



PRISON VOICE

April 2021

Vol. XVIII

Issue 4

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-



**INCARCERATED
INNOCENT INFANTS**



Books Distribution to Chavakad Subjail



Easter Celebration at Ernakulam Subjail



Easter Celebration at Idukki District Prison



Easter Celebration at Jashpur Prison



Easter Celebration at Kozhikode Prison



Easter Celebration at Mananthawady Subjail



Easter Celebration at Mattanchery Subjail



Easter Celebration at Trivandrum Central Prison

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PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY



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Are You Willing?

“Help a Prisoner's Child
Prevent a Potential
Criminal”

80% of the children of prisoners are potential criminals unless somebody takes care of them. Prison Ministry India has begun a scheme to educate 1000 children of prisoners:
Kindly contribute
Rs. 5,000/- for the education of a child.

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Patron

Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva

Managing Editor

Rev Dr Francis Kodyian MCBS

Chief Editor

Sr Amala DC

Circulation Managers

Fr Benny Thomas Pachanal CRSP
Fr Rajendra Kumar

Editorial Board

Fr Shaji Stephen O de M
Fr Wilfred Fernandes
Sr Jobina UFS

Magazine Staff

Sr Basil SCS
Sr Joanna SCS
Sr Rosily SCC

Graphics and Layout

Dinto Tom K T

Printing

Sevasadan Printing Press
Koramangala, Bengaluru

Prison Ministry India

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

☎ 09447710488
9486604887

Email

prisonvoice123@gmail.com
nationalpmi2015@gmail.com

Website

www.prisonministryindia.org

EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT!



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor

Education is the process of imparting knowledge, skill and judgment. It is also a social institution through which society provides its members with cultural norms and values. Good and proper education plays a great role in shaping our future and professional career. It helps us to develop personality; and earn recognition and respect in family and society. Thus, we can say that education is personally and socially an essential part of human life; and we cannot ignore the importance of education in our life at any cost. We are incomplete without good education because education makes us right thinkers and correct decision makers.

Prison Voice April issue highlights the educational assistance given to prisoners' children by Prison Ministry India. PMI runs many homes for prisoners' children both for boys and girls and spends lot of energy to educate these children. Besides homes for children, PMI provides scholarships to hundreds of children especially as part of the Ruby Jubilee Celebration. PMI could narrate many a story of our little ones becoming heroes and heroines. The incarcerated parent, a mother from slum, a father from street will have the desire and dream to educate their children? PMI exists to realise their dreams. Can we all join hands in educating these children and providing them a better future? If you and I don't reach out who else will reach them out? God has blessed us in abundance, in order that we too become a blessing in the life of the marginalized, vulnerable and broken ones. "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body"" (Mt 26:26). Jesus has

taken us in His hands, gave thanks for the gift of each of us, broke us and gave it to the world. "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven (Mt 18:10).

There are so many Preethis, Daniels in the streets in which we walk daily, so many Angels and Stephens in slums where we need to reach out more, so many Pawars behind the prison walls with their incarcerated parents who need embracing hands, encouraging words, loving touch and generous hearts to reach them out in humble service. If these children are not taken care today, tomorrow they would have the same fate of their parents. What are the ways to educate these underprivileged children? What can be done? Help each and every poor child in obtaining good education by donating funds or sponsoring their fees; be a volunteer to PMI homes for prisoners' children as tutors, benefactors, and well-wishers

May I also avail of this opportunity to wish you the Joy of Easter. May the Risen Lord, bless us with his wisdom and grant us his fortitude to imbibe his attitude (Cf. Phil 2:5) that we may transcend from trivialities to live a purposeful life experiencing everlasting joy, peace and contentment. "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is empty and your faith comes to nothing" (I Cor 15:14). And any person who chooses to follow Jesus receives "a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1Pt 1:3).

INCARCERATED INNOCENT INFANTS

Women Prisoners with Children

According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) there were 1,543 women prisoners with 1,779 children as on 31st December, 2019. 1212 women prisoners were undertrial prisoners who were accompanied by 1409 children. 325 convicted prisoners who were accompanied by 363 children. The total number of prisoners were 4,78,600. This means 4,78,600 families with their children are in peril and in difficult situations. Seeing the sad plight of incarcerated infants and prisoners' children, Prison Ministry India (PMI) thought of launching homes for prisoners' children providing food, accommodation and education. This is a brief report of the PMI homes for prisoners' girl and boy children.

PMI Homes for Boys

Snehadeepam

Snehadeepam at Inchiyani, Kanjirappally, Kerala is an initiative of Mar Jose Pulickal, the bishop of Kanjirappally diocese who is the chairperson of Justice, Peace and Development Commission of Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference. Mar Jose donated his ancestry property for the integral human development of children and entrusted the task to Holy Spirit Sisters. Launched in 1994 this became the first home for children under Prison Ministry India.



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

Kolbe Home

On 15 December 2015 Most Rev Bernard Moras, the then archbishop of Bengaluru blessed Kolbe Home at Carmelaram meant for prisoners' boy children. This was an initiative of Fr Sebastian Vadakumpadan who was the then PMI national coordinator. Satyaseva Catechist sisters are entrusted with the training of the children and at present there are 25 boys under the supervision of the PMI national office.

St Antony's Home

One of the PMI Ruby Jubilee decisions was to establish 4 new homes for prisoners' children and I am glad to inform that St Antony's home for prisoners' boy children at Kankavali will be inaugurated on 1 May 2021. Most Rev Anthony Alwyn Fernandes Barreto, bishop of Sindhudurg offered land and building for this noble cause and Fr Manuel D'Silva took initiative in launching this home for prisoners' children. PMI Maharashtra and PMI national office will extend support for the maintenance of this home.

PMI Homes for Girls**Asha Sadan**

Asha Sadan in Noida, UP, established in 1977 is an initiative of Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC) Sisters. They get girls from Tihar prisons and are well taken care of by the FCC sisters.

Karunyashram

Karunyashram at Thoppil, Kochi launched in 1999 is an initiative of the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (SABS). Sr Anne Maria is the directress and there are 15 children undergoing training.

Pemodaya

Premodaya established in 2001 is an initiation of sisters of Saint Anne's of Chennai. This is located at St Francis Xavier's cathedral compound in Bengaluru. Sr Jerlin is in charge of this home and children there undergoing primary and high school studies.

Jeevan Jyothy

Jeevan Jyothy at Anavilasam, Idukki, Kerala is an establishment of Augustinian Sisters.

Bonal Bhavan

Bonal Bhavan at Kadumeni, Kasargod, Kerala is launched by Sisters of St Anne's of charity.

Ashakiran

Ashakiran in Fundi, Khunti, Jharkhand was established in 2001. This is an institute for

children run by Ursuline sisters of Tidonk. Sr Jonita is the director and they have 70 children.

Saranalaya

Saranalaya at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu established in 2001 meant for prisoners' children is an initiation of Society of Sisters of St Anne's Chennai. There were 25 children but due to covid19 most of the children were sent back to their homes.

Marie Pushpan's Home

Marie Pushpan's home launched in 2017 is in Ranchi, Jharkhand. This is run by Dominican Sisters and Sr Jini is its director. Due to Corona and due to the closedown of schools many children are at their homes.

Conclusion

Let us hear the cry of imprisoned innocent infants who are deprived of freedom and integral human development. I am proud of PMI volunteers who dedicate their lives for the uplift of incarcerated infants and children of the imprisoned. "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs" (Mt 19,14). "Children are a heritage from the Lord, a reward from him" (Ps 127:3-5). "Do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven" (Mt 18:10).

I wish all *Prison Voice* Readers the joy and peace of the Risen Lord. Happy Easter.

Amitha's Tale of Triumph

Tragic Tale

“All things are possible for one who believes” (Mk 9:23). During my regular visits to the prison, I happened to meet an inmate by name Amitha (Name changed) who was just brought in to the prison that day. She was in tears. As I sat listening to her woes, I came to know that three members of her family were arrested together; her sister and her aged mother too were brought in to the prison on the same day. She was in great pain recalling the torture she suffered at the hands of her alcoholic husband for many years. It was on a hellish day that her husband reached home heavily drunk and dared to approach Amitha's younger sister and laid his hands on her, staring at her with lustful eyes. Amitha couldn't wait a second. She grabbed his hand and pulled her sister away from his grasp and in the struggle her husband fell flat, as his feet were unsteady because of his drunken state. As a result of the sudden fall on the hard granite stone his head started bleeding heavily and the end came quickly. As he lay motionless on the floor, all stood flabbergasted not knowing what to do next. His sons stood there aghast but with secret joy in their hearts at the thought that the torture had at last come to an end. But the last groaning of the dying man was heard all around the house and



Sr Adele Korah SCCG

inquisitive neighbors came flocking to the house. The news reached the police station in a short time.

Tale of Misfortune

All the three ladies, Amitha, her mother and sister were taken under custody in the police station. Later they were produced before the magistrate and were shifted to the central prison, Bangalore. After being exploited by an alcoholic husband for several years, Amitha had to undergo the punishment of a prisoner along with her mother and sister bearing the stigma of criminals. The greatest weight in Amitha's heart was the anxiety about her two sons. The elder son was in first year P.U and the younger one was in 8th class. She gave me the contacts of her brother with a request to approach him so that the sons would continue their education under his care. When I called him, I was shocked to hear that their uncle had taken the boys to his house and put them on his farm to help him. The elder boy had a fractured bone on his hand supported by a steel rod and he was unable to dig the soil with his broken arm.

Tale of Hope

I realized that his uncle had no interest in helping his sister nor was he bothered about the boys' future. He was planning to take advantage of the tragic situation in his sister's family for his own benefit with a very selfish motive. Hence, I decided to take personal interest in the matter and requested him to permit me to get the boys admitted in Institutions so that they could continue with their education. With difficulty I got his permission on condition that he would not have to bear the cost of education of the two boys. Without much delay, I visited several Educational Institutions along with another sister so that we could procure seats for admissions in a College and a hostel for the elder boy and a seat in High School and boarding in a children's home for the younger boy. I said to myself, the Lord is ever faithful in his promises, "Ask and it will be given you, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you" (Mt 7:7). Our going around in the city in search of seats for the two boys was not in vain. Two good educational Institutions offered them boarding and seats to complete their studies. When we met their mother in prison on the next day after admitting both the boys in good institutions, her joy knew no bounds. I said to myself, "My God will fully satisfy every need of ours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19).

Tale of Triumph

God blessed both the boys in their studies. When the elder boy completed his BCom we were happy to know that he passed out of the College obtaining the sixth rank. I thanked the Lord for blessing our efforts to send him to College rather than being a helper in his uncle's farm. He was in a position to procure a job and support his mother, grandmother and aunt when they would be released from prison. On the day of their release both the sons came to the prison gate to receive them. We realized that they had no home of their own to spend together in the days to come, until a house was arranged for their stay. We made arrangement to send them to the rooms given by the Indian Social Institute managed by the Jesuit priests so that the family which was shattered could spend a few days in the company of one another. We were able to get a rent-free house for them later as one of the volunteers of Prison Ministry India generously offered them a house. All things are possible to the one who puts her trust in God.

I entrust this family which has begun a new life to the Almighty and loving God who brought them to a new beginning. May the Lord who has opened a new chapter in their life fulfil his promise, "I am going to bring recovery and healing: I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security" (Jer 33:6). "Give thanks to the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for his steadfast love endures forever" (Jer 33:11).

FROM CHILD LABOURER TO A LEADER

Sr Jerline Joyce, SSAM

Preethi (all names in this true story have been changed) aged 10 years, had never known that she would have to get back to Bangladesh from Premodaya after a short stay of two years in Premodaya, a Home for children of prisoners at Cleve Land, Bengaluru. She did, however, during her stay in Premodaya, emerge as a leader with aspirations to make changes in her life and in the lives of children around. Well, Preethi joined Premodaya along with her younger sister Preena in mid 2018 having been referred to by the Child Welfare Committee, Bangalore.

Before she joined Premodaya, Preethi never went to School in her native town but was a child labourer. In line with RTE, she was immediately placed in age-appropriate class IV and was taught from alphabets to arithmetic. A special coaching was given by Sister Jerline Joyce to help her learn reading and writing with regular follow up. In fact, the mother tongue of Asma was Bengali, but she diligently learnt Kannada as part of the curriculum with the aspiration to acquire a new language and skills in learning. Preethi was such a lovely child that she gained the respect and love of all the inmates.

'I am surprised to see my child having grown so mature and responsible. She has learnt good manners and have developed learning skills. Even I would not have done so much to my children and we are ever indebted to Premodaya for giving care, education and leadership skills to my children particularly to Preethi who looks so mature.'

- Ms. Rahima, Mother of Preethi

In fact, all of them looked up to her for assistance in carrying out various activities. Rahima, mother of Preethi, was incarcerated for allegedly violating passport laws as the family immigrated to India for survival. The children were separated from their mother and were placed in Premodaya for care and protection. Preethi, did not show any sense of fear in the new abode, instead gained strength to withstand the situation as she was fondly guided by the Sister In-charge of Premodaya with motherly care, life-skills, wisdom and academic education. Premodaya offered her quality while continuing her education to ensure her right to education. With all the above comprehensive learning system, Preethi developed leadership skills. She did gain momentum in becoming a leader by voluntarily taking up little tasks that were to be performed for the welfare of the inmates like assisting the younger ones in evening studies, sharing snacks and meals, organizing games and cultural events and maintaining cleanliness of the premises of Premodaya.



Labourer to a Leader

Preethi, did not show any sense of fear in the new abode, instead gained strength to withstand the situation as she was fondly guided by the Sister In-charge of Premodaya with motherly care, life-skills, wisdom and academic education. Premodaya offered her with quality while continuing her education to ensure her right to education. With all the above comprehensive learning system, Preethi developed leadership skills.

‘If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.’- John Quincy Adams. Likewise, inspired by the value system in Premodaya, Preethi did inspire other children to learn more, do more and dream more. With little acts of kindness, she inspired the lives of children and she always was ready to do more and contribute more to others and to the Premodaya Home. The younger ones were quite fond of her, calling on to her for assistance. She was a little sister with a big heart.

PMI legally assisted Preethi and her younger sister Preena along with her mother to be repatriated to Bangladesh, their native country. She is back with lots of confidence and courage to regain her development to being fully human. We are sure that Preethi would continue her education and inspire

many more young girls with her value-based leadership skills. When Mrs Rahima, mother of Preethi saw the children she stated, “I am surprised to see my child having grown so mature and responsible. She has learnt good manners and has developed learning skills. Even I would not have done so much to my children and we are ever indebted to Premodaya for giving care, education and leadership skills to my children particularly to Preethi who looks so mature.”

COVID:19 AN UNINVITED TITAN

Rolph Patrick Christy

The titan was ought to be born,
Coz the humans made nature mourn.

It is a virus that entered our existence,
Time passed and became a resistance.

We dreamt somehow, we could dance,
But the government and virus gave us no chance.

Happy all were! Before the situation,
But it just came and started human elimination.

The virus flowed when people congregate,
Noting could be done, it was nature's fate.

Government closed all the shops,
The gdp of india eventually drops.

Schools were off, no proper education,
Lack of attention, loss of concentration.

This pandemic gave us a very big pain,
God give us our life back again.



Imprisoned Infants



Walter Kamble

Quite a number of children aged between one month and six years old languish in Indian jails, growing up with their imprisoned mothers. The plight of these guiltless children has long been known in India, but recent investigations by a human-right organization have thrust the problem into the spotlight. These poor innocent children are being regarded, for no faults of theirs, on a par with the convicts, whereas on the contrary they should be provided special treatment.

The observation says that these children lodged in jails with their mothers are neither convicts nor awaiting trial. They are entitled to food, shelter, medical care, clothing, education and recreational facilities. But instead, until the age of six, children are allowed to live with their imprisoned mothers in India. Many develop without getting the attention they need, loss of health, and are isolated from the outside world.

Some incarcerated children are old enough to attend school, but instead remain invisible victims of crime, their rights violated, and are deprived of social and emotional security not only by the criminal activities of their parents but also the State's actions in the name of justice. The Supreme Court makes the obligations clear: *Children below three years*

shall be allowed crèche and those between three and six years shall be looked after in the nursery. The prison authorities shall preferably run the said crèche and nursery outside the prison premises.

Seeing the plight and lack of basic educational facilities for such children the Prison Ministry India, Nashik Unit with the help of Nashik Social Service Society which works for the Diocese of Nashik had asked permission from the Jail Authorities to start a Creche within the Prison premises itself which was happily granted and since then for the last ten years or so a Teacher from the Parish goes to the Prison in the Women's cell and takes classes for the children from Monday to Friday between 9 and 12 am. The same teacher also takes adult classes for the women inmates. Apart from education to the children, we also provide them with educational aids, school bags, shoes, water bottles and compass boxes etc.

The Jail authorities have expressed their satisfaction for these classes for the children in Jail. They have confessed that in earlier days, these children did not know how to read and write, even basic manners were missing, but since this crèche started, the behavioral pattern of the Children has completely changed. Now they are able to read and write.

However, due to this Corona pandemic, for the last one year and more now, everything being closed, no one is allowed to enter the Central Prison and hence we are neither able to communicate nor take any follow up of the children and the women inmates.

ON THE WINGS OF A BIRD

Mrs Marjorie Correa

“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn”. These famous words uttered by the renowned Benjamin Franklin, founding father of the United States of America, have come to pass in the lives of these two young boys Vishwanath and Daniel (all names in this true story have been changed) from Kolbe Home, 18 years and 14 years respectively. They had one thing in common. Both had a parent each behind bars. Despite this and thanks to the efforts of those managing Kolbe Home, they have both emerged as confident, positive and brave young men ready to take on the world with all its challenges. They are getting ready to fly...

Vishwanath

When Vishwanath stepped into the portals of Kolbe Home 5 years ago he was a shy, insecure, fearful teenager, battling with loneliness, fear and trauma, the baggage that all children of prisoners carry, not knowing what the future holds for them. But here in Kolbe Home under the loving guidance and support of Fr Sebastian and Sr Gertrude and the Brothers in charge, Vishwanath, gradually began experiencing a change in his life. In his own words, Fr Sebastian and his team at Kolbe Home were more than a father, mother, brother and sister to him. He slowly started coming out of his shell and began confiding to Fr Sebastian and Sr Gertrude about his feelings of fear and insecurity. With great patience and love Father and his team began to make him feel wanted and loved.

He began his education in a Kannada medium school but at the same time learnt to speak English with the help of his mentors at Kolbe Home. He began to explore his talents and started to express his feelings through his drawings, which he became good at. He felt encouraged to develop his talents in other fields. He became a champion in sports and bagged many prizes coming first in all Running races, held in the school. His dream was to become

a Sports coach as well as a police officer. With the training and discipline that he received in Kolbe Home he felt confident that he could realise both of these dreams. He has always felt loved, respected and wanted ever since he came to Kolbe Home. To him Kolbe Home is a home away from home. He is slowly learning to spread his wings and fly...

Daniel

Daniel was only 14 years when he stepped into Kolbe Home. Initially he too felt lost, lonely and was filled with a lot of anger towards the world. He often questioned himself as to why he should have been thrown into such a situation and be brought there to Kolbe Home? Would it be like another “prison” with no freedom? He envied the boys on the street who were free and roamed wherever they wanted. He gradually noticed that there were other boys in Kolbe Home who had adjusted to their new environment. He decided to give himself a chance. He established a bond with the other boys and developed a strong relationship with them. He slowly overcame his frustration. He observed that there were many things he could learn here. He would get an education and of course a lot of love from the Fathers, Sisters and Brothers there. He had a passion for dancing and soon became a dance leader and got the admiration of his peers. He started to get confident and became proud of himself. He no longer envied those boys on the street. He developed his skills and his talents. He was no more that former helpless frightened bird but one whose wings had got stronger and was getting ready to fly.

Kolbe Home

This is the transformation that Kolbe Home has brought about in those who have come there. The training, the discipline, the values and the prayer life have equipped them to face the challenges of the outside world. This is how the boys are taught to fend for themselves. As the famous Chinese proverb goes, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for one day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” This is what Kolbe Home strives for - to teach these rejects of society not to be afraid, but to learn how to use their wings and fly.



JOYFUL MOMENTS IN DONGRI

Mrs Lili P Vaz

Dongri Observation Home is a shelter in Mumbai,
Where children in conflict with the law have to reside.
Far from their families they are full of despair,
Longing for a bit of tender loving care.
Sad and forgotten, alone and dejected,
Isolated from loved ones by society rejected.
For these lonely children Prison Ministry is a saviour,
Our volunteers comfort them and wipe many a tear.
In their pain and suffering we want them to know,
We empathise with them, a new person we want them to grow.
We help them to regain their lost identity,
Through loving guidance, we give them a sense of dignity.
All through the week we visit Dongri,
We go there in groups of two or three.
We don't mind the journey in a packed local train,
Nor the blistering hot weather or the pouring rain.
Just to see their smiles, hear their welcoming voice,
That warm tight hug, oh it feels so nice.
“What are we doing today?” they are eager to know,
Forming a close circle we all squat on the floor.
We begin our session with prayer and meditation,
Then art and craft or cooking or value education.
Maths and computers and beauty course too,
And counselling for some to begin their life a-new.
It gives me great pleasure and tremendous joy,
That a mother I can be to that lonely girl or boy.
So be a ‘Love Bomb’ - let it explode - not to kill,
To heal the broken hearted – hearts bitter and ill.
We are on a pilgrimage it's Jesus I see,
“What you do to the least you do it to me.”
I thank my God for this golden opportunity,
To serve the lost, the least and the last through Prison Ministry.



Nithya's Success Story

Sr Fidelis HCM

Family

Nithya had her parents and one younger brother. When she was about four years old, she reminiscences, one day her mother came to Bangalore with her and was sitting on the road side near the dairy circle. She is not sure whether her mother wanted to abandon her or not, her mother told her to sit there and after that she disappeared leaving her on the road. Then someone took her and entrusted her to the police and the police handed her over to the government orphanage.

Orphanage Life

She grew up in the government orphanage for ten years. According to the government rules after 10 years they should be shifted to bigger children's home called Girls' home which is in the same campus. Nithya was sent to this home and continued her education. There she completed 10th. One of the social workers got her admission for Nursery Teacher's training and after successfully completing it she started teaching the children in a Nursery school run by a Trust. While working there she enrolled herself for plus two and passed. However, she had no idea of what to do and how to go about in her life. During these days one of her friends introduced her to a Religious Sister who was familiar with

Jeevodaya Ashram. Then she told the sister all about her life and the sister explained to her about Jeevodaya. The girl was interested in coming to Jeevodaya and after a few days she came to live in Jeevodaya in the year 2000.

Nithya was a very quiet and soft-spoken person. Slowly she developed confidence and started mingling with every one and joining for the activities. Since she had completed plus two, we were thinking of sending her for further studies. By this time, she was twenty years old. When she was asked about doing General Nursing, she was happy to study. But as there was a gap of about one year to join the course, we put her on job as a helper in one of our convents to help her with the studies. There she happily worked and earned a good name for herself and was given support for her education.

Nursing Student

Nithya started her new life as a student in the year 2002 in the School of Nursing run by the Holy Cross Sisters. Being brought up in orphanage hostels, she had her flaws. Through interactions, corrections and rectifications Nithya went through a hard time, but she was moulded and shaped into a new person by all that. We got the necessary financial assistance to complete her studies through different sources and she worked in the same hospital for a short time. Then she moved to another hospital where she could earn more money and while working outside, she remained in contact with us.



Life Settlement

While working in one of the hospitals, one staff nurse introduced her nephew to her and proposed him for her to marry. Since she was not a person who jumps into anything suddenly, she told them politely to go to Jeevodaya, speak to the sisters and come back. We enquired about him and everything moved positively and the marriage was arranged. He was working in the Gulf as an electrician. When he came on leave in 2010, she was happily married. Since he had to go back to the Gulf after a few months she continued to work in the hospital where she was until he resigned and returned from the Gulf.

Motherhood

Nithya now lives a happy married life with her two children, a 7-year-old son and a one-year-old daughter. Her in-laws are very understanding and good with her and she in turn is also the same. She is settled in her husband's home town and lives with her in-laws. She remains always grateful to Jeevodaya and keeps communicating with the Sisters. "Great things happen, when God mixes with human beings. Some find life, some find peace, and some people even find joy. Some see things as they never could before; and some people find that they can begin to live and trust". This is what happened to Nithya as she entrusted herself to God through the hands of the Sisters. As in the case of Job, she got back everything that she had lost – parents, and was now in a good family enjoying new life.



PRISON MINISTRY MUMBAI – A LENTEN RECOLLECTION

Rowena Luis

A Lenten recollection was held on Monday of the Holy week for Prison Ministry Mumbai over Zoom. It brought together our intercessors, volunteers and benefactors. A short welcome by Juelynn, introduction to our speaker by Rowena and Fr. Anthony J. Fernandes, our preacher began the service. He reflected on the topic 'Via Dolorosa' so appropriately chosen to integrate with the liturgy of these days. He shared on the meaning of suffering with Mary and St Maximilian Kolbe and how God's grace consoles and even lifts up the pain when it is borne patiently, especially unjust suffering.

From this introduction, he conducted the Stations of the Cross in a most beautiful and personal way as he took us members of prison ministry into the reality of this sensitive mission that is totally sustained by God's love in our own lives. He walked us through the stations, from the lives of prison inmates, convicts, political prisoners and even scores of under trials, so many innocent ones, as well as criminals waiting to experience inner freedom. Srs. Simlifer and Catherine beautifully added a hymn and harmony that gave meaning to the various Stations.

Fr Glasten our PMM Director thanked Fr Anthony who was his own seminary professor and always creatively brought depth to learning. With gratitude he appreciated the commitment of volunteers and the session ended with a blessing by him. Members immediately began pouring in their joy of this first-of-its kind, 'Way to Calvary' so inspiring and challenging for us, prison ministry volunteers.



Redeemed Children

Sr Shanti Pulickal SCC

Are You Willing?

Every month, year after year, there is a message printed on the first page of the magazine, "Prison Voice". The Title is "Are you willing?" The message goes like this: around 80 percent of the prisoner's children are potential criminals unless someone takes care of them. The message is addressed to persons of good will to extent their hands and help these children especially, in their education. Prisoner's children are more prone to be potential criminals. Their minds are pulled strongly towards criminal behaviour. This may be due to various factors like insecurity, poverty, rejection by their peer group, inability to have any aim and purpose in life and so on. Hence, they too need release, renewal and inner transformation.

Rema's Saga

Education may help in solving many of these problems. Let me share one of the success stories about helping Rema (name changed) the daughter of a prisoner. Her father was arrested when she was only 3 years old. The mother was young and uneducated and Rema was the only child. With no income and no support from any one she was at the point of despair. This had a negative influence on Rema's behaviour and studies. As she grew up,

she was becoming withdrawn and lonely. It was then that the prisoner asked his wife to contact us. She phoned me and from then on, I kept in touch with the family. The wife took up some small jobs and managed to make both ends meet. I helped in the education of Rema through financial support, appreciation and encouragement even in the small efforts she made. There was gradual change both in her behaviour and her studies. Rema will write her class 10 board exam this year. She is attending the 100 days class arranged by the government for the board exam students. The syllabus is much reduced and we are hopeful that Rema will pass. The father was released 3 years ago after spending 9 years in the jail. Now he has a small son too. The father has a small job and the family is satisfied with what they have. We keep in touch with them and help them especially in the education of Rema.

Seema's Story

Seema (name changed) is another success story in our ministry at Berhampur. She is the eldest daughter of a prisoner with four more after her, three girls and one boy. Seema was in class 7 when her father asked us to visit the family. He and his wife had eloped, years ago causing immense pain and shame to the wife's parents as they had arranged another marriage for her. They had never visited or helped her even after the arrest of their son-in-law. But the prisoner's wife was equally stubborn and decided to face the situation by herself. She became a daily wage earner and her

mother-in-law looked after the children. But when she got an opportunity to work in a convent in Bombay the prisoner agreed and she went with the sisters. Apparently, life went well but Seema was planning secretly to elope with a drunkard. When the prisoner heard about it, he cried bitterly. He shared his problems with us and asked us to visit his family. We prayed with him and at his request gave him the Bible to read. It was the turning point of his life. He started spending most of his time praying and reading the Bible and even got other prisoners to do the same.

We visited the house and spent long time praying with the family and counselled the girl. She promised to give up the boy and study well. I got her admitted in another school and arranged a place for her in the hostel and promised to meet all her educational expenses. She agreed. Her house was only 10 km from my convent but the new school and hostel were about 5 hours journey by bus. I went to her house and she came with me to stay in my convent over night so that we could take the early bus to her new school and hostel.

We boarded the bus to my convent and sat together in the bus. The bus ride was only for 20 minutes. I was exhausted and slept. When I opened my eyes, I found the girl missing. It was a crowded bus stop and the conductor said that she got out as soon as the bus stopped. Everyone in the bus shared my anxiety and waited for me as I kept searching for the girl. I was not familiar to that place but she was

and she found her way back. I told the bus to leave and I would make a search.

In desperation I phoned her mother in Bombay. She consoled me and said, "Sister, don't worry about the girl. I know the possible places she can go. I will phone and trace her out. You have done so much for my family. We are grateful to you". With a sigh of relief and prayer for the safety of the girl I took the next bus back to the convent and spent long time praying for her. After about 2 hours the mother phoned me and said that the girl was safe at home. I thanked the Lord and continued to pray for her.

When the wife's parents heard of my services they repented and accepted the daughter and started caring for the children. Unfortunately, the mother-in-law who was looking after the children died suddenly of massive heart attack. The wife's parents came and stayed with the children till the wife could come from Bombay. She took Seema along with her to Bombay. The sisters gave her a small job with regular salary and she is happy. The wife's parents took the children to their house and are educating them. The wife sends money regularly to her parents and now everyone is happy. The prisoner looks happy and contented and spends much of his time praying and reading the Bible. He conducts prayer meetings with other Catholic prisoners during their free time and helps in creating a prayerful atmosphere in the jail.



Women's Day Celebration District Jail, Varanasi, UP

Fr Kasper & Sr Litty OLP, Varanasi

Prison Ministry India team of Varanasi diocese, under the leadership of Fr Kasper and Sr Meena SHM visited the District Jail of Varanasi for the Women's Day celebration on 6th March 2021. The main aim of the program was to create awareness among women inmates about their rights and provide solutions to their problems. The event was marked by cultural programs by women of Hatia Parish with the support and leadership of Fr Roselin Raja Manser, the parish priest of Ish Matha Mandir, Shivpur, Varanasi. These women were selected with the intention of giving them a chance to witness the reality of the prisoners, to make them feel for them, thus motivating them to lead a better life in the future. We were altogether 28 participants in all, including a few Sisters from different congregations and Fr Kasper.

The program included a prayer dance, Nagpury dance, songs and Qawali. A special attraction was two skits, exposing superstitious beliefs and abortion of the female child. There were also songs sung by two women inmates. All the programs were meaningful and thought provoking. It was well performed and kept everyone spell bound.

The chief guest of the day was Mrs Sudha Singh, Secretary to the District Legal Authority, Varanasi and the Judge of Lok Adalat. The guests of honor were Shri Pawan Tiwari, the Jailor and Fr Kasper, the Director of Prison Ministry India, Varanasi. The chief guest in her speech stressed the need for women empowerment. She said that women are in no way inferior to men today and they also enjoy equal rights. They have now become self-reliant and are free to choose their own

career. She also said that a woman is primarily a daughter first and then a mother, sister, and daughter-in-law, but how each one lives her life matters a lot. A woman performs all her tasks and carries out her responsibilities both at home and in the work place with sincere devotion. There are also many ways by which women are recognized for their extraordinary accomplishments in life. She told them that women have a lot of power within them and they need to use it for the good of society, family and the world at large but not to misuse it. She asked them to get united to use this power to give hope, love, peace, care and understanding as well as show compassion to all living beings. The chief guest assured the women inmates of extending all possible assistance in solving their problems. She also distributed stationery items; books, copies, pencils, erasers etc. to encourage them to read and write. This step will not only make them literate but also improve their standard of living.

The Jailor Shri Pawan Tiwari encouraged the women inmates by highlighting their important position in society. He asked them to have patience as they would be given due justice. He assured them of all possible help from him. Fr Kasper in his vote of thanks highlighted the role of women in today's world. He emphasized that the world was incomplete without women and that his existence as well as of all present there, would have been unimaginable without women. Women require only being aware of their rights and positions. He also thanked the Jailor, Shri Pawan Tiwari and his team for giving a chance to put up the program on the occasion of Women's Day which would remain in the memory of the women inmates and also serve to improve them so that they may become better citizens of the country. Finally, we shared fruits with the inmates and children. It was really a good initiative undertaken to mark an important day for women.



Love-Shore: A Home for Released Prisoners

Ummachan P Chakkupurackal

Genesis

Love-shore is the brainchild of Ummachan Chakkupurackal who hails from the Diocese of Alleppey, Kerala. He is married to Jiji Antony and has two boys who are doing their graduation. He was working as a resort manger in Munnar. In 1995 Ummachan was incarcerated for a few days due to his active involvement in the political activities of the communist party. His days in prison gave him ample opportunities to understand the difficulties and sufferings faced by prisoners and inspired him to do something for their liberation, rehabilitation and reintegration.

Jesus Fraternity

Gradually Ummachan began to participate in the Catholic charismatic renewal movement. In March 1999 while he was attending a prayer meeting Sr Latha IMS told him that she got a message that Ummachan would soon begin some charitable activities like prison visit. In December 1999 Ummachan began prison ministry in association with Jesus Fraternity with the consent of Fr Vijay Isaac, the parish priest of Chathanat Holy Family Church. Sisters from various religious communities such as Sisters of the Destitute, Canossian Sisters, Visitation Sisters, Sisters of Mary Immaculate and Sisters Adores collaborated with him in this ministry.

Love-shore - Snehatheeram

Ummachan's association with Prison Ministry India inspired him to launch a rehabilitation center for released prisoners in a rented building. In the initial days Ummachan received some inmates from PMI's Snehashramam, Thrissur. Love-shore functions as an observation home where released prisoners who wish to transform their lives can come and stay for some months. After their initial renewal they will be sent either to Snehashramam of Jesus Fraternity or Shantibhavan of the Claretian Fathers for further training and job settlement.

Witnessing the good works done by Ummachan Most Rev Stephen Athipozhyil, the then bishop of Alleppey donated 25 cents of land and a building for this ministry. On 9 January 2010 Love-shore was officially blessed by Most Rev Stephen Athipozhiyil and inaugurated by Most Rev Mathew Arackal, KCBC chairman of justice, peace and development. Fr Jose Karakkat MSFS, PMI Kerala State coordinator, and Sr Marykutty OMI, PMI Kerala State secretary were present. More than 340 people came to this institute for reformation and rehabilitation. Below we shall find some of the success stories of Love-shore.

Ahmed (Name Changed)

Ahmed, abandoned by his parents from childhood onwards, became an expert in criminal activities. He was a specialist in train robbery and was often in prison from his young age itself. One day when he was

released from prison, Ummachan brought him to Love-shore. Soon Ahmed was transformed to become a tourist guide. In the course of time, Love-shore arranged his marriage and raised funds to purchase a plot of land for him. With assistance from PMI volunteers Ahmed constructed his house. He leads a decent family life now and earns his livelihood as a tourist guide.

Ramkumar (Name Changed)

Ramkumar was a thief and was in prison. He came to Love-shore after his release and underwent the initial formation. Jesus Fraternity purchased a plot of land for him. With assistance from many sponsors, Love-shore constructed a house for him. He works now as a fisherman. PMI volunteers arranged his marriage and he is now settled in his new house and lives happily with a child.

Unwed Mothers

Many students going for higher studies in the metropolitan cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Delhi, Mumbai are lured into sex work for easy money making. They come on Friday and go back to their cities on Sunday evening. Some become pregnant and come back home. Love-shore volunteers take care of them keeping their privacy. Their children are given for adoption.

Ministry Among Sex Workers

Inspired by the intervention of Fr George Kuttickal MCBS of happy memory Love-

shore launched a ministry for sex workers in 2016. Once in a month they are invited to the Love-shore for recollection and prayer service. They are provided with medical assistance, counseling, spiritual food and a grocery kit. This ministry was officially inaugurated by Mar Sebastian Adayanthrath, the then auxiliary bishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese. Most Rev Stephen Athipozhyil, bishop of Alleppey presided over the meeting. Under the valuable guidance of Fr Mathew Thundathil MCBS, who looks after Friends of the Birds of the Air (FBA), a ministry for the integral human development of beggars, Love-shore extends assistance to sex workers and AIDS/HIV patients. During Onam, Christmas and other national festivals, Love-shore volunteers visit their houses and help them by offering grocery kits and organizing jobs in tailoring centers and beauty parlors.

Death Penalty Abolition

Love-shore launched another great mission for death penalty abolition. One of their success stories was the review petition given to the Supreme Court for Antony M Augustine who was sentenced to death. It was done with the assistance of advocates such as Colin Gonsalves, Satyamitra, Shrijee and Sr Jessy SD. As a result, Antony's death penalty was reduced to single life sentence. Another impact of this review petition was that the Supreme Court judge asked prison authorities to make facilities for prisoners to raise such issues to the Supreme Court instead of it being done by NGOs.



Sathya's Success Story

Sr Clara HCM

Childhood


Sathya (Name Changed) was born in a family of three children as the eldest child. She had one younger sister and one younger brother. They were very poor and had to struggle to make ends meet with coolie work which was never sufficient. Her mother was going to a Reddy's house to work but was very irregular and it made the family suffer, hunger and want. Sathya was going to the local school and when she was in the 3rd Standard. She offered herself to go to Reddy's house and stay there, help in the work and continue her studies. They were good with as she being a child and supported her in her studies. She was helping in cleaning the house and washing dishes etc.

ECHO

Sathya's younger sister Meena was put in a government boarding and only the 3rd child, the son was with the parents. Meanwhile they lost their father and the mother was not much interested in the children. Meena was missing her elder sister and told the social worker about her sister that she was working in a house and asked her to bring her sister to join her. The social worker then contacted the family and arranged to take away Sathya from the house and produced her to the Child Welfare Centre (CWC). By the time she was 10 years old and her sister was in 1st standard. After being there in CWC for a while both of them were referred to ECHO an NGO run by Norbertine Fathers.

The Way Ahead

In ECHO centre, they were taking both boys and girls and one of our sisters was also working with ECHO. As the number of the children started increasing and growing in age, they found it necessary to shift the girl children from there. The Director Father asked the Holy Cross Sisters whether we could handle them and help them in their formation and education. We happily agreed and some twelve girls were brought from ECHO and we started taking care of them and this centre was named Makkala



Jeevodaya as we already had a centre by the same name Jeevodaya for the senior girls and women. Sathya and her sister Meena too were among them.

Education

Sathya was soft spoken and mild in her ways of dealing with others where as her sister was very stubborn and a 'fighting cock'. As human beings develop according to the circumstances they live, this child had a painful childhood, experienced no love and care from the parents which shaped her into a stubborn child. Meanwhile they lost contact with their mother and don't know what happened to her. Sathya continued her education from 4th std. under the guidance of the Sisters. She is rather good at studies and completed 10th in the nearby convent school run by the FMM sisters. She is quite active, good at dancing and singing.

Jeevodaya

When she finished 10th Sathya was placed in the hostel to continue her studies. She was joined in Loyola College at Bannerghatta and passed out 12th in 1st division. By the time she turned to 18 and had to be shifted from Makkala Jeevodaya to Jeevodaya. Since she was good at studies she was encouraged to go for further studies and joined for B.Com, and completed her degree this year in 1st class. Sathya is good at dancing, singing and takes initiatives at functions to put up programmes and entertain others.

Job Settlement

She has now secured a job in a finance company and is very happy and grateful for the life she now lives. She could be an inspiration for others to be motivated to climb to the heights on the ladder of life. "Everything that is created under heaven has a purpose. Now her life has also a purpose and meaning. May God grant us the 'fortunate ones' the grace and courage, to share the burden of life some are not able to carry themselves". "The quality of your life comes from the quality of choices you make in life. There is no one to change but myself. How I deal with circumstances is much more important than the circumstances themselves. If worst comes to worse, can I still turn this obstacle into an opportunity? The scar into a star? Nobody else can motivate you unless and until you motivate yourself."

Prison Ministry India in Indian Major Seminaries

Fr Dr Jose Valiamangalam MST

“The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost” (Lk 19: 10). These words of Jesus actually inspire the seminarians to go and visit the jails and to help the prisoners. First of all, my great appreciation to all Rev Fathers, Rev Sisters and brothers of Major Seminaries in India who are engaged in prison ministry.

As we know we have four regions: Central Region (Goa, Madya Pradesh, Maharashtra etc.), North region (UP, Delhi, Punjab, Orissa etc.), North East Region (Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland etc.) and Southern Region (Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Telangana etc.). This year all activities were suspended because of covid19 pandemic that spread all over the world.

North and North East Region Seminaries

I have been contacting seminaries and Rectors. They are positive towards PMI activities. In those seminaries where they do not have any specific prayer group for PMI, they do occasionally and whenever there is any prayer service, pray for all the prisoners.

Southern Region

In Kerala itself, there are nine Major Seminary units. The seminarians are actively involved in the prison ministry. Each seminary is having a professor as the director. At present Fr Shaji Stephen is serving as the Kerala state director of Jesus Fraternity and Prison ministry in India. He is very helpful and dynamic in coordinating the programs in all the seminaries of Kerala.

Kerala Seminaries

They conduct annual visits (*Reksbadoot*) to Central Jails, Sub-Jails and District Jails during their semester holidays. This year they did not pay any visit to jails because of Covid. They conducted, however, a weekly prayer for the prisoners. It is called the Powerhouse of Prayers.

Every year, all the seminarians join together to publish an annual magazine called *Thadavarayile Sangeetham* and *Pulari* just to encourage and develop the talents of the prisoners. There are rehabilitation centres in Kerala where a group of seminarians stay during the summer vacation for a community experience.

Bangalore, Karnataka

The MCBS Major Seminary, Jeevalaya, is actively involved in prison ministry in Bangalore under the initiative of Fr Thomas Paul MCBS. The seminarians used to gather every Sunday for one-hour of prayer for prisoners. Besides, there is a chain of prayer and fasting every day. They used to visit Devanahalli open Jail and Central Jail very frequently and perform cultural programs. But this year they were unable to do any activities there because of the pandemic.

Central Region

Madya Pradesh: Bhopal, Ashta, Ujjain and Satna; Maharashtra: Papal Seminary Pune and St Pius X college, Goregaon. These are the Major seminaries we have in these places. At present Bhopal KPR (Khrist Premalaya Regional Philosophate) seminary in collaboration with MMB brothers go to central Jail Bhopal, visit the prisoners on a regular basis and conduct various programs there. They were not able to carry out any activities this year because of Covid19.

In Ruhhalaya Major Seminary, Ujjain, the brothers are active in prison ministry. The Brothers have a prayer group and they do pray for the prisoners once a week. Once a month they arrange a special meeting for prayer as well as for sharing. On special occasions and festivals, brothers do visit Jails and conduct various cultural programs. This year the brothers could not go out and visit jails for conducting programs because of Covid19.

Future Plans

To intensify prayer group in all seminaries there is a plan to organize a zoom meeting connecting all the major seminaries in order to encourage PMI activities. There will also be some annual publications that will interlink all the Major seminaries together.

International Webinar on Death Penalty Abolition Report



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

International Webinar on Death Penalty Abolition was organized by Prison Ministry India on 27 February 2021. The webinar took off with a solemn prayer and hymn invoking the Holy Spirit, led by Lt Col Jennifer James, the Chief of the Death Row Commandos, which is one of the 40 Special Task Forces of the PMI and Sr Sagaya MSC. Rev Dr Francis Kodyan MCBS, PMI national coordinator warmly welcomed the gathering reminding them that 2021 was the Ruby Jubilee year of the PMI. He apprised the participants about certain statistical figures - According to the Amnesty International, at the end of 2019, more than 26000 prisoners around the globe were known to be under the sentence of death. America has more than 2500 prisoners on death row, India has 404. The silver lining is that 142 countries have abolished death penalty. India is one of the 56 countries where death penalty continues to be in force.

While welcoming Sr Helen Prejean CSJ, the chief speaker of the evening, Fr Francis said that Sr. Helen, a member of the Congregation of St Joseph in New Orleans is a passionate Nun, a leading advocate, and a social activist inflamed with a fire, the fire of merciful love, and justice for the Death Row Prisoners. Her single minded devotion to abolish Death Penalty is an inspiration. Sr Helen has authored best-selling books like “Dead Man Walking”, “Death of Innocence”, and “River of Fire”. Dead

Man Walking, an eye-witness account of the death penalty got recognised through the Oscar awarded movie of the same name. Death of Innocence is an eye-witness account of wrongful executions. She also founded “Survive”, an organisation that sympathises with the families of the victims of murder and related crimes.

Rev Sr Helen Prejean CSJ, in her address said that “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.” 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!” is the message she left for the participants.

Rev Fr Brian Gowans, ICCPPC President from Scotland spoke on “Death Penalty in World Scenario”. He applauded Sr Helen for her great commitment for death row prisoners being a woman. He said, “We don’t carry God to prison from outside, rather God is present in the dark cells of prison amidst our brethren”. He concluded his message saying, “Let death penalty not exist in any of minds”.

Honourable Justice Kurian Joseph, former Supreme Court Judge spoke on “Death Penalty in Indian Scenario” by quoting and explaining death row prisoners cases of recent time in India. He said in his address, “By punishing the criminal with death row punishment the crimes have not decreased, rather it’s on increase. Other alternatives need to be found. In our country there is no uniformity in our law. Let the life of human being be respected and we need to have a universal approach”.

Rev Dr P D Mathew, Supreme Court Lawyer spoke on “Death Penalty in Legal Perspective” by quoting the Scripture. He said in his address, “None of us given are permission by God to take away someone’s life. Life belongs to the Creator. Let the divinity and dignity of every human be respected. Let our meeting bear much fruit to abolish the death penalty in our country together with 146 countries which had abolished death penalty in their countries”.

Time was given to the floor for the clarifications and discussions after which the promo video of the book “Redeemed Prisoner” dedicated for death row prisoners, authored by Sr Lini Sheeja MSC, was played for all. Presidential address was delivered by Most Rev Gerald Almeida, the Chairman of JPD Commission of CBCI. His talk highlighted the recent encyclical of Pope Francis - Fratelli Tutti. He expressed displeasure saying, “we talk a lot about justice to human beings but do not do it, or recognize the inalienable dignity of persons, especially of the labour class. The Holy Father emphasizes on this in his encyclical. According to the Pope there are several other ways to reform a person and to deter him from further committing crime. Pope John Paul II also had acknowledged that Death Penalty should be abolished altogether because it is inadequate from a moral standpoint.

According to him even Life Imprisonment is a disguised form of Death Penalty. In the olden times justice for such crimes were handled by the village elders. They meted out punishment in milder forms than the Death Penalty. The Madhya Pradesh government law today states that a rapist should be hanged to death. This is a very sad state of affairs and against the teachings of the Catholic Church. We, who genuinely feel for the death row prisoners should, along with the Bishops’ Conference join hands to fervently pray and work diligently to abolish the Death Penalty. This requires tremendous amount effort and whole-hearted cooperation from each one of us”.

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC, former PMI national secretary proposed vote of thanks and Sr Amala DC, PMI national secretary concluded the webinar with prayer for death row prisoners.




Neelima Kumari & Anjana Kujur

Sr Jini OP

I am Neelima Kumari, not exactly, but may be that is how I would like you to know me. I hail from Chanho, Ranchi, Jharkhand. I have an elder sister and I stay with my maternal grandparents. My father is in jail for the last 13 years. He is awarded with life imprisonment. I do not know whether I would be able to live with him again. The case not only took long years for judgment but also took all that we had to live on. My mother had no option but to go to Delhi to work as a house maid.

It was nothing but providence that bought Sr Jini and Sr. Saroj of the Dominican Sisters to my house where I was staying some times in the early 2017. They came to know about me when they visited my father in jail. My study had taken a beating though I was studying in 5th standard I neither knew reading or writing either in Hindi or in English. There was no doubt that academically I was a failure. On the other hand, I had neither father nor mother to take care of me. I did not know what is love. There was no one who could make me feel loved. There was no one to teach me right mannerisms. I was rough and rustic.

The sisters asked me to come to Marie Poussepin's Girls Home (MPGH) to stay and study. I was not so sure where I was going but I had no inhibitions. On 7th April 2017 I landed up in Marie Poussepin's Girls Home, Ranchi. The initial days were days of anxiety and fears. I came to know seven other girls who either had their one



or both the parents incarcerated. Life was not easy. My way of looking at other girls were with fear, jealousy and suspicion. But slowly those predominant feelings gave way to transformation. I have undergone a lot of transformation being in the Marie Poussepin's Girls Home.

There were priests and sisters visiting us, pouring love on us. In the parish we were known as 'sister's children' and so enjoyed a lot of privileges. On any special occasion there used to be at least one program from MPGH performed by us. As a result, my academic performance and self-confidence improved drastically to the extent that I am able to express myself very freely.

I will never forget one incident that took place in MPGH. My father was put in jail when I was very small. For me, I had a father who did not have a face but only had a name. I don't remember seeing him. I met him first when in he came out for a month in parole and visited me at MPGH. It was a very touching moment for me and my father. I do not know from where tears gushed forth from my eyes and his. Now my father in my imagination got a face. My father was very happy to see all of us very happy in Girls Home. I heard him telling each child is happier than the other. This is what he went and told in the jail and at home.

I was not an artist but being in MPGH, I recognized my talents in drawing and painting as well as in Dancing. Sr Jini always commends that my Hindi is very good and I am happy to hear those appreciative words. What I feared the most at home has become my strength. I was always scared of

being silent and being with myself. Now I enjoy spending time alone with Jesus who has become intimate to me. I have sisters who love me more than my parents could do This is what God gifted me with and I am grateful to God.

I am Anjana Kujur, may be that is how you can call me for now. I have my parents and five elder sisters and one elder brother. My father was in jail and he was out. It was great joy to have my father around me at home. I was his pet as I was the youngest. I was sure that now that my father is out, he will be there for me all through my life. But what I, being a small child, did not know was that he was out on a bail and he was back to jail. I remember it was during night, I had already slept, but I heard the commotion and the police sound. I was scared to open my eyes. When the commotion was over, I saw my mother and others crying and came to know that the police had taken my father to jail again. His going back to jail shattered my small world I had dreamt of. He was convicted in a murder case. It was a big shock for me. I was just starting my academic life as I was in LKG.

My father being in the jail caused a lot of social stigma for me resulting in a lot of verbal abuse and mental harassment. My neighbors, relatives and friends made fun of me. I was a victim of social ostracization. It led to depression and anxiety within me. My going to school was only an excuse. Because I missed my father at home, I ran to school to run away from the reality that my father is not at home. Lo and behold, the Dominican

sisters came to my home and one day my mother asked me if I would like to go to Marie Poussepin's Girls Home, Ranchi to study. I was more than willing.

I landed up at MPGH in April 2017. I was the eldest and that gave me many advantages. The fact that I was eldest gave me a lot of attention. I used to help sister a lot. I found a place where I was treated with no prejudice or prior condition. I was called by my name and not by any label. Sister used to meet us personally and this meeting helped me as I was able to share all my untold pains and worries and at times I cried uncontrollably. At last, I found a place where I could be myself. Being there at MPGH helped me to overcome my unfound fears of the night, strangers etc. Allowing me to cry waned away my pain.

When I came, though I was studying in 7th standard, I didn't know alphabets were there in Hindi and in English. Sisters had a lot of patience to teach me both English and Hindi. I found myself flourishing in extracurricular activities such as dancing, singing, drawing and sports. When given an opportunity my potential found no limits. Now I strive hard to excel in my studies also. Being in MPGH helped me to dream again. I have started to re member the shattered pieces of my dream world. I dream myself delivering speeches in English. I am at home with myself and others. The atmosphere of trust, love and prayer is impacting the life of all of us for good. The opportunities given to me are far more than what anyone could imagine. I wonder if it were not for these sisters what could have become of me.




From Vulnerability to Victory

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

From Incarceration to Incubation

Pawar (Name Changed) was 6 years old when he got shifted to Kolbe Home at Carmelaram, Bengaluru run by Prison Ministry India. His parents were in Parappana Agrahara Central Prison, Bangalore for a crime of murder. Together with his mother he grew in prison and adapted all unwanted habits being with other inmates of his mother. Pawar took few weeks to get adjusted into the new environment with other children at Kolbe Home. If any child scolds or corrects Pawar he would beat them and even spit on their faces as he had adapted it from prison cells.

One day Pawar had an argument with another child at Kolbe which led into a fight in which both were beating each other. Jeevan seeing their fight told them, that there is a CCTV which records everything. Pawar gave a smile to Jeevan and said, "I've already disconnected CCTV and nothing will be recorded. Yes, this is some of the realities of children growing in prison cells. Children do not know to distinguish between good and bad unless they are guided. This Pawar has now adapted good morals, values and guides his junior ones to lead a good life. He explored his hidden talents and develops with ample of opportunities provided to the children of Kolbe Home. These children are taken to prison every month to visit the parents. In one of the visits,



mother cried by seeing the development in her child, the character that is built in him gave her a great joy. What more a mother need? She said in her words, 'my son turned naughty and uncontrollable in the prison as he was honeypot in prison cell. Now he is completely changed and thank you for the new being that you made him'

"History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children", said Nelson Mandela. Every child is born to make history; they need to be guided, led to achieve their dreams, need to be given ample opportunities for growth and development.

From Street to Class Leader

Years back, I worked in Childline, in which we used to rescue the children who are in need of care and protection from the streets, bus stands, railway stations and calls from 1098. One day, I was in Shivaji Nagar, Bangalore where I saw a child sleeping with bandaged legs. I went close to the child and woke him; after my initial conversation I asked about his parents. He said he has a mother and he would take me to her. He took me to the Church gate and showed his mother, who was a leprosy patient sitting and begging. She saw me with her son, got up from her place and greeted me. As I spend some time with her, I came to know that her husband had abandoned her due to her sickness; she has no one and she was pushed to the streets to beg with her son. I explained on the need of placing her son to the school and I found her very receptive. She came along with me to BOSCO Mane, Bangalore, placed the child in the centre. Appu the name which I call very lovingly



Vulnerability to Victory

even to this day, was crying as his mother said bye and mother came back told him which echoes in my ears, “I’m pushed to the street for survival, I want you to have a bright future. You should become a doctor and treat patients like your mother”. After uttering those words she left the place. Appu got admission in English Medium School and he is topper in his class, also a class leader today.

From Slum to CBSE

Few years back, in a scorching sun, as I was walking through the slums I saw an aged woman with two children to her both hands holding and walking. Angel aged 5 and Stephen aged 7 were going with their grandmother to a marriage halls she was going for work. I gave all three of them broad smile and went close to the children and held them closely knowing completely that are in desperate moment. I asked grandmother about children and for my surprise I came to know that their mother committed suicide and father who went in rescue got partially burned and under treatment. These two tiny ones are cared by grandmother who goes to clean the marriage halls and earns something as their livelihood. As I had explained the need of education of these two little ones and their future, grandmother was receptive and she agreed to place the children in a school. Today, Angel and Stephen are studying in CBSE syllabus (supported by priests and sisters), doing excellent in their academic and co-curricular activities.




THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

Fr Allam Sagar Manoj

At the end of each year, the newspapers make their list of the top news stories of the past twelve months. This leads us to wonder what the biggest story of the past decade may be? What was the most important story of the century? Finally, we end up asking, what was the most important event of all time? For some this could be an endless debate. But for Christians it is a no big deal. The Resurrection of Our Lord is the most important event of all time! It is the fulfillment of all prophecies; it is the confirmation of Jesus’ life and teachings. It is the greatest story ever told. It is not merely a past event, but an unfolding mystery that touches all of us. The real proclamation of the gospel is not “Look what happened to Jesus!” It is our own joyful experience of the power of the resurrection transforming every dimension of the life we are living now. “Look what is happening to us!” Easter Sunday is the high point of the Church year. It is also the only time of the year that is decided by the phases of the moon. Easter always falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the spring equinox. It sounds complicated, but there is a reason behind planning the date this way. It connects Easter with the Passover, the time that the gospel tells us when Jesus died.

For those of us in the Northern hemisphere, this also means that Easter coincides with Spring. Christ is truly Risen and the whole world springs to life. An ancient hymn of



St. John Damascene describes Easter as the “Spring of seasons bright” after a long winter of our sins. New green shoots break the surface of the earth, finches put on their Easter gold, and the smell of lilies fills the air. The connection is a helpful one. It reminds us of the creative power of God. But the connection between springtime and Easter can be misleading because spring is natural. Resurrection breaks into our world in ways no one expects. The first Easter with Mary Magdalene at the tomb is not the kind of Easter Sunday we are used to celebrating. There are no hymns proclaiming ‘Christ is Risen!’ There are no sung Alleluias. There are no lilies. There are no congregations in the Easter event. There is only Mary standing alone next to the tomb.

The Sacred Scripture tells us that Mary stands by the tomb in the dark. Her mood seems to reflect the same darkness “They have taken the Lord from the tomb...” Her hope is dead. Her future is gone. Mary stands in the dark at the tomb of her friend. The natural thing to do when someone we love dies is to grieve first and then try to go on with life the best way one can. But Easter tells us a different story. We gather on Easter trusting that something unnatural has happened. We gather on Easter trusting that God shines a light into our darkness. We gather trusting that God brings life from death.

The world seems unusually dark these days. All these dark tragedies harbor the possibility of lightsome resolutions; all of these deadly experiences are means for resurrection. But not necessarily very soon, and relief may never come. Resurrection is not automatic; it demands a rejection of the

dark past and accepting a hope for a brighter tomorrow. In the light of the Resurrection, Jesus gives Mary a message. He tells her an Easter message for all of us. He says, “Go to my brothers and tell them, I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’.”

The resurrection not only changes Jesus but also changes all of us. As St. Paul says in his letter to the Colossians, the handwritten script against us has been nailed to the cross. We do not need to go out and tell others how bad they are. We need not leave here and live as judges or rulers or persecutors of others. Instead, Jesus makes us children of God through his grace. That is the life we are to live. Together with Mary Magdalene and the disciples, we are called to bear the good news.

The friends of Jesus were devastated when he died. They called him Master, Lord, Teacher. He had called them friends. They had given up everything to be with him. Now he was gone forever. Darkness covered their whole lives. Suddenly they saw him, he was alive! We cannot replicate that original experience. But we can, through meditating on it, place Jesus in the center. Once we rejoice in his happiness, his joy will spread over our whole lives. In other words, Resurrection means that our relationships survive death and those relationships remain totally human, not merely spiritual. To be human is to live in relationship with others. It is the other who tells us who we are. Therefore, those relationships become a real part of our self. We would be incomplete, unfulfilled, and unhappy without them even in God’s glorious presence.

PMI Volunteers Training Program 2021

Reform to Reintegrate - Program

12 April 2021

1000AM

Inaugural Session & Ice Break

1100AM

Introduction to Prison Ministry - Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

13 April 2021

1000AM

Biblical Foundations of Prison Ministry – Most Rev Dr Allwin D’Silva

1100AM

Historical Foundations of PMI – Fr Varghese Karipperiy

14 April 2021

1000AM

Spirituality of Prison Ministry – Dr John Ponnore

1100AM

PMI Lifestyle and Major Guiding Principles – Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

15 April 2021

1000AM

Prison Ministry in Sri Lanka – Fr Anton Sriyan, Colombo

1045AM

PMI Central Region and Pune Unit – Fr Wilfred Fernandes

1115AM

PMI South Region and Kerala State - Fr Shaji Stephen O de M

1145AM

PMI North East Region - Sr Jobina UFS

16 April 2021

1000AM

Ministry Inside the Prison – Sr Adele SCCG

1100AM

Ministry Outside the Prison – Fr Benny Pachanal CRSP

1130AM

PMI Bangalore – Sr Clara HCM

17 April 2021

1000AM

Counselling Skills for PMI Volunteers – Fr Subash CRSP

1100AM

PMI Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated – Mrs Rowena Luis

1130AM

PMI Ruby Jubilee Projects – Sr Amala DC

19 April 2021

1000AM

Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet – Goretti Martins

1030AM

State Level Ministries – Dion Isaac

1100AM

Unit Level Ministries and Seminary Units – Mrs Veera

1130AM

Tihar Prison Ministries – Sr Inigo

20 April 2021

1000AM

PMI Rehabilitation Centers for Men – Fr Binoy

1030AM

PMI Rehabilitation Centre for Women – Sr Beena

1100AM

Homes for Prisoners’ Children, Girls – Sr Jerlyn

1130AM

Homes for Prisoners’ Children, Boys - Sr Basil

21 April 2021

1000AM

Types of Prisons and Prisoners – Jesu Raja

1030AM

PMI Special Task Forces and TSS – Fr Michael

1100AM

Death Row Commandos - Lt Col Jennifer James

1130AM

National Office & RRDC – Fr Rajendran

22 April 2021

1000AM

Prisoners’ Reformation Trajectory – Fr Francis Kodiyan

1100AM

Reformed Prisoners – Sr Fidelis HCM

1130AM

PMI Fund Raising – BDP – Sr Rosily SCC

23 April 2021

1000AM

Alex - Reformed Prisoner Witnessing

1100AM

Noy Joseph - Innocent Prisoner Witnessing

1130AM

Concluding Remarks – Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

24 April 2021

10AM

Exam

11AM

Valedictory



RESURRECTION – LEARN DIGNITY FROM WOMEN

Sr Jerline Joyce

Resurrection as Empowerment

People are empowered if they have access to opportunities without any limitations or restrictions. Feeling entitled to make one's own decisions creates a sense of empowerment. The power to make a decision without compulsion or inducement makes a person realize he or she is empowered. Empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives and over society. Empowering women and girls gives them an opportunity to redefine gender roles, which in turn ensures more freedom to pursue desired goals. The restraints imposed on them in the name of religion over their gender, sex and femininity are largely challenged by the role played by Jesus in his Resurrection vis-à-vis women.

The Resurrection of Jesus immediately has an impact on the lives of women as he revealed his life in the risen state firstly to a woman named Mary Magdalene. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus gets proper dignified evidence and impact as he rightly revealed his true self to a woman. The power of love, patience and holding on to fire by a woman made Jesus to sincerely acknowledge the empowered presence of a woman in the culmination of his life. He promptly recognized the same and revealed his true divinity to her. The much-tutored disciples, the beloved family members and spiritual admirers stood shattered by the brutal murder of Jesus and thereafter literally hid themselves behind doors. Whereas, this single woman, the most admirable disciple of Jesus, is strong and bold to face the impact-less emptiness over mount Calvary after the death of Jesus. Her boldness enables the woman to realize her power that is original and untainted. When a woman

chooses to realize her power independently, she rises above and resurrects to being fully human and divine. Jesus truly recognizes and concedes himself in manifesting his glorified presence before a woman. Both God and the Woman recognize their unique power in each other and stand powerfully united.

Redefining Resurrection

Christianity might solely take pride in the resurrection of Jesus, its proclaimed redeemer and be fully satisfied with it. However, the true spirit of the resurrection in its entirety is devoted to the rising of humanity from imposing and experiencing discrimination, as well as disparity and inequality. Such imposition of discrimination on the major portion of humanity by an elite creamy layer of society is historically a planned one. The discrimination meted out to women in the name of religion, caste, gender and sex are institutionalized which immobilizes them in the socio-politico-cultural and economic spheres. They are constantly harassed, abused, cheated and side-lined in the arena created by men and a male chauvinist world. It is in this context that resurrection has to be re-read and redefined from the wisdom of women.

We just can't accept any theological and pious interpretation to the apparition of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, other than that of its importance in recognizing the power of women. Jesus at the outset, after his resurrection, is moved to admit the emanating and liberating power of women which ought to have been the foundation of the true spirit of the church. The Resurrection doesn't reach its fullness with Jesus himself, but with the consolidation of the wisdom and leadership shared by women to build up this universe and the Church that stand torn apart. Hence, it is time that Christianity redefines resurrection from a woman's aspiration to the universal, which consists in unity and integrity.



LEARN DIGNITY

Every woman dearly desires to use her words, expressions and actions to build up rather than tear down, to encourage rather than to discourage, to cheer rather than jeer. A woman strongly believes in infusing courage and confidence in lives where lack of confidence leads to disheartening decisions. She believes in construction and consolidation of the diffused powers of humanity and all other beings to lead them towards positive power generation in achieving holistic development for all.

Learn From Her

The eyes of women are normally full of kindness and compassion and filled with happiness in what they see and excited with what they are yet to see. Women do not propose enmity and negativity but instead spread positivity in a world where negative thoughts are affecting our minds. A woman constantly rises from a confounded situation to constructive elevation and uplifts the family, neighbourhood and society.

As part of Prison Ministry, it has been observed that most of the women either imprisoned or left behind by husbands due to incarceration have had tremendous courage instilled in their girl children. These children are bold, decisive and forthright in responding to emerging situations. In fact, Azia, a nine-year-old girl child from Bangladesh reaching Premodaya was an illiterate child. She picked up languages, both Kannada and English, in no time and rose up to study in Class IV in three months' time with the supplementary education provided at Premodaya. Like her, these little ones pick up leadership qualities and team building skills that enhance their personality. These children with balanced maturity handle the Home situation and manage their daily routine to perfection. These qualities are signs and indications of the presence of the Resurrection considering

the odd and difficult life background they have emerged from. They don't easily succumb to the pressures around them but instead rise up and are ready to put up a fight to stand upright. We need to truly learn from them the true spirit of the resurrection.

Allow them to Bloom

Deprived women and girls in most of the situations do not decline saying, they do not know or they can't do. Instead, they are prepared to learn and contribute innovatively with immediate response. What they need is inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities in order to contribute to sustaining the world. They need assurance to end all forms violence and discrimination against women to promote their rights and demand them as well as opportunities to go forward. They need their space to bloom and by blooming they cover the world with their unique fragrance of equity and integrity to assist sustainable models. Girl children just need a safe place to learn and develop, wherein they are respected and given their dignity. True education revolves around ensuring dignity to all and resurrection in fact upholds the dignity of God and the human being in every person. Resurrection is an educative process to redeem the world from discrimination to equality and dignity.

Hence, resurrection for women and girls implies that they are ensured dignity in what they are and what they dream to be. Biblically Jesus confirmed dignity to women by revealing his glorified presence to Mary Magdalene, thereby calling on humanity to dignified womanhood with its powers. Redefining education in the light of the resurrection is to cultivate the quality in each one to share dignity in one and all. The world stands still in need of liberation and resurrection in learning to share dignity which is to be learned from womanhood.

PMI Pune Keeps Marching on

Amira Peter



The Pandemic has not been able to stifle the burning hearts of the PMI Pune team. We have been marching on, reaching out to prisoners and volunteers alike. The month of March began with an uplifting spiritual enrichment for the volunteers through a three-day Lenten Retreat titled “Lenten Journey as a Passover”. Each day the Lenten Retreat comprised three elements – Preaching, Holy Mass and Holy Hour. With the help of Zoom technology, Fr Naveen Rebello’s preaching was zoomed from Rome while the Holy Mass with Fr. Wilfred Fernandes as the Main Celebrant and the Adoration led by different animators, were zoomed from the Nav Sadhana Chapel in Pune. Each day, Fr. Naveen guided us on an inspirational lenten journey. On Day One, volunteers learned about enduring suffering as we travelled with our Lord from Cross to Glory. Next, we reflected on restoring our identity from being a slave of sin to

becoming a child of God. And, finally, we celebrated our Communion with the Lord as we learned about the transition from meal to sacrifice. “This Retreat has helped me draw a connection between the suffering of prisoners to the sufferings of our Lord” commented Elizabeth D’souza a volunteer and participant from PMI Pune.

Enlightened and strengthened by the Holy Spirit the PMI Pune team was ready for action. On the 11th of March a Workshop on “Prevention of Drug Abuse” was arranged at the Girl’s Juvenile Home in collaboration with Kripa Foundation. Through powerful testimonies, Kripa volunteers shared the



PMI Pune Keeps Marching on

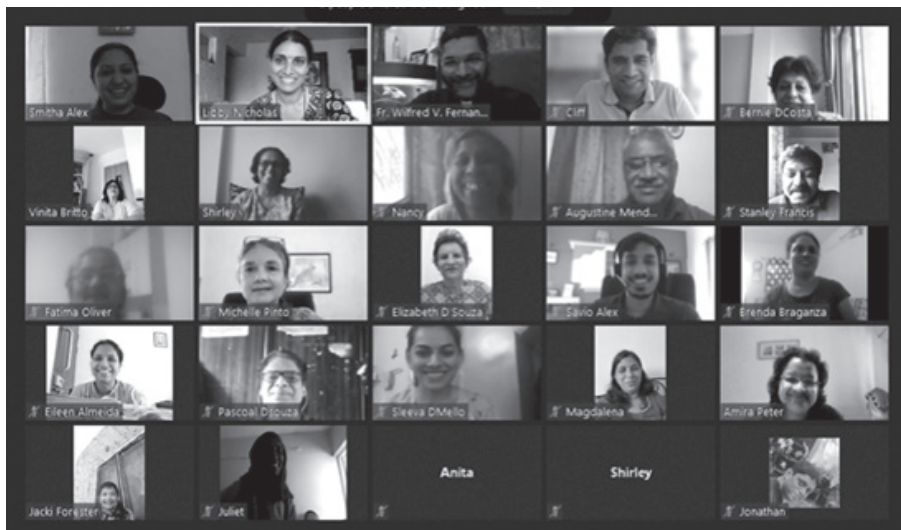


negative impact of drug addiction in their lives and their journey of de-addiction. After an inspiring and helpful interaction, Pad Squad, another NGO distributed sanitary napkins to all the inmates. “We were very happy to be visited and would like to have more sessions like this” remarked Usha

(name changed) an inmate from the Under 18 wing of the Juvenile Home.

With the temperature in Pune rising, PMI Pune received an urgent request for ten ceiling fans for the residential barracks and visiting room of the Men’s Open Jail. Our appeal received a swift and generous response. Within 24 hours, the fans were sponsored and promptly delivered to the much relieved jail authorities.

And finally towards the month’s end, PMI Pune turned its attention towards its volunteers with a “Listen to Heal” Counselling Course for them. A Zoom Session was conducted by Ms. Smita from Zera Training and Development to introduce our volunteers to the importance of listening. More sessions are planned in the future to equip our volunteers with necessary skills for interacting with prisoners, victims and their families.





Easter Celebration at Vaithiri Special Jail



Visit of the Superior General of Missionary Sisters of St Peter Claver Congregation



Fr Daniel Poovannathil Celebrated Easter at Attakulangara Women Prison



Mar Jose Pulickal Celebrated Maundy Thursday and Handed over a new projector to Kottayam District Prison



Mar Joseph Kallarangat and Team Visit Idukki District Jail



Mar Joseph Perumthottam Celebrates Easter at Alappuzha Prison



Mar Tony Neelankavil Celebrated Easter Holy Mass at Viyoor Central Jail



Maundy Thursday Celebration at Aluva Subjail



Maundy Thursday Celebration at Ernakulam District Prison



Most Rev Theodore Mascheranas Celebrates Easter at Ranji Prison



Women's Day Celebration at Bengaluru



Most Rev Paul Antony Mullassery Celebrated Easter at Quilon Prison



Easter Celebration at Chavakad Subjail



Easter Celebration at Attingal Prison