



# PRISON VOICE

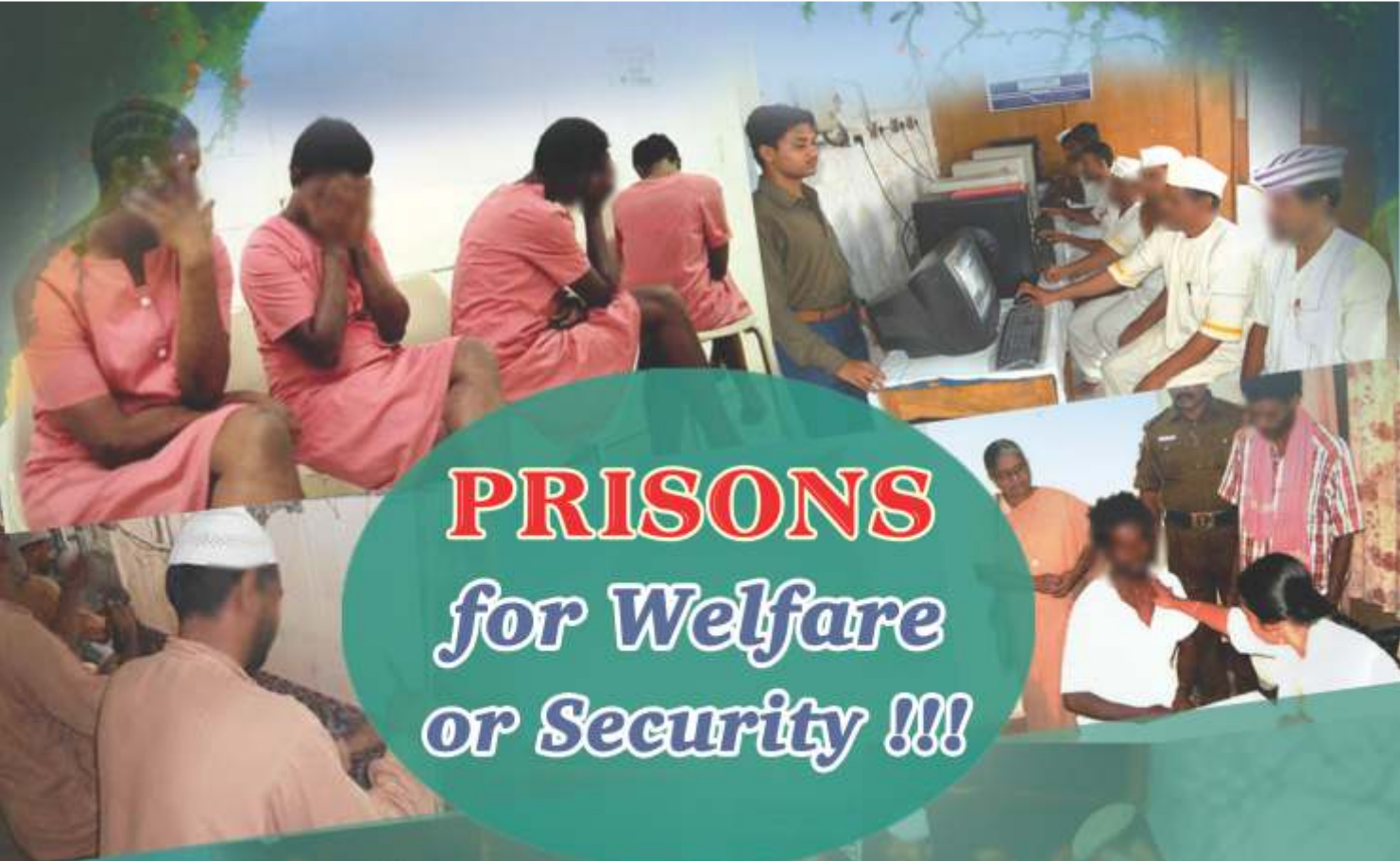
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Issue 3

**NATIONAL MONTHLY**

₹ 20/-



**PRISONS**  
*for Welfare  
or Security !!!*





# The 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference of Prison Ministry India



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### *Are you willing?*

*"Help a Child of a Prisoner*

*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, by  
giving*

*Rs. 3,000/- per child in a  
year. Your contribution is a  
help to mend a life.*

*Please send your valuable  
contribution.*

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## Every life has A PURPOSE AND MEANING



**Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC**  
Chief Editor

I remember a man, out of frustration telling me, "The world has given me enough, I should commit a crime and go to prison, where I'll be fed 3 times and would have nothing to worry about." "If you want total security, go to prison. There you are fed, clothed, given medical care and so on. The only thing lacking is freedom," says Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th president of the United States. Security without freedom is slavery. What does a human need? Food or freedom? Clothes or love? I often hear the laity saying, "Religious sisters and priests are safe and secure within the four walls of the convents and seminaries; we struggle with the outside life. Every night before going to bed we think and worry about the next day's food. What to feed our children? But everything is provided to you on your table." If all our homes and residences were places of security then the society, and the world at large, would not have had great leaders.

Great leaders are created only through struggles and pain. If our prisons were places of absolute security then we would not have a prisoner turning over a new leaf when they come out after serving their term. Most of the prisoners after their life imprisonment come out as new beings, ready for a new start in their lives, becoming loving and loveable, transformed and being hope for the hopeless. Prisoners are provided with lots of opportunities



to work and to study according to their capacities and various training courses are provided. They are paid for the work they do. As the prisoners look at the next day with hope, the authorities and system work towards their welfare. The purpose of life is to live, to live fully. Just because prisoners have made mistakes or were compelled to make mistakes in life their life does not become meaningless. Every life has a purpose and meaning.

As we the Prison ministry volunteers believe, "Every saint has a past and a sinner has a future", every prisoner who is in prison has a future. Thus prisons work for the welfare and rehabilitation of the inmates. The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today. The best (Welfare) is offered to every prisoner within the four walls of prison today, so that he/she is prepared well to face his/her tomorrow. Many of the ex-prisoners are settled happily because they were counselled, their talents discovered, given spiritual and inner strength, hope and love, and accepted by others with all their shortcomings. So, as we all work for the welfare of the prisoners let us not judge our brethren behind the bars, rather let us do our best to give them a bright tomorrow.

WE NEED many more people like  
**St. Savin**  
in the Prison Ministry...



**Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan LLM,**  
National Coordinator & Secretary to C.B.C.I  
for Prison Ministry India

Once, many years ago, a hermit who later came to be known as St. Savin lived in one of the caves near about Viscos. At the time, Viscos was little more than a frontier post in France, populated by bandits fleeing from justice, smugglers and prostitutes, by confidence tricksters in search of accomplices, even by murderers hiding out between murders. The wickedest of them all, an Arab called Ahab, controlled the whole village and the surrounding areas, imposing extortionate taxes on the local farmers, who still insisted on maintaining a dignified way of life.

One day, Savin came down from his cave, arrived at Ahab's house and asked to spend the night there. Ahab laughed: "You do know that I am a murderer who has already slit a number of throats, and that your life is worth nothing to me?"

"Yes, I know that," Savin replied, "but I am tired of living in a cave and I would like to spend at least one night here with you."

Ahab knew the saint's reputation, which was as great as his own, and this made him uneasy, for he did not like having to share his glory with someone so weak. Thus he determined to kill him that very night, to prove to everyone that he was the one true master of the place.

They chatted for a while. Ahab was impressed by what the saint had to say, but he was a suspicious man who no longer believed in the existence of Good. He showed Savin where he could sleep and then continued sharpening his knife menacingly. After watching him for a few minutes, Savin closed his eyes and went to sleep.



Ahab spent all night sharpening his knife. Next day, when Savin awoke, he found Ahab in tears at his side: "You were not afraid of me and you did not judge me. For the first time ever, someone spent a night by my side trusting that I would be a good man, one ready to offer hospitality to those in need. Because you believed I was capable of behaving decently, I did."

From that moment on Ahab abandoned his life of crime and set about transforming the region. That was when Viscos ceased being merely a frontier post inhabited by outcasts, and became an important trading centre and a reformed place on the border between two countries.

Ref. to *The Devil & Miss Prym* by Paulo Coelho.

We need many people like Savin in our ministry and elsewhere. Only trust can bring about reformation in the lives of people. Jesus had trust in Peter's ability to lead the group. The father in the story of the prodigal son had faith that one day the son would come back a reformed person.

We hope that our brothers and sisters in prison would one day feel that there is someone to love them, respect them, believe them, and help them, not based on their crimes but on their dignity as human beings. We shall dream that our nation will one day treat our brothers and sisters in prison not according to their offences but according to the dignity given to them by the creator.

## You are not Alone

The Prison Ministry India, a national voluntary organization working for the release, reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners, conducted its 12th National Conference from 23rd Oct 2018 - 26th Oct 2018 in Guwahati Assam. 6 bishops, 97 priests, 216 nuns and 197 lay people from northern, north-eastern, central and southern India marked their presence in the conference.

The conference commenced with the inaugural function and a welcome note by the PMI National Coordinator Fr. Sabastian Vadakumpadan, followed by the address by the guest-of-honour, the Honourable Justice T. Vaiphai, the Chairman of Human Rights Commission Assam, presidential address by His Grace the Most Rev. John Moolachira, and address by the Most Rev. Theodore Mascarenhas, the General Secretary of CBCI. Thoughtful messages were also given by Ranjana Sharma, the IGP of prisons, the Most Rev. Alwyn D'Silva, Chairman of Prison Ministry India and by the Most Rev. Bishop Peter Remigius, the former Chairman.

The inspirational life of Blessed Rani Maria, who was murdered, was presented by her youngest sister, Sr. Selmy. She gave an account of the transformation of the offender and his grief and repentance over the crime.

Each state presented a report of the activities organised by them in prisons. Panel discussions with Dr Bahdesh Kumardas, Mr Nurul Laskar and Dr Biju SDB on prisons and prisoners from the perspective of other faiths, gave an overall understanding of the life of our brothers and sisters within

the prison walls. Informative sessions were also conducted on the legislation and prisoners by the Law Minister Siddharta Bhattacharya, prison and prisoners by Shri. Ranjan Sharma, judiciary and prisoners by S. N. Sharma, Legal Member Secretary of Assam, and judiciary and prison activities by the activist Srimati Rossana Lyngdoh, the Board Director of Impulse NGO network. Interactive sessions on the challenges and opportunities for PMI and its volunteers were discussed. Volunteers also shared their experiences that strengthened them and the areas of improvement to better the functions and activities of the PMI. Further to the discussions, a memorandum was prepared listing the suggestions and opinions collected to be presented to the government and church authorities.

The objective of the conference was to weave together views and ideas and exchange these with the government authorities for the welfare of prisoners and the future of the PMI. The theme of the conference "You are not alone" gave the message to the PMI volunteers that in our ministry work of reaching out to the prisoners and their families, we are together in spirit, together in our joy and suffering, in our mission and in prayer that strengthens and binds us to each other and this is the very message the volunteers should be conveying to our brothers and sisters behind the bars. "You are not alone" should be reinforced by way of our interactions with them and help them reform their lives within and outside the prison walls.

## I have been waiting for this for a long time. But who will take me to jail?



**Sr. Selmy Paul FCC**  
*Sister of Blessed Rani Maria*

I rejoice in my Lord because he has done great things in my life. One of the great things is the martyrdom of my own sister Sr. Rani Maria. We were born in an ordinary family with seven children. Our parents, Paily and Eliswa brought us up in the Christian faith. Rani was born on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1954. She was a person of few words, but full of laughter and joy; preferred very simple cloths, and had no interest in ornaments. She was an example to us and our parents were proud of her. After her 10<sup>th</sup> she joined the FCC in the province of Ernakulam. During her formation period itself she expressed her passion to serve the poor and the oppressed. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1974 she committed herself to the service of the Lord and received the name, Rani Maria.

In 1976 she was sent to the north Indian mission in the Diocese of Bijnor in UP. It was the cradle of her mission activities. The presence of Rani Maria made a difference in the lives of people in around 20 villages. She was known as 'Bijnor Rani'. Later she was transferred to Odagady, where she was appointed as the coordinator of the social activities. She was firmly convinced that only through love and sacrifice could one secure the total liberation proclaimed by Christ. Camps were organized in several

villages of Adivasis and Harijans, village committees were formed, training programs were arranged for the village leaders, and saving schemes and Mahila mandals etc. were started.

She was transferred to Udainagar, in the Diocese of Indore in 1992. Here also she worked towards the awakening and the empowering of the poor in nearly 15 villages. There was a clash between the Adivasi Christians in a village and some political leaders in that area. Though she tried for reconciliation, it did not succeed; the poor Christians were imprisoned. The villagers turned to Sr. Rani Maria, and through her intervention, they were released from prison. This angered the opponents, and they were waiting for an opportunity to get back at her.

On 25<sup>th</sup> February 1995, Sr. Rani Maria was to take the first bus to Indore and from there to Kerala. When she reached the bus stand, they came to know that the bus which goes through Dewas was cancelled. So they reserved one seat in the second bus, named 'Kapil', which would reach Indore through a forest road. They returned as the bus would leave only at 8.15 am and they could board it from the front of the convent.

When the bus arrived there were nearly fifty passengers including her would-be murderer. When the bus reached the forest, about 20 km from Udainagar, the culprit got out of the bus and performed the sacred rite of breaking coconut to their divinity. Then he re-entered the bus with the broken pieces of the coconut and distributed it to all the co-travellers. Samunder Singh, the assassin, offered a piece to Sr. Rani Maria but then withdrew it as if to fool her. She asked him,



"Why are you so overjoyed today?" Drawing out a knife he said, "Just for this," and thrust it into her stomach. Repeatedly he stabbed her. The bus stopped. Deaf to her cries, he dragged her out of the bus and stabbed her to death. The post-mortem registered 40 major injuries besides 14 bruises. Unto the last, she kept on saying "Jesus! Jesus!" None of the passengers dared to go to her rescue. Most of them ran away.

When I heard about the death of my sister, it shocked me. My heart was filled with sorrow and bitterness. I thought I could never forgive the assassins of my sister. But when I touched the wounded body of my sister, I remembered her words to her Provincial Superior, when she was cautioned about the risks involved in the kind of work she did: "I have no fear to die for the poor and I will die for my Lord". My heart became light. I sat down there, pondering over her words, over her death. I questioned the crucified lord: 'Why did you allow my beloved sister to be left alone on the jungle road?' I asked the same questions to Jesus again and again. Slowly I slipped into a deep silence. After a few minutes, I heard a voice, "I was beside her with my beloved mother. Was it not enough?" I received my answer from the crucified Lord. He strengthened me. I received the grace to forgive the murderers unconditionally. I understood that they were only instruments in the hands of God and I felt Rani was awarded for her selfless sacrifices for the poor.

On 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 1995 her mortal body was taken from Indore to Udainagar. On the way I was thinking about how to console my family. When I met my dear ones, my brother Stephen embraced me and said, "Rani is lucky, her desire is fulfilled." This comforted me greatly. After her death, my mother visited Udainagar for the first time. She stayed there for one

week. Every evening we used to go and pray at the tomb. One day while we were going, I asked mother, "If we meet the assassins of Rani on the way what would we do? Mother replied, "I will kiss his hands because my daughter's blood is upon them." I wondered at her answer.

About one week after the death of my sister, Rev. Fr. Andrews Athapilly told me that what we had to do at that moment was to go and meet the assassin of Sr. Rani Maria in jail and give him forgiveness. I was inspired by this spirit-filled words and I informed this to my superiors. They could not accept this. So I decided to prepare for this reconciliation procedure with much prayer and sacrifice. I also believed that God would show the way, in the fullness of time.

#### Act of Forgiveness

After seven years of prayer, on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2002, I received a phone call from Fr. Swami Sadanand, who asked me, "Are you ready to go and visit Samunder Singh in jail?" I replied, "I have been waiting for this for a long time. But who will take me to jail?" The Father agreed to make arrangements for the visit. He had visited Samunder in jail several times, and mentally prepared him. Only then had he contacted me over the phone. Samunder had said to Fr. Swami: "My mistake is grave. No one in the world can forgive me."





On 21<sup>st</sup> August along with Fr. Swami and other sisters, we started our journey to the Central Jail, Indore. I had carried *rakhi* and sweets with me. Samunder Singh was brought before us. Fr. Swami introduced us. He was shivering. He prostrated in front of us and pleaded: “Forgive me....



forgive me...I am doing penance...forgive me.” I replied, “God has forgiven you. We too forgive you. Be at peace.” I tied *rakhi* on the hands stained with the blood of my sister Rani and kissing it accepted him as my brother. Then I gave the sweet to him. My heart was filled with peace and joy. It was really a heavenly experience; I received the grace to accept him as a brother.

When I shared this news with my parents and siblings, they too expressed their desire to meet Samunder. Thus once again on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2003, I accompanied by my mother, brother Stephen, and others went to the Central Jail, Indore and met Samunder Singh. Mother expressed her forgiveness, by kissing his hands which were once soaked by the blood of her own daughter and accepted him as a son. Samunder had given a letter for my family members earlier, when I went to tie *rakhi* where he had asked for forgiveness.

After nine years of imprisonment I felt that if he was my brother and he was forgiven why should he remain in jail? We submitted an application in affidavit for his release on probation. The governor of MP said, “Only you Christians can forgive this way.” It was a long process. Then after two years on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2006, the same day of Sr. Rani’s feast, Samunder was released on probation. It was very surprising for me because just one week ago an official had told me that it would

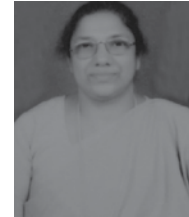
not happen soon. On hearing that my father was gravely ill, Samunder made arrangements to visit us in Kerala. I took him to my father who was bed-ridden. Samunder kissed his hands and sat down asking for pardon. When I introduced him to others, he was struggling to face

them. After receiving blessings from my parents and siblings he had lunch with us. Then he was taken to the room where Rani’s photo was kept. He cried bitterly. My mother hugged and consoled him, though she herself was in tears. Before leaving Samunder asked me, “I can bear everything, but not the tears of mother. How can a mother do this?” I told him, “She has forgiven everything and has accepted you as her own son.” He looked at me in surprise.

In 2016 on hearing about my mother’s grave illness Samunder reached home. He gave her a spoonful of water and she drank it. Soon she was in a coma. He spent almost 2-3 hours with mother. As if she was waiting for Samunder to reach, at 11 pm, on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2016 her soul flew to heaven. Samunder was one of the coffin-bearers.

Sr. Rani was conscious about the threat to her life. But she did not turn back from the mission of Jesus. She lived with the poor, worked for the poor, struggled with the poor and died as the poorest of the poor on the street. She did nothing but good, wanted nothing but peace. Let us try to follow her example and go forward bravely confronting all the challenges and persecutions we face today. Let us recall the prophetic words of St. John Paul II during his last visit to India: “The church of India will grow only on the blood of Christians.”

## PMI Volunteer- a Gift of God



**Sr. Shiney SDS**

*Unit Co-ordinator, Bangalore*

The 12th National Conference of Prison Ministry India was held at Christ the Bearer of Good News Cathedral Church Auditorium, Rukminigaon, Dispur, Guwahati with the theme of 'You are not Alone' from 23rd to 26th October 2018.

The first day's sub theme was 'You are not alone in Prayer.' The conference began with the Holy Mass celebrated by the Most. Rev. Michael Akasius Toppo, Chairman of North-East PMI and he implored the grace and blessings of the Almighty for the success of the conference. In the evening all the participants were welcomed by the North-East cultural eve, where each state's dance was performed.

The participants entered the second day with the sub theme of 'You are not alone in suffering', with a morning prayer. The Holy Mass was celebrated by the Most. Rev. Peter Remigius, former chairman of Prison Ministry India. The Prison Pulse was presented by Mr Alex from Bangalore and Mr Akash Singh from Guwahati who shared their experiences in prison tearfully, and the services offered and sacrifices made by Prison Ministry volunteers.

After the inaugural function, Sr. Selmy FCC presented the life of her sister, the Blessed Rani Maria, who set the perfect example of forgiveness and reconciliation.

A brief history of Prison Ministry was presented by Fr. Francis Kodiyan, co-founder of the ministry, leading with the story of Alibaba where Alibaba needed EQ, IQ, and LQ. LQ is a spiritual quotient. He said it was a spiritual ministry. We need to have

recourse to the most Holy Eucharist and prayer, where we receive LQ, as a "Love bomb" to heal, by receiving and maintaining a personal relationship with the Lord. The divine experience with the Eucharist would give us the wherewithal to overcome disagreement, disunity, misunderstanding etc.

All were divided into groups and dispersed for group discussions and each group had a resource person to talk on the topics given to them.

After the group discussions the Mizoram state coordinator, Fr. Praveen Fernandez introduced the Archbishop of Guwahati. The Archbishop was instrumental in the starting of the PMI in the North-East. He spoke about the situation and the cases there at present like petty cases, political cases, etc. He stated that we should not be judgemental while dealing with people. People would not respond at the time but they will respond in time. In the current situation our lands are being challenged, and our services are being questioned. Our presence is hated; there is an increase of migrations, corruption, terrorism etc. We need to be careful. Anger is growing in the world. Right and legitimate anger, anger against colonialism, Dalit anger etc., are used towards its own purposes. At times we are activists, but many a times we are victims. He stated that we should heal this kind of anger. He introduced his book explaining anger and the cycle of suffering

caused by anger. He also explained about stored anger. We have to heal people in prison who want to repent, want to become better. We need to work inside and outside for better relationships.

Gujarat, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Orissa, West Bengal and Goa state committees presented their reports. The activities were at the level of renewal, reformation and rehabilitation.

The third day began with the theme of 'You are not alone in Joy', with the Holy Eucharist being celebrated by the Most. Rev. John Moolachira. Next was the inspirational message given by Fr. Varghese Karippery, the founder of Prison Ministry India on the reality of "PMI Volunteer-A Gift of God." Sr. Clara gave an inspirational talk from her personal experience on the theme of "Prison Ministry India and Rehabilitation" after which the following states had presented reports: Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Bihar, UP, Maharashtra, Orissa, Delhi, Haryana, Chandigarh and the North-East states.

All the participants were asked to go to their groups for the region-wise discussions and the following were the points discussed for better regional growth:

- What are our strengths for prison experiences as a full-timer, coordinator and volunteer?
- What are our weaknesses as a full-timer, coordinator and volunteer?
- What are the challenges in Prison ministry?
- What are our opportunities in Prison ministry
- What are our practical suggestions for the church to take care of for a better ministry in the coming years?

There were panel discussions on the topics of prison and prisoner from the point of a Hindu

religious person by Dr Bhabesh Kumardas, from the point of a Muslim religious person by Mr Nurul Laskar and from the point of a Christian religious person by Dr Biju SDB along with the conference theme of 'You are not alone'. Another panel discussion was on the topic of "Legislation and Prisoners" by Shri. Sidhartha Battacharya, "Prison and Prisoners" by Shri. Ranjan Sharma, IGP Assam, "Judiciary and Prisoners" by Shri. S. N. Sharma, Honourable Legal Member Secretary of Assam and finally "Judiciary and Prisoners" by the activist, Shrimathi Rosanna Lyngdoh, Board Director, Impulse NGO Network.

On the evening of 25th there was a cultural event presented by every state which added light and colour to the conference. Every state participated and presented their culture.

The National Executive Body meeting, General Body meeting and formation of the Regional Executive Body also took place during the conference.

North East Pulse was shared by the volunteers, Sr. Rosia BS and Mr Francis Thantluanga. They shared their personal experience of working for the vulnerable ones, the brethren behind the bars. There was also a special sharing by Mr Anto Akkara, a writer and an activist on the theme of "Innocents in Prisons" who shared about the Kandhamal experience.

On the morning of the 26th, the praise and worship service was conducted by Sr. Mary Mathew SMI and Fr. Thomas Ettiyil VC, who led the group into the spiritual realm. The conference concluded with the Holy Eucharist and final blessing by Most. Rev. Allwyn D'Silva, the Chair of Prison Ministry. The Prison Ministry India Creed was recited by all the participants holding a lighted candle in the church after the Holy Mass.



**If we add LOVE**  
**to the SUFFERINGS,**  
*it becomes Sacrifice*



**Sr. Justina Xavier ( SJC)**  
*National Team Member*

**F**r. Varghese Kariperry in his speech began by quoting Mother Theresa who had told him that working among prisoners was God's work and volunteers were God's Gift. He explained that the Charism was being a love bomb that was born out of prayer. It had all started within a group in a small cabin. Later they were given the opportunity to visit all the jails in Kerala. He further said that we needed to follow the methodology of Jesus. We are God's gifts to others. Explaining the goal of PMI he said that we should allow prisoners to be touched and allow others to touch Jesus through us. As God's gift we were ambassadors. If we add love to the sufferings it becomes sacrifice. PMI is group work, so we need to be united. As individuals we may draw success but not grace. He added that we should be like the mobile phone of Jesus which should be fully charged and should stay connected to Jesus always. He stated that Prison Ministry was a service where Jesus alone could thrive. So, as religious people we could do wonders wherever we were.

Shri. Ranjan Sharma, IGP in his message stated, "...The issues concerning correction and rehabilitation are so complex, that governmental efforts howsoever serious and sincere are not enough to address them properly unless supplemented by community participation and supports. While prison inmates need to be assisted

towards gainful engagement after release, it is also important to save their indigent families from ruination during prolonged incarceration of the bread-earners. Similar care also needs to be taken of the families of homicidal victims who happened to be chief earning members for the families. Unfortunately, there is an acute dearth of voluntary organizations, with dedicated charters, for aid and welfare for the offenders, or their aftercare and rehabilitation, let alone welfare of their families, or of victims' families. In such a scenario, PMI stands out as a welcome example of societal response and support in this field. I am told that the organization has more than 30 years' record of service, in the field of welfare, renewal and rehabilitation of prison inmates, and it also aims at the welfare of their families, as well as victims' families. So far as Assam is concerned the programmes of moral discourse and cultural performance etc., conducted by PMI in a few prisons of the State, have been well-received by the inmates."

In the panel discussion, "Prison and Prisoners from the point of a Hindu religious Person", Dr Bhabesh Kumardas began by reciting a Hindu mantra and

introduced the goal of Ramakrishna Mission Ashram. He stated that there was no difference, all were good and all were well, etc. He added that being alone we become like prisoners. We always like to amass fortunes rather than suffering. To do away with suffering we need emotional support and moral strength. Lasting peace is needed for our existence. He quoted Swami Vivekananda on finding God in everything. And he quoted Valmiki who had written in Ramayana "Hate the sin and not the sinner".

Mr Nurul Laskar, speaking from the point of a Muslim religious person said that 5 practices make a Muslim. India is the third largest Muslim population in the world. Explaining the situation in Islamic nations he said that there were very few prisons there, but punishments were severe. Muslims have to say prayers at sun rise and sun set; there is a time set for every activity. So there were fewer crimes but now the times have changed as have our perspective. Here are no separate jails as per one's religion. He quoted the book on 'Rights of prisoners according to Islamic law'. Prisons should have safety and security. Therefore there should be separate cells for men and women. According to him the high rate of illiteracy among Muslims should be the bigger concern that leads to higher incidence of criminals and people landing in prison. He explained the work he did for prisoners in his youth and he concluded his message appreciating Prison Ministry and all the work it does.

Dr Biju SDB, from the point of a Christian religious person, started quoting how and why importance is given to prisoners. Important personalities in the Bible

were incarcerated in prison. The Bible says prisoners are innocent therefore punishments should not be harsh. But today hurt people are hurt more inside the jails. The Bible presents the messianic mission as setting prisoners free. God is the liberator. Our God is just and merciful. Therefore we need to be merciful to and forgiving of offenders. We need to see to the need of the prisoner and attend to Jesus through that need. He quoted Mother Mary who accompanied the convict to the cross. We as disciples of Jesus need to constantly affirm that Jesus is with us and that 'We are not alone'.

In the next panel discussion Shri. Siddhartha Bhattacharya from Assam talked on the topic of 'Legislation and Prisoners'. He said that people generally think of prison as a place of cruelty. But he assured us that prison was a place of reformation just like cultural centres. Usually the authorities are criticised. He explained about the procedures in jail. He said they attend to prisoners like people who attend to their health at home. He explained how they make them feel that they are not alone; they treat them with friendliness and not as if an obligation. Prisoners' right of access to family members is availed through telephone booths. They teach them some life skills along with vocational training so that when (s)he is out (s)he gains whatever (s)he had lost. Tailoring sections, computer skills, art, etc. are made available so that there are very less instances of sexual harassments, riots, etc. inside the jails. More and more reformative measures are welcomed. On this front the PMI team was appreciated. They were welcomed to take up new initiatives.

Rights of the prisoner from the judicial perspective were explained by the member secretary of Assam assembly, Shri. S. N. Sharma. He congratulated all the delegates who were helping prisoners. Crime was the outcome of time. So the jail should be hospital for the cure of crime. Reformation is the main purpose of imprisoning a person. Prisoners' rights are human rights. The judiciary is taking care of their rights. From 1950, since the constitution was put in place, these rights were allotted to prisoners. The judiciary sees to it that the rights of prisoners are not violated. Towards this end a committee is also set up. Acquittal and rehabilitation committees are also set up of which the Chief Judicial Officer is the head.

Activist Shrimathi Rosanna Lyngdoh, Board Director, Impulse NGO Network gave us the perspective of judiciary and prison activists on the rights of prisoners. She began by saying that building happiness is required to bring down crime. Leaders need to make efforts to put happiness in place. She cited an example of a young girl of 11 years who committed a crime; but she said lock-up is not a friendly place for an 11-years-old. It should be a location that allows people to live with dignity. She illustrated the story of a young girl who did not get legal help to come out of prison. After she concluded, we proceeded with finding answers to our pressing questions concerning legal issues.

Sr. Clara from Jeevodaya Rehabilitation Centre for released women prisoners, in her sharing detailed about the origin and growth of the Prison Ministry as she was one of the pioneer volunteers in Bangalore. Then she continued to explain about the

rehabilitation centre. She said the inmates may look happy but they have a lot of grief in their hearts. It should not be a boarding, it should be a home-away-from-home, and it is a way of life. When they come they are allowed to be what they want to be. Slowly they change and gradually they are occupied by engaging in different kinds of skill-set training etc. She added that if they come to know about the inmates' abilities, they help them to continue their studies or work. She further explained the risks in handling these girls. She illustrated with the story of a girl who had a series of complaints. Sr. Clara emphasized that to start a rehabilitation centre no qualification is needed but that God qualifies; no abilities are needed, but only availability is needed.

Mr Anto Akkara, who is an activist and journalist, presented many incidents pertaining to various people at Kandhamal. He said there were seven poor and innocent people languishing in the jail for 10 years including a mentally-challenged man. He conveyed the message with documentary films. He said none of the Christians had become Hindus even after so much torture, but rather many Hindus had become Christians. He has travelled far and wide addressing people from various capacities and campaigning for the release of these seven prisoners. Mr Francis, a retired State Bank employee, from Mizoram who is an active lay volunteer for PMI shared his experience. He said that he was unaware of anything about the outside world other than the bank and money, but he was inspired by Ms Merlin's sacrifice to start an office and the ministry. He said in Mizoram they had 0.5 percentage of Catholic population and they were like the salt of the earth in prison.



HATS OFF TO YOU  
THE VOLUNTEERS



**Sr. Theresa Mascarenhas**  
*Karnataka State Secretary*

It has been a great experience attending the national conference which had the theme 'You are not alone'. As one of the Prison Ministry volunteers during this October, I met many dedicated and smart colleagues from all over India, experienced veterans, executives, specialists in the working of the Prison Ministry, and legal practitioners from different legal cultures. Personally I think this conference was very well-organized and was a great success. I fully enjoyed the one-week event, which included an outing to Guwahati, Shillong and Bhutan. This conference was filled with so many interesting topics which brought about relevant discussions on various aspects related to a person living in a jail as well as the stigma when (s)he is released. Several of the sessions, delivered by experts in the field had been very informative and insightful. These have made me do an evaluative study of my own practices related to the Prison Ministry and adopt a wider perspective which was benefitted by the exchange of ideas, sharing of activities, socializing with inter-state counterparts etc. In the meantime, I took the chance to examine its relevance that this service may become

a vibrant reality in Karnataka and in other states.

On the first day of the conference, on the evening of 23rd October, the crowd of smiling faces emphasised for me the loud and clear message of 'You are not alone'. I could not believe that the tiny spark which started at Kottayam had spread so wide and become the biggest burning bush all over India. The Eucharist arranged for all of us was a beautiful and meaningful start to the entire proceedings. Though the number of people attending was very high, none seemed to be unfamiliar at north-eastern Guwahati due to the presence of like-minded counterparts. Despite the busy schedule the ever-smiling leader moved around, making each one feel that they are important. The calibre of the organizing committee under the leadership of Sr. Letitia and Fr. Stephen had united the whole north-eastern religious people, priests and laity, making this event extremely successful. It was remarkable to see the co-operation at each and every place that made us comfortable.

On the second day with the usual prayers and Eucharist, we had the interesting and touching experience of listening to two prisoners, Mr Alex from Bangalore and Mr Singh from Assam, which not only cheered the volunteers but created an emotional solidarity among the participants. Later the inaugural session with the dignitaries sharing their feelings and appreciation towards this ministry conferred a sense of royalty and exuberance to the ministry. I enjoyed the presentations given by different panellists on the judicial and executive perspective, as also from the Hindu, Islam and Christian perspectives along with the personal sharing by the coordinator Sr. Rosita BS and Mr Francis. The whole crowd was moved by the biographical presentations by Sr. Selmi on her sister and Mr Anto Akkara, the journalist and activist from Orissa, on the martyrs of Kandhamal.



## Rich Experience

The ten advocates arranged by Fr. Ravi Kumar gave comprehensive information on the IPC and CRPC which we learnt from them as ten different groups. The beautiful North-East dances arranged in the evenings were relaxing to the tired minds and exhausted spirits of our volunteers, who were occupied by the very busy schedule during the day. Everything was set as per the convenience of the participants, including delicious food delivered on time. The arrangements for healthcare of the ill were praiseworthy. Though the lodgings were slightly distant, none felt uncomfortable because transport was arranged to pick up and drop the participants on time. The presentation from each state had enriched all of us and showed the enormous interest of our volunteers, who were barred neither by age nor time constraints. The most enjoyable part of the whole conference was the cultural presentation by the different state units which

brought together both the young and the old on to the stage giving rise to ripples of joy and laughter.

On the whole, the conference has given the conviction to many that 'we are not alone' and that we still have many daunting tasks to accomplish, but there is huge potential for improvement in our work. What some of the speakers shared with the audience intrigued me and I want to learn more of their experiences. I hope my future interactions with my colleagues at PMI in other states will shed some light on many of the seemingly baffling problems faced by a few units.

While I congratulate Fr. Sebastian and the co-organisers I wish to say that the exhilarating experience has made me long for another conference. Let it arrive soon! And hats off to you because you have made a difficult job successful in the stunning North-East! Thank you!

## GROWTH OF PMI- MIZORAM UNIT

The PMI Mizoram Unit was started by the late Mrs Marlene Lalhmingangi in the beginning of 2006. After visiting the jails on her own expenses for about six months, it was officially inaugurated in the Central Jail, Aizawl on 26th September, 2006 by the Most Rev. Stephen Roltuanga CSC, Bishop of Aizawl. From then on many more people came to know about the activities of PMI and started to enrol themselves as volunteers.

Although Mizoram is known as a Christian State, people do not realise the importance and necessity of visiting jails. Mrs Marlene was the first person who visited jails at regular intervals and showed care, love and affection to the inmates. Now, other denominations also have started visiting jails regularly.

In the course of the continued and regular visit to jails till date, the PMI takes care of the daily physical needs of the prisoners like soap, tooth-paste, toothbrush, sandals, underwear

etc. and warm clothes during winter. On special occasions like Easter, Prison-Day, and Christmas, the PMI organises special programmes for their entertainment. On those occasions local Radio artistes and musicians are invited and they perform voluntarily.

From our small experience, we have come to learn the importance of having a rehabilitation centre of our own. Mr Francis Zaithanga, Director of Horeb Retreat Centre has kindly accepted our request and allowed us to use the centre for the PMI rehab centre. The building is being re-constructed with funds from PMI and is on the verge of completion.

The PMI Mizoram appreciates the organisation and functioning of the 12th National Conference 2018, held in Guwahati. We have learnt many things from the conference which will be useful in our jail visits. May the Lord shower His blessings on all the volunteers and all the people who worked for the success of the conference!

## Diwali Celebration at Bhopal Central Jail

Diwali is a festival of lights which brightens the sky and cheers the heart. But it is a different story when you get the opportunity to light up hearts which brings a sparkle to people's eyes and smiles on their faces. It was a day of celebration and joy on 6th November for the women prisoners and their children in the Bhopal Central Jail. It began with a prayer song followed by tribal dance presented by the Nishkalanka Hostel girls.

Sr. Wendy FCC gave the Diwali message stressing on repentance and faith; that if one has these two qualities then everyday will be Diwali within our hearts. After that everybody danced - the sisters, the children along with the prisoners followed by the lighting of sparklers and the burning of fountain crackers. One could certainly see the joy and happiness on their faces; it was like they were becoming

children once again. It concluded with the game, Bombarding the city, and the three winners were given gifts. Madam Somesh Pal, the jailor gave the vote-of-thanks speech. Then we presented a Diwali token to the jail authorities. It was a really heart-warming Diwali celebration.



## FESTIVAL OF LIGHT AND CHILDREN'S DAY AT CHENNAI CENTRAL JAIL - PUZHAL

This year the Deepavali festival was celebrated on 6th November and Children's day was celebrated on 14th November. Both festivals were celebrated together on 4th November, Sunday at the Puzhal Prison. Jesus has said, "You are the Light of the World" (Mt 5:14). Therefore, we must be the light to others who are living in darkness. The first creation was Light. God created Light by uttering, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). Today when we celebrate the Festival of Light, we see the darkness disappearing when light is present. Similarly, we spread the news among the inmates that darkness will never overcome Light. It is always so that Light will overcome darkness. In a similar fashion, whatever sinful thoughts are present in the mind will vanish during this Festival of Lights. The children of prisoners were brought to the prison and they spent time with their fathers. There were 40 families present. The children of St Antony's School, Puzhal performed programmes for the inmates and their family members. Sri. Senthil

Kumar, the Superintendent of the Central Prison, Puzhal appreciated the efforts taken by the PMI for conducting this celebration. Rev. Fr. G. J. Anthonysamy, the State Coordinator, Mr A. Jesu Raja, Secretary PMI, Tamilnadu,



Rev. Fr Varghese Rosario, the Chennai PMI Coordinator and many volunteers participated in the program.

The time spent with the children was memorable. It cannot be compared with any amount of money. All the glory and thanks belong to the Lord almighty. "We are unworthy servants; we have done only what we ought to have done" (Lk 17:10).



## ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING – 2018

Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC

*National Secretary of Prison Ministry India*

The Annual General Body Meeting was held at Christ the Bearer of Good News Cathedral Church Auditorium, Rukminigaon, Dispur, Guwahati on 26th October 2018.

The meeting began at 9.20 am and was presided over by the Most Rev. Peter Remigius, the former chairperson of Prison Ministry India. Bro. Naveen Ekka said a small prayer at the beginning of the meeting and all the members were welcomed by Bp. Peter Remigius. Sr. Lini MSC, the National Secretary presented the minutes of the last General Body Meeting. Then Bp. Peter Remigius explained to us the obligations of the Annual General Body Meeting and of the approval of minutes, approval of accounts and elections. Members were also given a clear picture of the present financial status in detail. He said that the caritas fund was from local caritas for the vehicles and other than that there were no project funds. Mr Alwares proposed and Mr Rajendran and Bro. Sunnilal seconded and everyone approved this. But there was an objection from Fr. Wilfred Fernandes, Maharashtra State Coordinator who pointed out that the persons who proposes and seconds must be persons who had attended the last General Body Meeting. He was applauded for his valid and immediate response. Then Fr. Timothy Victor Pinto, Orissa State Coordinator approved the minutes.

Further Fr. Sebastian was asked to present the future plan, which was as follows:

1. Volunteers in all the states will have full-timers course next year.
2. There is a lack of prison ministry representative in the Bishops' regional conferences. The regional co-ordinators

will represent the ministry in regional CBCI bodies.

3. Central region has secured a place for the rehabilitation centre and office in the central region. This year Mumbai will have a rehabilitation centre for the state.
4. We will cover all the prisons of India. (1410)
5. We will reach out to all the states and work systematically by strengthening the regional executive body.
6. Every region will have a rehabilitation centre. In Bangalore, rehabilitation centre for men is going to be started.
7. All the regional future plans will be incorporated.

After this the memorandum was presented to the group by Mr Jesuraj, Secretary of Tamilnadu PMI.

The Bishop responded to the memorandum querying if the regional groups knew and had decided. When the response was positive he thanked the group for the memorandum. He thanked the regional co-ordinator, Sr. Letitia, and Fr. Stephen, the cathedral parish priest for their hospitality and for taking care of every detail of the guests for all these days.

He said it was his duty to welcome Bishop Allwyn D'Silva whom he had known as part of the Peace and Justice Committee for so many years. He hoped and blessed that the Prison Ministry may grow under his guidance. He thanked Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan, the National Coordinator and Sr. Lini MSC, the National Secretary for their hard work. The Most Rev. Allwyn D'Silva, the Chairman of

Prison Ministry India was officially welcomed by Fr. Josekutty MST to this ministry. He introduced him with a note on his esteemed profile. Further the origin and growth of the Prison Ministry was explained with references to the hard work of Fr. Varghese Kariperry and the other coordinators.

The former chairman of Prison Ministry India, the Most Rev. Peter Remigius was given a token of gratitude by Bishop Accasius Toppo, for his 24 years of service and guidance, with a few words of appreciation. He said he was hardworking yet jovial, dynamic and simple. He was honoured with a trophy as a token of gratitude.

The district judge, Justice P. K. Sathya of the Guwahati bench and Registrar General, was welcomed to the dais and was honoured. Accepting the honour, the justice said Prison Ministry India, a voluntary organisation, has taken a lot of initiative and rendered selfless service for long all over India. For this, it needed to be appreciated. He shared his experiences on the field of prison portals. According to him, there were various kinds of prisoners:

1. Those with low status in society who commit crime to make their daily living.
2. White-collared criminals who need special treatment.
3. Offensive criminals who would not commit the crime again.
4. Those that kill people in the name of moral policies.

He thanked the Prison Ministry volunteers for the good work and message that they carry to society and he wished everyone the best. After the talk, Bishop Peter Remigius appreciated the simplicity and good work done by the District Judge and offered him a memento of gratitude.

Then the meeting continued with the thanking of dignitaries. Fr. Sebastian expressed that though many people had discouraged having the convention here in the North-East, God had made it possible. He thanked Fr. Stephen for all the support and tireless work that they had extended all throughout the convention. It had become possible just because they were cooperative. Sr. Rosia, who led the inaugural ceremony, was thanked. The transport committee who helped people reach on time everywhere was honoured. The Sister Superior and the SMI convent community, Guwahati who helped with the liturgy on all the 4 days were specially thanked. The cultural committee from Don Bosco was honoured. The national team members were honoured with mementoes; special gratitude was extended for all the effort they had put in. The Guwahati team was also honoured with T-shirts for the efficient regional physical arrangements.

At the end of the Annual General Body Meeting Bp. Peter Remigius said that the Prison Ministry was a personal and spiritual ministry. He congratulated Bp. Allwyn D'Silva on his new appointment as the Chairman of Prison Ministry India and assured him all his support and prayers.



## “Hate the crime not the criminals”

- Mahatma Gandhi



Rajendra Dushing  
Aurangabad

Every man is born free and it is his work or action which makes him a criminal. Even though the prisoner is imprisoned because of his own misdeed, he deserves to have the option of leading a safe, secure and healthy life.

Prison authorities have the responsibility to ensure that the supervision and treatment of prisoners is in line with the rule of law, with respect to individuals' human rights, and that the period of imprisonment is used to prepare individuals for life outside the prison following their release. But often national legislation and rules relating to the management of prisons are out-dated and need reform.

Human rights of prisoners can be enforced through various methods some of which are listed below.

### 1) Prison Welfare Schemes and security:

Prison welfare schemes should be introduced in prisons all around the world so that some productive work is done by the prisoners. This would prevent them from indulging in other nefarious activities while they are in jail and enable them to utilize their time in doing fruitful activity. The jail authorities could help the prisoners or inmates, as they are referred to by jail authorities, to conduct themselves in a better way which would help them lead a better life after their release. The atmosphere provided by the jail authorities should compel the prisoners to work which will divert their mind from mischief.

### 2) De-addiction centres:

Drug de-addiction centres could be opened up in every prison so that the drug abuse and drug addiction of the inmates can be curbed; they could then live a better life after prison.

### 3) Skill-development through work:

Prisoners could be made to work in various factories so that they understand the importance of work and inculcate these principles in their life outside the prison too. The inmates can not only prepare eatable goods but also shirts, carpets, khadi clothes, etc. Other than these a few inmates should be allocated creative work like making furniture, showpieces like

small temples, flower vases, braille books for the blind, wooden chairs, tables etc. These goods can not only be sold but could also be used by the inmates.

### 4) Educational and training facilities:

Educational and training facilities should be given to the inmates such as vocational training, formal education, computer courses, painting etc. These recreational facilities help the inmates to change their behaviour and become good citizens.

### 5) Recreational facilities:

The prisoners could also participate in games and sports activities held within the jail. For example, sports fest is organized during winter sports festivals, which are popularly known in the jail as “Tihar Olympics”. They could also be given yoga and meditation facilities. Creative art therapy, painting, etc. would boost their morale. Competitions on a regular basis, both in sports and arts, are another option.

### 6) Job placement:

Job Placement should be provided to the prisoners so that they could earn a living and their dignity back in the society where they had lost both through their arrest. Such types of **programmes should not be optional and should be strictly enforced** by the jail authorities. Every inmate has to be involved in it. This motivates the inmates to live a better life after the end of their term and also these programmes would help bring out hidden gems of talents in people who had sunk into the deep mines of crime.

Incarceration is perhaps one of the oldest forms of punishment. Prison facilities that were built to hold in notorious criminals have gone through an amazing amount of evolution over the centuries. Bars and guards are not enough in this day and age, and prison security measures today are as advanced - sometimes as primitively simple - as it can get.



## ***‘Sisters, please come next Sunday too’***



**Sr. Rosia BS**  
Co-ordinator,  
Guwahati Unit

**T**he Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound (Isaiah 61:1).

Jesus' words in Matthew's (25:36) gospel give us the basis for this ministry, "...I was in prison and you visited me..." We share His love, hope and life-changing message to those behind bars and those who have been recently released from the detention system.

While it may not be easy to go into a detention facility, Jesus challenges us, the modern-day disciples, to be His hands, feet, eyes, ears and body. We are called to be witnesses of God's love and compassion to our brothers and sisters.

With this thought in mind, I joined S.M.I., Mother Theresa's sisters, MSMHC, and Venetians Holy Cross Bethany and made my entry to the huge walls and the mighty iron-gate of prison with a band of sisters. As we entered, we saw huge concrete structures, the rocky ground, a few trees and a great number of inmates all spread inside the prison compound. We also saw a few of the inmates peeping through the bars. My curiosity made me question why they were behind the bars while the others enjoyed the fresh air outside.

The prisoners, young and old, came out to meet us. Some of them started to express their painful feelings of being imprisoned and asked us to bail them out, promising us that they will never repeat such behaviour.

Visiting prisoners regularly on Sundays and as per need became a passion for me. "To open the

eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness" (Isaiah 42:7). It gave me great joy to visit my brothers and sisters who eagerly waited my visits. The chorus we usually hear at our departure is, 'Sisters, please come next Sunday too'. These words keep ringing in my ears. I forget my other petty concerns when I see their happy faces while, their pain and sorrow are hidden behind those smiles in reality.

My sincere gratitude goes to the prison authorities who were very kind, open and co-operative. It was their generosity and love for the inmates that helped us to carry out the mission effectively. We received full support from them. Thus, we were able to carry on our prison ministry efficiently.

We organized eucharistic celebrations during Christmas, Easter, Feast of Maximilian Kolbe, Prison Ministry Day etc. The Archbishop John Mulachira celebrated the eucharist once. Some priests also have celebrated mass for the inmates. All Christians, even people from other religions, eagerly participate in the eucharistic celebration. Apart from that we conduct other activities and programmes for the inmates. They collaborate with us in preparing for the liturgy by practicing hymns, by conducting games, in putting up pandals, arranging the required materials, chairs etc. The inmates respect all religions and take active part in all the celebrations and prayers. Everyone takes part in all the religious festivals. While Bihu was celebrated very grandly, Eid was celebrated with much reverence. Many Muslim leaders came and spoke of the rich values of their religion.



## Sharing at Conference

The Christian inmates took a lot of interest in decorating the hall and inviting the other inmates to join in Christmas, Easter and other celebrations. It is a great joy to see them coming together with so much enthusiasm to celebrate Christmas, the Birth of Our Lord, as a universal festival.

Their interest to learn new things made me organize different activities. Children from our Catholic schools, and novices from religious communities put up some programmes which made them very happy. It brings joy to us to see their happy faces and their informality while with us. Their happiness has always been my wish and will ever be so. We conduct competitions like quiz, music, drawing, games like musical chair, sports like cricket, volley ball, hand ball etc. I wanted to start dance classes as well. They were interested in taking part in this and we prepared them for some programmes.

After games we would distribute prizes to the winners to make them feel happy. Hence, they are enthusiastic about participating in the different programmes. They are interested in playing Kabbadi. But there is not enough ground space. The weather is usually very hot, and they find it difficult to play outdoors. They play in the evenings when the sun sets. There are good dancers among the inmates. They participate in dance competitions.

The Jail Ministry provides ample opportunities to proclaim the message of Christ, bringing hope to their lives. The Prison Ministry also extends its services to the Juvenile Hall Centre for children.

The Prison Ministry Sunday was celebrated in the Archdiocese of Guwahati on August 12, 2018. The Church offers love and hope to our brothers and sisters who are in prison. While some are innocent, there are many who are victims of circumstances and suffer from loneliness and helplessness. It is to such persons that Prison Ministry wants to

reach out. We have zealous volunteers who keep in touch with our brothers and sisters in prisons/observation homes. We pray that God will bless their efforts.

Besides this we do some counselling. Some of them cry remembering their families during these sessions. We visit their families, learn their situation and help them to reconcile, forgive and to maintain contact and if possible, request the victim/family to withdraw the case. A few of them have already done this.

I was able to help some of them financially, to post bail with the generous help of some donors. Once they are released, I keep contact and help some of them find jobs to support their family.

The collaboration and co-operation among the inmates are praiseworthy. They make no distinction based on caste, creed and colour. They respect, feel for, and care for each other. When someone is in dire need, others bring it to our notice and request us to help them.

Having worked for this ministry, I have immense satisfaction in the work I have done, and I wish and pray that many more may come forward to render their loving service in order to bring Christ's peace and love to our brothers and sisters who await liberation.

The world stands in need of liberation, my friends. So, let us pledge on this day that we will care for our brothers and sisters who are behind the bars and bring hope to them that they may be liberated soon to join their families. May God bless our efforts, and may our Blessed Mother intercede for us and for our brothers & sisters!

May God bless us all.

## Sr. Leena Kattookaren FMM - The Legend

Having heard the knock at the door, Sri. B.P. Acharya IAS, Collector of Warangal stood up to warmly welcome a short, elderly and pleasant nun. After serving her a cup of tea, the collector enquired what he could do for her. She introduced herself as Sr. Leena Kattookaren FMM, a retired nun. She said, "Sir, I request you to permit me to visit prisoners behind the bars." "What!" wondered the shocked collector. He asked, "Why on earth do you want to visit prisoners?" Sr. Leena presented her point very politely, "Well they are lonely, discouraged and they have no one to talk to them affectionately. Hence, I wish to see them and console them. Kindly grant me the necessary permission, Sir." The collector scratched his head and said, "But it is risky for you to visit those unpredictable criminals, no sister?" Sr. Leena smiled and said, "Let it be so Sir, I have no family ties. Being all alone I can afford that risk. I can make them feel that there's someone to care for them and to convince them that every saint had a past and every sinner a future." Seeing the nun's sincerity, Mr B.P. Acharya said, "Ok sister, give me a couple of weeks and I will get back to you." Hardly a few days after the above incident took place in 1988, Sr. Leena and her community were surprised to receive a letter, rather an order from the DG Correctional Wing of the Police Department of the then united AP that stated that Sr. Leena Kattookaren FMM was granted permission to visit not just the jail in Warangal, but all the jails and sub-jails in Andhra Pradesh.

The second innings of Sr. Leena K. began now. She soon acquired legendary status in the history of AP. She was known as the 'Love Bomb' that exploded not to kill, but to heal. The police department and her colleagues soon recognised her as an Iron lady with strong will and concrete skills in getting things done. Definitely her second innings (she called it a call within a call) brought her many laurels, and it was more adventurous, more thrilling, and

**Mr. M. D. Vincent**

*First General Secretary*

*Andhra Pradesh, Prison Ministry India*

more rewarding like the second wine served at Cana. She lived every second of her life for the Prison Ministry and achieved several golden milestones on her way. I was fortunate to be closely associated with her from the year 2000 till 2018. I happened to be the first general secretary of PMI AP unit while she was the first state coordinator. Though we were in office for only 8 years, she introduced me to everyone as her secretary till she breathed her last. Having walked along with her on her magnificent journey let me narrate this legend's glorious achievements as much as I can:

1. Spreading the Ministry: As soon as she got that blanket permission to visit all jails in AP she brought together all 12 dioceses; recruited and motivated the 360 volunteers in AP.
2. Organised the 6th national convention at Hyderabad: With the help of other legends like Sr. Alice Crasta (Charity), Sr. Zavarria (St. Anns Providence), Mrs Balaiah, Mrs Samantha, Mrs Rose Mary, Mrs Brighith, Mr Edwin etc., she organised the 6th national convention at Birdy, Hyderabad. The VIPs who graced the meeting were Mr. Deva Gowda, the Home Minister along with the IG, Krishnarao IPS, for the inauguration, while the closing ceremony was presided over by the Governor couple Mrs and Mr Rangarajan. Till date, this is applauded as one of the best conventions of PMI.
3. Sr. Leena could win over the hearts of politicians: A few minutes before the function was about to begin the Home Minister Deva Gowda enquired of Sri. Krishnarao, "IG Sab, you always tell me that it's extremely difficult to deal with



prisoners. Then what on earth is this little sister and co. doing in prison? Do the prisoners care for them?" The IG was more than delighted to answer, "Sir, it's astonishing, but the prisoners listen to this sister and co. better than to us." "Is it so!" the stunned H.M. probed, "What is the magic behind their abilities to get the attention of the prisoners?" IG Krishnarao explained, "Sir, we approach the prisoners with the law in one hand and the hefty stick in the other, whereas these sisters and volunteers meet the prisoners with the scriptures in one hand and love in the other hand. No wonder then that the prisoners sit quietly, listening to them for hours together." That prompted the Home Minister to make a public statement, "Nuns are better than Guns".

4. Sr. Leena generated locally the entire funds required for the convention: Sr. Leena along with Sr. Alice Crasta and team managed to raise enough funds to meet the expenses involved in boarding, lodging, for mementos, transport, media coverage plus printing of the 1500 copies of the colourful souvenir for the convention.
5. Sr. Leena organised the Idea Presentation Contest: Often the jail superintendents used to say, "Your work in the prisons is satisfactory. Your visits are like the vacuum vents through which the prisoners who are like pressure cookers vent out their stress and strain. But what are you doing outside in the society which has to accept these prisoners once they are released?" This question prompted Sr. Leena to discuss with us, the executive members, and organised an Idea Presentation Contest to educate the society at large by developing positive attitude towards people like the unfortunate prisoners and at the same time raise funds to build a rehabilitation centre for released prisoners. Under her dynamic leadership we organised a state-wide Idea Presentation Contest. Students were asked to purchase an entry form

for Rs.10/ and write five lines only on a postcard and post it. It was a grand success. After meeting all the expenses involved for all the 12 dioceses and the units in organising the contest, and after giving away 12 sets of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes, we could generate a substantial amount to start the construction of a rehab centre at Medchal with the kind cooperation of St. Anns Sisters of Phirangipuram. She also managed to get Rs 5 lakhs from the MP, 25 sets of beds, Rs 3 lakhs worth steel furniture from SBH, etc. The rehab centre now serves women in distress and children in need.

6. Launching of Vimochana Bible Diary: Initially Sr. Leena was struggling to meet the telephone bills, electricity bills, and her driver's bills (Someone had donated to her a four-wheeler to visit prisons). She appealed to the Transport department and got an exemption of Rs.45,000/- and Life Tax on the vehicle. She introduced Vimochana Diary not only to meet incidentals but also to publicise Prison Ministry Sunday, PMI Mass and prayer for prisoners, and to popularise the Prison Ministry itself. Under her encouragement and support the AP unit successfully published it for ten years and then handed it over to the national office. As Bishop Remigius had advised us to never give up the publishing of the diary, I hope the National office revised its publication.
7. Sr. Leena won several awards
  - a) Deena Bandu award
  - b) Best Social award
  - c) Felicitations by two Chief Ministers
  - d) The final reward: In recognition of all her mighty contributions to the Prison Ministry, the Hyderabad unit headed by Fr. Dian, Monsignor Dearn's Bernard and the Bishop M.D. Prakasam were pondering over proposing Sr. Leena's name along with Fr. Francis Kodyan and Fr. Varghese Karipery, the two founders of PMI for a Papal award. In the monthly meeting it

was proposed to forward to Vatican these three names, to be bestowed with the “Knights of Faith” award. Having heard this proposal, Sr. Leena’s reaction was different. She said, “Dear all, enough of these awards, I am waiting for the Lord’s

final award.” And she fittingly went for it on 13th October 2018 which happened to be her 84th birthday also. Only one in a million gets such an opportunity to die on their birthday. Once again, she proved that she was a legend.

## Prisons –should it be security-focused or welfare-oriented?

**Prof. Beulah Emmanuel**  
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The concept of prisons has undergone a paradigm shift in the arena of criminal justice system. Traditionally the safety and security of prisons were the prime concern and focus of the system. Effective supervision of inmates is challenging with the increasing population of prison inmates. Currently, the prime concern of the prison institution is safety and security, and due importance is also given to the welfare of inmates. Prisons have two wings: security and welfare. Prisons need to concentrate on both the wings simultaneously; not sacrificing one at the cost of another.

### Prison Security

Physical containment alone cannot be the solution for inducing the effect of punishment. Dr Ahmed, an International Prison expert, has mentioned that prisons should be safeguarded with three types of security: • Procedural security, •Physical security, •Dynamic security.

Conventionally, the focus has always been on the planning, design and construction of the physical structure. In reality, safety and security are the result of a careful, dynamic balance among the three. Safety and security require staff to actively supervise and manage inmate behaviour, while understanding the differences between observation and supervision. Security maintenance and welfare are inseparable (Hand book of Dynamic security and Prison Intelligence 2015).

### Welfare of the inmates

Rehabilitation focuses on three core areas like education, vocational training and work in

Relevant provisions in international standards and norms related to prison-based rehabilitation programmes, in particular those from the Nelson Mandela Rules are:

Key issues to consider in planning, initiating and/or enhancing such programmes

Types of programmes which are likely to be appropriate and the different organizational forms such programmes can take

Possible obstacles to implementation, and how to overcome them.

prisons. These activities cover a wide variety of vocational skills, training, welfare programmes, programmes including medical and psychiatric treatment, counselling and other therapies and programmes. There are quite a few reasons for expanding activity to these areas.

### The reasons for welfare programs

- The court directs rigorous imprisonment in prison where the prison authority is forced to involve a prisoner in some work programme. The prison has the responsibility to find a suitable vocation for the prisoner.
- The vocation or the skills provided should be helpful in the post release life of the prisoner.
- Learning and working are an exercise of fundamental human rights.
- The work programme should be inherent in imprisonment.
- It is not just forced labour, but it is also to help the people deprived of their liberty to spend their time sensibly and productively.

- The work programme would keep the prisoner active, thereby preventing personality changes in the prisoner as there is every possibility of the prisoner undergoing personality changes from antisocial, schizoid to borderline personality disorders (Rotter, Way, Steinbach, Sawyer, Smith 2002; Conn, Warden, Stuewig, Harty, Mark, Hastings, Tangney 2010).
- The welfare of the inmate is of great concern in spite of the security issues.

### How welfare affects security?

The equipment provided for vocational skills and training like carpentry materials, tailoring materials, etc. have caused mishaps to attempted escape by digging of tunnels. Example, as given in case no.1:

**Case no.1.** *“Hawara had made attempts to flee from the Buraill jail by digging tunnels. His first attempt was digging a 35-ft deep tunnel in the kitchen of barrack number seven, but luck was on vacation and Hawara got the middle finger in return. While staying at the Gurudwara barrack, Hawara attempted twice to make his way out.”*

The equipment used by the inmates were given to them for gardening their premises and a few were from the kitchen. This equipment was smuggled by them and used to dig tunnels for escaping from prison.

There were also several incidents reported where prisoners had smuggled medicines from hospitals and abused those in place of drugs.

On certain occasions they used the articles in the vocational training areas for attempting suicide or to end their lives.

Welfare programmes when introduced in prisons includes risks and involves procedures and policies. The safe custody of the inmates is always the focal point of the prison administration; therefore, a lump sum amount is spent on enhancing the security of prisons. The watch on prisons by the National Human Rights Commission, the Media and other voluntary organizations play an inevitable role in forcing the prison administration to

be security-oriented first and then to think of correctional facilities and procedures in their functioning.

Of late, much has been emphasized by the Supreme Court guidelines and judgments about justice reform and making prisons more humane. Many of the things we learned through evidence-based practices led us to re-think how we designed correctional environments along with security and safety concerns.

According to a study it was suggested that it was not only the introduction of welfare programmes alone that contributed to the rehabilitation of the inmate, but also the presence of facilities that provided natural daylight, colour, access to nature, good sightlines and acoustics, in place of threatening, secured environment. We should also plan for accessibility for many categories of inmates like the differently-abled.

### Conclusion

The foundation of any correctional facility will always be a safe and secure environment to protect inmates, staff, visitors and ultimately, the community. Prisons cannot create a correctional, therapeutic, healing environment, if it is not first and foremost, safe and secure. While witnessing a paradigm shift in our criminal justice system, it is important to note that the fundamental requirement of safe custody along with rehabilitative measure need to be the concern of prison administration.

### Reference:

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A big Thanks to All who made it a Successful one







**Lighting of the Lamp at the Inaugural Function by the Honorable Justice T. Vaiphal, the Chairman of Human Rights Commission Assam and Most. Rev. John Moolachira, The President of 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference, Prison Ministry India.**



**Inaugural Function**



**Release of the books during the Conference**



**The Guest of Honor is awarded with the Memento by Fr. Jesu Amirtham, UP State Coordinator**

**The participants at the 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference of Prison Ministry India**

