



PRISON VOICE

June 2020

Vol. XVII

Issue 10

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹20/-



PMI
Servant
Warriors



**Distribution of Sanitizers and Toiletries
Central Prison, Belgaum**



**Distribution of Masks and
Sanitizers
Yerwada Central Prison, Pune**



**Distribution of 200Ltrs
Sanitizers
Central Prison, Nagpur**



**Distribution of Groceries to Kolbe Home Children
Bengaluru**



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PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY

God Our Commander-in-Chief Fights for Us in Forefront



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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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WE BEG TO MAKE THEM KINGS



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
Chief Editor

The stigma of being a prisoner is the greatest struggle one can go through. When a woman conceives, the prayer of the entire family would be to get a healthy baby. No one wants a sick baby. No mother or father wants their son/daughter to be behind the bars as an incarcerated person. Michael Tshabalala from South Africa, who spend 35 years of his life in Groenpunt prison said to the fellow prisoners, “Your life has not come to an end with this, it’s only the beginning for greater things. Wrap yourselves with hope and go forward in life”. He was thrown out of the community; he was deprived of freedom and life’s comforts as he spent long years in prison.

Some commit mistakes as they lack guidance in life and some innocents are placed behind the bars through no fault of theirs. People lose hope when they enter prison. The dark prison cells tend to make their lives even darker. It is at this juncture that our PMI warriors come in who reach out to them as Jesus our Good Shepherd went in search of the lost. We have different types of warriors: The warriors who reach out to the brethren behind the bars and who are called ‘Amma’ by the prisoners. The warriors who offer all their sufferings and do acts of mortification for the well-being of prisoners and who are called their spiritual parents. We, the PMI family, have opened new banks such as the Bank of Holy Mass, Bank of Rosary, Suffering Bank, Bank of Mortification, the Bank of Stations of the Cross and our volunteers take part in it in large numbers.

Many of our volunteers work on restorative justice as part of the ministry

of rehabilitation between victims and offenders and they become warriors. Those who are unjustly imprisoned need to be freed from bitterness and frustration and our volunteers provide courage by giving constant accompaniment. As a consequence of imprisonment, the families of prisoners suffer loneliness, financial hardships and our volunteers become warriors by reaching out to these families. These ideas drive some of the dedicated warriors of Prison Ministry India who spend their lives for the reformation and redemption of the souls of the lost ones.

Prison Ministry is a struggle with joy for the brethren behind the bars. This joyful struggle is expressed in full by our begging lifestyle. We, the prison ministry volunteers, beg to turn them into kings and queens. We beg to provide them with a better future. There is joy on the face of our volunteers as they stand with a bucket at Church doors for a cause. All our PMI volunteers become warriors as they beg for the brethren behind the bars, for the children in our rehabilitation centres, for the released men and women. We gaze at the Crucified Master, partake in the sufferings of our brethren as we beg for them. PMI does not have any foreign projects. Hats off to every volunteer who allow themselves to be humiliated and become down-to-earth persons. We surrender all PMI warriors to our Heavenly Father and pray for his protection and abundant blessings.

Charles de Foucauld Archetype for PMI Warriors

In 1998, I defended my doctoral thesis on prisoners' reformation trajectory at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. The second part of the thesis was the application of my renovation theory to the reformation of Charles de Foucauld, a great prophet of the 20th century. Viscount Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916), born and brought up in an aristocratic Catholic family in Strasbourg, France was a soldier who lost his faith but regained it, became an explorer, contemplative person, priest, missionary, desert hermit, and martyr, and is going to be canonized on November 13, 2020 by Pope Francis. I am personally deeply influenced by his spirituality and lifestyle. As the PMI spirituality is closely associated with the Foucauldian spirituality, I thought of shedding some light on how Charles de Foucauld becomes the archetype for PMI warriors.

Nazareth Spirituality

Knowing the exploring mind of Foucauld, Abbe Huvelin, his spiritual Father asked him to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This visit to the actual towns and countryside where Jesus had walked, made a profound impact on Foucauld. Taken up by the hidden life of Jesus the carpenter, Charles wanted to imitate the simple, humble, and hardworking life and virtues of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth. For three years, he worked as a servant at a convent of Poor Clares in Nazareth itself, living in the same place where Jesus had spent 30 years of his life. But eventually he realized that Nazareth could be any place.

From National Coordinator's Desk



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

Spirituality of Presence

To be present, to be with the people, to be with slum dwellers, gypsies, prisoners, aborigines, street children is one of the basic characteristics of Foucauldian spirituality. In the constitutions he devised, Foucauld wrote, "The whole of our existence, the whole of our lives, should cry the Gospel from the rooftops not by our words but by our lives." In contrast to the triumphalistic models of his day, Foucauld exemplified what has come to be known as an evangelism of presence, a willingness to encounter people of other faiths on a basis of equality and mutual respect. He wanted to bear witness to the Gospel by living it, by being a friend and brother to all. In 1994, when I visited Hindelbank Prison in Switzerland I was surprised as well as encouraged on meeting with the Little Sisters of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld living inside the prison cell and serving prisoners. Imbibing insights from this, PMI commenced the challenging and fruitful prison quarters ministry in Bangalore central prison.

Eucharistic Spirituality

Charles de Foucauld practised the Eucharistic spirituality proclaimed by Pope John Paul II in his document *Mane Nobiscum Domine* and *Ecclesiae de Eucharistia* where he

From National Coordinator's Desk

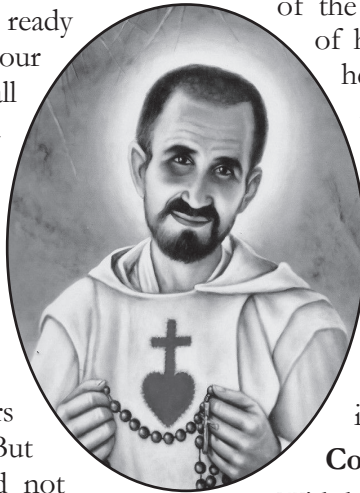
highlights the significance of Eucharistic celebration, Eucharistic contemplation and Eucharistic adoration. PMI shall follow the same spirituality because every renewal, repentance, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration sprouts from the authentic spiritual energy, that is, the body and blood of Jesus and the Word of God.

Spirituality of Abandonment

Foucauld had spent many years in conceiving and preparing the rules for his followers who never arrived. However, after his death, today there are more than 20 religious communities who follow the rules he prepared. In his famous Prayer of Abandonment, he wrote: "Father, I abandon myself in your hands, do with me what you will. For whatever you may do, I thank you. I am ready for all, I accept all, let only your will be done in me, as in all your creatures". PMI adopts a similar attitude, aptitude and characteristics for our results and fruits are not immediate but time-consuming.

Contemplative Spirituality

Foucauld entered the Trappists and spent a number of years in a monastery in Syria. But conventional monastic life did not satisfy him. Instead he reinterpreted contemplative and monastic life by launching a new model of contemplative life, not in a cloistered monastery, but in the midst of the world. His followers practice contemplative and monastic spirituality by serving gypsies, prisoners, slum dwellers and the like. Prior to the launching of prison ministry, PMI volunteers shall be contemplatives and mystics.



Desert Spirituality

Foucauld spent 15 years as a missionary in the Saharan desert. Anchoring on his desert spirituality, I was in the Thar desert of Rajasthan before coming to the national office. Immediately after his ordination, he went to the oasis of Béni-Abbès on the border of Morocco and when it started becoming too congested, he sought greater solitude in Tamanrasset, a small outpost in the rugged Hoggar. As Charles de Foucauld always preferred the most difficult, the farthest, the most challenging missions and tasks, PMI volunteers have the most difficult and challenging task and mission of reforming hardcore criminals.

Kenotic Spirituality

On 1 December 1916, when Foucauld underwent violent death in a remote corner of the Sahara, he had published none of his spiritual writings; neither had he founded any congregation nor attracted any followers. He could not claim responsibility for a single conversion. And yet, his witness endured. Many today regard him as one of the great spiritual figures of the 20th century, a prophet whose message speaks more clearly to the challenges of our time than it did in his own.

Conclusion

With his beatification on 13 November 2020, the church will have given official recognition to his significance as one of those seekers who periodically manage to reinvent the imitation of Christ in a manner suited to the needs of our age, and thus invite others to read the Gospel in a new way. The reverberations from Foucauld's solitary witness bear fruit after a century. I invite PMI volunteers to study in depth the salient features of the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld, the archetype of PMI warriors.

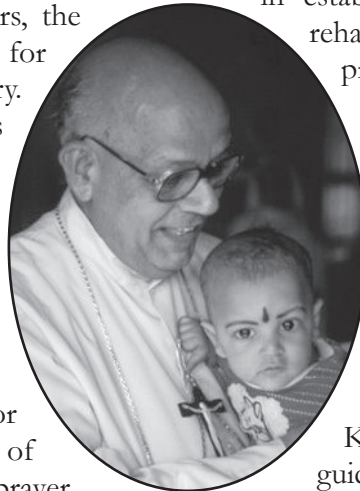
Mar Joseph Kundukulam
The Father of Prisoners

Fr Varghese Karipperry
 Cofounder, PMI

Archbishop Joseph Kundukulam, popularly known as the Father of the Poor, can also be called as the Father of Prisoners and Jesus Fraternity (known today as Prison Ministry India). Born on 26 September 1917 at Parappur, Kerala, Mar Kundukulam became the Bishop of Thrissur on 16 August 1970 and embraced eternal bliss on 26 April 1998. Bishop Joseph had a burning heart beating for the poor, prisoners, the marginalized, the outcast and for those who lived in the periphery. This article briefly sketches his valuable contributions to prison ministry.

Father of the Poor

Mar Joseph Kundukulam was well-known in Kerala as the Father of the Poor due to his extraordinary care for the poor and suffering. He was a man of deep conviction, faith, and prayer who always relied on the providence of God. He was certain that serving the poor was serving the Lord and believed that they were the visible sign of Jesus. He truly lived the words of Jesus, “Truly I say to you, as you did to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25: 40). Archdiocese of Thrissur was really an abode of the last, least and the lost. He launched various homes for the homeless, differently-abled people, sick and dying,



leprosy patients, HIV patients, unmarried mothers, mentally challenged and many more such categories of people.

Father of Prisoners

Archbishop Kundukulam can also be called as the Father of Prisoners as he loved and cared for them in a special way. For this great soul there were only two types of people in the world – sinners who were caught and sinners who were not caught. Prisoners were always happy to see him and hear from him. He was very particular about visiting the central prison in Thrissur during every feast such as Christmas, Maundy Thursday, Easter, etc. He took a special interest

in establishing the first renewal and rehabilitation centre for released prisoners in his archdiocese. In March 1991 when PMI volunteers informed him regarding their plan to open a centre for released prisoners, he immediately referred to a plot of land at Vettukad. Prior to the fund raising for this project, Fathers Varghese and Francis visited Bishop Kundukulam to obtain his guidance. He encouraged them by sharing his own experience of pastoral ministry for unwed mothers in the city of Thrissur. Before concluding the discussion, he gave his signed and sealed letterheads to Francis saying, “Write whatever you want and give these to whomever you think helpful”. After the meeting, the bishop had to go for a blessing. He asked Francis to accompany him in his car. On the way, as he was pointing out different charitable institutes run by religious congregations,

he told Francis that these institutes had been donated not by many but by single individuals and counselled him to approach the rich to channel money for the released prisoners' renewal centre.

First Rehabilitation Centre for Released Prisoners

On 1 October 1991, the first PMI renewal and rehabilitation centre was blessed by Mar Joseph Kundukulam where released prisoners, who had been rejected by society and family, were invited to undergo a six months' training program. This was a reintegration process that led one towards living a normal life which proved the fact that everything was possible for God. The precious blood of Jesus is so powerful that it could save even hardened criminals.

Chapel-Temple-Mosque

God is everywhere. God is very present in prison too. With this conviction, in 1992, Archbishop Kundukulam planned a project in which people belonging to different religions could have a place to experience God in their own faith. He approached the authorities and got permission to build a small church, temple and mosque in the central prison of Thrissur. He entrusted this task to Fr Baby Shepherd CMI and asked the faithful of Lourdes Cathedral to financially assist it. Today this church-temple-mosque has become a great sign and symbol of religious harmony.

Released Prisoners' Hope

Mar Kundukulam was the consolation and hope of released prisoners. On 16 February 1994, he blessed Ashadeepam, a home for the renewal and rehabilitation of released female prisoners run by the Sisters of John

the Baptist. On 20 December 1998, Nirmal Bhavan – a home-cum-vocational training centre for released juvenile delinquents under the initiative of Malabar Missionary Brothers was launched in Thrissur archdiocese. On 20 December 2003, the Reformatory, Research and Documentation centre (RRDC) of PMI was launched in a rented building at Anchery in Thrissur archdiocese.

Comrade of Saints

Thrissur archdiocese was blessed with the presence of many great saints during the reign of Mar Kundukulam. On 7 February 1986, Saint John Paul II inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the eparchy of Thrissur at Saint Theresa's Nagar (Sakthan Thamburan Nagar) in the presence of one million faithful. On 18 January 1994, Saint Mother Theresa of Kolkata visited this eparchy and inaugurated the Divya Hrudaya Ashram at Chennaippara, a home for the rehabilitation of wandering beggars under the care of the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS). Hence, Archbishop Kundukulam can be considered as a stalwart of charity like Saint Pope John II and Saint Mother Teresa of Kolkata.

PMI Warrior

Prison Ministry India owes much to Archbishop Kundukulam and the Archdiocese of Thrissur. Fr Varghese Karipperry, the cofounder of PMI hails from this archdiocese and the first rehabilitation centres for the released men and women prisoners as well as the PMI research centre were launched in this archdiocese. Archbishop Kundukulam, the Father of Prisoners and a great PMI warrior continues his mission in assisting prisoners from heaven.

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS
A SERVANT WARRIOR

- **Fr Benny Pachanal CRSP**
Assistant National Coordinator

Introduction

The call to become a love bomb for the reformation, rehabilitation and redemption of the lost was received by the PMI warrior Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS at St Elijah Ashram, Niravilpuzha, Kerala on 11 March 1983. This experience of God sparked in him the commitment to dedicate his entire life towards the cause of prisoners and prostitutes. His whole life can be summarised as an answer to the question, “Why can’t you dedicate your life for the conversion of sinners?” which the Eucharistic Jesus asked him at Elijah Ashram Chapel. Thanks to his response to this question, PMI has grown with 8000 dedicated volunteers for visiting the 1412 prisons in India and 20 rehabilitation centres for released prisoners and their children. This article highlights the trajectorial heights of a PMI warrior, Fr Francis Kodiyan, the current PMI national coordinator.



Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India

Born on 20 May 1961 at Chendamangalam in Ernakulam district of Kerala as the 9th son of Mr Kodiyan Vareed Itterah and Athanasia Payyappally Kovulan, Francis joined the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS). For his priestly studies, he was sent to St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor. On 8 December 1981, Br Varghese Karipperry and Br Francis Kodiyan shook hands and said, “Let us become love bombs to explode among the people, not to

kill but to heal bruised hearts”. To become love bombs they first decided to spend their daily siesta hour at the Malankara Chapel of St Thomas Apostolic Seminary adoring the Eucharistic Jesus, the sacrament of love. This fraternity and friendship between the Most Holy Eucharist and seminarians became the seedbed for the Jesus Fraternity prayer group, which later came to be known as the Prison Ministry India. The All Kerala Prison Pilgrimage in 1986 with the resultant divine providence experiences and encounter with prisoners all over Kerala strengthened them to develop the unique lifestyle of Jesus Fraternity which was recognised by the Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Conference in 1989.

PMI Rehabilitation Centres

In 1990, immediately after his priestly ordination, Fr Francis was invited by the Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Conference to become the assistant director of Jesus Fraternity at the Pastoral Orientation Centre, Palarivattom. While serving there, he masterminded the first rehabilitation centre for released male and female prisoners known as Snehashramam. The first one for men released prisoners was begun at Vettukad, Thrissur in 1991 and the second one for women at Monvila, Thiruvananthapuram in 1992.

Reformative Research and Documentation Centre

In 1993, Fr Francis was sent to Rome for higher studies by the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS). His life question was how to reform and rehabilitate a prisoner or a criminal? Finding answers to his life questions in 1998,

he defended his doctoral thesis on personal religious conversion trajectory at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. On his return from Europe in 2003, Fr Francis launched the PMI Reformatory Research and Documentation Centre (RRDC) in a rented building at Thrissur. On 20 November 2020, RRDC was shifted to the newly constructed PMI jubilee memorial building at Carmelaram, Bengaluru.

Eightfold Path for Prisoners' Reformation

Anchored on his doctoral thesis, Fr Francis formulated an eightfold path for prisoners' reformation and rehabilitation which he explains lucidly in his book, *The Lost: An Eightfold Path for Prisoners' Reformation*. This eightfold path consists of Reach-out, Release, Repentance, Reconciliation, Reformation, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, and Redemption.

Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

In 1996, Fr Francis Kodyan took the light of PMI to international horizons by participating in the ninth world congress of the International Catholic Commission for Prison Pastoral Care (ICPPC) held at the Metropolitan Seminary, Warsaw, Poland on 7-12 September. Recently, he was invited by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in the Vatican to present a paper on the "Initiatives and Contributions of Prison Ministry India" in an international meeting for prison pastoral care held on 6-7 November 2019.

Periodicals

Fr Francis commenced his literary career by publishing a magazine called *Pulari* (Dawn) in 1987 for prisoners. He also took the initiative of publishing a book called *Thadavarayile Sangbeetham* (Prison Melody), a compilation of prisoners' poems, short stories and pencil drawings collected through the All Kerala

Art and Literary Competition for prisoners held in 1987. When he became the assistant director of Jesus Fraternity, he launched a magazine known as *The Echo* to convey the news of prison ministry which later paved the way to *Prison Voice* and *Vimochanam*. In 2003, he launched the research magazine called *Reformatory Explorations: A Psycho-Spiritual and Crimino-Social Quarterly* on reformation and rehabilitation from RRDC, Thrissur which is now being published from RRDC, Bengaluru.

Books

Fr Francis has written the following books which are valued by PMI volunteers. 1) *Religious Conversion Trajectory* (1998), 2) *Conversion Trajectory of Charles de Foucauld* (1998), 3) *Saga of Divine Providence: The History of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India* (2000), 4) *My God and My Lord: The Ecclesial Identity of the Syro-Malabar Church* (2002), 5) *The Holy Eucharist: Theological and Missionary Perspectives – Malayalam edited* (2006), 6) *The Eucharist: An Antidote to Death Culture, edited* (2007), 7) *Rainbow: Theological Foundations of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India* (2007), 8) *Love Bomb: Prisoners' Reformation Trajectory* (2018), and 9) *The Lost: An Eightfold Path for Prisoners' Reformation* (2019).

Conclusion

Fr Francis Kodyan, a mighty PMI warrior who masterminded the Prison Ministry India, is a true love bomb who inspires people with his love for God and compassion for humanity. His simple lifestyle, friendly and pleasing manners, hard-working nature, and habit of doing everything for the greater glory of God certainly inspire many. Just as Jesus went in search of the lost sheep, his heart always goes towards the weaker ones in the community and society at large. He is a man of mission with a vision and a man with conviction, who always dares to reach out to the needy and the marginalised. Together with the PMI family, I salute this PMI warrior and wish that God may work many more wonders through this man of compassion.

Fr Paul Akkara CMI - A Fascinating Warrior

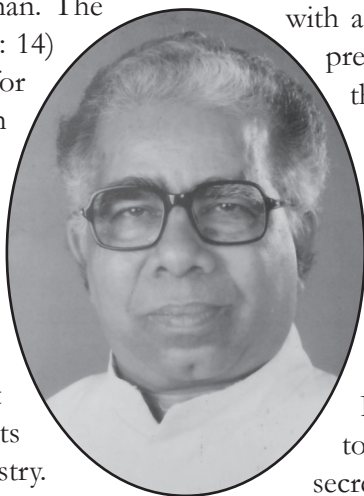
- Sr Alphonse Jaya FCC

Introduction

Fr Paul Akkara CMI, a multi-coloured personality born on 23 April 1943 used to disperse the multi-hued colours of the rainbow (Vibgyor) through the Jesus-prism, which was his constant model. V stands for Valiant, I for Impartial, B for Benevolence, G for God-centred, Y for vigour of Youth, O for Ordinary, but outstanding, and R for Responsible. During his life voyage of 63 years he experienced the amicable blending of the perfect divine and human. The love of Christ guided (2 Cor 5: 14) him to do selfless service for prisoners and mankind. For him service to God and mankind were two sides of a coin.

Strong Pillar of Jesus Fraternity

Without Fr Akkara, we cannot think of the Chavakkad unit of Jesus Fraternity. Prayer units are the nuclei of prison ministry. They play a vital role in enriching and motivating volunteers as well as prisoners. With a grateful heart, let me give a brief sketch of his unique personality, which manifested during his service as the president of the Chavakkad unit and as director of the Thrissur zone during 1989-1995. As he was the prior of Pavaraty Carmelite Monastery, by default he took charge as the spiritual director of 3 convents inside the Little Flower College, Guruvayoor campus. Every



Fascinating Warrior

second Saturday, when he came to hear confessions, he used to give effective and inspiring talks, quoting up-to-date events from day-to-day life, placing stress on the last judgement. Everyone was motivated to do service for the marginalised, especially for prisoners.

PMI Unit Gathering

Just as a family gathering, about 50 volunteers including businessmen, bank officers, and even retired staff would meet together in the classroom of St Joseph's School, Pavaraty, where Fr Paul Akkara was the sole authority, as manager and prior. After praying for 15 minutes for prisoners and volunteers, with a genuine laugh, Fr Akkara, the president would welcome all to the gathering. He would enquire about the whereabouts of the participants. If they had any news about the prisoners, victims or their own family, they used to share it then.

Zonal Level Director

By God's will, I had the chance to assist Fr Paul as the zonal secretary when he was the director of Jesus Fraternity of Thrissur Zone. Fr Paul's horizon of service widened further with the zonal gatherings and executive meetings conducted in Vettukad Sneathramam or Asadeepam. The representatives of Chavakkad, Thrissur and Irinjalakuda units used to be present. Thus, we could gain first-hand knowledge of the problems faced by the rehabilitation centres and could find solutions for the same.

Chavakkad Prison Visit

Every Saturday, PMI volunteers would reach the gate of the Chavakkad prison at 2 pm. Holding hands and forming a circle we would pray, after which the staff would open the gate, welcoming us into the prison. After the prayer song, Fr Akkara would explain the unconditional love of Jesus towards sinners. He had the talent to make them understand that Jesus was their intimate friend whom they could depend on. Joining Fr Akkara, all the volunteers and prisoners would sing songs about the love of Jesus. Thus, for a while everyone could forget their sorrows and hatred and with a refreshed mind, the prisoners would go to their own cells. Then we would go to individual cells to talk to them. They would be waiting for us to pour out their sorrows. Praying for a while and assuring our prayers thereafter, we would show willingness to visit their families. We would talk, especially about Snehashramam and guide them there after their imprisonment. Fr Akkara took the initiative to establish a new library in Chavakkad prison.

Christmas Celebration

Once for Christmas celebration, the whole program was arranged with the help of physically-challenged girls from Little Flower Convent. The skit performed by polio-affected girls, mime with deaf and dumb girls, mono act by girl without hands, and carol song by girls on wheelchairs moved the prisoners. Everyone had to control their tears. With encouragement from Fr Akkara, Baburaj, a prisoner, composed a song within minutes and sang it wonderfully. We

changed his name to Kaviraj! We distributed Christmas cards with stamps so that they could send them to their dear ones. The superintendent, our dear president, along with the eldest prisoner, cut the Christmas cake and shared it among us. To our surprise, one of the prisoners thanked us from the bottom of his heart saying, “It is the first time that we are seeing performances by physically-challenged people. You found time to make us happy, we who terrify society. We are healthy; these girls without proper legs or hands or hearing came here to remove our mental loneliness and distress. They moved us. We won’t go back to our sinful past.” Crying aloud, he stopped his words of gratitude. Everyone cried. We returned with satisfaction in our hearts. After a few days, one of the prisoners sent the Christmas card to me saying, “Sister, I have nobody dear to me. I feel you people are the only ones dear to me. So, I am sending it to you, with thanks. Please pray for me!”

Conclusion

The word “impossible” did not exist in the dictionary of Fr Paul Akkara and he firmly believed “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil 4: 13). His firm foundation was Jesus and he believed nothing on earth would separate him from Christ, who called him to this ministry for the lost, the last and the least. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (Rom 8: 35). Being aware of his weaknesses and failures as well as being aware of God’s grace in his life, he lived a life in Christ, with Christ, for Christ surrendering himself completely.

Fr Joseph Kavalakkat VC A Humble Warrior

Fr George Kalassery VC
RRDC Director

Introduction

Rev Dr Joseph Kavalakkat VC was a love bomb that exploded and healed the broken-hearted at the Tihar central prison. Rev Dr Antony Plakkal VC, the former Superior General of Vincentian Congregation, observed that Fr Joseph was a “cheerful donor, an open dictionary, a great missionary and a North region PMI visionary”. Rev Sr Archangel SABS, who served at the Tihar prisons for more than 25 years recalls gratefully of Fr Joseph as the Tihar prophet and a reformative psycho-spiritual revolutionary who established a civilization of love among his friends and colleagues. This article briefly analyses the contributions of Fr Joseph Kavalakkat VC, to prison ministry.

Family

Fr Joseph Kavalakkat, the vibrant PMI warrior of North India, was born at Kallur in Thrissur District of Kerala in 1944, as the 5th son of late Mr Kochuvarkey and Mrs Eliamma. Inspired by the Vincentian motto, “He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and to let the oppressed go free” (Lk 4: 18), after his high school studies, he joined the Vincentian Minor Seminary at Angamaly in 1962. He took his first religious profession in 1966 and was ordained by His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Parekkattil on 17 December 1970.



Academic Studies

Fr Joseph completed his pre-university course (PDC) from the University of Kerala in 1972 and obtained his degree from the Newman’s College, Thodupuzha in 1975. He completed journalism from Bharatia Vidyabhavan in 1977 and did B.Ed from Sardar Patel University, Gujarat in 1985. He did PG from CSRD College Ahmednagar, under Puna University in 1993, Diploma in Management Studies from Puna University in 1994, Diploma in Law and Labour Welfare from Puna University in 1995 and obtained doctorate (PhD) from Jamia Islamia University in Social Work.

Priestly Ministry

Fr Kavalakkat served as assistant parish priest at St Thomas Church, Malayattoor in 1971, assistant director at DePaul Orphanage, Thottakam, Vaikam in 1972, administrator at Christu Nivas Seminary, Thrikkakara in 1973, director at DePaul orphanage, Kuravilangad in 1974, director at DePaul orphanage Kalur, Thodupuzha and parish priest at Lourdu Matha Church, Palakkad diocese.

Contributions to Prison Ministry India

Besides the regular prison visits, Fr Joseph organized psycho-spiritual counselling for prisoners, awareness training programmes for Delhi school students, obtained prison permission for NGO’s, open university exam registration in IGNOU for prisoners, conducted media and computer training course for prisoners, established tailoring



Humble Warrior

centres and houses for released prisoners and found government aid for prisoners. The best contribution of Fr Joseph to PMI was his love for prisoners. He used to literally cry when he gave talks to various groups. He had affection for the prisoners, especially the Tihar prisoners. Besides visiting them regularly, he organized many programmes during various occasions such as Christmas, Easter and other national festivals. He was so moved with the spirit of prison ministry and started his own ministry for prisoners when he was working in Satna Diocese, Madhya Pradesh.

PMI North Regional Coordinator

When Fr Joseph was appointed as the regional coordinator, he was the parish priest of the Krishnapark Syromalabar Church. He used all his parish relationships for the development of prison ministry activities. The PMI begging style was practiced by Fr Joseph. He never asked for money for the running of the regional office from the national office. He had managed all the expenditure with help received from the people with whom he maintained a stellar relationship. Fr Joseph was the convener for the arrangement of the 8th PMI National Convention held at Bhopal in 2014. Fr Sebastian, the former PMI national coordinator, cherishes the many trips that they had taken to various states of north India in order to accelerate the work of prison ministry in the northern states.

A Pastoral Visionary

He was fond of orientation programmes held in parishes, formation houses, and diocesan and religious meetings. PMI cannot exist without providing proper orientation to the religious and diocesan priests. He was

so keen to arrange various classes for those groups as he travelled across north India. He had also addressed the regional bishops' conference. Fr Joseph supported the launch of the PMI national magazine, Prison Voice in 2004. He arranged many meetings with officials for the registration of our national magazine and was a supportive presence in the national executive meetings, national conventions and coordinators' meet.

Coordinators' Meet

Another contribution of Fr Joseph was his input for towards the coordinators' meet. To accelerate the work of prison ministry there was a major gathering of all the coordinators at the national level from 15 to 17 November 2011 at the Archbishop's house, Nagpur, Maharashtra. His able support in the coordination of this meeting was praiseworthy.

Hospitality & Benevolence

Fr Joseph Kavalakkat was an excellent host. He was ever ready to extend his hospitality to prison ministry coordinators and volunteers. He arranged regular meetings with friendliness, generosity and care.

Heavenly Warrior

After completing his long years of service in the prison ministry, as Jesus said on the cross, Fr Joseph commended his spirit to the Father God on 2 January 2016 and was buried at the Vincentian Asharam, Angamaly. The service rendered by Fr Joseph was written in golden letters not only in the annals of Prison Ministry India but also in the Book of Life. Certainly, he is our heavenly warrior as he intercedes for the fruitfulness of PMI mission for the lost, least and last.

Sr Jemma George DHM
A Suffering Warrior

In 1993, someone asked a French Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, to write an essay on the meaning of suffering. He wrote these astounding words: “Human suffering, the sum total of suffering poured out at each moment over the whole earth is like an immeasurable ocean. But what makes up this immensity? Is it blackness, emptiness, barren wastes? No, indeed:

it is potential energy. Suffering holds hidden within it, in extreme intensity, the ascensional force of the world. The whole point is to set this force free by making it conscious of what it signifies and of what it is capable. For all the sick people in the world were simultaneously to turn their sufferings into a single shared longing for the speedy completion of the kingdom of God through the organising of the earth, what a vast leap toward God the world would thereby make?”

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin speaks about seven stages of suffering in his book, *Stages of Suffering*. They are Rejection-inner, Rejection-outer, prayer, patience, choice, communion and fidelity. When I look at the

last few months of my nephew who suffered from cancer, there was a clear sign of some of these stages. His first reaction was denial or rejection that it was ok and he will be back to work soon, etc. But as the treatment was going on, he accepted the reality and in a special way turned to God for help. He went for a week’s prayer, returned more positive than before and began to settle things with his wife and children. He was able to make arrangements for his property and all other matters peacefully, including his funeral. Though he suffered much, he surrendered everything to his loving Father and to his son, Jesus.



He was able to encourage others to seek strength from Jesus who alone could be a constant companion. We know that nobody wants to be sick. Rather, all of us like to live a healthy life. But we see suffering everywhere. Today, with Covid-19, the whole of humanity is suffering. One cannot generalise the stages of suffering. There are so many different kinds of suffering and individuals react or respond accordingly. Take the case of the present Coronavirus. This virus has brought about suffering, loneliness, mental suffering, and spiritual suffering in the whole world.

People suffer due to the colour of their skin, from injustice, and because of the religion one belongs to. In the midst of all this, what

Suffering Warrior

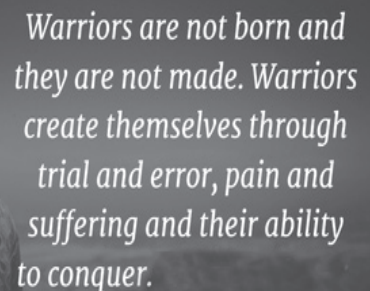
are we to do? How are we to respond? We need to think of our own spiritual growth as well as the spiritual growth of other people.

Let me share my own experience as a cancer patient. For the last 23 years, my illness has been coming and going. It has never left me completely. For me the first stage was one of shock. But in a day or two, I responded positively and was ready for treatment. Being from a religious order, I found it easy to call on God and ask for his mercy and love. This illness helped me to get closer to God each time I fell sick, and gave me the opportunity to pray for the good of other people in the world. I have experienced God's healing touch on me many times. God uses me to bring about positive initiatives and thus bring others to him. Today, though my medical report shows that the illness has spread, I get to spend a good amount of time with the Lord to intercede for humanity everywhere.


Every little pain and suffering can be used for the growth of our brothers and sisters in the world over. If we accept suffering joyfully, we learn good lessons like compassion, understanding and patient endurance. The only way to find peace, joy and strength in our suffering is to look to our Lord Jesus Christ. He suffered every kind of pain and injustice during his life on earth. He alone gives meaning to our life. Even in the midst of today's pandemic, persons who have turned to God have been healed and they are able to share their experience of God during the pain and suffering. Because in

this kind of illness, the most difficult thing is the inability to breath.

St Paul in his letter to the Romans says, "Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Will it be trials, or anguish, persecution, or hunger, lack of clothing, dangers or sword?" St Paul continues to say that the suffering of our present life cannot be compared with the glory that would be revealed and given to us. I would like to conclude with a quote from Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation – *Rejoice and be Glad*, "Whatever weariness and pain we may experience in living the commandment of love and following the way of justice, the Cross remains the source of our growth and sanctification."



Warriors are not born and they are not made. Warriors create themselves through trial and error, pain and suffering and their ability to conquer.



Courage,
above all things,
is the first quality
of a warrior.

-Carl von Clausewitz

A Silent Witness in Prison

Pritam Tamang from Darjeeling, West Bengal was 33-years-old when he winged his flight to heaven on 29 April 2020, after spending nearly 10 years in Central Prison, Bengaluru. He lived as a silent witness during his imprisonment. He was a convicted prisoner, always serene and prayerful. During the time he spent in prison, he underwent inner transformation and became a model to his companions in prison. I used to see him in the prison Church regularly on Sundays and Wednesdays. He was very devoted and keen in the study of the Holy Bible. He found peace in sitting quietly in the prison chapel spending a lot of time in personal and group prayer. He found his joy in sharing his faith in Christ with his companions in prison.

He met me personally for the first time while he was suffering from skin allergy. He bore the ailment silently and asked for help when the wounds started oozing and it became uncomfortable. Yet he bore everything patiently. Besides the medication provided by the prison hospital, I was supplying good ointments and medicines with the permission of the prison doctors. I provided him regularly with all the medication which he was in need of. Being a nurse by profession, I was able to foresee all the medical care he would need. Whenever I felt that Pritam was in need of greater care I used to meet the C.M.O. of the prison hospital and the Assistant Superintendent of the prison to ask them to send Pritam for better care in the out-hospital. Though there was some delay, he was sent for treatment outside along with prison escorts.



- Sr Rose Alexander
PMI Bengaluru Unit

He was diagnosed with cancer and was sent to Victoria hospital and later to Kidwai, Cancer hospital. I used to go with the other volunteers of our ministry and see that he was given food which he could eat, so that his condition would improve. We provided protein powder, fruit juice, dry fruits, etc. for boosting his physical condition with the permission of the concerned authorities. Pritam had to wait on several occasions in the police van or in the hospital wards to get the needed care because of the large number of patients awaiting care in the government hospitals. But he raised no complaint and bore all his pain patiently.

As a cancer patient he was advised surgery. Considering the seriousness of his condition, I was anxious as his relatives were far away and we, the volunteers of Prison ministry, considered him as our own brother and supported him in his sufferings. I have no regrets as I had worked to my maximum capacity for his healing and comfort. Sister volunteers of Prison Ministry volunteered to provide him supplementary food prepared in the convent whenever possible and gave this to him with the consent of the authorities. When his condition was

Voice of the Prisoner

worsening in the hospital, I kept informing his father about him. I personally saw to it that whenever I could comfort him by my presence and care, I reached out to him until the lockdown. We could not visit him as we were not allowed to go out in order to avoid the spread of Covid-19.

After the lockdown, with the permission of the prison authorities, Rev Fr Francis Kодиyan, the national coordinator of Prison Ministry India went to the Central Prison, Bengaluru and supplied a packet of fruits and all other articles needed for Pritam through the Superintendent of the prison. After that, the only avenue we had was to enquire with the constables and other prison authorities regarding his condition as we were not permitted to enter the prison. On 29 April 2020 at 06.30 we received the news of his demise from Smt R. Latha, the Superintendent of the prison, Bengaluru. We conveyed the news to his relatives and to Fr Francis Kодиyan. As Pritam's body was kept in the mortuary of Jayanagar hospital, Fr Francis, Sr Lini, Sr Gertrude and the regent brothers went from the national office and conducted a short prayer for the repose of his soul. We commend the soul of our dear brother Pritam to Almighty God his creator and Lord. May Christ, the true Shepherd receive Pritam in to his hands as one of his flock. Eternal light grant unto him O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul rest in peace. Amen.

I thank wholeheartedly everyone who stood by Pritam, who took care of him, because he went happily to his Heavenly Father after receiving the love and care of fathers, sisters and other volunteers. May the God of prisoners bless you and your families.

Life Outside with Family



My name is Victor Samuel (name changed), aged 29, born and brought up in Pune city. In 2009 at the age of 18, I got arrested in an unfortunate incident which arose after a quarrel with a neighbour. Initially, I spent 3 years as an undertrial prisoner as I could not manage to get bail. I had hopes of getting an acquittal; however, I was convicted in a false offence and sentenced to life imprisonment. My family left no stone unturned for my release but our hopes were shattered. Life in prison is far from easy. They say one day you become the same person you once hated to be. I saw this phrase coming true in front of my eyes. I was very depressed and heartbroken to live this life of failure and regret. I prayed and asked for the Lord's forgiveness for my sins and I wanted to walk free in the open world just for the sake of my family. When it did not happen, I felt hopeless. Another six months passed and on account of my good conduct I got the privilege of a month of release on Furlough; it was my birthday the same month and also the festival of Diwali.

The first time I stepped out of prison after 3½ years, it was like a dream come true. Later, after another six months I was again honoured with parole. During

this period, I decided to complete my education. So, I enrolled for my pending 12th standard exams. The dates of the exams were due after my leave period, so I applied in the High Court for permission to appear for exams. The Hon'ble Justices were quite impressed with my resolve to study and build a bright future. That year (2013) I cleared my HSC and the next year after being released on Furlough, I joined a regular college and started studying BA. Taking similar permission from the Hon'ble court for the examinations, till date, I have completed my graduation and I am on the brink of completing my PGDM in HRM and CRM from the Symbiosis Centre of Distance Learning. Also, I have applied for a regular law degree and by next month I will complete my first year in Law and within 2022, I will graduate as a successful advocate as I will get an acquittal very soon.

My appeal has been pending before the Hon'ble High Court of Mumbai for the last eight years. I have been granted Conditional Bail on 12 occasions, Furlough leave on six occasions and one parole. During this period spend in prison, by God's grace I have come across many Good Samaritans who helped me and supported my dreams. I thank the Almighty for sending them to aid me during times of crises. Also, I thank my family and my extended family and friends for their unflinching faith in me and for always encouraging me to do well. Even

my lawyers who have not yet been able to place my case before the Hon'ble Court, all that I remember them saying is, "Keep the good work going!"

Lastly, I would like to give a small message to all my fellow inmates, 'I know it is very difficult to persevere inside closed walls and keep your spirits up. But trust me, for life outside with family, everything is worth it. Never lose hope because in the end it will always make sense. As you can see from my life story, in the last eleven years in this pursuit of redemption, I have been defeated, mistreated, deceived, misled, failed and been disappointed. However, in all these years of exile there was one thing that kept me going - 'FAITH'. Faith in God and faith in oneself! So have faith because the devil may have a thousand days of his but there will come one day which will be yours, which will be our Lord's and of the victory of those who have entrusted their faith in him.

Last of all, I want to heartily thank the members of Prison Ministry India who tirelessly work for the welfare of the inmates and their families and provide them with various kinds of help and guidance. I thank Mr Anthony Jacob and the entire PMI Pune team for helping me for furlough and parole. They were a great support to me. A big thanks to all of you for your generosity and compassion in making this world a better place to live for everyone. God Bless You All.

IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19



- **Sr Laveena Grace**
Secretary, PMI Belgaum Unit

Prison Ministry is the ministry loved by the Lord and commissioned by Jesus himself in his manifesto. In his Gospel of Mathew, Chapter 25: 36 he states, “I was in the prison and you came to me”. It gives us the message that if we respond to the cry of these least of his brothers and sisters, we respond to the call of God himself.

Diocese of Belgaum is blessed with the Prison Ministry commission which actively responds to the call of God along with unit volunteers in different prisons. Prison inmates look forward to having the presence of volunteers on many occasions. Volunteers always respond positively in times of joys and difficulties, in times of celebrations and in moments of pains.

We are still in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis. Since Covid-19 emerged in India, there have been new terms/usages cropping up every day. From pandemic, social distancing to quarantine, there are many terms which were introduced to

us during this period. Amidst all these challenging moments we, the members of Prison Ministry, were inspired and boosted by our committed leader Rev Fr Francis Kodiyan, national coordinator of Prison Ministry of India who came forward to reach out to prison inmates in need. In keeping with all the civil laws and regulations, our volunteers could also reach out to the Central Prison Hindalaga at Belgaum and the Sub Jail at Hubli. With the help of the national office and the contribution of local unit members, we could provide soaps, hand sanitisers, toothpaste and brush, and detergents to 300 inmates. They were happy of our timely assistance.

With the grace of God, with the blessing of our dear bishop and chairman of Prison Ministry Commission, Rev. Dr Derek Fernandes, with the cooperation of the superintendents of the prison and sub jails and the willingness of our volunteers, we could hear the cry of the prison inmates and respond to the call of God during this Covid-19 emergency period.

**A CRY OF THE
INCARCERATED!**

Jane Vasanthi

A 25-year-old prisoner does not know when he will see his parents next, a 38-year-old cannot believe he cannot see his wife for God knows how many months; a 56-year-old does not want to acknowledge that he will not be allowed to meet his loved ones, a mother yearns to hold her child in her arms to reassure her that things will change. The uncertainty and solitude due to COVID-19 in the case of those imprisoned are very real. They had the comfort of the presence of their loved ones during normal days, as they were being visited by their families who assured them that they were loved; they were guilty yet loved. Some were not guilty but developed faith through their families. Some were sentenced but convinced they had a reason to live. The simple reason could be because they got to see their loved ones. What has changed now? Regulations and ban instituted by the authorities have shattered their lives and the lives of their families.

Murder, misfortune, robbery, rape, cheating, drug abuse and pedalling categorized as violence and crime in general are the reasons why some of our fellow human beings are kept in confinement. It is believed that these criminals are too

dangerous to be allowed to live in society. Prisons are a death sentence to many as it spells 'NO FUTURE'. Today prisons are seen as reformation centres wherein those accused of various crimes are given the opportunity to recall, recognize and realize what went wrong and to be able to introspect and make efforts to change for the better.

Confinement or loss of freedom by itself is a traumatic situation that many are unable to cope with. Anger, fear, frustration and finally mental depression are a few of the visible outcomes of confinement. Loneliness and lack of family interaction has led many to contemplate suicide and many have been successful. Psychological distress amongst prisoners cannot and should not be neglected as it leads them to becoming mental wrecks, not fit to return to mainstream life once their period of confinement is over.

Lockdown in India that came into effect since March 2020 has not only changed and affected normal citizens but has had devastating effects on prisoners too. This marked a phase of turmoil for the families of prisoners as they are forbidden from meeting them. Prisoners interaction with family through other means and sources are limited. This has in turn played havoc in their lives as the implicit manifestation of parental, sibling and family love has become an impossibility and taken a terrible toll on their physical, emotional and psychological well-being.

Voice of Prisoners' Mother

The primary purpose of a prison punishment is to punish the offender or the accused. No one thinks of the silent victims of this punishment. Who do you intend to punish? The assumed and accused offenders or the families who suffer in silence? Can you imagine the unfathomable trauma that has been caused to their souls? You might question, when they committed an offence where was their soul or conscience? Let me ask you one question. If you fail your exams do your parents forsake you? Well no! They still love you; but they analyse ways to help you and if punishment is a form, then so be it. But do they deserve to be victims too? We are humans first of all, made for a purpose; what is our purpose in life is what we need to enlighten individuals about. Can we be ambassadors of peace, goodwill and reformation? Or just ruthless servants of law ready to punish, leaving no stone unturned.

If it is true that public opinion brings about effective changes in government policy then here is an appeal to be made on behalf of the prisoners and their families. It is known that law punishes crimes by separating criminals from the rest of the society. It is more punishing to be kept away from loved ones knowing that you cannot be there for them if and when they need you. This becomes traumatic when they cannot assure each other that all is well. It is but a natural fear that COVID-19 might affect them or even that they may succumb to the virus. It is now that

they need comforting and strength more than ever. The sense of being alone without access to information and support will cause extreme fear and anxiety.

In order to ease these conditions, it would be appreciated if the government could relax this restriction, with provisions for the inmates to meet relatives and friends, with arrangements in place to maintain social distancing norms, thereby preventing permanent mental and emotional loss and damage. We all have to agree with the fact that prisons should bring a realizational change and not an everlasting negative impact.

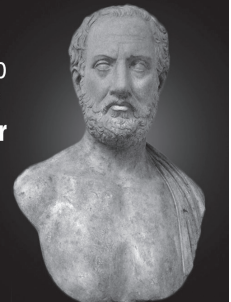
About the author:

The author is a teacher by profession and passion and is also a counsellor with experience of over 30 years. A mother of an incarcerated and a silent victim of turmoil caused due to the prevailing scenario.

The **bravest** are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, **glory and danger** alike, and yet notwithstanding go out to **meet it**.

— Thucydides

AZ QUOTES



A courageous warrior knows that she is powerfully sourced by something much greater than herself and that she can release the judgments of others.

— Debbie Ford —

AZ QUOTES

Lockdown Shall Not Lock Us Down

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
National Secretary, PMI

Bengaluru/Mumbai 23 May 2020

Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, the chairman of Prison Ministry India, through a video conference with its national and regional coordinators reminded the volunteers all over India that the Covid-19 lockdown shall not lock them down. Instead, respecting the government restrictions and regulations, PMI shall strengthen the ministry for the prisoners, their families, victims and prison officials during the Covid-19 pandemic. Prison Ministry India, a national voluntary organisation under the CBCI, has a history of liberating, rehabilitating and redeeming tens and thousands of prisoners and their families through its 20 rehabilitation centres and 8000 volunteers all over India. Besides Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, the chairman, Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan, the national coordinator, Sr Lini Sheeja, the national secretary, the 4 regional coordinators from Delhi, Pune, Guwahati, and Chennai took part in the video conference.

Sr Lini Sheeja, the PMI national secretary through her prayer invoked God's blessings upon the participants and prisoners all over the world, especially people who were suffering from coronavirus. In his inaugural address, Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, the PMI Chairman expressed his joy regarding the initiatives and activities taken by the national office, regional and state offices in reaching out to serve the prisoners, people infected by Covid-19 and migrants. He added that when the whole world was in the grip of coronavirus, it was the paramount duty of the PMI volunteers to take care of the poor and the downtrodden, especially those who are incarcerated. The regional coordinators presented their reports.

Video Conference

National Office

Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the PMI cofounder and national coordinator presented the national office activities since 24th March 2020, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the lockdown. To eradicate and prevent the rapid spread of Covid 19 virus and to strengthen those who dedicate themselves in taking care of the corona infected people the first thing the PMI national office did was to double the spiritual exercises. When churches all over the world were closed down PMI began to celebrate one more holy Mass for the reparation of the sins of mankind and extended the Eucharistic adoration from 9am to 1pm and doubled all spiritual exercises such as recitation of rosary, divine mercy chaplet, thank you Jesus mantra, etc.

Outreaching Prisons

During the corona pandemic lockdown, PMI intensified their outreach to prisons by obtaining special permission from the police department. Reaching out to prisons we distributed masks, sanitizers, bermuda, T-shirts, shirts, and pants to various prisons such as central prison Bengaluru, open prison Devanahalli, KGF Kolar, Kolar district prison, Thumkur district prison, and Chikkabellapur district prison.

Go to the Periphery

As Pope Francis instructed us Covid19 pandemic provided PMI volunteers golden opportunities to go to the peripheries of Bengaluru. National team distributed provisions and groceries to the different slums in Bengaluru and migrant communities. Every week national team visited Kolbe children and brought provisions such as rice, wheat powder, oil, and groceries with the assistance of the Archdiocese of Bengaluru, Smile Foundation, Dream India Network and many other PMI volunteers.



Video Conference

AID to PMI Volunteers

As announced in the letter of Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, the PMI Chairman, national office financially assisted many PMI volunteers in different parts of India to distribute mask and sanitizers to prisoners and provisions to prisoners' families.

Prison Voice & Reformative Explorations

Lockdown did not lock down the publications of Prison Voice and Reformative Explorations thanks. We published in right time both magazine but due to the lockdown of the press and post you would be able to receive them in soft copy format only.

Reception to Released Prisoners

Van Thuan Home, a rehabilitation center for released male prisoners in Bengaluru welcomed many released prisoners during the lockdown days. The best gift brought by Covid19 was the release of so many thousands of prisoners to decongest the prisons. Van Thuan Home reintegrated many released prisoners to the main stream of the society by providing good jobs and accommodations.

Resuming RRDC Construction

On 4th May the RRDC construction resumed which was stopped due to Corona lockdown. The flooring, wiring, plumbing, and painting of the fourth and fifth floors are going on and we humbly invite your prayerful support for its successful completion.

PMI Documentation Centre

On 5th May 2020 Fr Francis and Fr George purchased ten book shelves for the PMI documentation center at RRDC. Fr George with the assistance of Mrs Rose commenced the works of documentation center by arranging books and other documents.

South Region

Rev Fr Anthony Swamy, the PMI southern regional coordinator, presented the following report regarding the activities in the southern states. **Grocery to Prisoners' Families:** In the month of April onwards, PMI volunteers in Chennai thought of prisoners' families and arranged for the delivery of grocery with a provision shop, not collecting it but directed them directly to the shop. Hundreds of families benefitted from this arrangement. This was possible thanks to the generosity of Sr Nirmala FMM provincial and her team. In May, Most Rev Dr George Antonysamy, the PMI Tamilnadu president, directed us to distribute provisions to prisoners' families directly from another shop. A few families also received blessings from the Archbishop. Sr Rose PBVM and her team assisted the archbishop with their generous contributions in this venture. Bon Secours sisters had also given assistance to many inmates' families in and around Kancheepuram. It was the probation officers from the prison department who identified the families of the inmates. Many of the inmates' families were also visited by our volunteers. As the situation in Chennai becomes worse, we request your valuable prayers that Lord's anger should pass soon and things return to normalcy. PMI Volunteers in Kerala and Karnataka distributed tailoring machines to many prisons so as to produce masks not only for the prisoners but also for the public.

Central Region

Fr Wilfred Fernandes, the PMI central regional coordinator presented the following prison ministry activities in the central region. **Prisoners' Release, Food Grains to Migrants:** In many central region states, PMI provided food grains twice to tens and thousands of migrants from Jharkhand and Bihar. **Assistance to Reach Home:** PMI Central Region helped many migrants to return to their villages. After reaching home they called and confirmed that they had reached

home safely. **Provisions to Rag Pickers:** PMI distributed food grains to rag pickers and slumdweller in Pune and Mumbai. **Toiletries to Open Prison:** Toiletries donated by Good Shepherd Church were distributed to the inmates of the open prison. The open jail also contacted us stating they needed 200 masks for the inmates. We purchased them from the Central Jail and gave them to the Open Jail. These masks were sponsored by Mr Mathew Anthony. The authorities of Open Jail got in touch with us again for a temperature detector gun, pulse oximeter, sanitiser, floor cleaners, hand gloves etc. **Maharashtra Day Celebration:** PMI celebrated Maharashtra Day on 1 May in the Juvenile Home for those below 18 where we distributed food and spent quality time with the inmates. **Prayer Services:** PMI Maharashtra continued the weekly intercessory prayer services and special prayers for corona-infected people.

North East Region

Sr Jobina presented the North East PMI report and shared that they did the following activities during the lockdown days. **Solidarity with the Brethren Behind the Bars:** Responding to the call of Jesus Christ to show solidarity with the poor and suffering and experiencing his presence amidst the pandemic, the PMI Northeast Region has extended solidarity with the brethren behind the bars to make them feel that they are cared for and supported. **Awareness Programmes:** In order to cope with the present challenge of Covid-19 in the society, as well as to promote better health care we have organised awareness programmes in different prisons, encouraging and motivating them to take responsibility of their own health. **Distribution of Masks and Sanitisers:** At this time of panic, fear and anxiety, realising the need and importance for safeguarding one's health and that of others, we have shown our solicitude for our brethren by providing 1400 masks, sanitisers, Dettol, and soaps to the inmates of Central Prison Guwahati.

Have Heart: Volunteers do not necessarily have the time they just have heart. Experiencing the struggles and sensing the need of the time, the PMI Unit in Mizoram reached out to the inmates of Horeb retreat home and sponsored items for their specific requirements as well as their basic needs. **Unable To Visit Prisons:** Due to the pandemic, the prison authorities have requested us not to visit the prison until they give us further information. Thus, we are unable to visit prisons. But we are connected with the prison authorities and if need arises, we will reach out to them.

North Region

Fr David MSC, the newly appointed coordinator of the north region, organised a lot of spiritual activities for the brethren behind the bars and for others affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Offering the Holy Eucharist, chain rosary, divine mercy chaplet they have intensified their prayer and mortifications.

Forthcoming Programmes: The video conferencing took the following decisions: State Coordinators' Meeting, National Executive Meeting, Full-timers' Training Programme, seminars, All India Volunteers' Competition.

New Spiritual Banks

Decided to open new banks of PMI such as the Bank of Holy Mass, Bank of Rosary, Sufferings Bank, Bank of Mortification, and the Bank of Stations of the Cross.

Pray with Pope Francis

Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva in his concluding remarks quoting Pope Francis invited PMI volunteers' attention to the need for intense prayer for the corona-infected people and blessed every participant.

Distribution of Sanitizers to Prison Officials

Anthony Jacob

PMI Pune

In Pune, the Yerwada Central Jail has opened a temporary jail for new prisoners. This was done to ensure the safety of old prisoners, to prevent them from contracting Covid-19. Prison Ministry India, Pune also visited the temporary jail and distributed sanitizers to the prison officials. We also distributed more masks, sanitisers and thermal scanners to the Juvenile Home for under 18.



PMI NORTH EAST INDIA

Sr Jobina UFS

Coordinator, PMI North East

As COVID 19 pandemic is throwing up new challenges every day, we are called to be more sensitive and enthusiastic in carrying out the mission of Christ on this earth with great love in whatever way possible. As the instrument of Christ, we, the PMI focus on the reformation and redemption of the lost and the least where we reach out to our brethren behind the bars. Thus, responding to the signs of the time, the Prison Ministry Northeast India in collaboration with MSFS FAsCE India has handed over sanitisers for the use of the inmates of Central Prison, Guwahati.

We express our sincere thanks to Rev Fr Saji Geroje Puthiyakulangara FAsCE India (MSFS) for his generosity and constant support of the PMI Northeast in carrying out our activities smoothly. We also had a short interaction with the Superintendent and the Jailer of the Central Prison Guwahati, wherein they acknowledged and appreciated the services rendered to them.



Farewell to Idukki District Jail Superintendent



National Team Wishing Archbishop Peter Machado on his Birthday



Fr Wilfred Fernandez PMI Pune Coodinator Blessing Mr Raj & Mrs Sophia on their 25th Wedding Anniversary



Mr Gracian & Mrs Margeri Correa Celebrating their Wedding Anniversary at the National Office, Bengaluru



Fr Benny Pachanal CRSP, Assistant National Coordinator's Feast Celebrated at RRDC



Reception to Mr Varadaraj from Bengaluru Central Prison to Van Thuan Home



Distribution of Masks and Sanitizers Central Prison Guwahati



Distribution of Masks and Sanitizers Yerwada Central Prison Pune and Chandrapur District Prison



Inauguration of Sound System at Idukki District Jail, Sponsored by CMC Sisters, Palai



Reception of Amith and Family to Van Thuan Home