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## PRISON VOICE NATIONAL MONTHLY



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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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They played in the streets,  
we play on screen



**Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC**  
*Chief Editor*

Are we ready to tear down the walls that confine us, break down the cage that imprisons us? "Walls do not create prisons" is the theme of the year 2019. Just being inside the four walls does not mean that you are imprisoned. But rather, there are many other factors which can make one to feel that they are imprisoned. Today, our lives have shifted from houses to flats. The apartment system has become the fashion where one does not know one's neighbour. Gone are the days where all the neighbourhood children would gather in the streets, sweat and use up their energy to the utmost in games. 'They played in the streets, we play on screen,' said a girl. Life has become so closed up it generates a feeling of suffocation; we do not have time for others and try to create strong walls around us and remain busy in our own schedules and activities. 'No Time' is a cliched phrase used by everybody.

How many of us are ready to break down these walls of ours? In our entire society it is only our brethren behind the bars that do not create walls for themselves. For, they have the external high wall which restrict their freedom just because they made a mistake in their lives, were compelled to make a mistake, or the situation was conducive for them to make a mistake. The external walls are not that painful in their lives compared to the walls which family members or society impose on them. The moment they are arrested, they feel abandoned. Life becomes meaningless. They tend to think that they should die meaningfully

rather than live a meaningless life. If we should be presented with a chance to enter a prison and meet our brethren, ask them about their first day's experience in prison, when they were mocked and laughed at by their enemies.

The agony does not end here. Forget rivals! It becomes even more poignant when their family members do not visit them. We come across many prisoners who have not been visited by their families for years. An inmate, who was going to be released after serving his term in jail, said to me in tears, 'I was arrested for my son's mistake. When I was arrested and put behind the bars, it didn't pain me much, but the agony was when my wife harassed me with her words; and she abandoned me, married someone else. I had no one visiting me these past 14 years except my mother.' He did not want to look back on his past, the years in prison. Lastly, he said, 'My precious time was wasted here'.

A child is carried in the mother's womb before birth and he/she is carried to the tomb after death. From womb to tomb human beings long for love, care, affection, understanding, acceptance and so on. Nobody wants to be a criminal as no one is born a criminal. To be good, better and best is the goal of everyone and especially of our brethren behind the bars. Let us accept them instead of rejecting them; let us understand them, rather than judging them.



*Are you complementary  
or contradictory in your  
interactions with others?*



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

**W**hen was the last time you laughed uproariously? The last time you felt indescribable joy? The last time you sensed profound meaning and purpose in your life? The last time you felt enormously proud of an accomplishment? Even without knowing the particulars of these high points of your life, I know their form: all of them took place around other people; when we complemented others or when others complemented us.

Did God create us as complementary persons or contradictory persons? This idea is summarized in the familiar scripture, Genesis (2: 18), in which the Lord declared, "It is not good that . . . man should be alone." It is that no one can flourish in isolation and that the quality of our relationships with others will ultimately determine our level of fulfilment and happiness in both this mortal existence and the life to come. It is in this sense that it is not good for man—or woman—to be alone. Rather we should become complementary to each other. It is not only in the relationship of marriage but also in the other relationships of our lives. You cannot really correct anyone by being contradictory, but it becomes easy when you are complementary. Many a times we have witnessed that being complementary facilitates growth and being contradictory brings on the destruction of others.

How good is God that God gave Mary and Elizabeth, each to the other! Their crazy lives gelled in such a similar way. Elizabeth was totally isolated. Mary was on the verge of being

ostracized when the reality of her impregnated state would have come under the scornful gaze of her small town. How beautiful it is that they had one another!

The Angel said to Mary "You will conceive and bear a son. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren." We can read this story differently.

How would this story have been different if rather than running to go and be with Elizabeth, Mary's response had been, "Elizabeth?" And then she totally blew off the opportunity to connect with her kinswoman. If this was her reaction, she would have missed out on God's provision of another person with whom to give and receive love and comfort.

We could say that there were only 2 Christians in the whole world that day. Mary and Elizabeth! They greeted each other, confessed their faith (after all Elizabeth *was* the first to call Jesus her Lord).

Then John the Baptist did what might be the first liturgical dance – as he leapt in Elizabeth's womb. And then Mary sang a hymn about God's mercy and the upturning of the social order. It is as though this is the first Christian worship service. Two people, for whom life had not been easy, had received mercy from God. Mary and Elizabeth, both were inappropriately

pregnant. One was too young and unmarried, and the other was too old and had suffered a life of shame for not having children. And since Mary stayed with her for 3 months, we can imagine them laughing, eating, embracing and relaxing, telling stories. How good is God that God gave them one to another!

The same is true of us. We are given one to another. We are not alone. We belong to God and because we belong to God, we belong to each other and perhaps this is the message of the birth of Jesus.

You can criticize others, but try to be complementary to others, to bring back the other from destruction. Your parents can understand you better than others. Your parents can be understood by you better than others. A bishop can be best understood by another bishop or a priest can be understood better by another priest than other people. A superior can be best understood by another superior. A student can be best understood by another student. A novice can be better understood by another novice than any other person. A prisoner can be best understood by another prisoner. A volunteer can be best understood by another volunteer.

In the prison situation this complementary nature is very important for the inmates as well as for the volunteers. In the lives of volunteers, being complementary to each other is a very touching experience. Sometimes some may be very active in the local prison. They may struggle a lot for the ministry. It may be of a personal nature, sometimes related to finance, sometimes regarding permission. They may feel the lack of cooperation from officials or from within the church acutely. They may carry out the thankless work and be unsatisfied, have a painful heart. Sometimes we hear from the volunteers that a very active person has left the ministry. We wonder what happened to his/her dreams and plans? What happened to his/her work as a volunteer of the Prison Ministry? Then, we understand that he/she felt alone in his/her ministry, abandoned by his/

her colleagues, may be abandoned by his/her own church, or be fed up with the corruption happening in prisons. So, we have to realize that the message that we are complementary is not only valid and urgent for the inmates to whom we all give pastoral care, but also for the volunteers in the prisons. It is very important to be together and share with our fellow workers this responsibility of being complementary to each other in the manner that God entrusted us with.

In the lovely passage on the disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-33), we see that the disciples were sorrowful and grieving because their hopes concerning the Messiah had disappeared along with Jesus. As Luke tells us, Jesus first approached, then walked with them, asked some questions, he read the scripture to them, and finally he gave them the bread of life. He complemented them rather than criticizing them.

Pope Francis addressed prisoners at the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia, on September 27, 2015 with the following words: 'Life means "getting our feet dirty" from the dust-filled roads of life and history. All of us need to be cleansed, to be washed. All of us are being sought out by the Teacher, who wants to help us resume our journey.

The Lord goes in search of us; to all of us he stretches out a helping hand. It is painful when we see prison systems which are not concerned about caring for wounds, to soothing pain, to offering new possibilities. It is painful when we see people who think that only others need to be cleansed, purified, and do not recognize that their weariness, pain and wounds are also the weariness, pain and wounds of society.' We should make our journey by being complementary to others and being sympathetic to the dark realities of others this New Year. I wish a prosperous New Year with our God who is the only complementary God in the entire universe.

*When we are entrapped by*  
**INVISIBLE WALLS...**

Dr. Teena Antony

**T**he Lord listens to the prayer of the destitute; he does not forget his servants in their chains. (Psalms 68: 34)

Feeling entrapped is a feeling that is not unique to any person. Most of us go through incidents and periods of life when we feel the invisible walls close around us, choking the happiness out of us. As a newly-wed, my life was extremely difficult. It was not that anyone was intentionally illtreating me or behaving badly. It is just how Indian families are structured. The bride is expected to adjust to a new culture, food, rules, dressing styles, spending habits, people and more. There is no period of adjustment: one fine day we are suddenly in a new house and environment; and to add to that the bride is expected to obey and defer to her husband. She might have been working, living independently until then, coming and going as it suited her, but after marriage, society expects her to change her habits, individuality, even her own person to suit that of the family she is being married into.

For nearly a whole year, I used to wait for the brief holidays to go home, to eat food cooked by my mother, wear clothes I was used to wearing, visit people I had known my whole life, even have conversations on subjects and incidents familiar to me. It

was not that my better half or my in-laws were trying to make my life difficult; but society, particularly Indian society does not provide a voice or choice to their brides. I had not had to cook or clean regularly at my own home. My only duty at home was to excel in academics, land a good job. Now, suddenly I had to wake up early in the morning, cook a menu decided by other people, eat food that was cooked to other people's taste, wear jewellery that was unfamiliar (because brides are expected to wear a mangalsutra/thalli, ring and whatever else is customary in the groom's family), stay in the background when people came visiting (because married women stay behind in the kitchen when guests arrive), and so on.

Now mine is not a specific case. Almost all brides have to go through a period of adjustment, until they are moulded into the kind of personality that is expected of them at their conjugal home. I was blessed to have been married into what is termed a 'normal' family, where the members loved each other, helped each other and generally behaved how normal families are expected to behave.

However, I have a number of friends and acquaintances from broken families. There was a roommate who was sexually



## View of Family

molested by her brother-in-law constantly and her husband was unable to stop it. So, their only option was to move out of the family home. There were some friends whose parents were not on talking terms with each other; the members barely got along together. Another friend was married to a guy who was suspicious of anyone who talked to her. Their first fight happened on the wedding night because male classmates of the bride had attended the wedding! Another acquaintance had to live with physically abusive in-laws. Yet another relative was expected to stay at home and take care of the conjugal family members, though she was highly qualified, intelligent and good at her job. It was not that the family members were bedridden or needed constant care, but that customarily women in that family were not expected to work outside.

Any number of reasons can make a home feel like prison. And when the home feels like a prison, we would just long to move out of that physical space, to get away from the situation and people that make us uncomfortable, that take away our joy and peace. We may feel trapped in a situation, a condition, or a place without any actual

walls imprisoning us physically. In such a situation would we be strong enough to take the right decision that applies to our particular case - to move out, to take a stand, to make the necessary change, or even to accept the state of affairs? Waking up and getting through the day would feel like a chore when we are stuck in a bad circumstance. It all comes down to the mind and the soul.

The mind can be made strong with support from other people, by reading uplifting literature, making changes to our life, etc. But, the soul in another matter. From a Christian standpoint, we would need the grace and blessing of our Lord, to get through life when we feel depressed or trapped by a situation. Have faith that the Lord would listen to our prayers, help us from the worldly chains that choke our souls. And above all, what life has taught me is this: no matter how bad a situation seems at the time, it will pass. And with a little help from above, the situation becomes bearable. We need to have faith in a better future and the courage to take the step that would help us to either overcome or to accept the situation.

As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison  
- Nelson Mandela

Facebook is like prison, you sit around and waste time, write on walls and get poked by people you don't know.

# LIBERATING THE CONSCIENCE from INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS



Rev. Dr. E. William MI

Nelson Mandela, before leaving the prison, said, "As I stand before the door to my freedom, I realize that if I do not leave my pain, anger and bitterness behind me, I will still be in prison." It is true because self-imprisonment is worse than that imposed from outside. How many are trapped in self-inflicted pain today? How many of us have imprisoned ourselves inside the walls of anger and bitterness? How many of us are not liberated because of internal constraints? Self-imprisonment is due to the imprisonment of conscience. External constraints do not imprison the person but internal constraints or

walls within the conscience do. Human being appears as a captive within his/her own mind and as a victim of forces that he/she cannot recognize. We need to work towards freeing the conscience which is imprisoned by many factors and the cultures of our postmodern society.

To liberate the conscience from internal clutches, we have to affirm the importance of conscience. Max Weber, in his 'Politics as a Vocation', says, "When a mature man - no matter whether old or young in years - is aware of a responsibility for the consequences of his conduct and really feels such responsibility

with heart and soul, he then acts by following an ethics of responsibility and somewhere he reaches the point where he says: 'Here I stand; I can do no other.' That is something genuinely human and moving. And every one of us who is not spiritually dead must realize the possibility of finding himself at some time in that position." 'That one is spiritually not dead' indicates that the human person is alive because he/she has the inner sanctuary, namely, conscience. Conscience is the internal sanctuary of a person. It is the guiding principle of a person. Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia* underlines the importance of the conscience, its freedom and its formation.

So, conscience is the norm of reference for choosing only one course of action, aimed at the good of the individual and the common good of society and family. It is the metaphysical guide that helps everyone to act in a judicial way; it is the interior, quintessentially human voice that speaks to us of goodness and duty, so as to keep our integrity (K. Seamus Hasson); it is



## Types of Inner Walls

closely related to a person's beliefs or convictions about actions that are deemed morally right or wrong (D. P. Sulmasy); it can guide the person because it is rooted in a fundamental responsibility of an ethical obligation to lead a moral life (P. Fuss). As a whole, conscience helps the individual to avoid many cultural evils because it is a means to preserve integrity or ethical wholeness.

But unfortunately, this sanctuary is imprisoned by many evils. Fulton J. Sheen in his book 'Peace of Soul', speaks of two factors that imprison a person. The first factor is *Alienation*, which is of three types: self-estrangement, isolation from others and estrangement from God. *Self-estrangement*: human person is no longer a unity, but a confused bundle of complexes and nerves. He/she is so dissociated, so alienated from self that he/she sees the self less as a personality than as a battlefield where a civil war rages within him/her. *Isolation from others*: when a person is alienated from self, lawlessness follows. A self with a fight within itself will soon have a fight

outside itself with others. Once a person ceases to be of service to neighbours, he/she begins to be a burden to them; it is only a step from refusing to live *with* others to refusing to live *for* others. Our personal hatred always becomes hatred of neighbours. *Estrangement from God*: alienation from self and from one's neighbours has its roots in separation from God. Once the hub of the wheel, which is God, is lost, the spokes, which are human beings, fall apart. God seems very far from human beings. This is due, to a great extent, to humanity's own God-less behaviour. Goodness always appears as a reproach to those who are not living right, and this reproach on the part of the alienated expresses itself in hatred and persecution. These alienations imprison a human being, who tries *to be or to get beyond himself/herself* without God or without others.

The second factor is *Conflict*. The origin of conflict is not found outside but in human nature, which is common to all of us. Two facts stand out. First, the human is neither an angel nor a devil. Humanity is not intrinsically

corrupt, not intrinsically divine. Rather, the human being has aspiration to good that he/she finds impossible to realize completely by himself/herself; at the same time, he/she has an inclination toward evil that solicits him away from these ideals. Second, this conflict has all the appearances of being due to an abuse of human freedom. As the drunkard is what he is, because of an act of choice, so human nature seems to have lost the original goodness with which the good God endowed it, through an act of freedom. As St. Augustine says, "Whatever we are, we are not what we ought to be."

Self-centredness and self-righteousness also imprison a person, which are shaped by many inhuman cultures:

Culture of Individualism (living in one's own created world) and Megalomania (living in one's own created power), by which a person sets himself against others/God, wants to be his own god, plays god in every walk of life, is a law unto himself, wants desperately to be himself, wants to save himself without the help of God and others, and



wants desperately not to be himself, that is, not to be the finite, limited or vulnerable creature who is in need of others/God.

Culture of 'Handiphobia' (living in the fear of the handicapped), that is, fear of one's own and others' limits and vulnerability and therefore tries to eliminate vulnerable people.

Culture of Hedonism (living for one's own pleasure), that is, making use of the other as the object of one's own pleasure.

Culture of Comparison (living at the cost of the other), that is, the person and his/her family and social relationship is the result of comparing one's own efforts with those of others, trying to compete with others and excel in life at the cost of the other. He/she tries to become more powerful, greater, richer, and bigger than the other.

Culture of Materiality (living at the material level): the person is not concerned about his spiritual life. Everything he does, he does it only to accumulate wealth. Money is the only thing that matters a lot, not God or spiritual richness. He/

she is attached to matters of material concerns like how the umbilical cord of the child is attached to the mother.

In this context, conscience would help the person to look back on previously made decisions or actions which paved way to imprisonment and to assess whether a proposed action would compromise one's moral integrity. In other words, human conscience should assist the person to be both reflective and reflexive: the reflective conscience scrutinizes past, present, and future decisions against this imprisonment, while the reflexive component provides instant feedback in the form of internal dissonance or discomfort when an individual is compelled to choose a potentially problematic or immoral decision or action. Conscience has to be the ethical tug towards doing the right thing that becomes a central, dominating feature of one's motivation and self-identity. Conscience helps one in the protection of one's own moral integrity in the face of increasingly questionable demands by these factors and cultures.

Conscience has to be healed and freed and this can happen only when the person is aware of these factors and cultures which imprison and when he/she is in need of recovery and repair.

Fulton Sheen says, the human being is a clock whose mainspring is broken. He needs to be fixed on the inside, but the repairs must be supplied from without. He is mistaken if he is an optimist, who believes evolution will give him a mainspring, or a pessimist, who believes that nobody can fix him. He is a creature who can run well again but only if some watchmaker will have the kindness to repair him. God is the watchmaker and the imprisoned human has to rely on this watchmaker. The presence of this watchmaker is being felt by the imprisoned in and through the presence of many other watchmakers, that is, through our presence. Let us work for the removal of those constraints, factors and cultures, which make a person a prisoner of his/her own unhappiness and bondage. Let us cooperate for a society liberated from internal constraints.

***It is a language that tells us about a plight that must be understood.***



**Rajendra Dushing**  
PMI Member - Aurangabad

***“At first, addiction is maintained by pleasure, but the intensity of this pleasure gradually diminishes, and the addiction is then maintained by the avoidance of pain.” - Frank Tallis***

**H**ow truly the above-mentioned quote explains the meaning of the word “Addiction” ... So addiction is a complex condition characterized by persistent drug use or problematic behaviour, despite knowledge of the negative consequences. Although substance use may be the activity most commonly associated with addiction, it can also mean common behavioural addictions, getting high on something other than drugs or alcohol. When most people hear the word addiction, they think of dependence on a substance, such as drugs or alcohol. And for good reason: those aged 15 years or older have a significant problem with alcohol or drugs.

But alcohol, uppers, downers, and other commonly abused substances are not the only things. In fact, just substitute the word “behaviour” for “substance,” and you open up the definition of addiction to all kinds of dependencies, some of which may surprise you. Whether it is sex, the Internet, or bungee jumping, the desire to experience a

“high” becomes so strong that the so-called addict loses control and seeks the activity despite all negative consequences.

#### **Effects of drug abuse and addiction**

Drugs are chemicals that affect the body and brain. Different drugs can have different effects. Some effects of drugs include health consequences that are long-lasting and permanent. They can even continue after a person has stopped taking the substance. There are a few ways in which a person can take drugs, including injection, inhalation and ingestion. The effects of the drug on the body also depend on how the drug is delivered. For example, injection of drugs directly into the bloodstream has an immediate impact, while ingestion has a delayed effect. But all misused drugs affect the brain. They cause large amounts of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that helps regulate our emotions, motivation and feelings of pleasure, to flood the brain and produce a “high.” Eventually, drugs can change how the brain works and interfere with a person’s ability to make choices, leading to intense cravings and compulsive drug use. Over time, this behaviour can turn into a substance dependency, or drug addiction.

Today, more than 7 million people suffer from illicit drug disorders, and one in four deaths results from illicit drug use. In fact, more deaths, illnesses and disabilities are associated with drug abuse than any other preventable health condition. People suffering from drug and alcohol addiction also have a higher risk of unintentional injuries, accidents and domestic violence incidents.

### What is drug abuse?

Clinically known as substance use disorder, drug abuse or addiction is caused by the habitual taking of addictive substances. Drugs include alcohol, marijuana, tobacco and cigarette. Substance use disorder is a disease, causing people to compulsively use drugs despite the consequences.

The effects of drug abuse on health Substance use disorders are associated with a wide range of short- and long-term health effects. They can vary depending on the type of drug, how much and how often it is taken and the person's general health. Overall, the effects of drug abuse and dependence can be far-reaching. They can impact almost every organ in the human body.

Side effects of drug addiction may include:

- A weakened immune system, increasing the risk of illness and infection
  - Heart conditions ranging from abnormal heart rates to heart attacks, and collapsed veins and blood vessel infections from injected drugs
  - Nausea and abdominal pain, which can also lead to changes in appetite and weight loss
- Increased strain on the liver, which puts the person at risk of significant liver damage or liver failure
  - Seizures, stroke, mental confusion and brain damage
  - Lung disease
  - Problems with memory, attention and decision-making, which make daily living difficult
  - Global effects of drugs on the body, such as breast development in men and increase in body temperature, which can lead to other health problems

The most severe health consequence of drug abuse is death.

Effects of drug addiction on the brain All drugs—nicotine, cocaine, marijuana and others—affect the brain's "reward" circuit, which is part of the limbic system. This area of the brain affects instinct and mood. Drugs target this system, which causes large amounts of dopamine—a brain chemical that helps regulate emotions and feelings of pleasure—to flood the brain. This flood of dopamine is what causes a "high." It is one of the main causes of drug addiction.

Although initial drug use may be voluntary, drugs can alter brain chemistry. This can actually change how the brain performs and interfere with a person's ability to make choices. It can lead to intense cravings and compulsive drug use. Over time, this behaviour can turn into a substance dependency or drug and alcohol addiction.

Alcohol can have short- and long-term effects on the brain and disrupts the brain's communication pathways. These can influence mood, behaviour

and other cognitive function. Brain damage may also occur through alcohol-induced nutrition deficiencies, alcohol-induced seizures and liver disease. In pregnant women, alcohol exposure can impact the brains of unborn babies, resulting in foetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

It is reported that alcohol-induced brain problems can often be corrected with proper treatment. Abstinence from alcohol for months or years can help partially repair thinking abilities, like memory skills.

### Drug effects on behaviour

Substance use disorders can lead to multiple behavioural problems, both in the short- and long-term, which can include:

- Paranoia
- Aggressiveness
- Hallucinations
- Addiction
- Impaired Judgement
- Impulsiveness
- Loss of Self-Control

These effects of drug abuse have serious consequences, like missed work, punishable offences, accidents and injuries. In fact, alcohol and drugs are partly to blame in

an estimated 80 percent of offences leading to jail. These incidents include domestic violence, driving while intoxicated and offences related to damaged property. Legal and illegal drugs excluding alcohol are involved in about 16 percent of motor vehicle crashes. In the past year, almost 12 million people drove under the influence of illicit drugs, and almost 4,000 fatally injured drivers tested positive for drug involvement.

Effects of drug abuse on unborn babies  
Illicit drug use poses risks for pregnant women and their babies. Drugs may contain impurities that can be harmful to an unborn baby. Pregnant women who use drugs may be more likely to harm the foetus with risky behaviour and poor nutrition. Drug use can lead to premature birth or low birth weight. It can also cause the baby to have withdrawal symptoms (sometimes in the form of neonatal abstinence syndrome), birth defects or learning and behavioural problems later in life.

Alice Miller rightly says, "What is addiction, really? It is a sign, a signal, a symptom of distress. It is a language that tells us about a plight that must be understood."

WITHIN THE PRISON WALLS  
OF EVERY PRISON SIT THE  
SOULS WITH EMPTY EYES AND  
BROKEN SPIRITS

The walls we build around us to  
keep the sadness out also keeps  
out the joy - Jim Rohn

*"I find no meaning in life. I am helpless and can do nothing to help my wife who is being tortured by her parents."* Raman was weeping uncontrollably as he told me his story. He had had a court marriage with Reena and they had lived together happily for 18 months, away from their hometown without the knowledge of their parents. When Reena's parents came to know of their whereabouts, they got Raman arrested on charges of kidnapping and rape. At his first court hearing, he heard the news that his wife was being tortured by her parents. Raman was an orphan and there was no one who could help him though he had proof of his marriage with Reena. In desperation, he had slit his wrist to end his life, the evening before he met me. He felt good when I listened to him without judgement and believed his story. This happened 4 months ago. Now, on every visit he would be waiting eagerly to meet me. Though I cannot help him legally, he feels good because there is someone who cares for him.

This is the experience of many prisoners, who have no one to tell their stories to, to speak out about their innocence or their guilt. Though there are hundreds of other prisoners living in close proximity to them, they feel helpless, hopeless, lonely and lost – struggling to cope with having their freedom taken away from them, some struggling with real feelings of guilt and regret for what they had done. Sometimes, their family members also distance themselves from them. The greatest pain they feel is that their families and friends have forgotten about them. Ostracism is the worst thing humans can endure, and prison often means permanent loss of family and friends. A man once told me, *"my daughter has not spoken to me for the last 12 years"*. Another man whose sentence of 14 years of imprisonment is nearing an end, is not in the least excited to go home,

## BEHIND PRISON WALLS AND BEYOND . . .



**Sr. Elizabeth**  
Secretary, North Region PMI

*"I am wondering how my son will receive me. What if he says, 'where were you all these years, when I needed you?'"* There is another man who had been harassing his wife and is now repentant, waiting for a reply to the many letters of apology that he had written to her. The pain, mental torture and confusion that the prisoners go through is beyond compare. In these situations, a smile, a word of encouragement, a message from the Bible bring comfort and hope to their lives. Some of the prisoners I meet, read the Bible every day, and are able to relate it to their everyday lives. There are often requests for a Bible, rosary or a prayer book, rarely for clothing or other articles.

There is a long queue of inmates waiting to talk to me during my visits. I listen to their stories. Initially, they would say that they were not guilty; they were falsely implicated in a case. Slowly, they begin to reveal the truth. I suggest to them better ways of coping with their life, especially with handling anger

or addictions. I motivate them to attend the classes that are held in jail – computer, music, art, electrical skills, motor winding etc. There is always a ‘better yourself’ book in my bag to give to any prisoner who shows interest in reading.

Many people ask me if I am not afraid to meet the murderers, rapists and thieves inside the prison walls. I can confidently say that I have not felt even a slight trace of fear. I read Psalm 91 before leaving for the jail and I believe and experience God’s presence and protection. “I will send my angels ....” For the last 3 years that I have been going to Jail No. 1, a young prisoner who is a pastor, accompanies me to the wards and makes sure that I am safe. The prisoners are respectful and grateful that I am there for them. In January this year, when I could not go to the jail for about 3 weeks because my prison pass was not renewed, the prisoners were concerned. They began having intercessory prayer for my good health and I was surprised to receive a letter by post telling me that they were missing my visits.

The response is not always positive from all prisoners. Some stand at a distance and watch. Some disappear into their cells, afraid of meeting me. Some of those who meet me find it difficult to acknowledge their mistake. Those involved in the Prison Ministry need to have an abundance of patience and non-judgemental attitude, and believe that even the most broken lives and situations can be restored and made whole with God’s grace and our cooperation.

After my visit to the prison, I contact the families of prisoners to convey messages about court dates, to find out how they are coping with the situation or to encourage them to visit the prisoner. “*I feel better after speaking to you, sister*”, said Neha, wife of a prisoner. Her husband has been in prison since the last 8 months. “*I am still angry with*

*him for being stupid and greedy. But he is a good man. I don’t know whether he realises his mistake.*” Her husband was a driver. His greed led him to drive a truck load of material to a secret godown instead of to the factory outlet. His boss had been watching the plot being hatched and carried out, on the CCTV camera attached to his mobile, and caught him red-handed. After his imprisonment, their 3 children had to discontinue their education in a private school as they could not afford the high fees. After a break of 6 months, they were admitted in a government school.

While it is good for the offender to remain in prison and learn lessons of life, it is the family of the prisoner that is affected the most. It is the wife or mother who goes through a lot of stress in trying to hold the family together, getting a job, taking care of the children and making regular visits to the court and jail.

The Prison Ministry does not end with visits to the prison; it goes beyond the prison walls to the families of prisoners – counselling, emotional support, accompanying them to court when necessary etc. Thanks to the generosity of benefactors, I am able to help a few families financially for their maintenance and/or education of their children.

Sometimes, we visit the families of prisoners or the family members visit us. Our community is happy to welcome them, listen to them and share a meal with them. At times, when it is not possible for them to reach back home, we allow them to spend the night with us. We are disturbed by their harrowing and heart-breaking tales of struggle, and enriched by stories of resilience and trust in God even in difficult situations.

The Prison Ministry work is challenging but also very satisfying. I thank God for giving me this opportunity to reveal his merciful love to those behind the bars and their families.

## With Tears Rolling Down...

Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC

Editor: Good morning Meena!

Meena: Good morning Sister! Thank you for all your support.

Editor: Yes, I heard that you are going to be released. We assure our constant support to you.

Meena: Yeah Sister, when I was arrested and put behind the bars, and when I was looking around with frustration and disappointment, I saw a Sister with compassion in her eyes approaching me, who held my hand and said, 'Don't give up'.

Editor: Thank you Meena. I am glad to hear that you had so many helping hands and people who looked at you with compassion rather than judging you.

Meena: (with tears rolling down) ... Years ago, I, along with my mother and brother, were charged for the fault of one of my relatives, who murdered a girl. As a family everyone wishes to go on a tour or visit pilgrimage centres. But here, we as a family came to jail for no fault of ours. When we were brought in, people looked at all of us as murderers. Everything seemed to be hopeless and frustrating on our entry. I lost my father at a very young age. At times, I even wanted to end my life. In the prison everyone had visitors, others would get certain things from outside by their loved

ones. But me? My entire family was inside. Is this life? No girl should experience such agony in their lives. Just because we had no visitors coming to visit us, we were even insulted by the inmates here.

Insults by others, psychological abuse and the fact of not having any visitors pained my heart more than being within these four walls. When I was at home with my mother, every morning as soon as I woke up, with a cheerful face I used to run to my mother, hold her tightly and say, 'Good morning mamma'. But here when I see my mother's face in the morning, I have no words to say, rather tears roll down from my eyes. I was married, but I don't have my husband, because he married somebody else after I came here. My mother was released a few years ago and now I'm also getting released. I have hope and a future now. I'll live for my brother and mother, who were my support and the reason I live. I had support from all the PMI volunteers throughout my stay here.

Editor: Dear Meena, thank you for being an inspiration to the readers of the *Prison Voice* magazine. There are so many other 'walls' which can make one feel imprisoned rather than actual external constraints. We will continue our service and support as we have been doing all these years and consider this as a blessing to have been able to reach out to you.

HOW DID ADAM AND EVE  
LOSE THEIR FREEDOM GIVEN  
BY GOD?



Rev. Dr. Baskaran Lenus MSC  
Assistant National Coordinator-PMI

Freedom is not a licence to do anything I want and like; but it is being responsible while doing things. Nobody wants to be enslaved by others. Even then for fundamental needs like food, clothes, shelter and education people have enslaved themselves to others or they commit wrongs and lose their freedom.

Parents always want their children to be under their thumb, but after a certain age children want to be free birds. A husband does not want to be a slave to his wife, but a wife wants to keep her husband under her control always. Still there are others who follow the philosophy of eat, drink, and always make merry. Who really enjoys freedom in today's world? Who really needs freedom in the current situation? People behind the bars are earnestly looking towards their release from prison. We can really see that urge in their eyes when we meet them; especially those who are innocent and have been punished wrongly, look forward to freedom. This article deals with the meaning of freedom, and the theological aspect of freedom.

**What is freedom?**

According to the Oxford dictionary, freedom is the power or right to act, speak

or think as one wants. This meaning is very important. It is the state of not being imprisoned or enslaved. Then why are there prisons all over the world? Why are the number of prisoners increasing day-by-day? We all do have some freedom of choice to choose our life partner, etc.

**Society and freedom**

Why are there rules and regulations in society? They are there to bring peace and harmony in society. There should be order in society. If there is no order in society everything will be chaotic or in disorder. We must follow the rules and regulations as citizens of the country. What happens if we do not follow them? For example, take traffic rules. If people violate the rules there will be big traffic jams and the whole city will stumble and come to a standstill. Even the traffic policemen would be able to do nothing. Likewise, it is the same with other laws regarding human trafficking, murder, theft, sexual harassment, encroaching, hardening and so on. They are there to make sure peace and harmony prevail in society. If anybody violates the rules intentionally or unintentionally, then the law will punish them with the power entrusted to them. This is how many men and women end



up in prisons. Then they start longing for freedom. How is it possible to give freedom to such people? So, one thing all citizens should understand is that freedom is not being able to do whatever one wants, but it is being responsible in all that one does.

### Theological Aspect of Freedom

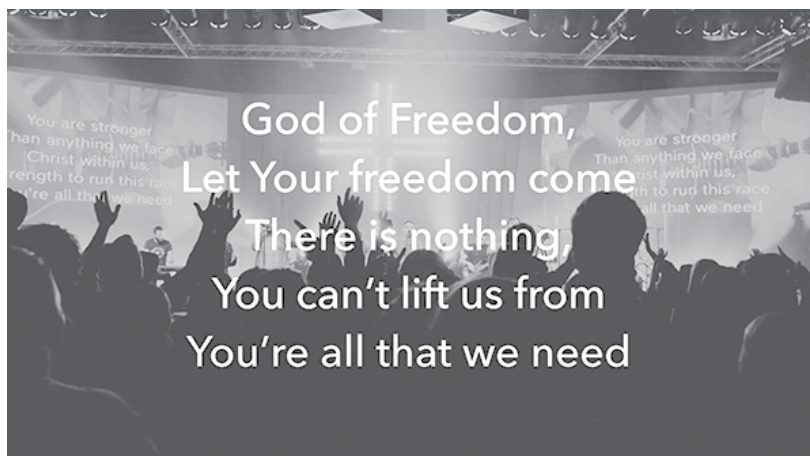
God created humans with freedom. In the book of Genesis, chapter 2 we see creation of human beings in God's own image and likeness. He put Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, gave them freedom to live but with one restriction: (Gen 2:16,17) *And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."*

How did Adam and Eve lose their freedom given by God? In the story each one blames the other. No one claimed responsibility. So, punishment was meted out. What was the punishment? Their freedom was taken away; they were driven away from the garden. The ultimate reason for losing freedom is nothing but aspiration, desire, craving to possess higher power. Buddha says, "Desire is the reason for destruction." Yes, this is what happened to our first parents.

The issue then is power. It is economics, it is inequality in a world where equality was promised. Which walls created cells for Adam and Eve? From then on, human beings build walls

on one side to make prisons and on the other side socially-conscious people pull down the walls to give freedom to the imprisoned. The world's history was one of confronting two seemingly irreconcilable truths: the biblical promise of freedom and equality, and the reality of political bondage. Jesus came to liberate people, who were under the oppression of social evils and sin. He clearly proclaimed it in Luke (4: 18-19), *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recover sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of Lord's favour.* Real freedom is when the whole of society can live in peace and enjoy happiness.

Let us remember that walls do not create prisons. All those who are behind the bars are not born criminals. They have lost their freedom due to many circumstances. They are our brothers and sisters. Let us try to help them realize their predicament and stretch out our helping hand so that they may enjoy true freedom in their lives. May God bless us all!



## Christmas Celebration in the different jails - Sagar Diocese, MP

*“Kindness is free, sprinkle that stuff everywhere”*

God’s very nature is love; God loves you and me, not because He needs us but because He wants us. Incarnation of Jesus as a mere human was the greatest sign of God’s love for us. The joy of hope, peace and love echoed from the manger at the birth of the divine little babe of Bethlehem.

We carried the vibrations of this joy to the prison where our brothers and sisters behind the bars were waiting for our presence. Our presence always brings a smile to their face. With the message of Christmas, we stepped into each prison to share the peace and joy of the divine baby born in Bethlehem, born in our hearts. Their hearts always long for our visit. To make the day celebratory and

memorable, variegated programmes on the birth of Jesus were performed by our students in the respective jails in their locality. It filled the hearts of the prisoners with the compassionate love of Jesus. The Christmas message was delivered by specially invited guests. In a nutshell the message was, *«As different rivers join together in the great sea, we, following different religions ultimately reach the Divine sea - the Almighty. So, wherever we are, believe in God, and be at peace with the situation and wait patiently for the loving God to work in us. Today or tomorrow God will answer your prayers.»* We distributed woollen clothes and snacks, and Christmas meal was arranged for them. They were very happy and contend with our presence and prayers. Prison-in-charge personnel greatly appreciated our dedication and the service we render in each prison.

*Fr. Emmanuel, MP State Co-ordinator*

## Christmas Celebration at Burdwan Correctional Home

A group of laity, religious nuns and priests, and students of the Asansol diocese visited the Burdwan District Central Correctional Home at Burdwan on December 15, 2018 to wish the inmates a happy Christmas and to sing carols. However, what the visitors encountered was a very different experience from what they had expected. The inmates welcomed the MC Sisters, SMI Sisters, DSA Sisters, SSAM sisters, priests, students of St. Anne’s School, Burdwan and the laity with dance, drumbeats and singing, and led them from the jail gate to the open-air stage inside the correctional home.

The inmates greeted them, garlanded the visitors and presented dances and songs to entertain the Christians who visited to share Christmas joy. Mr. Naveen Kujur, Superintendent of the Correctional Home, made elaborate arrangements to stage a Christmas play acted by the students of St. Anne’s Hostel, Burdwan for the inmates. Fr. I.P. Sarto, Vicar General of Asansol diocese thanked the staff

and inmates for the welcome, and prayed for the speedy return of the inmates to their homes. He invited all the inmates to be helpful to one another and to be supportive of each other.

The St. Anne’s Hostel tribal boys, Burdwan performed dances to entertain the inmates. The women inmates of the Correctional Home performed two dances praising Jesus, the Saviour and the men inmates displayed their talent through three dances and a drill. The 999 men and 86 women at the Correctional Home worked together to clean the premises and enjoyed their time with the visitors and staff by singing and dancing on December 15, 2018.

*“This is the first time that I have seen the inmates welcoming visitors with garlands and dance,”* said Sr. Bernie, MC, Superior of the Burdwan community. *“It is the first time that we have had a cultural program like this to commemorate Christmas,”* said one of the wardens.

The nuns and laity sang carols to greet the inmates. Apostolic Carmel Sisters, Alexia and Sirija, from Calcutta visit every week to help the women with income generation programs at Burdwan Correctional Home. The priests and the religious nuns of Burdwan parish plan to organize more such programs in the future.

Mr. Amio Maity, one of the wardens, sang solo and danced to greet the audience. Mr. Maity appreciated Mr. Naveen Kujur for encouraging

the inmates to take part in and performing in some of the cultural programs. He thanked the visitors for the Christmas gifts. "This is a unique Christmas experience and I am thrilled to see the serene and clean atmosphere within the Correctional Home," said Mr Michael J. Shah, who has been associated with the Prison Ministry for the past many years.

**Fr. I.P. Sarto**

## Christmas Celebration at Buxar Central Prison, Bihar

**I**t is a great privilege for us to share with you the event at the Buxar Central Prison. I have a separate mission set by my ministry to work amongst my brethren in the jail. I started my mission without zeal and vigour, but the Lord blessed my mission of working for my fellow prisoners, the 965 inmates. The ministry offered counselling services, but could not bring Jesus to them inside the jail premises. So, I went daily and held regular counselling sessions; and took up the task of bringing the prisoners to a state of forgiving the self and seeking forgiveness from others for their mistakes. I even conducted mental mediation and gave them examples of personalities such as, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Nehru, Indira Gandhi, etc. and set out how their life panned out and they brought in a new way of life.

On December 22, 2018 we had Christmas celebration at the Central Prison Buxar. It was a great day to bring the message of Jesus to our fellow brothers. Pastor Paul, with his team, performed beautiful Christmas songs with actions. A beautiful skit on the mercy of Jesus to sinners, particularly the woman caught for adultery was enacted. The Most Rev. Sebastian Kallupura, Bishop of Buxar, in his message spoke about how Jesus brought salvation to all: "Peace and love to you, you are no more prisoners, but fellow brethren

and it is a correctional home." He asked everyone to do meditation daily for at least 3 minutes. Mr Vijay Kumar Arora, Central Jail Superintendent, Buxar too emphasized on the usefulness of meditation. Fr. Gotluri's message was on how everyone was blessed with the presence of the Lord Jesus, who brought great salvation to all and so his mercy was with them.

There were 14 programmes including carol singing, the skit and dances. The programme was attended by Fr. Andrew Raja, Sr. Tessa, Sr. Renu and Sr. Luci. Fr. James Amakatt, the Vicar General who is the spiritual guide of the ministry, was also present and his presence was a grace to all.

Pastor Paul, who conducted the Christmas celebration, and who brought his team to perform the programmes for all and not just the Catholics, I thank him and his team for sponsoring 1200 packets of sweets for all. We are grateful to all. We hope that everything goes well this year and we will give our best possible work for the furthering of the ministry.

Thanks to Mr Satish, the Jailor who made the arrangements for us to inaugurate the new auditorium for Christmas.

**Fr. Arogyaswamy Gotluri,**  
*State Coordinator, Bihar*

## Christmas Celebration at Circle Jail Berhampur, Odisha

Christmas celebration is a yearly event that carries with it much joy, hope and excitement. The Christian prisoners at Berhampur Circle Jail take pride in celebrating it within their means. They wait for the PMI volunteers to arrive to express their requirements and get whatever the jail authorities allow us to give. Their needs are limited - new hymn books, catechism books, ordo to read the Mass readings every day, some decorations for the crib and some cash for other expenses like hiring the music group, and so on. Normally we choose the Sunday before Christmas for the celebration in jail as Christmas is too busy a day, especially for our Bishop Sarath Chandra Nayak for whom the prisoners are people close to his heart; and he rejoices in offering mass for them. So, we had the celebration on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2018. The jail authorities had allowed the sacrament of confession before Christmas and so Sr. Shanti took Fr. Mohan Nayak and Fr. Jusman to hear the confessions. Among the 835 prisoners, only 69 are Christians, and among them only 38 are Catholics. All the Christians attended the talk given by the 2 priests and the Catholics made their confession. Real joy could be seen on their faces on unburdening their hearts to someone and receiving God's pardon.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December we had the mass at 2.30 pm by our bishop and Fr. Jusman. The prisoners had decorated the hall and prepared the crib. The bishop blessed the crib, and everyone kissed baby Jesus with great devotion. Some

were in tears. During mass the Reverend bishop spoke about the theme for the PMI, 'Prisons are not made of walls alone'. He elaborated on the theme and explained how they could experience inner freedom even within the prison walls and how we could be prisoners of our ego even though we are not bound by any external walls. Many non-Christians too had come for the mass and the hall was crowded. After the mass some boys from St. Joseph's School performed a dance which thrilled everyone. The prisoners were eager to speak to us personally and receive special blessings from the bishop. Then we were taken to the female ward with 26 prisoners and 2 small children. We were allowed to distribute sarees to all of them and clothes for the 2 small boys. We had taken 900 pieces of cake for all the prisoners which we left with the jailor to distribute. We also gave some shawls to the prisoners who were sick and to the elderly. It was a day of joy and gladness for everyone except for the fact that only 15 of us were allowed to enter the jail this year and so we had to refuse many who wanted to join. But we thanked God for giving us the chance to have this Christmas celebration in jail. Photography was not allowed in the jail, but the memory of the celebration lingers in our minds and we hear a gentle voice whispering 'My birthday was celebrated in prison and you were the instruments for it'.

**Sr. Shanti Pulickal SCC**  
State Secretary, Odisha

### Archdiocese of Gandhinagar

#### Christmas Celebration with our friends behind the bars

Prison Ministry India, Gandhinagar Archdiocese succeeded in reaching out to the prisoners in the jails. The volunteers went with the message, 'A Saviour is Born to forgive us.' Though we applied to 5 prisons, we got permission to extend our ministry in only four jails. On the allotted day we visited them, sang carols, read a passage from the Holy Bible and shared the joyful message of God. We also shared with them sweets, cakes and fruits from our generous donors. We ended each prison programme with the distribution of children's Bible. Some of the inmates met us after the prayer and shared that the prayer service was an inspirational experience and a turning point in their lives to experience a God who forgives.

**Fr. Dominic Savio**

## Can we approach our brethren behind the bars with Love and Compassion?



Fr. Josekutty Kalayil MST

Speaking to prison staff in South Africa in 1998, President Nelson Mandela expressed, "Secure prisons are essential to making our justice system an effective weapon against crime. When prisoners – convicted or awaiting trial – are entrusted to your care, they must know, and the public must know that they will remain there until they are legally discharged... The full contribution which our prisons can make towards a permanent reduction in the country's crime-rate lies also in the way in which they treat prisoners. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of both professionalism and respect for human rights."

When we think about society's responsibility towards prisoners, we should first learn who a prisoner is and how the prison system evolved in our society. **Prison** is an institution for the confinement of persons who have been remanded (held) in custody by a judicial authority or who have been deprived of their liberty following conviction for a crime. A person found guilty of a felony or a misdemeanour may be required to serve a prison sentence. The holding of accused persons awaiting trial remains an important function of contemporary prisons, and in some countries such persons constitute the majority of the prison population. In the United Kingdom, for example, generally about one-fifth of the prison population is non-convicted or unsentenced, while more than two-thirds of those in custody in India are pretrial detainees.

Until the late 18th century, prisons were used primarily for the confinement of debtors, persons accused of crimes and awaiting trial, and convicts awaiting the imposition of their sentences—usually death or transportation (deportation) overseas. A sentence of imprisonment was rarely imposed. As the use of capital punishment began to decline in the late 18th century, the prison was increasingly used by courts as a place of punishment, eventually becoming the chief means of punishing serious offenders. The use of imprisonment subsequently spread worldwide, often by means of colonial empires that brought the practice to countries with no indigenous concept of prisons. By the early 21st century a majority of countries had abolished the death penalty (in law or in practice), and imprisonment was consequently the most severe form of punishment their courts could impose.

As use of the new type of prison expanded, administrators began to experiment with new methods of prisoner rehabilitation. Solitary confinement of criminals came to be viewed as an ideal, because it was thought that solitude would help the offender to become penitent and that penitence would result in rehabilitation. Each prisoner remained in his cell or its adjoining yard, worked alone at trades such as weaving, carpentry, or shoemaking, and saw no one except the officers of the institution and an occasional visitor from outside.

A competing philosophy of prison management, known as the “silent system” or the “Auburn system,” arose at roughly the same time. Although constant silence was strictly enforced, the distinguishing feature of this system was that prisoners were permitted to work together in the daytime (at night they were confined to individual cells). Both systems held to the basic premise that contact between convicts should be prohibited in order to minimize the bad influence inmates might have on one another. Vigorous competition between supporters of the two systems followed until about 1850, by which time most U.S. states had adopted the silent system.

### **The purpose of imprisonment**

There are a number of accepted reasons for the use of imprisonment. One approach aims to deter those who would otherwise commit crimes (general deterrence) and to make it less likely that those who serve a prison sentence will commit crimes after their release (individual deterrence). A second approach focuses on issuing punishment to, or obtaining retribution from, those who have committed serious crimes. A third approach encourages the personal reform of those who are sent to prison. Finally, in some cases it is necessary to protect the public from those who commit crimes – particularly from those who do so persistently. In individual cases, all or some of these justifications may apply. The increasing importance of the notion of reform has led some prison systems to be called correctional institutions.

### **Order and discipline**

Although prisons are intended to be institutions where good order prevails, it is possible for order to break down in certain circumstances. It is the responsibility of prison administrators to ensure that each arriving prisoner understands what type of behaviour is expected of them and what acts are forbidden. In addition, there must

be a clear set of disciplinary sanctions for acts of indiscipline. In all such cases, the normal processes of natural justice should apply. This means that a prisoner who is accused of violating prison rules should be told what the charge is and who is levelling it. The accused prisoner should have the opportunity to attend a disciplinary hearing, to enter a defence, and to question the evidence presented.

### **Prisoners’ rights**

As an aspect of human rights, the concept of prisoners’ rights has been upheld by a number of international declarations and national constitutions. The underlying assumption – that people who are detained or imprisoned do not cease to be human beings, no matter how serious the associated crime – was expressed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10, which states, “All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.” This rests on the principle that the deprivation of liberty (that is, imprisonment) is the operative punishment and that it should not be augmented by unnecessarily restrictive conditions.

### **Social responsibility**

Positive attitudes towards prisoners are important in securing the effectiveness of various correctional rehabilitation programs and the successful reintegration of prisoners. It is at this level that society has a lot to do for their reformation. In this context I remember the comment made by the former DGP of Andhra Pradesh, ‘Not a gun but a nun can change a prisoner.’ It is their right to be considered as human beings not as animals. We need to approach them with a kind heart and accept them as our own. It has to be rooted even in the mind of children that a prisoner is our own brother or sister who needs to be approached with compassion and love.

## *Don't they deserve another chance?*

Is a prison only a building made of walls in which people are legally held as punishment for crimes they have committed? Not really... We are imprisoned by our egos, hurt, unforgiveness, anger, despair, anxiety, fears, addictions etc. Before Nelson Mandela left the prison he said, "As I stand before the door to my freedom, I realize that if I do not leave my pain, anger and bitterness behind me, I will still be in prison."

When a person is sentenced to imprisonment, it is not he alone who is sentenced to trauma, but also the family members. The family members also go through pain and rejection by society. Some families endure it, but in many cases families decide to disown the prisoner. It is heart breaking for the prisoner. The worst feeling is the feeling of rejection... rejection by the ones whom you love the most - your family. You look up to your family in trying times and if during these times your family rejects you, you are shattered. This is what most of the prisoners go through.

There was a lady sentenced to imprisonment for murdering her husband. She had two sons. Both of them disowned her. She was longing to meet her sons, but they did not want to see her. PMI was even willing to pay for her bail, but her sons did not want her. She was later diagnosed with last stage cancer. Finally, she died, but her children did not come to see her. What would she have gone through? The pain of rejection must have been more excruciating than the pain of cancer.

Every prison has visiting hours. It is during this time that family members and friends of the inmates come to visit them. When there is a visitor, the name of the prisoner is called out. There are many prisoners who long to hear their name but never get to hear it. This is because nobody wants to meet them. There was a young boy who used to wait for his name to be called out, but visiting hours came



**Fr. Wilfred V. Fernandes**  
*Central Region Co-ordinator*

and went and he never heard his name. At the end of the visiting hours he would always be depressed and hurt. The other inmates who had visitors would share the food their family members got for them, but this boy never had the opportunity of sharing anything with anyone. One day, a member of the ministry went to visit him. And he finally heard his name being called out. His happiness had no bounds. Even though it was not a family member who visited him he was so happy that someone had finally come to see him in prison. He was given some biscuit packets and even that made him so happy because that day he could share something with his inmates which was brought for him.

During one of the visits, a prisoner shared that he was to be released but he was not happy. After he was sentenced to imprisonment, his wife disowned him completely. She never even visited him. Only his mother visited him in prison. Later he was told that his wife remarried. Imagine the feeling of rejection he went through. He was now to be released from prison; but did not have a family to go to.

No doubt, prisoners are convicted because of some crime they have committed, but many a times these crimes are committed in a fit of rage. It is not intentional. By being imprisoned they are being punished for their crime. But do they really deserve to be abandoned by their family?... By society?... Don't they deserve another chance?



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- The last date for submitting the applications for both 21st April 2018.
- Who can apply? - Priests, Sisters, Brothers, Lay people, new and regular volunteers who are willing to extend their compassion and care towards the brethren behind the bars.
- Financial support -Generous contributions from every good heart.

Here is an invitation for you to send at least one person from your congregation, province and region. Hope to receive a positive response from you all, I remain.

Yours in Christ,

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