



PRISON VOICE

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Issue 09

NATIONAL MONTHLY

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ABOLITION OF DEATH PENALTY



Alathoor Prison Visit



Alleppey Jail Visit



**Azadika Amrit Mahotsav Celebration,
Chaudhary Charan Singh Prison, Meerut**



Book Distribution, Kannur Prison



Chhattisgarh State Gathering



Dharmavaram Prison Visit



**Distributing Chairs to
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**Independence Day Celebration
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**Independence Day Celebration,
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**Mangalore Prison Staff Honoring Edmund
Frank for His Service to Prisoners**



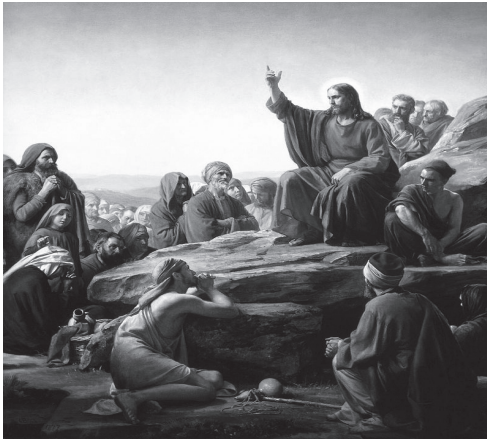
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Kunjalamoodu Jail**

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PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY



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(Mt, 5,21-22).

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Are You Willing?

"Help a Prisoner's Child Prevent a Potential Criminal"

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ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY SEPTEMBER PRAYER INTENTION

In his prayer intention for September, Pope Francis calls on all people of good will “to mobilize for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world.” “Each day, there is a growing ‘NO’ to the death penalty around the world,” says Pope Francis in the video released on Wednesday announcing his prayer intention for September. “For the Church, this is a sign of hope.”

In The Pope Video, produced by the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network, the Holy Father maintains that the death penalty is not necessary “from a legal point of view.”

He argues that “society can effectively repress crime without definitively depriving offenders of the possibility of redeeming themselves.” He adds that there must be “a window of hope” in every legal sentence. Capital punishment, he says, “offers no justice to victims, but rather encourages revenge. And it prevents any possibility of undoing a possible miscarriage of justice.”

Always Possible to Repent

Pope Francis goes on to say that the death penalty is “morally inadmissible” because it destroys life, and insists that “up to the very last moment, a person can convert and change.” The Pope argues further that “in the light of the Gospel, the death penalty is unacceptable, because the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ refers to both the innocent and the guilty.” Pope Francis concludes his message with an appeal for all people of goodwill to mobilize for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world.”

“Let us pray that the death penalty, which attacks the dignity of the human person, may be legally abolished in every country.”

MOTHER MARY AND MOTHER TERESA

EDITOR'S VIEW



Birth of Mother Mary

In celebrating the birth of the Mother of our Saviour, we are celebrating the approaching proximity of our Saviour. Meditation on her birth reminds us of the unique place she holds in Christian life, the love and protection we, the Church, have always experienced through her. In the birth of Mary, we see the unfolding of God's plan, the approaching nearness of our salvation, so, we realize the significance of her birth for the whole human race. It was one of the great events of salvation history. Though one of us in every respect except sin, she was destined by God to be the immaculate mother of the redeemer. In the fullness of time, she brought forth the Saviour who would drive away the darkness of sin. By offering her son for the salvation of the mankind, she was instrumental in bringing about a profound transformation of the world. Her birth was the starting point of a new humanity, a new world, renewed in Christ. In the economy of salvation as the mother of the Saviour, Mary has a unique role to play towards us sinners; she becomes the mother of mercy and compassion. Therefore, at the joyful birthday celebration, let us intercede for our brethren behind the bars for her tender love, care and concern for them.

Abolition of Death Penalty

Pope Francis' prayer intention for the month of September, is "to mobilize for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world." Death penalty is not necessary "from a legal point of view." Rather he says, "society can effectively be depriving offenders of the possibility of redeeming themselves." And there must be "a window of hope" in every legal sentence.



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor

Capital punishment, "offers no justice to victims, but rather encourages revenge, and it prevents any possibility of undoing a possible miscarriage of justice." Pope Francis intends that death penalty destroys life, rather to rethink and meditate he says, up to the last moment, a person can convert and change." In the light of the Gospel, the death penalty is unacceptable, because the commandment "Thou shall not kill" refers to both the innocent and the guilty. As volunteers of PMI, it becomes our responsibility too to save the souls from the death penalty through our prayers.

St Mother Teresa

As we celebrate the happiness of the feast of St Mother Teresa, let us also reflect on how we can imitate her patient reliance on God and fidelity to Christ law of love. Dear volunteers, we can imagine that in 1948, when Bengal was still reeling under the terrible after-effects of the dreadful famine in which four million people had died, and the partition that came in 1947; and into that she stepped as a single nun—no helper, no companion, no money to speak of - she had just got that call that she must serve God. The prominent virtue was her patient endurance and strong desire to serve the poor and the marginalized. She was never ashamed to beg. As PMI members we too are in the same boat for our founder Fathers also did the same and are still doing.

IMPACT OF ST IGNATIUS' CONVERSION

Introduction

St Ignatius Loyola was born in 1491 as one of 13 children of a noble family in Spain. He authored the *Spiritual Exercises*, one of the most influential books on the spiritual life and discernment of spirits ever written. Together with six companions he founded the Society of Jesus, one of the most significant religious communities from which hails Pope Francis. To commemorate his cannonball hit that sparked his return to God, the Jesuits celebrated the Ignatian Year marking the 500th anniversary of the conversion of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. Every radical conversion brings forth unfathomable contributions to mankind. This article highlights the trajectory and impact of St Ignatius' conversion.

Cannonball Hit

It was May 20, 1521! War between Spain and France was going on in Pamplona. It became clear that the advancing French troops were about to overtake the castle in the city of Pamplona. Only one Spanish soldier wanted to stay and fight on that day. His name was Inigo Lopez de Loyola, a 29-year-old nobleman with an enormous ego who wanted nothing more than to make a name for himself as the bravest knight around. He convinced the Spanish commander to stick it out. This was Inigo's big chance to become a hero. It didn't turn out well. As the French finished off their victory, a cannonball shattered Inigo's leg. Impressed by his bravery, the French troops carried Inigo back to his home castle for what would



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

become a long period of excruciatingly painful recovery. When confronted with a hopeless situation, Ignatius discovered greater intimacy with God. After the leg healed, he thought his leg didn't look good and decided to undergo corrective surgery. That recovery was longer than the first one.

Conversion

During this process of recovery, Inigo asked for chivalric romances to read, but there were no such books in the house, but only a copy of *The Life of Christ* and some biographies of saints. He decided to read these because he thought it would help him to conquer the ladies of the court. Instead, Ignatius realized how empty he was and how his Bohemian life didn't bring him peace. Ignatius' conversion took place during his long recovery from his injuries, as he read about the lives of the saints, like Francis and Dominic. Reading the lives of Jesus and the saints made Ignatius happy and aroused desires to do great things. Ignatius realized that these feelings were clues to God's direction for him. His dreams transferred from heroic feats on the battlefield to heroically serving Christ. The bull of canonization on March 12, 1622, reported that Ignatius was called from



ST IGNATIUS CONVERSION

worldly honours and earthly military service to a holy life that led to the founding of the Jesuit order and, ultimately, the consolation of souls worldwide.

Conversion Trajectory

The conversion of Ignatius was not completed instantly, following his fall in Pamplona. This incident, however, set a new course for his life. It turned his life upside down and forced him into self-examination. Out of this spiritual awakening, Ignatius had a burning desire for holiness and zeal to do great things for God, which ultimately led him to a lengthy process of self-surrender. The appeal of this conversion today is that when confronted with a hopeless situation, Ignatius discovered greater intimacy with God. As he renewed his relationship with God, he was able to refocus his unsettled existence. Ignatius put God at the centre of his life. He could look at the world not with fear, but with hope and the desire to set it on fire with the love of Christ. Soon after healing, Ignatius was determined to dedicate his life to serving God and helping souls. He spent parts of nearly a year living, praying, and writing in a cave near the Spanish city of Manresa. It was during this time that Ignatius first drafted his most famous work, a collection of prayers and meditations called the “Spiritual Exercises.”

Society of Jesus

Years after the cannonball strike, as he had been traveling around Europe studying and leading people through the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius wound up in Paris, where he met six companions, he would come to call his “friends in the Lord.” These seven together would found the Society of Jesus, with shared communal life as a bedrock

value. One of the results of Ignatius’ conversion was the sprouting of the Society of Jesus which played a major role in the Christianization of the American continent. His conversion led to the conversion of a large part of the world. That French cannonball ignited a huge transformation in Inigo’s life, as he encountered God on his sickbed and decided he wanted to serve the Lord instead of a worldly king. Eventually changing his name to Ignatius, he would go on to found the Society of Jesus, which is now the largest community of Catholic priests and brothers in the world.

Ignatian Spirituality

Ignatian spirituality sees life and the whole universe as a gift calling forth wonder and gratefulness. It gives ample scope to imagination and emotion as well as intellect. It seeks to find the divine in all things - in all peoples and cultures, in all areas of study and learning, in every human experience, and for the Christian especially in the person of Jesus. It cultivates critical awareness of personal and social evil, but points to God’s love as more powerful than any evil. It stresses freedom, need for discernment, and responsible action. It empowers people to become leaders in service, men and women for others, whole persons of solidarity and building a more just and humane world.

Even 500 years after the cannonball smashed his leg St Ignatius and his companions continue to serve in 112 nations engaging themselves in educational, evangelization and apostolic ministries. What we see is just the tip of the iceberg. I thank God, that the cannonball didn’t kill him, but I also thank God, that it didn’t miss him completely.





VERGE OF TEARS

Br Alexander Chatla

Verge of tears is the expression of Sadness, hopelessness, helplessness and what not that everything comes up. Human beings shed tears of happiness, tears of pain and joy. Mother Mary being a human and blessed to be the Mother of God had also experienced the tears of joy. But even more she underwent many sufferings. The church contemplates her seven sorrows which made her life come on the verge of tears. When our blessed mother presented the child Jesus in the temple, Simeon had tears in his eyes and made clairvoyance about the agony of Jesus to Mother Mary. As she heard the words of Simeon, her eyes filled with tears. But she wiped her tears and stood by faith. This was the first Sorrow that she underwent, as found in the gospel, (LK 2; 34-35).

And when the angel told St Joseph about Herod who was trying to kill Jesus (Math 13; 21), Mary and Joseph made a flight to Egypt. When our blessed mother heard the news, she suddenly burst into tears on the way to Egypt. This was her Second Sorrow. When Jesus was lost as they were returning from the temple, tears welled-up in her eyes. The loss of Jesus for three days (Lk 2; 41-50), had made her very sad. She started searching for him. This was her Third Sorrow. And her fourth sorrow was Jesus carrying the cross (John 19; 17). When Mother Mary saw her son carrying the cross, she was on the verge of tears; she could not hold them back. She

burst into tears. There was a flow of tear from her eyes. The crucifixion of Jesus (John 19; 18-30) was the greatest sorrowful episode in human history on which there are no words to interpret the the pain of Jesus as well as the pain of our blessed mother. And this was her fifth Sorrow. The sixth sorrow of her's was, Jesus taken down from the cross (john 19; 39-40). When the apostles gave the lifeless body of Jesus to our Mother of sorrows, she holds him in her arms and cried aloud. When people saw Jesus and his Mother in such a condition people were on the verge of tears. No one can wipe away the pain of our Mother of Sorrow. When Jesus was laid in the tomb, Mother, was on the verge of tears.

The Mother of God is the compassionate intercessor who intercedes with God for us because she understands the pain that can come with human existence. Let us pray and contemplate the seven sorrows of our blessed mother at least in this month of September and seek her compassionate intercession, and get the saving help of the Almighty God.

Capital Punishment

Capital punishment or death penalty, is a practice of killing a person as a punishment for a crime. The sentence ordering that an offender is to be punished in such a manner is known as a death sentence, and the act of carrying out the sentence is known as an execution. A prisoner who has been sentenced to death and awaits execution is condemned and is commonly referred to as being "on death row".

FR JACQUES HAMEL: EUROPE'S 21ST CENTURY MARTYR

“This was a man who did his job to the very end. He was old, but always available for everyone. He was a good priest. He had been here for many years; he lived in the rectory here. Many parishioners knew him very well”, a neighbour told after Fr Hamel, the hero of this article was martyred. With local imam Mohammed Karabila, the president of Normandy’s regional council of Muslims, Fr Hamel worked since early 2015 on an interfaith committee. After Fr Hamel’s death, Karabila described him as his friend with whom he had discussed religion and as also someone who gave his life for others. Fr Jacques Hamel (1930–2016) was a French Catholic priest who served in Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray. On 26 July 2016, Hamel was murdered during the 2016 Normandy Church attack by two Muslim men pledging allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant while Fr Hamel celebrated Mass in his church.

Priest

Jacques Hamel was born on November 30, 1930, in the town of Darnétal in Normandy in the northern region of France. At 14 he entered the minor seminary. He became a priest in the Archdiocese of Rouen. Hamel was ordained as a priest on 30 June 1958. He served as an assistant priest at the St. Antoine church in Le Petit-Quevilly from 1958, an assistant priest at the Notre-Dame de Lourdes church in Sotteville-lès-Rouen from 1967, a parish priest in Saint-Pierre-lès-Elbeuf from 1975, and a parish priest in Cléon from 1988. He joined the church



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

in Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray in 2000. He officially retired in 2005 at the age of 75, but continued serving as the parish’s assistant priest. Fr Hamel spent most of his working life in north-west France, including more than 30 years at St-Étienne. He celebrated 50 years as a member of the clergy in 2008.

Death of Fr Jacques Hamel

The morning of the martyrdom was like any other. Fr Hamel woke at 7 a.m., as was his custom, recited the prayer invoking the protection of St Michael the Archangel, read from his breviary and went to the bakery to buy bread for his breakfast. He left the rectory around 8:30 a.m. and walked about a quarter of a mile to the church where he was due to celebrate the 9 o’clock Mass. When Fr Hamel arrived, there was a small but committed congregation: three Vincentian sisters, a married couple of 64 years and another layperson. It was during the Prayers of Petition that two Islamic State-inspired perpetrators barged in, knocked Father Hamel down and slit his throat. At about 9:45 am on 26 July 2016, two men wielding knives and a handgun entered the 16th-century church of Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray as Mass was being held. Fr Hamel, three nuns, and two parishioners were taken hostage and ordered to sit together in a group. One attacker wore a fake explosive belt and the other wore a backpack made to

look like it carried a bomb. The handgun was later described as an “old, non-functioning pistol”. A hostage said the attackers filmed themselves and “did a sort of sermon” at the altar in Arabic. On the recording, which was later found by police, the attackers also shouted “you Christians are eliminating us”.

The attackers forced Hamel to kneel at the foot of the altar and then slit his throat while screaming “Allahu akbar”. Hamel had tried to resist, pushing his attackers away with his feet while saying “go away, Satan”. Another hostage, an 86-year-old parishioner, was ordered to photograph or film the priest after he had been killed. The attackers then knifed him, leaving him critically wounded. The other hostages were largely unhurt. After the killing, the two men talked with the nuns about the Koran. One also warned “as long as there are bombs on Syria, we will continue our attacks”. After forcing Guy Coponet to hold a video camera and record the assassination of his priest, one of the attackers calmed down and asked one of the religious sisters present, Sister Hélène Decaux, “Are you afraid to die?” She said “No”. Surprised by her answer, he asked why. “Because I believe in God, and I know I will be happy,” she said. He then murmured, “I believe in God, too, and I am not afraid to die.”

Priest to Martyr!

Fr Hamel’s death shocked France and much of the world. Pope Francis offered a Mass for the priest shortly after the attack, calling Hamel a martyr. The circumstances of his death have led him to be called a martyr by

Christians, including non-Christians, and the press. Calls to declare him a saint started soon after his death. Catholic Archbishop Dominique Lebrun of Rouen said about Fr Jacques Hamel “Fr Jacques Hamel exercised his ministry in simplicity, joy, fidelity to the end, to the gift of martyrdom,” He noted that the gospel reading on the day of Hamel’s murder concerned the parable of the wheat and the tares: “the good and the bad plants are mixed together and Jesus asks us to wait before they are separated because he always had the hope that the bad becomes better.” In the five years since his brutal murder, Fr. Hamel has come to be an inspiration for many. After serving as a priest for 58 years, he chose to continue in that office even after his retirement in 2005. His life of quiet prayer, service, and unflinching faith are remembered today. The florist, trying to hold back tears, said that Fr Hamel had taught her catechism 30 years ago when she was a child. She said that Fr Hamel loved roses, especially red ones, the colour of the martyrs.

Priest to Blessed!

On 14 September 2016, Pope Francis referred to Fr Hamel as “blessed”, a title used prior to canonisation. “This man accepted his martyrdom next to the martyrdom of Christ, on the altar,” Pope Francis said on 14 September during a homily at a Mass held for Fr Hamel’s soul at the Vatican. “He is a martyr and martyrs are beatified,” the pope continued. Two weeks later Archbishop Lebrun announced in a homily that the Pope had formally waived the five-year waiting period needed before the start of a canonization process, and that he had decided to prepare it without delay.



Kolbe Home - An Abode of God's Children


Br Pradeep Anthony L OFM

The Beginning

Kolbe Home was initiated in 2015 by Fr Sebastian Vadakumpadan, the former two-time PMI national coordinator. This happened when he witnessed a child who was labeled as a prisoner's child and was not taken into a well reputed hostel. This incident kindled a spark in Fr Vadakumpadan to take a resolution to begin Kolbe Home. Presently Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the present PMI national coordinator has been deeply instrumental in developing Kolbe Home from its foundation to a higher level. Since about three years anyone could notice that he has shown greater brilliance to strike the right chord in order to raise funds providentially. There are three things that I would like to mention: 1) he made a better home for children, 2) he presented the children with a Toofan car for their travel to school, 3) under his leadership the national team succeeded in getting Kolbe home registered under CWC recently.

God's Provident Care

The ministry at Kolbe home will make anyone realize the immense love of God for the lost, least, and the last. It is truly a proof of God's providential care because no money is received from any of these children. Kolbe home takes care of their good accommodation, provides sumptuous food for them daily and gives good education in a reputed school. Every



now and then it celebrates occasions like Prison Ministry Sunday, Assumption of Our Lady and Kolbe Home celebrations with many guests. Each child's birthday is celebrated with a cake at Kolbe. There have been many benefactors who come to help the children very kindly since the inception of Kolbe home. There are different types of benefactors who support Kolbe Home: some by prayer and others by finance; some by their service and others by their material contribution; some by their scholarship and others by their availability and so on.

Formation Method: Genetics, Ambience & Choice


There are presently 27 children at Kolbe and some more requests are in the waiting list. The main team members of the Kolbe home are Sr Basil SCS Superior and Sr Pushpa SCS, Assistant Superior. Their sacrifice is commendable as it is not at all an easy task to bring discipline among these children. Unlike other children these have come either from a prison, an orphanage, belong to a single parent, come from slums or they are from financially poor families. Since Kolbe children have come up from a poor socio-economic background, taking the first module of genetics we need to get to know their family members in a wholesome manner and create a strong bond between them and the children. When we take on the second module of Ambience it is to be borne in mind that their environment is not limited only to their outer space like food, time-table, sports, games, study and cultural activities but also the inner space in which their deeper motives, wounds and emotions too have to be looked into. The third

module is to guide and help the choices of the child who has to take his or her decision independently and autonomously. Having been present here with them I have observed that this process is definitely tiresome and tedious and therefore, demands from us much faith in God and patience with each child's personal temperament.

Another discovery that I have made among these children is that they all have a deep need to be trusted, believed in, hoped in, loved and given the greatest dignity and respect. It is also very important to note that in as much as we love, trust and hope in children it is even more important that they feel being loved, trusted, hoped, believed, respected and their dignity upheld at all times. Perhaps this is the crux of PMI ministry, namely, becoming a love bomb to heal them. When this happens no one can hinder the growth of these children.

An Abode of God's Children

The greatest values can be learnt not from greatly acclaimed people but rather from poor, simple people and people at the peripheries. Perhaps this made St Francis of Assisi to call them his masters or teachers. And this is what I have truly experienced in my life too. The Lord Jesus says in the Gospel "Let the 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). Kolbe children know how to be happy in spite of the hard struggles they have gone through in their lives. Perhaps the kingdom of heaven is already given to



them by God the Father for which Jesus thanks His Father saying: " I think you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants" (Mt 11:25).

The people who usually come to help are helped by these children very mysteriously. It is indeed true that this ministry doesn't drain out your energy but rather reinvigorates the individual. It doesn't take away one's sanctity but rather it sanctifies the one who serves. This has been my experience that when I help the children to set their goals they are teaching me to set my own Goals for Christ. While counseling I am being counseled by the children. While teaching them music I am learning music better. While helping them to study I am getting better at my studies. Therefore, I am receiving more than what I am giving. The love that children show to me is not returnable actually but I just enjoy their company. I only wish most importantly that they be happy and come up in their future life. I wish you all a gracious Teacher's day and Happy Children's Day.

Top 10 Countries that Conducted Death Penalties in 2021 (Amnesty International)

1. China — 1000+
2. Iran — 314+
3. Egypt — 83+
4. Saudi Arabia — 65
5. Syria — 24+
6. Somalia — 21+
7. Iraq — 17+
8. Yemen — 14+
9. United States — 11
10. South Sudan — 9+




“Justice Should be Done, but also be Seen to Be Done”

Dr Michael Noronha

In a shocking revelation the Supreme Court advocate and Former Home Minister of India Mr P. Chidambaram has tweeted: “There is an interesting side story to the grant of remission to 11 persons convicted for gang rape in Gujarat. Among the Review Panel were two BJP MLAs Shri C K Raolji and Shri Suman Chauhan! Another member was Shri Murli Mulchandani who was a key witness for the prosecution in the Godhra Train burning case!” He asked whether this was a neutral, non-partisan panel of experts in criminology and penology and said that the district collector was the chairperson” (Deccan Herald Aug 19, 2022 page 11 under the caption: ‘Are you not ashamed?’ Rahul asks PM on Bilkis Bano Case.)

The Question: Why are we discussing the Bilkis Bano case as PMI volunteers? The mission of PMI is to Reform, Reconcile and Restore – Help in the Reformation of the prisoner; help him reconcile with God and the family of the prisoner/victim and Restore him back to the society as a reformed citizen. We do believe that God hates Sin but loves the Sinner. The love for the Sinner comes with a rider as can be seen in the following two incidents in the Bible: 1) Zaccheus & 2) the Good Thief, which I have specifically selected for this article.

The Incident of Zaccheus – Luke 19:1-10: The incident has three elements which we can clearly understand: “He was a tax collector and a wealthy man”. Zaccheus was a corrupt tax collector. Zaccheus was a



proclaimed sinner by the people and he was conscious of it. “He wanted to see Jesus as to what He was like, but as he was a short man he could not see him because of the crowd. He ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree”. Zaccheus desired to Reform himself and so he took the first step to see Jesus. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him Zaccheus, “Zaccheus, come down quickly, for I must stay at your house today”. Jesus takes the next step recognising the desire of Zaccheus to reform through which the process of Reconciliation with God begins. But Zaccheus spoke to Jesus, “Half of what I own Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much”. (V 8). Zaccheus decides to Restore to the people he cheated four times as much, a reformation which restores him as a good citizen acceptable to people.

As Volunteers our prime duty is to remember that our responsibility is not to ‘Promote Crime’ by seeking early release of prisoners. We should facilitate and give every opportunity to the prisoners, be it under-trial or convict, a chance to realise their mistake and bring about a change of heart. Very recently during my prison visit an elderly under-trial met me and wept saying none of his family members visited him and it was his first offence of having murdered his wife because of suspicion. He was in tears when he said that he was sorry for what he had done and wanted his daughter to visit him and gave me the address of his sister who lived a few kilometres from my house. Believing his story and moved by his tears, I visited his sister the next day and was shocked to hear the true story. He was a rich man with 5 acres of land and had attempted to murder his first wife who escaped death



JUSTICE SHOULD BE DONE

and deserted him. His second wife was murdered for suspicion, from whom he was blessed with two children, a boy and a girl, who were completely shattered by the death of their mother and had still not come to terms. On hearing the facts the old adage came to my mind “The Sea of Suspicion has no Shores”.

Another case in the prison is of a convict who has been decreed for release but has to pay a fine of Rs 9000 which he is unable to. He too came and pleaded that he would lead a good life if the fine be paid by PMI; otherwise he would have to stay on for 9 more months if the fine is not paid. We asked him for his parents contact number so that we could speak to them and see how much they could contribute. On calling his father the very same evening what we got to hear was shocking. His father said every time he is released he goes to the nearest bar, gets drunk, beats up the bar personnel and any person who comes his way. His father said that he was tired of releasing him paying his fine. Please let him complete the additional nine months, he pleaded with me. I had only one advice to his father: please visit him once in 15 days and counsel him regularly which he readily agreed. From our part I assured him that we too will do the same. The family was living on a meagre income and could not afford to waste money on his release and suffer further humiliation in the village. In a few cases when we contact the advocates the reaction to our request is very rude and harsh. “Don’t you know his crime – he has raped his own daughter?” the advocate screams at the other end in one case. Well, we counsel the advocates telling them that we are not volunteers who want

to rush through the process of law and get them released but want to help them to reform, and in the process we let them know that the due process of law is taking its course and the under-trial or convict (who has applied to a Higher Court) will have to abide by the decision of the law of the land. On hearing this, the advocate cools down. As a Volunteer let us not be Judgmental but exemplify the redemptive love of Christ as done by Saint Maximilian Mary Kolbe in the prison, by helping prisoners Reform, Reconcile and finally Restore them back to the society. All three principles which form the mission of PMI and is displayed as the Objective in the Prison should be concurrently ensured by us as Volunteers.

This brings to my mind the moot question: Can we as volunteers hurry to send such a person back to the society without reformation? The release of the 11 convicts (popularly called Rapists) in the Bilkis Bano case has a chilling effect on the society. Don’t we know that the thief to the left of Jesus had no sense of remorse or regret over his crime but mocked at Jesus on Calvary? But to the repentant Sinner / Good Thief, didn’t Jesus the Saviour give the credit of being the first saint every in Christendom to have been canonized and that at the hands of the Redeemer himself which we celebrate on March 25th every year. Saint Dismas has been chosen by the Church as model of criminals, thieves and undertakers. The Reflection on Saint Dismas in the Saint Companions reminds us: “A man who has a hardened heart and a degenerate conscience is spiritually a sick man, even though he may enjoy the fullness of his powers and physical capacities. Everything must be done to bring him back to having a healthy soul. “Hear today his voice.... Harden not your heart,” said Pope John Paul II.



THE ORDER OF OUR LADY OF MERCY RELEASING IMPRISONED CAPTIVES

Prof Edmund Frank


This article is about the efforts made by individuals and leaders of religious orders to release captive prisoners who were reduced to the level of slaves and takes the readers back to the black medieval ages in Europe between the 8th and 15th centuries. In this context we can assess and compare the injustices and sufferings endured by those prisoners and the present day under trial prisoners lodged in the prisons of India awaiting justice and release. We also examine the role played by the good Samaritans during the medieval ages to give solace, relief and freedom to these unfortunate souls held as slaves in Europe and America and the work done by Prison Ministry India to bring justice and solace to the undertrial prisoners lodged in prisons across India.

Peter Nolasco

In 1203, a young man named Peter Nolasco formed an organization to buy the poor and unfortunate prisoners for a ransom price and free them. He was a native of Languedoc, France. After taking part in the crusade against the heretic Albigensians of Southern France, he became a tutor of young King James of Aragon and then settled at Barcelona. There he became friends with St Raymond of Penyafort. Very soon other men joined him in the work of releasing the imprisoned captives.

Mercedarians

Peter Nolasco decided to establish a well-structured religious order under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Blessed Mother appeared to him as Our Lady of Ransom on 1 August 1218 reassuring



him of her support and wanting to convert his organization into a religious order with the assistance of his friend and confessor Raymond of Penyafort, a Dominican friar, and with the protection of King James 1 of Aragon. Our Lady of Ransom also appeared to Raymond and to King James 1 of Aragon simultaneously in separate apparitions making known to both of them that she desired each of them to contribute to establishing an Order for redeeming captives.

After the initial formalities and due procedures to be followed, on 10 August 1218 a new religious order for the Redemption of captives was officially constituted by Bishop Berenguar de Palou at the main altar erected over the tomb of St Eulalia in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Barcelona, also known as the Cathedral of Santa Eulalia. The Bishop gave them the white religious habit that he and his companions would wear. As characteristic of the Order he put them under the rule of St Augustine as a norm for their life and gave his authorization for the sign of his Cathedral, the Holy Cross, to be on the habit of the Order. After that Nolasco and the first Mercedarians made their religious profession there before the Bishop. The new order was named “The Order of the Virgin Mary of Mercy of the Redemption of Captives”. St. Peter Nolasco is the founder of this Order. The Order is also known as the Mercedarians, the religious community which sent members as ransom for Christian prisoners and captives who were in the custody of the Muslim and Arab chieftains. The members are called Mercedarian friars.

Hostages for Christian Prisoners

In addition to the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience the Mercedarians took a fourth vow to offer themselves as hostages for Christian prisoners in danger of losing their faith and even die for them. The fourth vow of redemption was fulfilled by paying ransom or by exchanging themselves for Christian captives whose faith was in

danger. If necessary, the members remained within Moslem territory as hostages. The act of redemption required skill and courage. The Mercedarians particularly provided assistance to those without funds of their own accord. The work of the Mercedarians was to do charity work and to buy and release helpless Christian captives for a ransom from Muslim traders and merchants. Their headquarters was the Monastery of St Eulalia of Barcelona which served as the first Mercedarian convent and a house of welcome for redeemed captives.

Release Imprisoned Captives

On 10 August 1235 Pope Gregory IX officially recognized and constituted the Order and it spread rapidly through Europe. Inspired by Our Lady of Ransom the order has its active presence in seventeen countries of the world. The Order was established for charitable works and to release imprisoned captives. The Mercedarians had to visit and free Christians who were in captivity. Their work was to buy helpless captive Christian slaves for a ransom from Muslim slave traders and merchants. The brothers of this order had to be ready to give up their lives gladly if necessary. Twice Peter Nolasco went to Africa to serve as a captive, and it was reported that during one journey to Granada and Valencia he won the release from Moorish jails some four hundred captive Christians. The Order at one point was renowned for having rescued over 70,000 Christian captives. Over 2700 were rescued during the life time of St Peter Nolasco. In 1265, a second order of Mercedarians for women was founded in Spain by St Mary de Carvello. The members of this order were called Mercedarian nuns. They were mostly engaged in hospital work.

Prison Ministry India

Can we draw any comparisons between those imprisoned captive slaves for whose

release the Mercedarians fought and the efforts made by Prison Ministry India today for the release of under trial prisoners? Yes, comparisons are many. Those captives who were poor and defenseless were captured and taken as prisoners and used as merchandise by powerful gang leaders and chieftains to accumulate wealth and power. These captives had committed no crimes, done no wrong or violated any laws and were innocent victims condemned by their fate. The only way for their release and freedom was to pay the ransom demanded by their masters. These poor victims did not have the means to negotiate their own freedom to help themselves and were totally dependent on persons like Nolasco to win their freedom.

Undertrial Prisoners

In a similar manner, today a large majority of the undertrial prisoners are in prison because it was their fate and destiny to be there. Many of them are charged with crimes they have not committed and are languishing in jail waiting for their cases to come up for hearing and if lucky to be declared not guilty and released. These are the "poor of Christ". Quite a few are waiting for the ransom money for their release which we call the bail amount with adequate collateral security. There is no difference between these under trial prisoners and most of us outside the prison walls. Many of us may have committed similar or even graver crimes than those prison inmates, the only difference being for committing the same offence they were caught and imprisoned and we were not. Perhaps, because the offense we committed went unnoticed or was ignored because of our connections and position. It can be the violation of law, drunken driving, transporting and consumption of drugs or banned substances, a fight or a quarrel, a minor or major theft or pilferage and even murder. St Peter Nolasco died on 6 May 1256. He was canonized by Pope Urban VIII on 30 September 1628. His feast day is celebrated on 28 May.

Punjab: A New Opportunity for Prisoners

Abhishek Benjamin

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” “When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has been opened for us.” The newly elected Punjab Government is taking the initiative to give second chances to prisoners by starting petrol pumps on jail lands based on the Telangana jail model. This pilot project will help the Jail Department to stand on its feet and will help them not to depend upon Government funds or donations from NGOs.

Therefore, Jail Minister Harjot Singh Bains will inaugurate this first petrol pump on 2nd September 2022 in Ropar. He said that after this petrol pump, they will inaugurate petrol pumps in Ludhiana and Ferozepur and after that the remaining 10 pumps would be started one by one. It is expected that the jail department will be able to earn Rs 40 lakh per month from this business. The earnings made by the jails will no longer be with the Punjab government, but with the jails. The government is starting commercial activities in jails keeping the prison model of Telangana as the basis. Telangana gets an annual income of Rs 600 crore from the commercial activities of prisons.

Indian Oil has signed an agreement to open 12 petrol pumps on the lands of Punjab's jails. In addition, they will open 12 petrol

pumps on jail lands in the cities like Ropar, Gurdaspur, Sri Muktsar Sahib, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Sangrur, and 5 other jails. The prisoners with good behavior and released prisoners will get work at these petrol pumps in which women prisoners will be given priority. After opening all 12 pumps, the jail department will earn 40 lakhs from these petrol pumps. Indian Oil will also pay the rent for the pumps installed on the land of the jails and will also get a commission from the oil sold. This amount of income will go to the account of the Punjab Prison Development Board, established and based on the Telangana model for the welfare of prisons, whereas till now the income from business activities in jails used to go to the government treasury. So, at last, I would like to thank the Punjab Government for becoming the new hope for the prisoners to jubilate within the prison walls of Punjab and we wish to see all inmates outside the prison and living a decent life.

PMI Raffle Draw Results

Educate a Child and Enlighten the World
Children Empowering Children.

200 Children Received Educational
Assistance through this Venture.

First Prize : Laptop
Ticket Number 74005

Second Prize : Tab
Ticket Number 50471

Third Prize : Mobile
Ticket Number 04089

Fourth Prize : Watch
Ticket Number 10207

Hearty Congratulations to the Winners
For Prizes and further Enquiries
Contact Sr Amala DC Tel. 9486604887
Thank You for Your Valuable Cooperation




SAINT MATTHEW: TAX COLLECTOR TO BEARER OF GOODNEWS

Fr Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar

One day, as Our Lord was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw seated in his customs bureau, Levi the publican, whose business it was to collect taxes from the people for their Roman masters. Jesus said to him: "Follow Me" (Mt.9:9). Leaving all behind, Matthew arose and followed him, thereby giving us all an example of the way in which we should respond to grace. The humble Matthew, as he was thereafter called, tells us himself in his Gospel that he was Levi, one of those publicans abhorred by the Jews as enemies of their country, outcasts and notorious sinners, who enriched themselves by extortion and fraud. No Pharisee would sit with one of them at table; Our Saviour alone had compassion for them.

Saint Matthew prepared a great feast, to which he invited Jesus and His disciples, with a number of these publicans, who thereupon began to listen to Him with attention and joy. It was there, in answer to the murmurs of the Pharisees saying that this 'pretentious prophet' ate with publicans and sinners, that Jesus said, "Healthy people do not need a physician, but sick people do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners" (Mt.9:12-13). We imagine Matthew, after the terrible events surrounding the death of Jesus, going to the mountain to which the Risen Lord had summoned disciples. "When they saw him, they worshipped, but some doubted. Then Jesus approached and spoke to them. We can think of him looking at each one



in turn and Matthew listening and excited with the rest. "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:17-20).

After the Ascension, Saint Matthew remained for over ten years in Judea, writing his Gospel there till about the year 44 A.D., to teach his countrymen that the kingdom of heaven had already been initiated, for Jesus was their true Lord and King as foretold by the prophets. He departed then to preach the Faith in Egypt and especially in Ethiopia, where he remained for twenty-three years. When he raised from the dead the son of the Ethiopian king who had received him, the miracle brought about the conversion of the royal house and with them the entire province. It is said in the Constitutions of Pope Saint Clement that Saint Matthew instituted holy water, for protection of soul and body; the prayer he used for the purpose is reported in that document. The relics of Saint Matthew were for many years in the city of Naddaver in Ethiopia, where he suffered his martyrdom, but were transferred to Salerno in the year 954 A.D., where they remained concealed in a cave, for protection, for over a hundred years.

We ought to obey all inspirations of Our Lord as promptly as Saint Matthew, who, according to Saint Bridget, "at a single word laid down the heavy burden of the world, to take the light and sweet yoke of Christ."



Significance of Spirituality

Br S Michael SHJ

Introduction

The current situation is characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic and its variants but the biggest diseases prevalent among humans are envy, casteism, and groupism, which are unthinkable. In this critical situation, the word ‘Spirituality’ according to me, is a deep connection with God, with others, and with nature. It’s a heart-level connection in which a person is able to feel, touch, see, hear, experience, and able to live God in his/her life. It is not routine prayer but a conversation of heart which converts a heart on a daily basis and helps us to grow in holiness and helps us to see that every human being is the image of God and the universe is the abode of God.

Spirituality

Many of us think that spirituality is just going to Church or temple or mosque. Some of us think that it is just about giving donations or performing some rituals at home. But spirituality is to attain to our final destination or ultimate reality whom we call GOD. Spirituality directs the soul of each person towards perfection. We need to help every prisoner to have a deep connection with God so that they may experience true spirituality and be free from thoughts of envy. We could have this experience through the lives of many great personalities. For example, the spirituality of Mother Teresa consisted in this that she believed without a shadow of doubt that Jesus Christ is really, truly, and substantially present in the poor. This helped her to have a deep and apostolic love for the poorest

and saw Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. According to Mahatma Gandhi, spirituality was an “inner voice” which was guiding him throughout his life. His emphasis on truth, non-violence, love, compassion, and humanity are hallmarks of his spiritual life. Pope Francis rightly said, “Take care of your spiritual life, your relationship with God, because this is the backbone of everything we do and everything we are.” Therefore, in my understanding, spirituality should help us to discover our original nature and help us to make ourselves available to others, especially for our brethren behind the bars so that they can experience their true inner voice and listen to it to strengthen the backbone of their spiritual life.

Thirst for Spirituality

Why do people long for Spirituality? It is simply a search for inner peace and a longing to live a happy life. Due to continuous envy, jealousy, casteism, and groupism, people are living without love, company, peace, and harmony. The COVID-19 pandemic, envy, casteism, and groupism have brought about a lot of confusion and chaos in human life in terms of health, work, security, and protection. Many are searching for meaning in their lives. Therefore, humanity needs a divine interaction to balance the situation with hope for the future. The failure to understand true spirituality is the main cause of being materialistic, running after money, pleasure, power, and position. Therefore, humanity is confused. It is a great challenge for all religious men and women in this contemporary world to suggest a remedy for this problem.

Significance of Spirituality

Today spirituality is more important because it gives a sense of happiness,

wholeness and balance to the physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of our lives. For all of us this pandemic has taught us a lesson to be in touch with reality. As the whole world was under the threat of the virus, people were aided to understand that this worldly material, envy, casteism and groupism have no value. They are just flashes of light. Today they are there but tomorrow gone. Our spirituality helps us to introspect oneself in the presence of God and plead for His mercy to be content with oneself. Through synodality the Church invites everyone to experience true spiritual faith which can help us move together and erase all our envious thoughts, casteism, and groupism. The synodal Church calls all religious men and women to give spiritual solace and helping hands to our brethren behind the bars, particularly their families and children.

Conclusion

Spirituality makes a person to be positive, active, blissful, compassionate and serene. It also helps us to live a more practical life. Therefore, during this post-pandemic-period let us understand our own spirituality well and create a spirituality which is relevant wherever we are. Blessing us is not any big thing for our God as He is ready to bless us always but we need to be truthful in all our actions, thoughts and possess true faith in Him. We need to hold Him tightly in our hearts because He is holding us in his heart. Let us erase all our envious thoughts, casteism and groupism and walk equally together. May the Lord help us to discover new ways and new expressions of love!



PMI Chain Fasting

Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

Prison Ministry India after its successful introduction of the Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated proudly initiates Chain Fasting for its volunteers under the leadership of Sr Shanti Picardo FC. As we know, Prison Ministry India is a spiritual movement and our main weapons are prayer and fasting. The sons and daughters of PMI are in prison caught in criminal activities. Our goal is their redemption. Jesus redeemed them through his passion, death and resurrection. We participate in Jesus' passion and death through our fasting and mortifications. Jesus himself is our model in this. Jesus Fasted and prayed for 40 days (Lk 4, 1-13). Jesus again highlighted the significance of prayer and fasting to his disciples, "This kind can come out only through prayer and fasting" (Mt 9,29).

Why PMI Volunteers do fast?

PMI Volunteers fast for the release, reformation, reconciliation, rehabilitation, reintegration and reformation of prisoners all over the world. We do fast for the reparation of the crimes committed by them. We do fast and participate in intercessory prayer for the integral human development of our sons and daughters in PMI rehabilitation centres and homes for prisoners' children. We do fast for our own growth in grace, holiness and humility and of PMI volunteers. We do fast for the victims of crimes for their reconciliation and integral human development. Fasting enables us to celebrate the goodness and mercy of God and prepares our hearts for all the good things God desires to bring into our lives. Let us commit ourselves completely to it, and receive the graces of God in abundance. You are most welcome to join the PMI Chain fasting which is simple. You need to fast only a meal in a month.



St Mother Teresa and the Incarcerated


Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

The Big Hustle

Wahlberg first entered prison at age 17 and served his five-year sentence at various medium and maximum-security prisons. Most of his sentence was spent in the segregation unit. “It’s a nightmare that you can’t wake up from” Wahlberg writes in *The Big Hustle*. The way an act of kindness can change an inmate’s life is memorably illustrated in a new memoir, Jim Wahlberg’s *The Big Hustle*. Like a modern-day Augustine’s *Confessions*, *The Big Hustle* reveals Wahlberg’s gripping conversion story from a violent criminal to a devoted and faithful Christian. The book includes many stories from his time, including both his own experiences and the stories of others. He found moments of friendship and kindness, but much of his time in the maximum-security prison was dehumanizing and torturous. He recalls, “The mental pressure was just so intense. You did not want to fall out of favour with the other prisoners, hardened criminals that could kill you or torture you or make your life a living hell, just for one mistake”. After serving his five-year sentence, Wahlberg was out of prison for six months before he committed another crime and received a six-to-nine-year sentence. It was during this second sentence that a brief encounter with Mother Teresa changed his life.

Call to Love the Incarcerated

On June 4, 1988, Mother Teresa happened to visit the maximum-security prison where Wahlberg was staying. During her visit, Mother Teresa and the sisters from her order joined the inmates for Mass, kneeling beside them as “brothers and sisters before Christ”, Wahlberg recalled. Then Mother Teresa gave a 15 minute address to the



prisoners. She told them, “I will not forget you. I have you in the palm of my hand. You are precious to me. I love you.”

Brief Encounter that Transformed

Wahlberg vividly recalls the transformative impact that Mother Teresa’s compassion had on him. He writes, “For the first time in my life, I saw the face of Christ. The face of love! Mother Teresa knew that we weren’t just inmates. Prisoners! The wretched of the earth. We had names, we had stories and we had souls. When asked by the press why she had come, she responded simply, “You must find the face of God on the faces of these prisoners.”

Wahlberg ended up becoming a faithful Catholic in prison, thanks to both Mother Teresa and to the influence of a holy prison chaplain, Father Jim Fratus. He received the Sacrament of Confirmation not long after Mother Teresa’s visit, and was released on parole after serving half of the minimum for his sentence. “That moment with Mother Teresa changed my life,” he wrote decades later in *The Big Hustle*. Mother Teresa and Father Fratus brought Christ’s love to Wahlberg when he was a deeply troubled young man. Later, James M. Wahlberg became an American activist, speaker, director, producer, and writer. He is the author of *The Big Hustle: A Boston Street Kid’s Story of Addiction and Redemption*.

Mother for the Incarcerated

Twenty-eight years ago, Mother Teresa of Calcutta quietly visited the Regina Coeli prison in Rome. Father Vittorio Trani, a Conventual Franciscan and prison chaplain for 38 years, explained that Mother Teresa visited the prison in May 1994 and he added, “She came somewhat incognito. I gave permission so they would let her in but I didn’t tell anyone about it. She came in and attended Mass with a few detainees. It was very emotional,” he related. “We had set aside a nice chair for her in the middle, but



ST MOTHER TERESA

when she came and saw it, she looked at me and said no and went to another simple chair that was at the back,” the priest recalled with a smile. “Like other great saints, Mother Teresa has a lot of importance here also because the detainees see her as someone close to them, she had that ability to be close to people,” he noted.

Mother Teresa Addresses PMI Volunteers

Mother Teresa often accepted invitations to talk, as they would offer her an opportunity to draw the world’s attention on the poor and needy. Here’s one such interview where she talked to Anto Akkara, an Indian advocate and journalist. Mother Teresa spoke to Anto Akkara on November 17, 1995 at the Missionaries of Charity’s ‘Nirmala Sishu Bhavan’ centre in New Delhi. Anto Akkara asked Mother Teresa, “I heard you in September telling Catholic clergy in prison ministry that ‘to care for men and women in jail is to do something beautiful for God’. Are you planning to enter the prison ministry?” and she replied “We are already taking care of people from jail. Hundred and ten non-criminal women are already with us in Shantidhan (abode of peace). And soon, 22 boys will come to us from jail. Our Brothers will take care of them. West Bengal state Government has decided that non-criminal persons should not be kept in these kinds of places and asked us to take care of them. They should live in an atmosphere of love. They need to be loved. The second national convention of Prison Ministry India was conducted at Navinta Retreat centre, in Delhi from 22 to 24th of September, 1995 and Mother Teresa addressed PMI volunteers.



Saint of the Gutters

Who is this Saint of the Gutters? Well Mother Teresa herself gave her identity: “By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, I am an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus.” And this Saint’s feast is celebrated on 5 September. Born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu of Albanian parents on August 26, 1910, in Skopje, in what is Macedonia today, Mother Teresa came to eastern India’s Kolkata city, formerly Calcutta, in 1929, as a missionary of the Sisters of Loreto. Later, in what she described as a ‘call within a call’, she founded her Missionaries of Charity congregation in 1950 to serve Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor. Mother Teresa earned 124 national as well as international honours for her works of mercy, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. She died on September 5, 1997 at the age of 87 and St John Paul II declared her Blessed in the Vatican, on October 19, 2003 and Pope Francis canonized her on September 4, 2016.

Festal Blessings

Prison is one of the most blessed places, because God is most felt there. Jesus Himself said, “I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:36). One of the 7 corporal works of mercy is “to visit the imprisoned” and Mother Teresa did it. It is in prison the prisoners encounter God in their nothingness. The disciples of Jesus encountered Him after His resurrection in their nothingness, when they were in a locked room for fear of the Jews. Prison ministry is different from other ministries, because our encounter is with the ones who are thrown out, who are judged and condemned by society, who are broken and who are deprived of their freedom. Festal Blessings of the Saint of the Gutters and may she intercede for us to the God of the Lost to bless us with passion to go to the peripheries as Pope Francis invites us.




Beheaded Prisoner: St John the Baptist

Sr Shanti Picardo FC

On 29 August we celebrated the passion of John the Baptist. We know very well why John the Baptist was beheaded. According to Mt 14:1-12 and Mark 6:14-29, Herodias the illegal wife of King Herod Antipas was responsible for it. John the Baptist had rebuked King Herod for divorcing his wife and marrying his brother Philip's wife which was a violation of the law (Lev 18:6). Herodias was angry with the prophet over this. To appease her, the king put John into prison. As a Roman ruler he could have executed John but he respected him and protected him because he knew John was righteous. Ultimately, Herodias' hate-filled grudge against John the Baptist was the reason for the beheading.

It is well known to us how she managed to execute her plan on Herod's Birthday. It was the provocative dance of Salome, Herodias' daughter, that made the king tell the girl "Ask me for anything you like ... up to half my kingdom (Mk 6:22-23). To his shock, his happiness, generosity and greatness turned into deep regret when the girl asked for John the Baptist's head on a platter. As a matter of fact, Herodias only had urged Salome to demand his head. Herodias' bloodthirsty hatred was satisfied. But was Herod happy? Were the guests Happy? Not at all... The dance turned to death! The Birthday of Herod turned to be the death day of John the Baptist. Royal celebration brought mourning to the Galileans who longed to see John being released since 2 years! Herod



shed the blood of John the Baptist to please his wife. The same happened when Pilate shed the blood of Jesus to please the crowd.

Was there beheading of Prisoners in the past? Beheading was a mode of executing capital punishment by which the head was severed from the body. The ancient Greeks and Romans regarded it as a most honorable form of death. In early times an axe was used but later a sword for beheading. Although beheading or hanging was a means of executing political prisoners in Nazi Germany, the practice is now rare in the world. However, it is still practiced in some Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Even today the death penalty is seen in China, Iran, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi, Japan, and U.S.A. etc.

Whether it is in the past or in the present, both saints and sinners have been punished by society. We may not see beheading/hanging today in the modern world, but we do see innocents being punished for no fault of theirs. John the Baptist spoke the truth and paid the price. Fr Stan Swamy SJ fought for the poor tribals and was imprisoned and died on 5 July 2021. Prof GN Saibaba was raided in September 2013 by Maharashtra police along with cases against five others—Prashant Rahi, Mahesh Tirki, Pandu Narote, Vijay Tirki, and Hem Mishra. After a hasty trial based on questionable evidence, on March 7, 2017, Prof. Saibaba was sentenced to life in prison. Since then, he has been imprisoned in the maximum security prison Cell in the Nagpur Central Prison. Prof. Saibaba's co-accused, 35-year-old Pandu Narote, died in police custody due to lack of medical attention.

On June 6th 2018 the Bhima Koregaon

arrests occurred in phases beginning with Sudhir Dhawale, Rona Wilson, Surendra Gadling, Shoma Sen and Mahesh Routh. Later Anand Teltumde, Hany Babu, Ramesh Gaichor, Sagar Gorkhe, Jyoti Jagtap and Fr. Swamy. On 28th August, 2018 poet, trade unionist, human right activists Varavara Rao, Gautam Navlakha, Sudha Bharadhwaj, Arun Ferreira and Vernon Gonsalves were arrested. Recently Teesta Setalvad and Siddique Kappan were arrested for fighting for right causes. The list goes on. These are some of the people who are challenging the corrupt government today like the Prophets in the Bible.

The PMI members have met many prisoners who are innocent. Yet they are suffering in overcrowded prisons in dire conditions. What do we learn from the beheading of John the Baptist? John the Baptist called sin a sin. For most of us this might be tough call. Yet we have to take his example. Though John the Baptist's life ended soon in a heartbreaking manner, we know that he will be remembered forever as a great prophet who was a daring challenger. In fact Jesus himself declared in no uncertain terms that John the Baptist was the greatest of all the prophets. He had no power struggle, no argument, or bitterness. There was only humility and surrender.

So let us be optimistic and pray for the innocent prisoners so that they do not lose hope in the savior who gives interior freedom even in the dark cells of prison. St. John the Baptist, pray for the innocent Prisoners.



Nigerian Nuns Freed

Benedict Mayaki, SJ

After four nuns of the Congregation of the Sisters of Jesus the Saviour regain their freedom after two days in the hands of their captors, Sr. Ascensio Madukaji, SJS, expresses the gratitude and joy of the religious order upon the safe and unconditional release of the abducted sisters. "We are so grateful to God for the release of our sisters without harm." These words convey the relief and happiness of the Congregation of the Sisters of Jesus the Savior, as they reflect on the happenings of the past days, in the wake of the abduction and subsequent release of some of their members. Sisters Johannes Nwodo, Christabel Echemazu, Liberata Mbamalu and Benita Agu were seized by kidnapers around the Okigwe-Umulolo area in Abia State, Nigeria on Sunday morning, as they were on their way to Mass. Two days later, a statement signed by the Secretary-General of the Congregation announced the joyful news of the unconditional and safe release of the four nuns. This latest kidnapping incident brings to the fore once again, the security challenges of Africa's most populous nation, as the Nigerian government and security agencies battle to ensure the protection of the lives and properties of its citizens.

Kidnapped on Their Way to Mass

Sr Ascensio Madukaji, SJS, the Director of Missions for the Congregation in Rome, spoke to Vatican News in an interview, reflecting on the circumstance of the abduction and release of the religious nuns. "It was a terrible situation," said the religious



NUNS FREED

sister, recalling the general emotion when they received the news of the kidnap of the four nuns. She explained that the sisters had been on their way to join another colleague's Thanksgiving Mass for the profession of her final vows which had taken place the day before. Shortly after they set out, they were accosted and abducted by men she called "Fulani herdsmen." "They were taken into the bush," Sr. Madukaji recounts. "They spent two complete days... without food, without drink, without anything."

Release of the Nuns, Prayers

Kidnappings for ransom are not uncommon in Nigeria, as bandits, armed individuals and, more recently, nomadic herdsmen have been linked to the crime of taking persons against their will. In this case, the sister says that the abductors, with pecuniary motives behind their actions, got in contact with some sisters and family members of the kidnapped sisters in hopes of getting a ransom. In a bid to discourage the worrying uptick of kidnappings in the country, Nigerian bishops have discouraged the payment of any amount of money in ransom for kidnapped priests and religious, expressing concern that it may encourage criminality.

Sr. Madukaji stressed the important role of prayer in the ordeal of the sisters, noting that the Congregation immediately turned to God in prayer, imploring Our Lord, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the quick and safe return of their sisters. "We prayed. In fact, we prayed chain Rosaries, 24 hours - night and day. Adoration. Rosary. And then people all over the world were praying for us. We know that," she said. Fortunately, two days later, the four sisters were released from the hands of their captors.

Gratitude

In light of the worrying trend of insecurity, Sr. Madukaji called on government and security to agencies to "sit up" in their task of assuring the protection of Nigerians, and urged authorities to continue in their fight against insecurity in the West African Nation. The religious sister then offered her profound gratitude to all who reached out to the congregation to express their closeness as the news of the sisters' abduction spread. She also seized the opportunity to acknowledge the founder of the congregation, Very Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Matthew Paul Edeh, C.S. Sp. "We thank them for being with us all throughout this period, because it was a terrific moment," she said. Sr Madukaji also noted that in the thick of the difficult time, all hands were on deck as the Congregational Superior and even members of other congregations joined them in solidarity and prayers.

Insecurity

In recent times, Nigeria has seen several instances of violent killings and forceful abductions of citizens, some of them targeting priests, religious and leaders of other religious denominations. In 2022 alone, several priests have been kidnapped and some killed. The horrific attack on worshippers at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Owo, on Pentecost Sunday which left over 40 dead, shocked both religious and civil parties within the country. In May, the prelate of the Methodist Church in Nigeria was kidnapped and subsequently freed a day later, after paying a ransom of one hundred million Naira. On 25 June, Fr. Vitus Borogo of the Kaduna archdiocese was killed by armed individuals at Prison Farm, Kujama, along Kaduna-Kachia road, Chikun Local Government Area. The following month, on 15 July, Fr. John Mark Cheitnum, a priest of the Kafanchan diocese, was brutally killed by his kidnappers, while another priest who was abducted with him at the same time luckily escaped with his life.






Mutual Okayness

Dr Pearl Drego

The quality of human relationships that are created by the communion, participation, and mission of synodality can be termed Mutual Okayness. This is an attitude in which I respect myself and I respect others, in which I experience God's love shining in me and in people far away.

Synodality is rooted in Mutual Okayness because:

Mutual Okayness unfolds the horizons of the Infinite
Mutual Okayness glistens with unfailing hope
Mutual Okayness ushers in a new dawn
Mutual Okayness gives a halo of holiness
Mutual Okayness builds a union of hearts
Mutual Okayness illumines the soul
Mutual Okayness is engulfed in goodness
Mutual Okayness radiates mercy
Mutual Okayness stirs compassion
Mutual Okayness opens the avenue of humility
Mutual Okayness ferments sustainability
Mutual Okayness subdues arrogance
Mutual Okayness fuels justice
Mutual Okayness reflects the essence of life
Mutual Okayness fans out in prayer
Mutual Okayness brings an avalanche of trust
Mutual Okayness is rooted in warm affection
Mutual Okayness creates the sweetness of gratitude
Mutual Okayness reveals the essence of life
Mutual Okayness moves from hierarchy to solidarity
Mutual Okayness guides the path to freedom



Mutual Okayness values democratic methods
Mutual Okayness supports togetherness
Mutual Okayness unveils gender equality
Mutual Okayness funnels the desire to heal nature
Mutual Okayness births a spirit of understanding
Mutual Okayness breaks down barriers
Mutual Okayness heals past wounds
Mutual Okayness generates sincere fellowship

Mutual Okayness founds family and community
Mutual Okayness nourishes delight
Mutual Okayness brings new opportunities
Mutual Okayness fosters new vision and insight
Mutual Okayness advances self-esteem
Mutual Okayness restores confidence
Mutual Okayness helps bring comfort in grief
Mutual Okayness gives the courage to overcome obstacles
Mutual Okayness prevents depression
Mutual Okayness overcomes deprivations
Mutual Okayness dissolves prejudice
Mutual Okayness evaporates conflict
Mutual Okayness inspires listening skills
Mutual Okayness divinizes friendship
Mutual Okayness ushers in fulfillment
Mutual Okayness constructs reconciliation
Mutual Okayness forges forgiveness
Mutual Okayness showers blessings
Mutual Okayness cultivates joy
Mutual Okayness opens up spiritual treasures
Mutual Okayness surrounds us with peace.
May we be committed to a synodality of love built on the communion of Mutual Okayness.

Courtesy to Catholic News Update Asia:
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We, the Inmates of Tihar, Fold our Hands to PMI Volunteers

Timothy and Christian Group

August 13 was another Glorious Day for us - the inmates of Jail No: 4 at Tihar, Delhi. The Ministry of our Lord Jesus, extended to us in the jail through vessels like Sr. Inigo, has been the bedrock of our little hopes and source of Joy in this Jail. Just like other Liturgical Services celebrated in the past, today's Mass came with its own uniqueness as St. Maximilian Kolbe, who gave his life for another prisoner, was the centre of focus. The realization of the value placed in the Bible on us, prisoners, is amazing. According to Mt. 25: 36, "I was in prison, you came to see me", Jesus equated Himself with us in the prison. What a privilege – we are the Face of Jesus Christ!

The Mass celebrated by Fr George Peter Kachirayil MST was preceded by hearing of confessions. Very many of us queued up in line to make our confession. With the joy of reconciliation, we participated in the Mass and received Communion. Our joy was inexplicable! Having such a spirit-filled Mass within the Jail was a rare gift. We really appreciate the gift of Sr. Inigo, who is able to penetrate the hearts of our group through the power of the Word of God. Her sharing has a gripping effect on us as our pains felt shared and our worries reduced. How soothing!



To peak it all, a question that she posed before us made us all ponder: "Are your words a blessing and healing to others?" God's words are a blessing to us. But how about our words to others? What else can we ask for than a regular preaching and a Mass of this calibre!

We were further blessed by the words of the Psalmist in Ps: 68: 6: "The Lord will lead out the prisoners to prosperity"

Our hopes are renewed!
Our faith is strengthened!
Our joy is doubled!
Our wounds are healed!

We pray for unending grace upon Sr. Inigo, Fr. George and Mr. Shanu Jacob – who are working for us to make sure the Good News of Jesus reaches us in this prison!

Prison Voice

Rowena Luis

The magazine Prison Voice and the work of the Lord being carried out is tremendous. You're a diligent, focused, hard-working, Spirit-filled, fruit-bearing minister for the Kingdom of God to the lost.... and deeply committed and able to raise more warriors for the ministry. So proud of the achievement of PRISON VOICE

Rom 4:17 calling into existence that which was not is my sincere prayer and wish for you on Prison Ministry Sunday... as you lead this work in country to new heights, for God is preparing to take you beyond borders. Lots of love and prayers. Have a blessed Prison Ministry Sunday.



Prison Voice



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Moral Instructions at Jashpur Prison



Nediad Prison Visit



PMI Aurangabad Diocesan Conference



PMI Aurangabad Diocesan Meeting



PMI Jashpur Unit Meeting



PMI Kollam Unit Meeting



PMI Maharashtra State Conference



PMI Orientation Program, Shimoga



Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Bhavnagar



Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Chenchelaguda Prison



Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration Maninagar



Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Sacred Heart Church, Bangalore



Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, St Paul's Forane Church, Pollachi



Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Pallotine Church, Bangalor



Releasing an Uganda Prisoner from Puzhal Prison



Sacred Heart Deacons, Poonamalli Visiting Saidapet Prison



**St Maximilian Kolbe Day
Celebration, Maninagar**



**St Maximilian Kolbe Day
Celebration, Gujarat**



**St Maximilian Kolbe Day
Celebration, Palakkad Jail**



**St Maximilian Kolbe Day
Celebration, Vadodhara**



Vadodhara Prison Visit



Visit to Attingal Subjail



Visit to Bareilly Prison



Visit to Chavakkad Prison



Visit to KGF Special Subjail



Visit to Khurai Jail



Visit to Koilandy Jail



Visit to Mananthawady Prison



Visit to Manathawady Jail



Visit to Ottappalam Prison



Visit to Meerut Jail



Visit to Peerumedu Prison