



PRISON VOICE

January 2021

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Issue 5

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-

FROM THE INCARNATE TO THE INCARCERATED





Christmas Celebration at Chavakkad Subjail



Christmas Celebration and Cricket Match at Sagar Central Jail



Christmas Celebration at Aluva Subjail



Christmas Celebration at Ambikapur Central Prison



First PMI Prayer Group Members at St Apostolic Seminary Kottayam 1981-1988



Christmas Celebration at Banda Subjail



Christmas Celebration at Bengaluru Central Prison



Christmas Celebration at Berhampur Central Jail



Christmas Celebration at Jashpur Prison



Christmas Celebration at Jharsuguda Subjail



Christmas Celebration at Jharsuguda Women Prison



Christmas Celebration at Kalaburgi Prison



Christmas Celebration at Open Air Prison, Devanahalli



Christmas Celebration at Ottapalam Subjail



Christmas Celebration at Pala Subjail



Christmas Celebration at Vaithiri Prison



Christmas Celebration with the Mentally Challenged Children, Bengaluru



Christmas Celebrations and Medical Camp at Joherganj Sub Jail



Christmas Holy Mass and Celebration at Ernakulam District Jail



CST Little Flower Major Seminarians Visiting Ernakulam District Jail



Jail day Celebrations at Attakulangara Women Prison



Jail Welfare Day Celebration at Kottayam Prison



Jesus Youth Audio Visual Team Performing Music cum Drama Show at Ernakulam District Jail



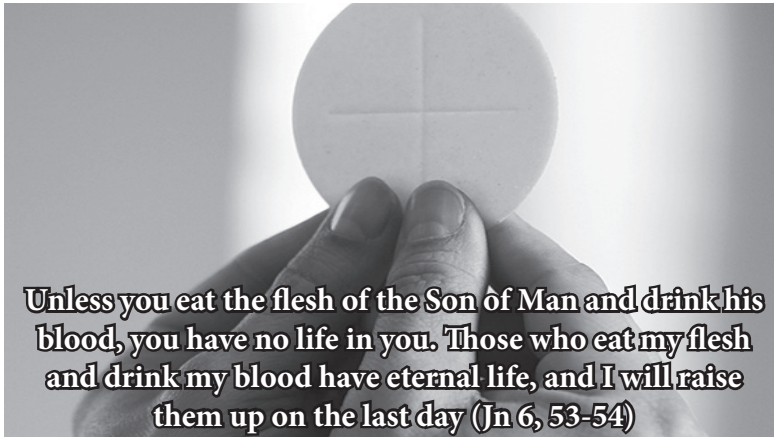
PMI Bengaluru Celebrates Christmas at Jeevodaya

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Are You Willing?

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

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

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BLESSED NEW YEAR 2021



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor

With immense gratitude and highest appreciation to Sr Rosily SCC for her valuable service as the chief editor of Prison Voice let me begin with wishing all of you a happy New Year 2021. Every end marks a new beginning though we are still under the threat of the invisible enemy covid19. I don't think we have, or this generation has experienced anything like this before. The year 2020 landed with this novel virus which wreaked havoc across the globe and still continues its onslaught unabated. The uncertainty looms large and we don't know how long or how far it will continue to keep us in fear. It is not in resisting the situation, we will triumph over it, but in becoming aware of it. Hence, how we deal with the situation is very important. How are we going to do it? We have, so far, resisted it partially, complained about it, and also tried to somewhat fit into this new scenario. Now is the time to look ahead and see how we can redefine ourselves in this restricting scenario. It's almost like imprisonment where we do not have much freedom that we used to have before. We will have to be more flexible in 2021 and beyond because unexpected calamities may happen.

As we enter into the New Year, let us focus on how well our goodwill and genuine service will impact the entire world especially our brethren behind the bars. Let us resolve to live a life of dedicated service that will positively impact the world in general and the incarcerated in particular. That's how we at PMI National Office started visiting the prisons even during this time of pandemic by giving gifts, performing cultural programmes and disseminating the Christmas message of love, joy and

peace. Though we don't have permission to visit prisoners very often, we are able to help them by taking care of their children's education and many other projects launched by the initiative of Rev Fr Francis Kodyan, PMI National Coordinator.

When PMI Celebrates its Ruby Jubilee let us be conscious that the purpose of Jesus' incarnation was to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Lk 4, 18-19). The goal and task of Prison Ministry India are also the same, liberating and redeeming prisoners. Let us intensify our redeeming mission of the lost.

It is relevant for us to remind ourselves of the New Year resolutions proposed by the Holy Father Pope Francis: 1) Don't gossip 2) Finish your meals 3) Make time for others 4) Choose the "humbler" purchase 5) Meet the poor in the flesh 6) Stop judging others 7) Befriend those who disagree 8) Make commitments, such as marriage 9) Make it a habit to "ask the Lord" and 10) Be happy.

I wish we change our direction and not dates, change our commitments and not the calendar, change our attitude and not the actions; and bring about a change in our faith, force and focus and not the fruit. May we live up to the promises we have made and may we create for us, our loved ones, the people around us and above all the lost sheep of Jesus the happiest moments in life.

PMI BURNING BUSH SPIRITUAL BANQUET

Il Resveglio - The Reawakening

In preparation and commemoration of the Ruby Jubilee, PMI convened an online retreat from 13-19 September 2020 to reawaken her volunteers. The theme was “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Eph 5:14). Many retreat participants asked for the continuity of the spiritual experiences they had during the retreat. As a lasting fruit of the retreat PMI decided to have an online spiritual banquet every month in the evening of every first Friday. During this Jubilee year, PMI chalked out various programs like 40 Special Task forces, Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated, 40 houses for the released and reformed prisoners, scholarships for 400 children of prisoners, releasing 400 prisoners and so on. I invite all of you to earnestly pray for the fruitfulness of PMI Ruby Jubilee programs and to actively participate in the Burning Bush Spiritual Banquets.

Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet

The unburnt bush (Ex 3:4) on Mount Horeb is an icon of theophany – the source of God experience, a symbol of God’s communion with man; it’s an embodiment of divine revelation - God revealing his plan to man. It narrates the story of God’s love for man and tells the tale of Moses’ vocation to liberate the people of God from the Egyptian bondage. This is the holy place where Moses was appointed and anointed by God to lead the people of God out of Egypt and into Canaan, the land of milk and honey; the place where God revealed His name that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac



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

and Jacob – and that He is Yahweh “I am who I am”. God is calling PMI volunteers as He called Moses, to liberate the incarcerated. The PMI Burning Bush Spiritual Banquet intends to set the hearts of PMI volunteers on fire, to understand the depth of their call within the call and thus totally dedicate themselves for the integral development of prisoners and their children. “Come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt. I will be with you” (Ex 3, 10-12)

Inaugural Banquet

On Friday 2nd October 2020, the Burning Bush PMI Spiritual Banquet was inaugurated by Very Rev Fr Varghese Karippery, the cofounder of Prison Ministry India. Mar Jose Pulickal, the Bishop of Kanjirapally spoke out of his experience as one of the pioneers of Jesus Fraternity at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam and out of his rich experience as the Director of the rehabilitation center for released men prisoners at Snehashramam, Thrissur. Highlighting Jesus’ special mission for the lost and the wounded he invited PMI volunteers to express more tangibly their compassion and affection towards brethren behind the bars. Mar Jose Pulickal who donated his ancestral house and property for the integral human development of prisoners’ children inspired PMI volunteers



From National Coordinator's Desk

to dedicate totally for the liberation and redemption of prisoners and their children. Fr Reji Koodapattu CMI and team led the Eucharistic Adoration and praise and worship. On 6th November 2020 Rev Fr Maverick, the Director Caritas Goa, led the Burning Bush Spiritual banquet. He spoke on the 'Restoration towards Eternal life'. Rev Fr Savio Fernandes Assistant Director of Caritas Goa and his team lead the PMI volunteers into praise, worship and adoration. It was indeed a spirit filled banquet wherein everyone who participated was enlightened and motivated to work for eternal life.

Burning Bush Advent Retreat

There is a reason for closed doors, unanswered prayers and blocked roads. If your plans don't work out it is because God has better plans for you. Our journey on this earth is full of surprises, difficulties, challenges, joys and sorrows, ups and downs. To face our day-to-day challenges, it is very important to keep ourselves in prayers. Just as food gives strength for our bodies, prayers provide us with the spiritual strength to face difficulties or challenges in our lives. Keeping this in mind PMI conducted a three-day online Advent retreat from 4-6 December 2020 under the leadership of Rev Fr Henry Falcao Director of the St Joseph Vaz Spiritual Renewal Retreat Center Old Goa. Fr Xavier Braganza, PMI volunteer, Panjim, Fr Saturnino Colaco and Fr Henry Falcao preached the retreat and conducted Eucharistic Adoration. The theme was God's Love. The retreat began with praise and worship by Mr Magnus. Panjim prison ministry volunteers namely Mr Walli de Lima Fernandes, Mrs Jocelyn Rodrigues, Mr Denzil Martins, Mr Michael Martins and Mrs Goretti Martins lead the retreatants in

rosary on all the three days. God is the Good Shepherd who is always in search of the lost sheep and when He finds it, He celebrates. God alone has the blue print of our lives and as such God alone knows our beginning and He alone knows our end.

Burning Bush Prayer

Lord our loving Father, we thank and glorify you for the divine providence and heavenly protection of PMI volunteers all over India. Merciful Father, we entrust the PMI Burning Bush Spiritual banquet – preachers, participants, organizers, sessions, arrangements and equipment into your safe divine hands. Lord Jesus, you invited the apostles to come away with you to a lonely place to rest a while for their sanctification and empowerment. Bless us O Lord to be the lamb of the world, to be the salt of the earth, to be the light of the world, to be the ransom for many, to be the stone rejected, to be the body broken, and to be the blood shed. Anoint us O Lord, with the power of the Holy Spirit and renew us to commit ourselves to search, serve and save the lost. O Holy Spirit, fill us with your fruits, gifts and charisms, let sinners be converted, the sick be healed, the consecrated be renewed, the faithful be strengthened and souls in purgatory be liberated. Shower your deliverance power on us and lead us to release, reform, rehabilitate, reintegrate and redeem our brethren behind the bars. O Blessed Mary Mother of Our Lord Jesus, mediatrix of sinners, pray for the salvation of the lost and for the reawakening of our Chairman, founders, coordinators and the entire PMI family. The saints who suffered and glorified the Lord in prison St John the Baptist, St Paul, St Maximillian Kolbe, venerable Van Thuan and all the saints and angels intercede for the anointing and sanctification of all the retreatants. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Which Way to Jesus

On a cold Harmattan morning three palm fruit farmers were warming themselves by the fireside. Soon two of them were engaged in a heated debate comparing their religions to decide which one was the true religion. Okoro, the oldest among them, sat quietly listening to the debate. Suddenly the two turned to him and asked, “Decide for us, Okoro which religion is the right one?” Okoro stroked his white beard and said thoughtfully, “Well, you know there are three ways to get from here to the oil mill. You can go right over the hill. That is shorter but it is a steep climb. You can go around the hill on the right side. That is not too far, but the road is rough and full of potholes. Or you can go around the hill on the left side. That is the longest way, but it is also the easiest.” He paused and then added, “But you know, when you get there, the mill man does not ask you how you came. All he asks is, ‘Man, how good is your fruit?’”

In the stories of Jesus’ birth, two special groups of people came to visit the new born babe: the shepherds and the magi. The church has no special feast to commemorate the visit of the shepherds but we have this special feast of Epiphany today to celebrate the visit of the magi. Why is that? It is because the visit of the magi is an eye-opener. The shepherds learnt of the birth of Jesus through a direct revelation from angels appearing in the midnight sky. This is direct and supernatural revelation. Many of us have no problem with that. The magi, on the other hand, learnt of the birth of Jesus by observing a star. The star did not say anything to them. They had to interpret this natural sign to know what it meant and where it led. If we remember that the



Fr Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar

magi or the three wise men were nature worshippers, people who divined God’s will by reading the movements of the stars and other heavenly bodies, then we can see how the visit of the magi challenges some of our popular beliefs.

Like the palm fruit farmers, religious people of all persuasions tend to think that their religious tradition is the only way to God. This is what some of us hear when we hear such words of Jesus as: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). We hastily conclude that the way of God equals the way of our religious tradition. Yet the word of God cautions us against such a narrow interpretation. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). That is why we are fascinated with the story of the visit of the magi. It is a unique story that opens our eyes to the fact that God is not limited to any one religious tradition.

Notice how people of different religious traditions came to know that the Son of God was born. The shepherds who were regarded as unclean and could not take part in Temple worship without undergoing purification came to know through a direct vision of angels. The magi knew through a reading of the stars and King Herod’s



Which Way to Jesus

scribes came to know through searching the scriptures. Visions, stars, scriptures are different ways of arriving at the same truth. Of course, this does not mean that any religious tradition is just as good as the other. Notice how Matthew indicates that when the guiding star got to Jerusalem its light failed and the magi had to consult the scriptures to direct them to Bethlehem. Over and above the natural light of the star the magi still needed the supernatural light of scripture to finally get to Jesus.

Yet the crucial question in the story remains: Who actually got to find Jesus? Herod and his scribes who had the scriptures failed to find Jesus but the magi who followed the natural light of the stars were able to find him. Why? Because the Jewish authorities, even though they possessed the shining truth of revealed scriptures, did not follow it. They did not walk in the light of the scriptures. The magi, on the other hand, who enjoyed only a star light, followed its guidance. It is not the possession of the truth that matters, it is how prepared we are to walk in the light of the truth that we possess. It is better to have the dim light of the stars and follow it than to have the bright light of the Holy Scriptures and neglect it.

As Christians we believe that our religion possesses the fullness of truth. But how does that benefit us if we do not walk in the truth? Nature worshippers or non-believers who are sincerely committed to following the dim light of natural reason may arrive at Jesus before Christians who have the exalted truths revealed by God but who do not walk the walk of faith. This is the challenging truth we celebrate today in the story of the pagan wise men who seek and find the Lord.

Prison Life, A Great Leveller

Fr Stan Swamy SJ

Inside the daunting prison gates
All belongings taken away
But for the bare essentials

'You' comes first
'I' comes after
'We' is the air one breathes

Nothing is mine
Nothing is yours
Everything is ours

No leftover food thrown away
All shared with the birds of the air
They fly in, have their fill and happily fly out

Sorry to see so many young faces
Asked them: "Way are you here" ?
They told it all, not mincing words

From each as per capacity
To each as per need
Is waht socialism all about

Lo, this commonality is wrought by
compulsion
if only all humans would embrace it freely
and willingly
all would truly become childre of Mother
Earth

Juvenile Delinquents Reformers (JDR)

Introduction

Juvenile Delinquents Reformers is one of the PMI Special Task Forces and PMI volunteers join hands together in reforming and redeeming these children of ours. The term 'Children in Conflict with Law' refers to anyone less than 18 years of age who comes in contact with the Justice System as a result of being suspected or accused of committing an offence. The General Assembly on 29 November 1985 adopted the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, and for the first time the word "Juvenile" was coined. This change in terminology was then reflected in domestic law with the passing of the JJA 1986. The Act was further amended in 2006 and 2011, and was known as the Juvenile Justice Act 2000. The Act was later amended in 2015 and is known as the Juvenile Justice Act 2015.

Juvenile Justice Act 2015

Under JJA 2015 there are two categories of children, (1) Children in need of Care and Protection, (2) Children in Conflict with Law. The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, defines the legal framework in which juveniles can appear before a judge. Juveniles in conflict with the law must be distinguished from children in need of care and protection. Offences covered under Juvenile Justice Act 2015- Petty Offences, Serious Offences and Heinous Offences.



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Why Juvenile Delinquency?

The root causes of Juvenile Delinquency are well documented and researched. They are poverty, school problems, economic problems, alcohol and drug abuse, community atmosphere, getting acquainted with bad company and ultimately falling into bad habits, bad family atmosphere, lack of family support, substance abuse – home life, substance abuse – personal, physical abuse at home, lack of adult interaction, peer pressure – neighborhood influence, low self-esteem and trauma, single parent families, separated families, frequent parents conflict, lack of trust and confidence among the parents, psychological problems in parents, sibling rivalry due to unequal treatment between children.

The Crime Committed by a Juvenile

The common crime committed by Juveniles is theft or larceny. Young or adult, may take to a wrong path to improve their financial conditions. Teens become Juvenile Delinquents due to lack of finances. When they experience poor economic conditions, they start engaging in the wrong activities. They may start selling drugs or steal things to improve their economic conditions. Some others are Vandalism and graffiti charges,



Juvenile Delinquents Reformers

shoplifting and other petty theft charges, Simple assault (especially due to fighting incidents), underage drinking violations, joyriding a car, murder and rape.

Domestic Work and Hazards

Children are the priceless gift from God and are the treasure of each family. The family and the community have the primal goal in shaping the personality of children. Sadly, many children are forced to work from a young age. The hazards linked to child domestic work are a matter of serious concern. Some of the most common risks children face in domestic service includes: long and tiring working days, use of toxic chemicals, carrying heavy loads, handling dangerous items such as knives, axes, and hot pans, insufficient or inadequate food and accommodation, humiliating or degrading treatment including physical and verbal abuse, sexual abuse. These hazards need to be seen in association with the denial of fundamental rights of the child.

Number of Juvenile Homes in India

There are a total of 815 Juvenile homes in India. They are overcrowded because of the number of juveniles accused and they need us. The crimes committed by juveniles show an upward trend as reported by the National Crime Record Bureau- 7 November 2016.

Juvenile – A Journey

Juvenile is a journey, a child can turn as villain or a hero, empowered or suppressed. A child can be looked up to by society for

the noble qualities or they can be looked down for being in Observational Homes for correctional behavior. On the one hand due to poverty children are deprived of education and forced to work from a very young age and shoulder responsibilities beyond their age and capacity. On the other hand children from well-to-do strata of the society have access to money and opportunities and live in the lap of luxury with nothing denied to them.

Give Roots, then Wings

There are two things that we can give our children. One is roots and the other is wings. Our children are taught to aim high. We teach our children to look up, but we fail to teach our children to look down. We have to give our children first roots and then the wings. As children are physically fed, they also need to be fed emotionally, psychologically, mentally, spiritually and socially. Every child is a different kind of flower and all together they make this world a beautiful garden.

PMI Services for the Juveniles

PMI offers individual counseling, moral class, English class, Computer class, life-skill training program, recreation, behavior management programs, celebrations, follow-up and intervention with the family for the Juveniles. Through the launching of many Kolbe Homes for the prisoners' children, children from broken families, children in extreme poverty or children of single parent we can prevent Juvenile Delinquents.

PREMODAYA, Bengaluru Creating SPACE for Children

Introduction

Child Care Institutions are a platform where children live, learn, practice and develop capacities for participation in the society at large. It is a home or abode wherein children in need of care and protection live together, play, share ideas and concerns, have identity, have discussions and dialogue in the process of growing to maturity. Their right to protection, development and participation is enhanced with greater attention. The United Nations Child Rights Convention (UNCRC) declared that children have inalienable rights and it is the responsibility of the State, Institutions and Communities to ensure. Premodaya, as a home for children of prisoners is committed to ensuring lasting development connected to child rights.

The Needs and Rights of Children

The needs of children are important. The basic needs pertaining to home care, wholesome nutrition, quality education and space for creative expressions are to be made sure by the society. These needs cannot be postponed for later stage as these children almost deprived of everything as their parents are incarcerated. Premodaya realizes that any delay in addressing these needs of children is detrimental in the shaping of their future. Premodaya has design of understanding the priorities of the needs of children and making creative efforts to address them meaningfully.



Sr Jerlin Joyce, SSAM

Creating Space for Children

PMI rightly intervenes in the lives of children of prisoners through their volunteers. The girl children are immediately brought to Premodaya for care and protection. These girl children are to be given utmost care in Premodaya as they are more vulnerable and are susceptible to abuse in their family-based neighbourhood. In Premodaya, prime importance is given to children by creating physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual space for expressions. While creating space for children with adult participation, the needs of children given timely and trendy attention taking into consideration of the signs of the times.

Amble Physical Space

Children enjoy being around huge space. Premodaya is situated in a vast campus and has a lot of child friendly space for children to run and play around. Sisters spent quality time engaging in play activities. Premodaya has a flower garden in which children spent time in watering and experimenting in crafting on plants which make them joyful

and creative. The study hall, dining hall, dormitory and recreation areas are spaced out sufficiently well for children to be what they want to be doing their activities. These physical spaces are child friendly, safe and protective enough to move about comfortably. These physical amble spaces basically make children feel comfortable, safe and happy thus ensuring fulfilling their need for safe environment. This increases in children the spatial intelligence with the ability to visualize objects from different angles and space such as those of navigators and engineers. The Christmas decorations made by them were truly amazing with creative visualization.

Emotional Intelligence

‘Emotions make us human, denying those makes us beasts’- Victoria Klein. The children of prisoners go through a tough emotional transition as they depart from family members in a constrained manner. The negativity spilt on the stature of family members does impact them on the emotions of guilt, embarrassment, envy and jealousy. Hence, Premodaya moves in a proactive manner to address emotional needs of children on love, self-acceptance and self-realization with positively addressing to their needs. A counsellor is engaged to assist children to imbibe emotional intelligence. Help children through mature companionship, motivations to stay healthy. Through group therapy and team building children are assisted to respond to situations

and events than reacting to them. The sisters, teachers, volunteers and friends make children learn from emotions on cognition, feeling and action aspects. The emotional space provided to children helps them move on to emotional intelligence through dance, music, linguistic calibre and interpersonal intelligence.

Intellectual and Spiritual Space

Children need empathy and not sympathy. Efforts are taken to provide regular positive support to children to improve and build on their intellectual calibre through regular assistance to study, group discussions, play way learning. Spiritual space is given to share their feelings and wants through prayers, group sharing and through moral stories. It is believed that every child is unique and they can win over their temporal emotional instabilities with proper accompaniments of adults with educative presence.

Embellishing Child Rights

Premodaya aims to standardize the space for assuring child rights. Girl children in Premodaya stay comfortable, assisted to grow intellectually and emotionally in a balanced manner. Proactive measures are taken by the PMI through Society of Sisters of St Anne-Madras (SSAM) to assure quality space and time to children. Thus, the loving ambience makes them to respond proactively to multifaceted situations in life. Premodaya strongly believes that the needs and rights of children cannot be postponed and are met with due child friendly S P A C E here and now.



Bro Marcel Van, Vietnam

Holiness Made Simple for Ordinary People

Santhosh Ebroo

Joachim Nguyễn Tân Văn


Joachim Nguyễn Tân Văn was born on March 15th 1928, in Ngam Giao, a village in North Vietnam. He received First Holy Communion at the age of 6, and began formal schooling at the age of 7.

Redemptorist Brother

At the age of 13, he entered the minor seminary. Soon after, his formation was interrupted yet again as the seminary was taken over by Japanese soldiers. He then moved to stay at a parish - dedicated to the Little Flower - with Dominican friars who had opened a minor seminary in the parish. He was subsequently expelled when he became involved in an argument with the parish priest. Finally, at the age of 16, he was admitted to the Redemptorist monastery in Hanoi. Here, he professed his vows, and lived and died as a Redemptorist brother - Bro. Marcel Van. During this time, St. Thérèse revealed to him that becoming a priest was not God's Will for him. Instead, was called to become a "hidden apostle of Love" and a "heart for priests" - as a professed brother.

St Thérèse of Lisieux

It was during his time in the parish that he had discovered St Thérèse of Lisieux's autobiography - The Story of a Soul. Marcel Van was convinced he had no capacity for strenuous penances and mortification. And



yet, he desired to become a saint. This is how he expressed it: "In spite of my great desire to attain holiness, I was certain that I would never achieve it, because to be a saint, you have to fast, lash yourself with a whip, wear a rock around your neck and little chains covered with spikes, a coarse horsehair shirt, endure the cold, the scabies, etc. My God, if it is like this, I give up... All that is way too much for me." Marcel Van also experienced diabolical temptations that it was presumptuous for him to want to be a saint. Today, we see clearly that none of these penances are necessary for holiness. In October, Pope Francis beatified 15-year old Carlo Acutis who never engaged in any of these practices. However, in the 1940s, the Universal Calling to Holiness was not preached from every pulpit, nor was it part of the consciousness of most ordinary people. By the grace of God, Vatican II helped the Church rediscover this teaching that had been a cornerstone of Apostolic preaching but that had gradually become obscured from view. By the grace of God, too, today, the Church proclaims with greater and renewed vigour, intensity, insistence, and clarity that you and I are called to be saints in the ordinary, commonplace, and humdrum activities and events of each day - which is what St. Thérèse's Little Way is all about.

Discovering St. Thérèse of Lisieux made Marcel Van weep tears of joy as he had found a person whose pilgrimage to holiness was something he could imitate. He expressed it in this way: "I understood then that God is Love... Like St Thérèse, I can sanctify myself through all my little acts... A smile, a word or a look, provided that everything is done

in love. What happiness!... From now on, sanctity will no longer frighten me....my tears were flowing like an inexhaustible spring.”

“I had received therefore, that afternoon, a source of grace and happiness. “The Story of a Soul” had become my dearest friend, and followed me everywhere and I did not cease reading or rereading it, without ever getting weary of it. There was nothing in this volume which did not conform to my thoughts, and what pleased me even more in the course of my reading was to see clearly the spiritual life of Thérèse was identical to mine. Her thoughts, even her yes or no were in harmony with my own thoughts, and the little events of my life. Truly, never in my life have I met a book which was so well adapted to my thinking and feelings as is “The Story of a Soul”. I can confess that the story of Thérèse’s soul is the story of my soul....”

Incarceration

Bro. Marcel Van was sent by his Superiors from Hanoi to Saigon - which would become part of South Vietnam. In July 1954, North Vietnam was handed over to the Communists. Some members of the Redemptorist monastery stayed behind to look after the Catholics who had stayed back in Hanoi instead of fleeing to South Vietnam. Marcel Van requested and was given permission to go and join them. He wrote that he was going to Hanoi for this reason: “I am going there so that there might be someone who loves God in the midst of the Communists.”

Not long after his arrival in Hanoi, on May 7th 1955, Bro. Marcel Van was arrested. He

was jailed for a year and subjected to all sorts of psychological torture. A year later, he was produced in court and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment in a “re-education” camp. Both in jail and in the various re-education camps he was sent to, he was a source of love, kindness, consolation, and comfort for his fellow prisoners. No amount of suffering could make him renounce his vocation to love.

Love Bomb

In PMI terms, he had become a “love bomb”. To his sister, he wrote, “Nothing can take the weapon of love from me. No affliction is capable of removing the kind smile that I let appear on my thin face. And who is the caress of my smile for, if not for Jesus, the Beloved? I am the victim of Love and Love is all my happiness, an indestructible happiness.” At another time he wrote, “I am very busy, like a little parish priest. Apart from the hours of forced labour, I must constantly welcome the people who come one after the other looking for comfort from me... God Himself has made known to me I am doing His will here. Many times, I have asked of Him the favour of dying in this camp, but every time, He has answered me: “I am ready to follow your will as you always follow Mine, but there are souls that still need you.” In 1957, he attempted to escape to find Consecrated hosts to meet the needs of his fellow prisoners. He was caught, beaten, and locked up. He lived in solitary confinement for much of the rest of his life. On July 10th 1959, sick, exhausted, and without any human comfort, Bro. Marcel Van died. His Via Crucis had come to an end. God had welcomed this little soul back to Himself. He was only 31.

Sr Helen Prejean CSJ A Passionate Nun for Death Row Prisoners

Introduction

Sr Helen Prejean CSJ (81 years old) was born on April 21, 1939 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, United States is a Roman Catholic religious sister, a member of the Congregation of St Joseph based in New Orleans, and a leading American advocate for the abolition of the death penalty. After studies in the USA and Canada, she spent the subsequent years teaching in high school, and serving as the Religious Education Director at St Frances Cabrini Parish in New Orleans and the Formation Director for her religious community. Prejean founded the group SURVIVE to help families of victims of murder and related crimes. She served as the National Chairperson of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty from 1993 to 1995. She helped establish The Moratorium Campaign, seeking an end to executions and conducting education on the death penalty.

Call within a Call

Sr Prejean began her career as a religious education teacher but soon felt called to serve the poor and the disenfranchised. A request to become a pen-pal to Elmo Patrick Sonnier, a Louisiana death row inmate, in 1981 marked the beginning of her death row ministry and her campaign against the death penalty. Elmo Patrick Sonnier, was given death penalty for the murder of two teenagers; held on death row in the Louisiana State Penitentiary, known as Angola. Sr Prejean visited Sonnier in prison and agreed



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

to be his spiritual adviser in the years leading up to his execution. Two years later, when Patrick Sonnier was put to death in the electric chair, Sr Helen was there to witness his execution. In the following months, she became spiritual advisor to another death row inmate, Robert Lee Willie, who was to meet the same fate as Sonnier. The experience gave Prejean a greater insight into the process involved in executions, for the convict, families, and others in the prison, and she began speaking out against capital punishment. Sr Prejean has since then ministered to other inmates on death row and witnessed several more executions. She served as National Chairperson of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty from 1993 to 1995.

Dead Man Walking

After witnessing these executions, Sister Helen realized that this lethal ritual would remain unchallenged unless its secrecy was stripped away, and so she sat down and wrote a book, *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States*. *Dead Man Walking* hit the shelves when national support for the death penalty was over 80% and, in Sister Helen's native Louisiana, closer to 90%. The book ignited a national debate on capital punishment and it inspired an Academy Award winning movie, a play and an opera.

Books & Awards

Sister Helen's second book, *The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions*, was published in 2004; and her third book, *River of Fire: My Spiritual Journey*, in 2019. In December 2010, Prejean donated all of her archival papers to DePaul University. In 1996, she was awarded the Laetare Medal by the University of Notre Dame, the oldest and most prestigious award for American Catholics. In 1998, Prejean was given the Pacem in Terris Award, named after a 1963 encyclical letter by Pope John XXIII that calls on all people of good will to secure peace among all nations. Pacem in terris is Latin for "Peace on Earth."

Ministry Against the Death Penalty (MADP)

The MADP is a non-profit organization encompassing the work of Sister Helen and her office in New Orleans, the Catholic Mobilizing Network, the Dead Man Walking School Theatre Project and a variety of special projects based at DePaul University in Chicago. The MADP fosters creative, reflective and educational programs that awaken hearts and minds, inspire social change, and strengthen our democracy's commitment to human rights and this mission is founded on a set of core values and beliefs: The members are moved by the compassion of Jesus and his strong expression of mercy and justice to stand by those who are outcasts in our society. They believe in the dignity and rights of all persons and recognize that government-sanctioned killing and the practice of torture

is a violation of those rights and a denial of human dignity. They strongly believe that capital punishment is never an appropriate solution for any crime and that the death penalty causes harm to all those affected by it, including victims' families and prison officers as well as the condemned and their families.

A Nun of Justice and Mercy

Over the decades, Sister Helen has made personal approaches to two Popes, John Paul II and Pope Francis, urging them to establish the Catholic Church's position as unequivocally opposed to capital punishment under any circumstances. After Sr Helen's urging, under John Paul II the catechism was revised to strengthen the church's opposition to executions, although it allowed for a very few exceptions. Not long after meeting with Sr Helen in August of 2018, Pope Francis announced new language of the Catholic Catechism which declares that the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person, with no exceptions.

Conclusion

On behalf of Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, PMI Chairman, Rev Dr Francis Kodyian MCBS, PMI National Coordinator and all the Prison Ministry India volunteers across the country, I congratulate and appreciate one of the courageous nuns, Sr Helen Prejean CSJ for her brave and dedicated witness to save human lives by tirelessly working to abolish death penalty and we do join hands with her in the mission of saving human lives.

Asha Sadan, Noida

Home for Prisoners' Girl Children



Sr Celine FCC

Franciscan Clarist Sisters (FCC)

Asha Sadan founded on 3rd May 1997 is a home for prisoners' girl children under Noida Assisi Sekchik Sanstha. The regular visits of Sr Celine and Sr Peter to Tihar Jail brought an insight to have an institution for the children who live with their mothers in jail. Asha Sadan receives children through India Vision Foundation NGO founded by Dr Kiran Bedi IPS. They do meet educational expenses of children and take them for regular child-parents meeting in different jails every trimonthly or every quarter. They conduct counselling and psychology sessions for these girls. Now due to some intervention or objections from the part of Government they withdrew their support.

Asha Sadan

At present Asha Sadan has 21 children studying in different classes from KG to class XII. They study in Assisi convent school in the same compound. In 2019 Asha Sadan celebrated the silver jubilee year, conducted programs and more than 400 children were present for the same. Now in this Covid19 pandemic situation we sent some of the children to their homes and 14 are with us.

Excellence

It is with pride and pleasure that I inform you about the excellence of our children in the curricular and cocurricular activities conducted in the school. Last year Tabassum

and Meenakshi passed out class 12 with flying colours scoring 96% in English and political science and bagged Gold medals for +2 CBSE. This year Khushboo scored 92%. They all joined Delhi University for Higher education. Geetha started her nursing course at St Anne's Nursing College, Vijayawada. Many of our ex-students are working in corporate sectors in India and abroad.

Visit to Tihar Jail

On 14th December 2019 our children went to Tihar jail for Christmas program. They danced and enacted Christmas play on behalf of Prison Ministry India. Rev Dr Francis Kodyan MCBS, the PMI National Coordinator, who was the Chief Guest, delivered an inspiring Christmas message.

Gratitude

We have two sisters and one kitchen maid to look after their needs. We gratefully remember the hands of our beloved sisters who take keen interest in molding and transforming them. God does wonders through different people. He allows them to be generous so that the poor may fill their stomach. FCC superiors offer timely guidance and support and provide various opportunities for their good education. We too thank the parents for their cooperation and support in the growth of children.



Christmas Celebrations in Odisha Jails

Every year, around Christmas time we were sure of receiving few phone calls from the prisoners, 'When is the Christmas Mass? Will bishop be coming? What are the songs to be selected' and so on. But this year they were silent as everything was uncertain. There was delay in getting the necessary permission but through prayer, fasting and repeated phone calls by Sr Shanti we were able to have the Christmas Mass and celebration at Berhampur Circle Jail. There are around 70 Christians among the 800 male prisoners and we had been arranging Mass, Confession and Counselling for them on different occasions. But we had not been to the jail since March due to Covid19 regulations and now we were happy to get this opportunity. Most of the prisoners were depressed with no visits either from us or from their family members.

The mood of the prisoners was reflected in the celebration: there was no crib, no decorations and no excitement. The two seminarians in our group were musicians and they helped in creating a happy, heavenly atmosphere all around. Fr Jusman offered Mass and conveyed the Christmas message of hope in the midst of hopelessness, fear and anxiety. The prisoners had prepared the full liturgy. Some of them are excellent singers. The brothers played the Casio and tabla. After the Service the prisoners flocked around us. Some of them were there for years and so they were very familiar with us. They were worried about their families. We promised them our prayers. It was not possible for us to visit them due to the travel



Sr Shanti Pulickal SCC

restrictions. Some were in tears as their bail applications were not sanctioned even after paying huge amount of money to the lawyers.

They were happy to receive our Christmas gifts, a sign that we love and care for them. St Joseph's school and Holy Cross Provincial sponsored snacks for all the 900 inmates and Christmas gifts for all the jail officials. We handed them over to the Superintendent to distribute later. Every year, at Christmas and on different occasions the bishop of Berhampur, Sarat Chandra Nayak made it his priority to visit and offer Mass for his lost sheep in the jail. But this year due to the uncertainty about the celebration he could not include it in his programme. But he sponsored sumptuous Christmas lunch for all the Christian prisoners. All appreciated his generosity.

St Vincent school sponsored saris for all the 25 female prisoners and dresses for the small children below 6yrs, remaining with them. Since the number was small we distributed them personally. Remaining in limited space and with no one to visit them, they were more depressed than the male prisoners. Our visit, love and care brought real joy on their faces. All appreciated the gifts and more particularly the love expressed through the gifts. The children were a bit scared on seeing us but felt happy to get the

new dress. It was time for us to leave the jail. We met the Superintendent and other officials to thank them for making all necessary arrangements to have this privilege of meeting the prisoners, conducting the Christmas services and bringing new life and hope to them.

As we were getting ready to leave we were surprised to see 16 women sitting on the floor there. The Jailor said that they were arrested for POCSO offence about a minor girl. All of them were from the same village. We were sad but could not do anything at that time. POCSO offences are serious and often non-bailable. We thought of their families and the sorrow they would be going through. We left the jail after spending about 2 hours. We know that our services are very little; a drop in an ocean but the ocean will be richer with this drop. We were happy that we could bring some joy and relief to our sisters and brothers behind bars.

Jharsuguda Sub Jail

There is a revival in prison ministry at Jharsuguda in Sambalpur diocese due to the concerted efforts of Sr. Mercyan S.U. There were no Catholic prisoners but the PMI volunteers were happy to announce the good news of the birth of the Saviour through meaningful Christmas celebration.

Some Christmas decorations they had carried and few Christmas songs helped in creating an atmosphere of celebration and joy. The Christmas message was given by Fr. Christopher, the parish priest. There were around 350 inmates. All were given small gifts mainly for their daily use. Every gift is precious for the prisoners because it carries the message that the prison ministry members are aware of their sufferings and that they care for them. They donated a library cupboard with 160

books including the Bible and Mahabharata sponsored by the Ursuline sisters of Pune Province. The Superintendent appreciated this gesture as reading the Scriptures and other motivational books would help in creating positive attitudes among the prisoners.

Their group succeeded in extending the Christmas celebration in the Naribandi Niketan Jail with 22 women prisoners. Some of them engage themselves in small income-generating activities. The PMI volunteers tried to share with them the joy of Christmas through songs and distribution of small gifts. The women felt relaxed and started dancing spontaneously. Fr. Timothy Pinto gave the Christmas message of peace, joy, love and hope. The volunteers conducted a small prayer service and prayed for all of them. The women expressed their thanks for thinking of them and bringing a ray of hope in their lives.

Gunupur Jail in Rayagoda Diocese

Fr. Ranjan OCD and his group were happy that they could celebrate Christmas in a small way in Gunupur sub-jail. The Superintendent expressed his inability to allow them into the jail and meet the prisoners or have any programme as he was advised to be careful about the Covid-19 regulations. The volunteers had taken small gifts of toilet articles for all the prisoners. The Superintendent promised to hand them over to the prisoners and speak to them about Christmas. He and the other officials were highly appreciative of the services of PMI and expressed their inability to help them. The volunteers sang few Christmas carols for the staff and hoped that the prisoners would hear it from inside and experience the peace, joy and salvation that Jesus came to bring.



PMI Pune Spreads Christmas Cheer

Anthony Jacob

Christmas came quietly upon us in this Covid 19 pandemic year but PMI Pune was all geared to “run with torches” and bring Christ’s light to our brothers and sisters behind bars. Our Christmas run began with winter warmth for the seniors over 60 years at the Women’s Central Jail. As the mercury started to dip in Pune, a benevolent PMI volunteer was quick to respond to the authorities’ appeal for blankets and on 16th of December PMI Pune handed over 35 warm blankets to the senior women in jail.

On 18th December, the Good Shepherd Parish Unit of PMI supported by their Parish Youth and other PMI Pune volunteers, spearheaded a visit to the Beggars’ Home. It was a happy moment indeed as Fr Wilfred Fernandes, the Director of PMI Pune, launched the program with an inspiring Christmas message for all present. Santa and his joyful elves then took over singing Christmas carols, playing games and dancing with the incarcerated.

As visits to these jails are limited, a skin camp was also arranged at the same time. Dr Jennifer Kolte, Skin Specialist, gently examined those with ailments, providing the necessary treatments and medications. The joyful evening ended with a distribution of snacks and a warm blanket. During a heart rending sing-song and sharing session, our

volunteers were amazed to learn that some of the inmates held post graduate degrees but were driven to a life of crime due to their extenuating circumstances. “This will always be a memorable Christmas for me experiencing the warmth and love of these brothers and sisters” said a tearful Santosh (name changed) who holds an MBA degree. The PMI team also handed over some Covid Protection equipment like liquid sanitisers, hand wash, face masks and gloves.

On the 22nd of December, Cecilia School of Music in coordination with the PMI Pune volunteers organised a visit to the Boys Observation Home (for boys 18 years of age). The Home’s officials were eagerly waiting for a small relaxation of restrictions so that PMI Pune could visit and bring Christmas cheer and light into the lives of the young boys. Sr Marina Gulati and her team of cheerful volunteers brought joy to the boys with their melodious singing and exciting games. Their spirits dampened by the pandemic restrictions were uplifted and delighted with their joyful visitors. Fr Wilfred Fernandes addressed the boys encouraging them with the message that we can all do the good in our own places, emphasising that Christmas is a feast of peace.

The visit concluded with distribution of prizes and snacks. A carrom board was also donated for the boys’ recreation. “It feels so nice to have a visitor after so long. And we got some prizes too. We are feeling happy.” remarked Jay (name changed) who has been in the Observation Home for the past 2 years. A memorable Christmas indeed as our torches have lit up the lives of our volunteers and those we served!

Prisoners' Children Educators (PCE)

The first online meet of Prisoners' Children Educators, one of the PMI Special task Forces of Prison Ministry India (PMI) was held on 09 January 2021 through Google Meet. Sr Amala DC, PMI National Secretary invoked blessings of God. Dr Francis Kodyan MCBS, PMI National Coordinator welcomed the members of PCE and thanked each one individually for their willingness and generosity to be part of this group for a noble cause. He stated that if we do not take care of these children today, we will see them behind bars tomorrow. The members introduced themselves as they are from different states joining hands for the sake of vulnerable children. Sr Lini Sheeja MSC, former PMI National Secretary gave an introductory presentation on PMI and she took them through four basic principles, which Prison Ministry India holds closer to its mission. As she ended her presentation with the 4th principle; 'begging our lifestyle' she said, we beg to make them kings and queens. Let us care and carry the burdens of our brethren behind bars and their children. If you and I don't care who else will do? They are our brothers, sisters and children. The members elected Mr Sanjay Antony as the President and Ms Asha Sebastian as the Secretary for PCE task force.

An open discussion on the activities of task force was followed. Each member gave their suggestions for PCE. Fr Francis invited the members to bring in more volunteers to reach the goal as this Special Task Force is



Asha Sebastian

launched in commemoration of PMI Ruby Jubilee to educate 400 children of prisoners. The current strength of the task force is just 40; more members would be beneficial in order to reach more children. The members can schedule a weekly/monthly visit to children's homes. We may segregate the kids age wise and help them move in a structured manner. It was also suggested to organize various talks, cultural activities, music classes, sports activities etc. for the well-being of children in our centers. It was suggested to add caretakers of children's home to the group so that we may get a better picture about the needs of the kids.

Sr Lini MSC in her concluding remarks said that each member can adopt a child and take care of their financial, educational, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs. They can call the child once a month and speak to them; all those who are nearby can make a visit and spend quality time with the child which will make the child to feel that one is wanted and cared. Members were happy with it and we will proceed with the same by assigning each child a caretaker. Also, we can meet frequently and evaluate the activities hereafter. Fr Rajendra Kumar, PMI interim secretary concluded the meeting with prayer at 5 PM.



PMI Ruby Jubilee: Report

A celebration of 40th Anniversary of Prison Ministry India is indeed a blessing for the entire PMI family. PMI entered into its glorious 40th year on 8th December and 9th December marked a memorable day with the twin celebration of blessing and inauguration of RRDC Chapel and building by His Grace Most Rev Peter Machado, Archbishop of Bengaluru.

Ruby Jubilee Eucharistic Celebration

The Holy Eucharist was presided over by His Grace Most Rev Peter Machado, Archbishop of Bengaluru and the concelebrants were Rev Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, PMI National Coordinator, Rev Fr Sebastian Thekkanath, former PMI coordinator, Fr. Rajendran, Interim National Secretary among other priests, religious and laity.

RRDC

In his introduction, Fr Francis Kodiyan highlighted the purpose and importance of RRDC Chapel which is mainly used for incessant intercessory prayer for the renewal, rehabilitation, reintegration and redemption of prisoners all over the world. RRDC - Reformatory Research and Documentation Centre - building is used to train the PMI volunteers and it also functions as a documentation Centre.

Van Thuan Home

RRDC has a rehabilitation center named Van Thuan Home for released men



Sr Amala DC

prisoners. The home is named after Francis Xavier Cardinal Van Thuan, who underwent 13 years of solitary confinement in Vietnam prison. After his release, he was appointed the Head of the dicastery in Vatican for Justice, Peace and Development; he has already reached the stage of venerable in the canonization process. Fr Francis mentioned gratefully 39 years of God's blessings which had begun on 8th December, 1981 and still continues to this day.

PMI Ruby Jubilee Inauguration

Ms Ashrita Mithun and Marjorie Gracian Correa PMI volunteers invited the Chief Guest to the stage for the program stating that 9th December 2020 will go down in the history of PMI to denote a remarkable achievement of the PMI family. Rev Fr Benny, the Assistant National Coordinator, gave an introduction as to how this Prison Ministry India saw the light of the day by two seminarians at St Thomas Apostolic seminary, Vadavathoor in Kerala on 8th December, during a casual conversation that led them to close friendship; their friendship was later strengthened by the Eucharistic Adoration at Malankara chapel and bi-weekly visit to the peripheries of Kottayam as well. They initiated a prayer group and regular visits to Kottayam Prison, which paved the way for organizing an all-Kerala pilgrimage.

The Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference welcomed this ministry under Justice, Peace and Development Commission on 8th September 1989 and appointed Fr. Francis Kodiyan at pastoral orientation center to seek, serve and save the lost. Since then, PMI has savored innumerable blessings. He too finally thanked all those who labored hard for the last 39 years in the ministry of redeeming prisoners. Sr Amala DC, the PMI National Secretary, was then invited to invoke God's special blessings and she did a splendid job by a meaningful prayer service. Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, welcomed the dignitaries.

PMI Ruby Jubilee Launchings

In preparation for the Ruby Jubilee, PMI launched the Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated worldwide on 9th October 2020. With this they extended their ministry to the whole world by interceding 24 hours of the day, 7 days of the week and 365 days of the year for the renewal and redemption of prisoners worldwide. He added that a Burning Bush Advent retreat was conducted from 4th to 6th December. PMI would open 4 Kolbe Homes, publish 4 new books, build 40 houses for released prisoners, organize 40 Special Task Forces, shelter 40 children at Kolbe Home, dole out Educational Scholarships to 400 prisoners' children and help release 400 prisoners with legal and financial assistance.

Ruby Jubilee Scholarship

His Grace Peter Machado in his inaugural address appreciated PMI volunteers and acknowledged that it was a matter of pride for the Archdiocese of Bengaluru that PMI has its headquarters in Bengaluru. He

inaugurated the Ruby Jubilee by lighting the lamp and launched the Ruby Jubilee scholarship project.

PMI Housing Project Launching




Then Mar Adayanthrath, Bishop of Mandya inaugurated the PMI Ruby jubilee housing project by handing over the cheque for the first house to Mrs Sashi Rekha, mother of Rangaswamy at Kolbe home. Then tiny tots from Premodaya swayed to a stunning remix capturing the hearts of the entire audience.

Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, PMI Chairman

Sr Lini Sheeja, MSC, former PMI National Secretary read out the message of Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva who was not able to be present due to the Covid19 pandemic. He lauded the initiation of the founders of PMI and stressed on the importance of continuing our ministry for the lost.

Fr Varghese Karipperiy, PMI Cofounder

Very Rev Fr Varghese Karipperiy, cofounder of PMI in his message highlighted on love bomb which drew its energy from the Divine in order to serve the least, the lost and the marginalized. Fr. Sebastian Thekkanath released the book - Warriors of Prison Ministry, edited by Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS. A scintillating dance was then presented by Jeevodaya girls. Felicitations were done by Fr Josekutty Kalayil, former National Coordinator and Sr Fidelis. The stars of Kolbe Home kept the audience on edge of their seats by their fabulous performance. Fr Rajendran proposed the vote of thanks to all and the program came to a happy end with a Jubilee Song melodiously rendered by Sisters of Charity.



Jingle Bells in Juvenile Jail, Hyderabad

Maria Regina

Covid19 crisis is sparking countless acts of generosity. Prison Ministry India too did its best, throughout the Nation. One such incident in Hyderabad is as follows.

Overwhelmed with the joy of Good News of the birth of the Messiah, six of us reached juvenile home at Nimboligadda, Hyderabad on 27th Sunday by 10.45 A.M. How could we share the joy of the season during the times of terrible sadness? We followed the agenda prepared by our ex-officio Mr MD Vincent. Sr Usha Rani CSA gave an introduction in Telugu about Christmas and read scriptures from St. Luke's Gospel on the narration of Nativity and offered prayers in Telugu. Fr Dian, the Sate Coordinator delivered some tips on overcoming the stress and strain, to the inmates in Telugu. He also enquired on their studies and encouraged them to excel well for their own benefit and make their parents proud of them. Fr Dian further told them how important it is to wear mask and sanitize their hands throughout this covid times. Sr Leena Fernandez of Nirmal Sisters, expressed the joy of the Christmas and explained the inmates in English, that the Lord came to give us peace, joy and love. He taught us to serve and love all mankind of all communities without any discrimination.

As many of the inmates are of Hindi background, Dr Brigitte Michael, the assistant co-ordinator, gave her message in Hindi briefly summing up all that is said by Fr Dian and Sr Leena Fernandez and asked the inmates to complete their graduation for

better future, maintaining strict discipline. Father Dian Isaac our State and Unit Coordinator presented an inspirational short message with final blessings. Regina the secretary, proposed vote of thanks. We had few carols in all three languages

We interacted with few inmates specially Catholics from Jagadgir gutta, and Mettuguda. It was very pathetic to listen to their pitiable narration. Sorrow comes to all, and to the young, it comes with bitterest agony, unaware. In total, there are 35 young inmates. Thank God that the superintendent, jailers and other staff take care of them like their own. We spoke to Mrs Manjula the in charge madam and found that they are strictly following covid rules and not taking new cases without testing and without house quarantine. We presented the inmates with hygiene kits, fruits and cakes. We sang carols and prayed for them and their families. The inmates too were very enthusiastic and joyful that they sang a carol for us. They expressed their joy in meeting us.

Its pleasing to know that the jail officials take care of the young inmates like their own children by serving nutritious food and encourage them to attend online classes. Almost all of them are here not for a very long time but joined recently just a few days ago. They are happy but eagerly await for their parents to come and release them soon.

I sincerely thank God for this beautiful opportunity given to us to visit His children behind bars. As the inmates expressed, our visit was a great relief and wonderful healing touch to them. As Hollywood actor Kristen Bell said, "We live in an age of instant gratification, of immediate likes, and it is uncomfortable to have to wait to see the dividends of your kindness. But I promise you, it will appear exactly when you need it"

Shaka Senghor, *Writing My Wrongs* A Bestseller on Prison Reform

A Broken Branch

Detroit was a beautiful place to live in. Well-manicured lawns stately residences. But no one noticed a poor boy on the streets eating what he can find around the place and sleeping out in the open cold nights perhaps near a garbage heap. Shaka Senghor did not know what the outside world was like. He was under the impression that some Good Samaritan might want to take good care of him; but was sadly mistaken. He suffered pangs of hunger and frosty cold nights on the streets of Detroit. Often, he did think of the warmth of his bed at home but unlike the prodigal son he continued to live on his own. He would run errands to buy himself a meal. However, not long afterwards, he was confronted by some older boys who promised him a better lifestyle with the job to sell drugs. This was about the time when Crack had just begun to wind its way through the streets of Detroit. He accepted the offer and became self-employed with a satisfied mind as he had everything he wanted; good food and clothing, a roof above his head and a better place to sleep. With all this found, his dream to become a respectable doctor had long-faded into dark nights.

Life of Crime

At the beginning of Shaka's career as a drug peddler, his customers were the crème of society; teachers, lawyers, doctors, wow!! These were the class of people respected by all. They were an educated lot. Not long afterwards, he realized he had entered a trap



Eunice Fernandes

which was not as easy to walk out of, as he walked out of home. He had begun to have his little share. This he learned six months down the line; however, did not have the strength to retrace his steps back home. Barely six months into selling drugs, he noticed his neighborhood had miserably lost the respect it had as the regular customers started to exchange a base morale for the drug and the innocence of a child drug-peddler was lost in laced joints. Even to this day 30-40 years later he states how pathetically people are addicted to Crack.

Incarceration

Shaka was so naïve that he trusted his companions and clients then ended up getting robbed and beaten very badly and left for dead. Ever since then, he armed himself with a gun and never left the house without his gun. Following his first encounter with a band of hooligans he vowed to be alert and that he would be the first to shoot any time in the future. And it did happen 16 months later when he shot a prospective customer. This customer carried that night in his wallet a substantial amount of money which gave Shaka to understand he meant immediate business. Shaka did not want to have anything to do with him 2 hours away from home and so early in the



WRITING MY WRONGS

day. Shaka turned and tried to walk away. No sooner had Shaka turned away, did he hear the door on the side of the passenger seat open and Shaka, swiftly turned back and opened fire on the man who was his customer named David. David succumbed to the 4 shots. When Shaka realized what he had done to David, he tried to escape the site of crime but eventually got turned in and charged with open murder and ended up pleading with 2nd degree murder and got sentenced to a total of 17 + 40 years. In solitary confinement you live in a 6x9 room space with showers at x3 a week with absolutely no regard to hygiene. Prisoners are handcuffed to a dog leash.

Turning Point

At one time his eleven-year-old son sent Shaka an inspired scriptural letter which touched his heart. This was the beginning of a transformation process of his mind, soul and heart. The scripture words of the hymn, "Change my heart O Lord" comes to my mind. It also fits here to say, look before you leap! He says later; "Don't blame your parents for the mess that you have got yourself in." Exactly, just as we choose to hit the streets or the bottle for that matter, we ought to pick up strings and tie them together singing, "Bind us together Lord, bind us together, with cords that cannot be broken". On reading his little boy's letter his past life unfolds before his eyes bringing to light his weaknesses. He kept asking himself, "How did I, an optimistic guy get to be in the prison"?

Writing My Wrongs

Not only did Shaka kill David an unsuspecting Crack customer; he also left

David's children orphaned; a two-month-old son and an elder daughter, fatherless. Our anger uncontrolled, knows no peace. To control it is within our will-power and capacity only our presence of mind is all that we need. Very often we also mess up with the lives of our own loved ones. Shaka recalls how his acts of uncontrolled violence and anger messed the lives of his own son and daughter. The contents of his son's letter stirred up his emotions and he knew he had to make a change to give his children something to be proud of his father. He took upon himself a challenge to write a book. He had never written a book before but he challenged and completed His First Best Book, "Writing My Wrongs" in record time is commendable for a prisoner to write his firsthand experience in 30 days.

Shaka shares with us glimpses of life in prison with the pathetic fact that grown men are unable to read or write as the prisoners have not been provided the means to basic education i.e, to better their reading skills; for most of them have been prisoners from early childhood and have not learned to read better than the 3rd level with some even less. Shaka was an exception to that rule as he was not from the streets. Six years post the death of David, Shaka receives a letter from a woman named Nancy, who says she raised David as her son and was a healthcare giver to his mother who died to cancer. She, Nancy, speaks comforting words to Shaka quoting the word of God as in John 8:32. "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free". Her letter helped Shaka open up his heart and let the power of forgiveness and the power of apologizing flow through him.



PMI Calander Launching



PMI Chennai Distributes Provisions to Prisoners' Families



PMI National Office Distributes Bathtowels to Observation Home Boys, Bengaluru



PMI National Office Distributes T-shirts and Trackpants to Juvenile Home Children



PMI Pune Celebrating Christmas at Beggars Home



PMI Pune Visiting Women Central Prison, Yerwada, Pune



PMI Volunteers Celebrating Christmas at Palakad District Jail



PMI Volunteers Celebrating Christmas in Viyor Central Prison



PMI Volunteers Distributing Blankets to Sabarmati Prisoners



PMI Volunteers Distributing Library Books to Vaithiri Special Jail



PMI Volunteers Visiting Gunpur Jail of Rayagada District, Odisha



PMI Volunteers Visiting Observation Home Vijayawada



Very Rev Varghese Kariperry with PMI National Office and Kolbe Staff



PMI Volunteers Visiting Women's Jail, Sambalpur



Christmas Celebration at Bengaluru Central Prison



Forty Years of Fraternity



Seminary batch in which the PMI Prayer Group Sprouted



Christmas Celebration at Vijayawada Prison



Christmas Celebration at Udupi Prison



Very Rev Varghese Karipperry's Visit to RRDC



PMI Ruby Jubilee Celebration



PMI Ruby Jubilee Celebration



Releasing of Warriors of Prison Ministry India



Christmas Celebration at Sagar Central Prison



Christmas Celebration at Berhampur Central Jail