, to avoid being captured by the authorities.

### Signs of Serial Killers

(1) Antisocial Behaviour: Psychopaths have a strong tendency towards antisocial behaviour. (2) Arson: Many serial killers start as arsonists. (3) Torturing Small Animals. (4) Poor Family Life. (5) Childhood Abuse. (6) Substance abuse. (7) Voyeurism. (8) Intelligence.

## How do Serial Killers Choose their Victims?

Many experts agree that serial killers have a fantasy of their victim. This person would be thought of as their “ideal victim” based on race, gender, physical characteristics, or some other specific quality. While men largely attack strangers, previous studies have shown that about 80% of women serial killers know their victims.

### Serial Killers Worldwide

The USA has a staggering figure of 3,204 serial killers. That is approximately 19 times more serial killers than the next country on the list, England. The data reveals a total of 277 known serial killings took place in Washington State, with 95 individual serial cases. In the United States, the majority of reported and investigated serial killers are white males, from a lower-to-middle-class background, usually in their late 20s to early 30s.

### Life Story of an Indian Serial Killer

India has 11 serial killers and K D Kempamma, known as “Cyanide Mallika”, is India’s first convicted female serial killer. Kempamma is from Kaggalipura, located in Karnataka. She married a tailor, but was abandoned by her husband in 1998. Her husband left her after her chit fund business took large losses. Her husband threw her out of the house. She has three children. She then worked at odd jobs, including becoming a domestic worker and a goldsmith’s assistant. She often stole from houses she worked in as a domestic worker. Her first murder was in 1999.

Kempamma killed 6 women over the next 8 years. She befriended victims from female temple devotees and portrayed herself as a deeply pious woman. After gaining their confidence she would call them to another temple, ask them to dress in their best clothing and jewellery and give them ‘holy water’ with cyanide to drink. She was caught by police trying to dispose of the jewellery and confessed under interrogation. She was the first woman to be sentenced to death in Karnataka.

### Serial Killers Movies

(1). Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer 1986, (2). Se7en 1995, (3). Psycho 1960, (4). Silence of the Lambs 1991, (5). Zodiac 2007, (6). Halloween 1978, (7). Perfume: The Story of a Murderer 2006, (8). The Killer Inside Me 2010, (9). Eyes Without a Face 1960, (10). Memoirs of Murder 2003.

### Role of PMI & Serial Killers Reformers

Serial Killers Reformers (SKR) is one of the 40 PMI Special Task Forces. These volunteers who have committed themselves towards the reformation of Serial Killers dedicate their lives in prayer, offering Holy Eucharist, praying Divine Mercy Rosary, the Creed and doing mortifications. PMI family strongly believes, ‘no one is born a criminal and no one is beyond redemption. As this year is dedicated to St Joseph, guardian of our Redeemer, we surrender these brethren of ours to St Joseph to guard them from evil ways and to our redeemer to redeem them in His redemptive power.

# PRISON MINISTRY INDIA

## TELANGANA UNIT

Prison Ministry India rendered its best services in both the Telugu States right from the year 1999. But the gates were closed for us for the past 5 years. We moved earth and heaven by meeting DGs, IGs, Home Minister, Secretaries, represented several letters to CM and Deputy CMs offices. Nothing worked until we relied upon constant midday prayers. For the past six months we the volunteers started midday prayers with rosary and mercy rosary for about one hour. Miraculously doors are being opened to us partly. Glad to say that they allowed us in spite of Pandemic restrictions to celebrate Christmas and to distribute fruits and cakes along with the hygiene items such as Masks, Pads, soaps, toothpastes and brush to 55 inmates of Juvenile girls' prison on 27th December 2020.

We had a grand one-hour program organizing singing and acting competitions in the Juvenile home for boys on 17th January 2021. One hundred hygiene kits were distributed and the IG commented that though many NGOs visit them PMI's program was something different and unique and that he would invite us whenever an occasion arose as he was very much impressed with PMI.

We then visited DG Basker on 20th January seeking permission to visit all major four jails namely Chenchalguda, men's jail,



**Fr Dion Isaac**

Chenchalguda Women's Jail, Cherla pally Hi-tech Jail and Cherla pally open-air jail. Due to the power of prayer as the Lord said "knock, it shall be opened" we praise and thank God that the reply was quite positive as the DG said "I can allow you to meet officials and some prisoners at the entrance and distribute your hygiene items. This was definitely a welcome change in the attitude of the officers who for the past five years have been repeating a strong "no" to our visits.

We planned to visit Women's Jail with 300 inmates on March 7th or 14th on the occasion of International Women's Day. Our volunteers also attended an online retreat organized by our National office last year. Our volunteers actively participated in praising and thanking God on 16th February as I celebrated my Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee with the blessing of His Grace Most Rev. Poola Anthony, the Chairman of Prison Ministry India of TCBC.

With your prayers and blessings of the Archbishops and bishops, we are sure that slowly the gates will open totally to us soon and that our services to prisoners will be plentiful as it used to be in the past.





# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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## Sr Shanti Pulickal SCC

The month of March is an exciting one for women all over the world as they look forward to the celebration of Inter National Women's Day (IWD). News papers and other social media highlight the achievements, struggles and triumphs of women in various sectors and segments of society. A recent video clip sent by Fr Francis Kodyan, the National director of PMI reads: "In countries led by women such as New Zealand, Finland etc the responses to Covid-19 were quicker, stronger and more effective. Their decisive actions led to lower cases and deaths". This observation must have inspired the choice of the theme of the year for IWD 2021, "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a Covid19 world." The video also highlights the fact that over 100 countries have committed themselves to accelerate the realization of gender equality, a decision taken in the Beijing Conference 25 years ago. These highlights are like mile stones that point out that we are moving in the right direction. 22 countries have women as heads of States or Governments. This is encouraging but it is only 6 percent of the total figure in the world. The majority of women are victims of sexual or domestic violence. Gender pay gap still persists in most of the countries. Globally women's health and education are neglected.

Women have an equal share in the progress and development of the world. Hence it is imperative that women are to be empowered and educated and given equal opportunities to exercise their economic rights and control over resources. They must be encouraged to contribute their share in all the decision-making policies and in holding political power. Why should women be encouraged and empowered? It is because most of the women have rich, hidden talents but lack self confidence. They have low self esteem and live with low self confidence and




over dependence on others. Hence the most important factor in women empowerment is in helping to build positive image about oneself. They must be trained to face criticisms and to uphold their roles both at home and in society.

## Women's Day in Prisons

What importance has Women's Day celebration in a prison where women are isolated from home and society and are confined to live in congested rooms with limited space and are looked down by the majority in society? It is a fact that most women prisoners suffer from mental depression. They may have experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse at home or have observed these in others at home. These experiences have an impact on their lives and they live with these traumas and are forced to find their own solutions. They are overpowered by negative feelings of being unwanted and unloved both in society and at home. What is the result? They develop anger, frustration, hopelessness, helplessness and a host of negative reactions about themselves and others.

The most important aspect of prison ministry is to help women prisoners accept themselves with all their setbacks and move forward in faith, hope and love. The journey will not be easy but we can help them focus more on their strengths rather than on their setbacks. Conducting a few fun games and the ensuing distribution of prizes and gifts can boost their spirits for some time as it creates in them the feeling that someone thinks of them and cares for them. This can become real empowerment when it is combined with an attitude of listening and caring. Women are givers by nature and not receivers. But how can they give unless they realize that they have much to give. How can they realize unless someone helps them to do so? This is true whether one is in prison or out in society. Creating this awareness is the essence of women empowerment.



## International Women's Day Celebration Buxar Central Prison, Bihar


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### Fr Arogyaswamy

It is a great privilege for us to share with you about recent event that took place in Buxar Central Prison. On 08 March 2021 we held the International Women's Day celebration at the prison. The program was introduced and welcomed by Fr Arogyaswamy the PMI state coordinator, Bihar. He acknowledged with thanks Jesus' presence in the prisons and thanked His Grace William D'Souza SJ, Emeritus bishop of Patna, who encouraged him to render his full-time ministry in Bihar. He sent his blessings to all and wished that the power of Lord and his peace be with them.

Father expressed his thanks especially for the permission given to PMI family to render ministry in the female ward of Buxar jail as we had no permission in the male ward this year. Mrs Shalini, Superintendent, Mahila ward central prison Buxar and Mr Mitelesh, the Jailor, granted us permission to hold the Women's Day celebrations. The jail consists of 25 women police, 90 women prisoners and their 6 children.

Fr Arogyaswamy reminded everyone that Jesus was born to bring salvation to prisoners and to let them enjoy peace and joy in life. He thanked Pastor Paul who freely and willingly sponsored the program in the male ward, central jail Buxar for four years and today had come to the female ward with his team to present this beautiful program on the occasion of Women's Day.



The program started with the beautiful female voices of the religious nuns from our team of St Mary's Cathedral parish, as well as Sisters from different congregations: Srs. Chelina Kerketta, Tessy John, Victora Kullu and Angela, all singing in unison. Their theme was, 'Jesus has come to bring peace to all'. The second Choreography, 'Christ loves children', was a skit by six orphan students. It made the women feel at home and brought a smile on their faces. A motivational speech was given by Mrs Shalini, Superintendent of Mahila jail. She emphasized that sons and daughters are one in their dignity and ought to be given the same importance in homes as well as in society. Many women have become great politicians serving as PM, or as CM, and many as scientists and hence we should learn to value our existence as women. We had then a colorful drawing competition for all in groups of thirty and butterfly cartoons were given for coloring. The Superintendent selected three prizes for the best and distributed them to the winners, in the order of first, second and third.

Pastor Paul with his team performed melodious Christian action songs. A beautiful skit was acted out by the team on the theme 'Jesus came to save us and he took over our sins'. Fr Gotluri thanked the team and the staff of the jail and promised that from that day the team would render free service in this ward and assured everyone legal aid too, reminding everyone present about Sr Celin who had released many prisoners in the past. We distributed sweet packets for the 125 participants. The two hours of programs came to a close with final blessings and prayer. We dispersed after a common photo at the entrance of the jail.



## PMI Special Task Forces Meet

Fr Michael Francis

On 30th December 2020, Prison Ministry India convened a meeting of its Special Task Forces. The meeting began with the Eucharistic celebration by Fr Michael Francis from the diocese of Aurangabad. The Holy Mass was offered to thank the Lord for his choicest blessings showered upon PMI throughout the year 2020 and prayers were offered for a fruitful year ahead. Lt Col Jennifer James invoked God's blessings upon the meeting and the success of PMI endeavors. All the organizing members and the participants were cheerfully welcomed by Fr Michael Francis.

### **Hired-Killers Liberating Squadron (HLS)**

Fr Alexander Kureekattil CMF is doing the wonderful service of liberating and transforming hardcore hired-killers by making them human once again. There is a group of people in society who earn money by taking quotations to kill innocent people and they are popularly known as hired-killers or contract-killers. Most of these hired-killers come from broken and disturbed families. Many of them have seen their family members suffer unjustly or face severe poverty. They become easy targets in the hands of mafia lords who push them to committing such a foul business as murdering people. Dealing with such persons involves great risk. Fr Alexander Kureekattil CMF has been risking his life by going after

hired-killers, intending to save them and change their lives. He has changed many lives. Before leaving his residence, Father writes a letter about his day's plan and the person he is going to meet and leaves it at his table for his community members.

### **Juvenile Delinquents Squadron (JDS)**

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC leads a couple of task forces as the Commander in Chief, of which Juvenile Delinquents Squadron is another feather on her hat. Sr Lini in her presentation defined and explained the great service rendered by her team. She described the juvenile delinquent as a minor between the age group of 10 and 18 who has committed some act that violates the law. It refers to the anti-social or criminal activities of a child below 18 years which violate the law.

The General Assembly on 29th Nov, 1985 adopted the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice and for the first time the word Juvenile was coined. This change in terminology was then reflected in Domestic Law with the passing of the JJ Act 1986 and came to be known as the Juvenile Justice Care and Protection Act 2000. The Act was further amended in 2015 and is now called as Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Act 2015. In this Act there are two categories of children i.e., children in need of care and protection and secondly children in conflict with the law. Petty offences, serious offences and heinous offences are the offences covered under JJCP Act 2015.



## PMI SPECIAL TASK FORCES

Different government departments and PMI play a vital role in the implementation of the JJCP Act 2015. There are many factors and situations like poverty, bad experience in childhood, substance abuse, peer pressure etc, which cause juvenile delinquencies. There are 815 juvenile homes in India as per the 7th Nov, 2016 report. Most of the juvenile homes are overcrowded. PMI renders individual counseling, different skill classes, behavior management programs etc. Many children come out with a renewed life. God does wonders indeed through our prayers and support. PMI aims at starting more Kolbe Homes to facilitate such children. 'Juvenile – a journey' is an article in the October 2020 issue of Prison Voice which highlights the dignity of children as a gift from God. Children are a beautiful gift of God to families. Sr Lini and her team leaves no stone unturned in serving juveniles and bringing them to experience the love of God.

### **Prisoners' Children Educators (PCE)**

On 27th January 2021 Miss Asha Sebastian presented a PPT on the PMI Special Task Force known as Prisoners' Children Educators. As secretary of PCE she analyzed the problems and challenges of prisoners' children and proposed necessary steps to be taken for the integral human development of these children. She described the PMI homes for prisoners' children such as Kolbe Home for boys in Bengaluru, Premodaya for girls in Bengaluru, Snehadeepam for boys at Kanjirappally, Asha Sadan for girls

at Noida, Karunyashramam for girls in Kochi, Jeevan Jyothi for girls at Anavilasam, Bonal Bhavan for girls at Kasargod, Marie Pushpan's home for girls in Ranchi and Ashakiran for girls at Khunti. As PMI celebrates its Ruby Jubilee, it is desirable to launch more homes for children. Already there are such proposals from Sindhudurg and Aurangabad in Maharashtra and from Gandhinagar diocese in Gujarat.

### **Insights from the Moderator**

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS shared the juvenile home experience he had during his doctrinal studies in Rome. Father was inspired by a movement called 'Covenant House' run by Franciscan Conventual Fathers in New York. He visited Covenant House in New York and spent a fortnight studying their methodology of reforming run-away boys. They collect run-away boys from New York streets and stations. There are different sections in the Covenant House; the first is 'Take In' i.e., boys from the streets will be taken in after thorough checking. After being taken in, they will be directed to various sections based on their needs and aptitudes. Some may be directed to the de-addiction center, some to the hospital, some to skill training centers and others to their homes or schools. Kolbe Home of PMI is an inspiration from this house. PMI is looking forward to launch more Kolbe Homes all over India.

Mr Walter Kamble from Nasik Diocese summarized the whole meeting in a few words and thanked each and everyone beautifully with his graceful words. The meeting concluded with prayer for prisoners and Angelus by Sr Marcelline CCV.



## **My Attributes on Prison Ministry India**

**Nancy Misquith**

The growth of the Catholic Church is built on the personal spiritual growth of its members. Prison Ministry India for me, offers unique and vital opportunities for personal spiritual growth because I get personally involved and even immersed in it at times. There is so much to learn and to do in the prison involvement, if only we catch that fire of love for prisoners. This is possible first and foremost, when our heart burns for our God. We can then seek ways and means to do our best to bring the compassionate love of God to prisoners. The Catholic Church shows us both spiritual and corporal works of love for prisoners:

### **Corporeal and Spiritual Works**

Sharing the gospel message, teaching the Word to thirsty minds, counseling and praying for people with broken hearts and ourselves being a living example, are just a few. The flame in our hearts will open up newer avenues of spiritual growth to these our unfortunate brothers and sisters behind bars. We may teach deep spiritual lessons on how to forgive, how to restore, how to really pray, to listen and have the virtue of patience. We can blend the following spiritual and corporal works of mercy into the Prison Ministry requirements: to visit the imprisoned (Mt 25, 36), to instruct the ignorant (Mt 16:15), to counsel the doubtful (Jn 14:27), and to comfort the sorrowful (Mt 11:28).

There should be no manufactured emotions but rather, simple authentic love for the inmates. Prisoners should see themselves as God's chosen people. Always remember that the inmates are human beings just like us. The only difference between them and us is "we didn't get caught for our crimes." Therefore, we must have love and respect for all inmates even though in some cases, we may not get a cordial reception. God equips all of us to carry on this essential work, provided we see genuine interest in this beautiful ministry.

### **Prison Ministry**

Prison Ministry is a shower of blessings for all those involved. You can experience the wonder and joy of leading people to Christ and seeing them start afresh in life and begin being productive to Society once again and so becoming pleasing to God. You experience complete dependence on God for the success of the ministry on realizing that no lasting thing ever happens through only our human efforts. "I was in prison and you came to visit me. ... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers, you did to me" (Mt 25:36, 40).

### **Jesus' Mission**

If Jesus were on earth today, would we find Him in the prison talking and dining with criminals and outcasts? Of course He would!!! He would definitely be there "to seek and save the lost!" Wow! Isn't it nice to follow Jesus into the prison cells, to meet ex-prisoners and their families at

## ATTRIBUTES ON PMI

their homes, to bring relief and consolation to those victimized and to give our all, to those who need our ears, eyes, heart and our consolation. When Jesus was charged for eating with tax collectors and sinners, he answered that “it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Mk 2:17). Tax Collectors, back then, were considered corrupt and treacherous, which labeled them as ‘criminals’. Yet Jesus went to them, spent time with them, shared a meal and befriended them. He did not overlook what wrong they had done. Yet, in the moral “sickness” of their sin, He offered them His healing Love, His forgiveness, His salvation and His friendship too.

### PMI Ruby Jubilee Fundraising

This year, as 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 aid and establishing 4 more Kolbe Homes for prisoners’ children, let us make a concerted effort to help PMI in raising funds through Raffle sale. Coupon booklets are out already. Let us tap every source we can get hold of to make this Jubilee Project a very grand success. May this fund raising fill all our friends, relatives, neighbors, office colleagues and every acquaintance with the knowledge of this ministry and bring about a deep desire in them to give generously for this noble cause. God Bless You!!!

## Whose Hand Do You Hold?

**Michael Sequeira**

Man can't live like an island alone  
Friends can't teach him to live life till he's old  
That's the moral of life as one man dies alone

He lives life each day for tomorrow can be better he's told  
So what is happiness and what pleasures are sold  
What worth can power, money and fame buy if sold  
At what cost does one live life with pain within his soul

There is a sacrifice called ego and that is what man upholds  
So one days joy is worth a thousand sad days in the cold  
A man journeying through a desert one day hopes to find his road  
As direction at times is what children lack as parents can't unfold

No one knows what destiny he pays for wrong things he told  
So make rich not a beggar for he may only need a coat  
Give him not a banquet in case he asks for drink to hold  
Build him not a castle to show what good you've done to God  
As all men need food, shelter and clothing to live a dignified life  
But a friend is all one needy person needs whose hand you hold



### PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH

Blessed Joseph, husband of Mary,  
be with us this day.  
You protected and cherished the Virgin;  
loving the Child Jesus as your Son,  
you rescued Him from the danger of death.  
Defend the Church,  
the household of God,  
purchased by the Blood of Christ.  
Guardian of the Holy Family,  
be with us in our trials.  
May your prayers obtain for us  
the strength to flee from error  
and wrestle with the powers of corruption  
so that in life we may grow in holiness  
and in death rejoice in the crown of victory.  
Amen.



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# **Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet**

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**Goretti Martins**

## **Sin and Savior**

In the beginning of creation, God made all things by His Word. God created man in His own image and likeness and wanted man to be the master of His creation. God formed man out of clay and breathed into his nostrils (Gen 1:26). God's plan for man was Eternal. However, man disobeyed God and lost the paradise. In spite of the sin of man God still loved him and promised a Savior (Gen 3:15).

## **Abraham and David**

As man is created for God and God alone, man always hungers for God. It's only when we experience this Divine love, our lives can get transformed in all its fullness. This we can see throughout history of mankind. Abraham was a God-fearing man and God chose him to be the father of a great nation and this even though he was 75 years of age. Abraham had to go through many trials and face numerous challenges; but in the end, he saw how God fulfilled his promise when he was a hundred years old. Yes, Abraham became the father of his son Isaac at the age of hundred. We see how God chose David who was just a young shepherd boy to be the future king of Israel. God even empowered him to kill Goliath with just



a sling and a stone. But then came a time in King David's life when he fell into the deadly sin of adultery and murder. Yet God did not abandon him but remained faithful to His promise. David acknowledged his sin and begged pardon from the Lord.

## **Jesus' Love for Sinners**

In the New Testament we see how Jesus approached sinners with great compassion and love. This approach of Jesus converted great sinners like Matthew, Zacchaeus, Mary Magdalene and many others into great saints. Even when Jesus was hanging on the cross, He promised Heaven to the repentant thief. This is the God you and I are called to serve. The stories of Abraham and David teach us no matter what our age God can choose anyone and at any time. We only need to be open to His calling. God knows and understands all our human weaknesses. He is ever willing to forgive our sins. He is a God who never keeps a record of our shortcomings. We too need to make this same approach when we go to visit our brethren behind bars. They are there waiting for us to give them our patient hearing. But to do this first and foremost we need to grow more spiritually. Because we cannot give to others what we don't possess.

## **Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet**

Keeping this in mind, and this being the PMI Ruby Jubilee, Rev Fr Francis Kodyan MCBS was inspired to launch Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet on every first Friday. This



## SPIRITUAL BANQUET

Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet does help us very much to grow more spiritually.

### Lenten Spirituality

On 5th February 2021 PMI team from Raipur under the leadership of Rev Dr John Ponnore along with the Medical Sisters of St Francis of Assisi led the Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet. The theme was Lenten spirituality. Rev Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS welcomed the team. Sr Dolly provincial superior, Sr Johncy superior of the community and Sr Leena, the Novice mistress led us into praise and worship. Fr John Ponnore spoke about the mission statement of Jesus. Mrs Rowena Luis proposed a vote of thanks.

### Lenten Retreat

On 5th, 6th and 7th March PMI convened a Lenten retreat blended with Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet. This was hosted by PMI Pune unit under the able leadership of Fr Wilfred Fernandes, the PMI Central Regional Coordinator. Rev Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS welcomed the Pune team and the resource person Rev Fr Naveen Rebello. All the three days, the Lenten retreat began with the Eucharistic Celebration by Rev Fr Wilfred Fernandes and it was followed by the talk of Rev Fr Naveen Rebello, SVD.

On the first day Fr Naveen spoke on the topic "From Cross to Glory". In this talk Fr Naveen helped us realize how we always need to be open to the Will of God even

during the most challenging phases of our life, just as Jesus was open to the will of His heavenly Father. On the second day Fr Naveen spoke on the theme "From slave to child". He pointed out the weakness of our human nature that inclines all of us to fall into sin and temptations. But we should never forget that God's Mercy is greater than our sin. He also said that we experience the unconditional love of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, through which we're restored as sons and daughters of God. The topic of the third day was "From Meal to Sacrifice." The key words that Fr Naveen highlighted for us were: "because Jesus loves us, He gave Himself for us". The Lenten retreat ended with Adoration which was conducted very prayerfully by the Pune PMI team.

Mrs Goretti Martins thanked Rev Fr Naveen Rebello for giving us his most precious time and for encouraging us to carry on our ministry with full zeal. She also thanked Rev Fr Wilfred Fernandes for working day and night for the success of this retreat and more so for inviting Rev Fr Naveen Rebello to break for us the Word of God. She also thanked the entire Pune unit for their whole hearted participation and expressed her heartfelt thanks to Rev Fr Francis Kodiyan for starting the Burning Bush program which was benefiting so many PMI volunteers.




Sr Lini Sheeja MSC,  
***Redeemed  
Prisoner***

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**Fr Sebastian Thottippatt**

“Redeemed Prisoner” is the latest book by Sr Lini Sheeja, MSC, the National secretary for PMI till recent times, which deals with what goes on behind the bars of prisons where men and women in hundreds are incarcerated in overcrowded cells for crimes they have committed or alleged to have committed. The title of the book itself is paradoxical in nature, a typical oxymoron. A ‘prisoner’ is one who is confined and ‘redeemed’ speaks of freedom. But how do both these words find their reconciliation in the lives of prisoners who find mention in this book? One must go through the pages of this book and read the accounts recounted in them to open our eyes to the stories of real prisoners unfolding and realize how the impossible can become possible in the lives of people whom neither their families nor society wanted.

The prison is a place where people who commit crimes of diverse types are kept in confinement as punishment for the harm they have done to individuals and as a safeguard for society. Crimes can be committed by people locked up in prisons or they can only be ascribed to them based on circumstantial evidence or allegations of others. The courts in the country decide the responsibility of the crimes to alleged criminals. On account of the lethargic attitude of successive Governments to



men and women languishing in prisons throughout the country, too many are compelled to spend years in prison for no fault of their own as under trials. The Prison Ministry of India has been doing yeoman service in bringing relief as well as psychological and spiritual comfort to those in prison for having committed crimes of various categories. The Book, ‘Redeemed Prisoner’ is a splendid exposure of the stupendous efforts made by the volunteers of Prison Ministry India to live out in truth the call of Jesus addressed to all men and women of good will to bring solace to those in prison and wish to pay heed to those words uttered by the Master long ago: “When I was in prison and you visited me.”

The book outlines the stories of real criminals who were thrown into prison for crimes of a gruesome nature such as cold-blooded murders appalling even to hear or read about. They were rightly condemned by courts and by society and made to pay for their crimes by undergoing life imprisonment or in some cases capital punishment too. The PMI volunteers are portrayed in the book as playing the role of redeemers by offering them the mercy and forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ. They firmly believe that “No human being is beyond redemption and no one is born a criminal.” The accounts of the prisoners mentioned in the book reveal the hideousness of their crimes but the gravity of their crimes does not in any way make the volunteers withhold themselves in bringing the Good News in Jesus to them.

Conversion of heart and inner transformation is a work of grace which can only be obtained through persistent

prayer either by the one in need of it or the ones who intend to bring it about in someone they are concerned about and feel deeply compassionate with the heart of Christ. The truth of this is wonderfully brought out through the instances of radical transformation that took place in hard core prisoners such as serial killers with whom PMI volunteers interacted tenaciously with deep compassion. Being well aware of their total dependence on grace, they prepared themselves through prayer and fasting before meeting the prisoners. They met with resistance in most cases which only made them intensify their prayer and make themselves adept in the practice of patience to wait for the moment of grace. Their experiences bear testimony to the fact that nobody is beyond the reach of love when it is expressed unconditionally and sincerely. Sr Lini has rightly remarked in the book as a result of her own experiences of witnessing transformation in prisoners, “I believe that the transformation of a person who had lived a life away from God’s light and was dragged into a life of darkness and crime can happen, and that they can be brought back to light once again only by the touch of God and his Word. It is a touch that is both loving and saving.”

The main thrust of PMI volunteers in their work for prisoners is to see them transformed by reforming their life. It is clearly spelled out in the book that every prisoner has a built-in negative self image. Most often the cause lies in the background of the family where an individual is not given his due knowingly or unknowingly. There can be some form of neglect or withholding of love from one or other of the parents or

even by both. Certain actions of parents can also be misconstrued by children and they take the path of evil unless checked and followed up by parents. The book reports several instances of this in individual cases that culminated in grave crimes being committed by young people who were hardly out of their teens, only to assert themselves or to gain confidence in their own abilities. Crimes are not committed for their own sake but people find themselves led into crime because of circumstances and the power of negative influence of peers on one another.

The prison ministry depicted in ‘Redeemed Prisoners’ demonstrates convincingly the salvific effect of authentic love on those groping in the darkness of evil, guilt and despair as the PMI volunteers, many of whom are Religious Sisters, share it bountifully with them. They approach them with the Word of God in their hand and hearts brimming with love for their Lord and witness miracles happening before their very eyes in the lives of criminals who would otherwise have ended up worse than they were by the time their prison term would end. On the contrary we see them walking out with a smile on their faces and the Word of God in their hearts, ready to witness to what God had done for them. Some of them leave prison life determined to be apostles, bringing the Good News in Jesus Christ to all who have not experienced it. Others come out from prison totally transformed persons, prepared to atone for their own evil deeds by dedicating their lives to serving the last, least and lost ones of society. As Scripture says, “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom.6:20).





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## Book Release


# Redeemed Prisoner

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**Daisy Mathew**

“Redeemed Prisoner” - a name that is contradictory in terms apparently, may not easily synchronize with the intellect of an average person, because for him/her the “Redeemed” is one who has been set free, whereas a “Prisoner” is one who is locked up. It is interesting to note that the book authored by Sr Lini Sheeja MSC, who served as National Secretary of Prison Ministry India for the past few years, titled her latest book, “Redeemed Prisoner.” The book which is the result of her first-hand experience in Prison Ministry narrates the real-life stories of prisoners who have been redeemed from prison not just physically but also emotionally as well as spiritually. The book makes an unconscious peep into the transformation secrets of the death row prisoners, murderers, serial killers, pick-pockets and commercial sex workers. It enthralls us that these men and women have surrendered their lives to their Maker. Some of them are now even preaching Jesus, after experiencing His forgiving love and mercy through the Prison Ministry volunteers.

“Redeemed Prisoner” is the third book written by Sr Lini after “Sound of Silence” which was published last year. Sound of Silence is a heart-rending yet uplifting portrayal of the sorrowful and agonizing Way of the Cross of Jesus. Her latest book, “Redeemed Prisoner,” was formally released on 30th January 2021 during a virtual



meeting of the PMI Special Task Force, by Most Rev Dr Allwyn D’Silva PMI Chairman in the virtual presence of Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, Rev Dr Joe Mannath, Rev Dr PD Mathew, Rev Fr Jeromias, Rev Fr Edward, Rev Fr Sebastian Thottipatt, Rev Sr Inigo, Rev Sr Adele, PMI volunteers, family members, friends, benefactors and well-wishers who joined and graced the occasion.

Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the PMI co-founder welcomed the Bishops, priests, religious, and the other participants. Welcoming Sr Lini, he spoke of her as a super dynamic personality who continues her good work from the convent in Bellary where she resides presently. He reminisced about the privileged two years that he got to work alongside Sr Lini in the Prison Ministry, and heartily congratulated her on publishing her latest book. Sr Lini MSC, the author, briefed the participants about the book after which a short introductory video on “Redeemed Prisoner” with the Hymn “Come and Worship” was aptly played in the background”.

The following catchy headings of the stories in the book flashed on the screen as the video played....

“Jesus dismissed the Dismas case”. “I killed a Saint!”. “Who is to be blamed?”. “The pickpocket who was finally picked”. “Guilty Judas to faithful Peter”. “Flesh-eater turned Care-giver”. “O Father I slipped again!”. “1 sheep greater than 99”. These were some of the captivating titles.



## BOOK RELEASE

The book which is dedicated to death row prisoners across the world over has a blessing message from Bp Peter Remigius and by Archbishop Peter Machado. The foreword is penned by His Grace Bp Allwyn D'silva and the Preface written by Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS. There is a special message from Rev Dr Jervis D'Souza too.

Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva, while congratulating the author Sr Lini MSC, highlighted the fact prior to releasing the book that it was not just an academic study, but the fruit of her experience as a PMI volunteer. "And that will make it all the more appealing to the readers", he added. He also mentioned about her literary skills, which he had noticed incidentally displayed in her as Editor of Prison Voice that will make the book even more interesting and enlightening. The Bishop also had a few words of compliment to share about the person of Sr Lini. Bishop congratulated her for being the wonderful human that she is, spreading happiness all around her. Reminding us that Lent was round the corner, the Bishop referred to the whole Paschal Mystery as an event of hope and redemption which is the essence of salvation history. "The saving power of Jesus was seen when the Israelites sinned and the same happens when we sin too. The Church exists not only in parishes, but in prisons too. Hence we need to be witnesses of hope and love inside prisons. Read the book to know about the redeemed prisoners and to get a glimpse of the author too," he said.

There was a round of applause as Fr Francis Kodiyan un-wrapped the colorful wrapping of the book and raised it up for all to see. Sr Lini thanked Fr Francis and Bp Allwyn for all the support they had given her in publishing the book. The Bishop then gave the final blessing to the author and to all present, expressing hope that the readers of the book would be filled with the Spirit of Redemption, Love and Hope. Sr Lini extended a special word of thanks to Fr Alexander Kureekattil, Sr Adele Korah and Mr Walter Kamble for their contribution to the book. Fr PD Mathew in a lighter vein remarked that Sr Lini could be known as Sr Lini 'Redeemer', because she had brought Jesus the Redeemer to the readers through this book. He made a suggestion that the laws governing the rights of the prisoners also be brought to light before them.

The floor was then opened to the participants for felicitating Sr Lini. Most of the participants of the meeting had a word or two of appreciation for Sr Lini. Sr Inigo particularly appreciated the cover page of the book, mentioning that it was an apt reflection of the theme of the Prison Ministry. Fr Joe Mannath SDB appreciated that more and more religious were getting involved in Prison Ministry, a ministry that is different from the prevailing areas of service - Education and Hospitals - a ministry that reaches out also to the unjustly imprisoned. Himself a writer of many books, he congratulated the Religious for getting involved in reading and writing. The Vote of Thanks was proposed by Sr Shony and the meeting was rounded off with the Angelus prayer and the Prayer for Prisoners by Sr Amala DC, PMI national secretary.



**International Webinar on Abolition of Death Penalty**



**Women's Day Celebration at Bilaspur Prison**



**Women's Day Celebration at Jashpur Prison**



**Women's Day Celebration at Jharsuguda Prison**



**Visit to Open Air Prison, Devanahalli**



**Women's Day Celebration at Raigarh Prison**



**Women's Day Celebration at Sagar Prison**



**Women's Day Celebration at Sambalpur Prison**



**Awareness Class Against Suicide Tendencies at Manjeri Jail**



**Awareness Class on Organic Farming at Mananthawady Prison**



**Launching Black Meat Chicken Farming at Pala Subjail**



**Online Retreat to Edmond Rice Group**



**Hearty Congratulations to Fr George Peter MST, the Newly Appointed PMI Delhi State Co-ordinator**



**Hearty Congratulations to Fr Shaji Stephen O de M for his Elevation to PMI South Regional Coordinator**