



# PRISON VOICE

February 2020

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**NATIONAL MONTHLY**

₹ 20/-

## REHABILITATION CENTRES DAILY MIRACLES



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NATIONAL MONTHLY



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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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I really wanted to change my life, but I could not; won't you help me? I want to live a good life, but when I was released neither did anyone believe me nor did people accept me. Probably the police will arrest me again on the pretext of suspicion. Could you please arrange for a place where I can stay for at least six months so that I will not be caught by the police again and be imprisoned? My family has abandoned me; society considers me only as a criminal. If you do not help me, who else will in this world? When I am released, nobody will dare to give me a job. Could you please find a job for me?

These heart-breaking cries of prisoners moved the hearts of Prison Ministry India volunteers and the result was the first rehabilitation centre - Snehashramam established on 18 October 1991. Thus, each rehabilitation centre becomes a paradise regained for the inmates staying at the centre. It becomes a tower of hope to the hopeless, help to the helpless and love to the hated from prisons. In this issue, we have concentrated on rehabilitation centres and their blessings.

**The ten-point relief at rehabilitation centres:**

1. To the world of life from the world of murder
2. To the world of happiness from the world of pain
3. To the world of keys from the world of locks

***I admire your availability and hard work for the lost, least and the last through our rehabilitation centres. May we haer many more centres of hope and serenity***

4. To the world of freedom from the world of walls
5. To the world of sharing from the world of stealing
6. To the world of hope from the world of despair
7. To the world of forgiveness from the world of revenge
8. To the world of service from the world of authority
9. To the world of love from the world of hatred
10. To the world of providence from the world of anxiety



**Sr Lini Sheeja MSC**  
Chief Editor

**WON'T YOU  
GIVE ME  
A CHANCE  
TO RENEW  
MY LIFE?**

Policy for starting a rehabilitation centre:

The Rehabilitation centre can be run by people for women, men, youth and children.

To be under the umbrella of PMI, it has to be registered with the

PMI state office.

It should be a centre for the people who were in prison or for the children of prisoners.

The main goals of the rehabilitation centre are to release, renew, rehabilitate and redeem the inmates.

The centre shall follow four basic principles such as:

- a) Prayer our powerhouse
- b) God's providence our bank balance
- c) Inconvenience our convenience
- d) Begging our lifestyle.



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

On 31 January 2020, I landed at Siem Reap airport, Cambodia to take part in the FABC 2020 Preparatory Workshop held at the Jesuit Service from 1-3 February under the dynamic leadership of Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva, the PMI Chairman. Mr Tun Chan Nav Reth, one of the Cambodian genocide victims who bagged the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the International Landmine Ban Campaign welcomed me at the airport. He had no legs; he had lost both his legs on 18 December 1982 in a landmine blast. Tun Chan represents 2 million people who were brutally murdered in the Cambodian genocide and the 40,000 differently-abled people who lost either their legs or hands in the Cambodian landmine blasts. This article introspects into the genocides in history and invites the reader to participate in their agonies and groans. For the joy and the hope, the grief and the anxiety of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, are the joy and hope, the grief and anxiety of the followers of Christ (GS 1).

### Genocide

The hybrid word *genocide*, coined by Raphael Lemkin in his 1944 book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* is a combination of the Greek *γένος* (race, people) and

the Latin suffix - *caedo* (the act of killing). The United Nations Genocide Convention in 1948 defines genocide as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, including the killing of its members, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group. History reveals a saga of genocides such as the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, the Greek genocide, the Assyrian genocide, the Serbian genocide, the Indonesian genocide, the Guatemalan genocide, the Cambodian genocide, the Bosnian genocide, the Rwandan genocide, the Rohingya genocide, and so on. The Political Instability Task Force estimates that, between 1956 and 2016, a total of 43 genocides took place, causing the death of about 50 million people and another 50 million refugees.

**NO MORE  
GENOCIDES**

### **Cambodian Genocide**

By January 1979, approximately 1.5 to 2 million people had died due to the policies of Khmer Rouge. Some 20,000 people passed through the Security Prison 21, one of the 196 prisons operated by the Khmer Rouge. These prisoners were taken to the Killing Fields, where they were executed, often with pickaxes, and buried in mass graves. On 4 February 2020, I visited one of these Killing Fields and mass graves under the care of a Buddhist monastery. As of 2009, the Cambodian Documentation Centre mapped 23,745 mass graves containing approximately 1.3 million suspected victims of execution. Direct execution is believed to account for up to 60% of the full death toll during the genocide, with other victims succumbing to starvation, exhaustion, or disease.

### **Handicapped Jesus**

The FABC 2020 Preparatory Workshop members were welcomed by Bishop Kike Enrique Figaredo Alvargonzález SJ, the Prefect of Battambang. An abode of love, compassion and tenderness, Bishop Kike greeted us by presenting to us a handicapped figure of Jesus, telling us that in Cambodia, Jesus is presented as differently-abled in empathy with those who had lost their legs in landmine blasts. In Cambodia, there are many people of all ages and conditions with disabilities, living in every part of the country. Some were disabled from birth, and some were disabled after birth due to certain circumstances such as road and landmine incidents, accidents, polio, stroke, and

meningitis; and others are a result of the civil war and the Khmer Rouge regime that caused them permanent disability.

### **No More Genocides**

Humanity has seen more than enough genocides, tragic deaths and bloodshed. Mother earth has no more strength to bear another genocide. Let us pray for all the genocide victims especially for the Cambodian genocide victims and strengthen the people living with disabilities. Let us join hands with the worldwide genocide victims and pledge:

- No more genocides
- No more Holocausts
- No more concentration camps
- No more internment camps
- No more Re-education camps
- No more Uyghurs camps
- No more extermination camps
- No more death camps
- No more killing fields
- No more mass graves
- No more Holodomor.

### **Pope Francis**

On 25 November 2018, Pope Francis recalled the 'Holodomor' genocide - the man-made famine - inflicted upon Ukraine by the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, which killed 3.5 to 7.5 million, and prayed that such horrors never happen again. Pope Francis urged humanity that this terrible wound of the past be an appeal to all people to ensure that these tragedies never happen again.

# LIFE: PRECIOUS AND UNPREDICTABLE



**Mr Jesuraja**  
*State Secretary, Tamilnadu PMI*

**K**olbe Home is situated at KG Kandigai, in the district of Tiruvallur, Tamilnadu and is 100 km away from Chennai. It is a rehabilitation centre for released prisoners who are abandoned by their families. Here the inmates are helped to overcome their loneliness and trained to face society when they go out. This Kolbe Home building, which was built 40 years ago, has been renovated with the help of the Chennai unit and was officially inaugurated by His Excellency Most Rev. Dr George Antonysamy, the Archbishop of Chennai-Mylapore.

In 2016, an invitation was sent to Rev. Fr. Gerard Francis OMI, the (late) founder of SDM from Rev. Fr. G.J. Antonysamy, the state coordinator and Mr A Jesu Raja, the state secretary to support them with the Prison Ministry. He accepted the invitation saying, "Our charism is love the unloved and we are very proud to help you." Then he sent Rev. Fr. Arul Xavier SDM along with Bro. Sathish to Kolbe Home where they served one year. The following year Rev. Fr. Thomas SDM was appointed as the director of Kolbe Home and under his guidance Bro. Vino, the regent worked for the development of the inmates as well as the Kolbe Home campus. In that year, 8 inmates were settled with their families. Last year, nearly 22 inmates benefitted from the programme. A few of them were trained for mechanical work, a few were admitted to different places for jobs and the rest of them were reconciled and

settled with their families. At that time many efforts were taken for the betterment of the home, to provide a pleasant atmosphere. The efforts included cleaning the whole campus, renovation of the house, starting of shops belonging to our centre and the construction of a grotto of our Lady and a new chapel. Many volunteers of prison ministry helped Kolbe Home in different ways.

Two boys, whose father is in prison, are at Kolbe Home. These boys have been taken care of by prison ministry from their childhood onwards and were educated in different homes. They took up residence at Kolbe Home since 2017. At present, the elder one is doing his 1<sup>st</sup> year of BCA in Christ College at Kizhachery and the youngest is doing his Diploma in Hotel Management at Ranipet.

This year, we received 10 inmates who were later settled with their families. This rehabilitation centre helps the inmates to lead a peaceful life and acquire a relaxed mind through holy mass, prayers, meditation and yoga. To attain self-discipline, classes are given to the inmates.

Apart from our ministry, we have a special devotion to our Blessed Mother on the 13<sup>th</sup> of every month. On this day, we have the holy mass, eucharistic adoration and rosary at the renovated grotto in our home. At this, to our surprise, we see not only Catholics and Christians but many of the Hindus from

nearby villages who come to experience the love of our Mother. To spread this Marian devotion further, a new grotto is being constructed at the entrance of our centre.

It is very evident that many prisoners are from broken families. When they are released, they have no place to go to. Realising the need of such people, on 13 August 2018, Kolbe Home (the first short-stay home) for released prisoners was officially inaugurated by our president, the Most Rev. George Antonysamy, Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore. Ms Pitchammal, the district judge, Thiruvallur, and Smt Ruckmani, superintendent of prisons were also present at the occasion. There were 5 inmates at that time; 2 from Cuddalore, 2 from Madurai and 1 from Puzhal. It was a good beginning for the rehabilitation of released prisoners. This year, 18 inmates from different prisons of

Tamilnadu have benefitted by our Kolbe Home. 12 inmates have been reunited with their family members. Mentally challenged inmates were admitted in different homes. One inmate was given technical training for his livelihood.

This ministry is a challenging one. The director has gone through so many difficulties. The inmates who emerge from prisons have different temperaments and issues. Since they have spent so many years of their life in prison, they are totally against society and nature. Due to their mental stress, they sometimes hurt the director. A few times he was physically injured by the inmates.

Only with the prayer of well-wishers, we are able to continue the ministry. Every day, we start our day with the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharist Lord gives us the strength to run the daily ministry

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## Christmas Celebration at the Central Prison, Kaluburagi

Sr. Reena D'Souza SSpS, Gulbarga

The Prison Ministry India, Gulbarga celebrated Christmas 2019 in collaboration with the Interreligious Forum for Peace and Harmony and CRI, Gulbarga, at Central Prison, Kaluburagi on 17 December 2019. It was a big event in the prison where more than 1000 inmates - men and women - gathered in public to view the cultural programme and to listen to the message of Christmas. This year Christmas message was given by 3 eminent speakers representing Hindu, Muslim and Christian (Methodist) groups who addressed the gathering with the message of love, hope and forgiveness on this occasion. In the end, Bishop Robert Miranda gave the final message and prayed for the prisoners. The cultural programme

was performed by school children including a dance drama on the narrative of Jesus' birth. Everyone keenly watched the programme until the end. Cakes were served to the 1200 inmates and staff. To add to the joy of Christmas celebration we had a beautiful crib put together by the inmates. It was for the first time in the history of Gulbarga prison that many prisoners witnessed the crib. It was a joyful experience for many, who would simply come away from their idle cells and sit beside the crib and enjoy it.

The PMI team also celebrated Christmas with the women inmates separately by exchanging Christmas gifts. Each one was given a sweater on the occasion of Christmas.

# If You Feel Lost . . .



**Fr. Binoy Chunayanmackal, CMF**  
*Jesus Fraternity, Ernakulam Zonal Director*

“Never would I have come back to life without the transforming love and peaceful care I received from my *second home*, Shanthi Bhavan,” recalled George, an ex-convict (name changed) with deep joy. This home for the rehabilitation of ex-offenders, was in fact, a Claretian Congregation initiative under Jesus Fraternity. On 7 September 1994, Rev. Fr Alexander Kureekattil CMF, rented a house at Edapally with the specific purpose of serving ex-convicts in all possible ways. God’s spirit was working within him. “Why don’t you love me?” was the soul penetrating murmur of the Holy Spirit that had been reverberating in his heart for many years. Inspiringly, the word of God pitched a tent in his heart, “Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as, you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me’” (Mt. 25:45). After almost a year of feasibility study of the new place and mission, on 16 August 1995, the centre welcomed a number of ex-convicts from Vettukad - Snehasram, Thrissur. With their arrival, the centre was named Shanti Bhavan.

In 1998, a house was purchased and reconstructed by the Claretians at Pathadippalam in Kalamassery. Since then, at Shanthi Bhavan, the second stage of life-settlement for all inmates has been undertaken in collaboration with the mother organisation - Jesus Fraternity.

The objectives of this centre are: 1) second stage of rehabilitation of ex-convicts, 2) support ex-convicts for a socially acceptable life, 3) settling them in family life, 4) on-going guidance and support 5) co-ordinate activities with members of Jesus Fraternity, Ernakulam zone and keeping them involved in the ministry. The different means by which these objectives are realised are by regular jail visits, celebration of Holy Eucharist in the jails, counselling of ex-convicts, providing accommodation, getting employment, settling down in family life, housing projects, family visits to those settled down, gathering of the rehabilitated members along with their family members at least twice a year, organising camps for the children of convicts and settled-down ex-inmates, visiting the families of who are presently in jail, etc.

Thus, Shanthi Bhavan has been serving as a centre for the rehabilitation of ex-convicts for the last 25 years. This is also an appropriate time to acknowledge the committed services of all the former directors of this centre. As 2019 marked the silver jubilee of the commencement of this special ministry, it has been a centre of hope for 200 families who underwent the process of rehabilitation directly or indirectly here. More than 60 families have been settled and the centre has been keeping in regular contact with 40 families. Presently, 5 inmates reside here and are preparing to be settled. Their



day begins with the participation in the Holy Eucharist at 6.10 am followed by breakfast. Later those who are employed, prepare and go for their respective daily jobs. After their return in the evening, they gather for rosary and prayers at 8.30 pm followed by supper. Their spiritual, social and psychological formation has been a top priority in the process of reintegration. As part of rehabilitation, three houses were constructed. Presently, another house is under construction with generous local support. Study and medical help are given to genuinely deserving rehabilitated families. Two significant events organised every year are the family get-together of settled families and children's summer camp in which an average of 40 families and 65 children participate respectively.

Significantly, this ministry is a special ministry, a ministry done by those who

are the humble instruments of God, who gently welcome and mould the inmates into a new way of life. Undoubtedly, there are also challenges of sheer resistance, unsettled broken family backgrounds and the non-availability of appropriate jobs etc. Still, this centre has been a beacon of hope for many who lost proper direction in their lives. The selfless service of the volunteers of Jesus Fraternity who include both committed religious sisters and dedicated lay associates are the greatest assets of this ministry. The constant support of Jesus Fraternity State Director and the assiduous guidance of the provincial team of the St. Thomas Province of Claretians have been a great inspiration to this centre. The God of love has been the greatest source of inspiration to do this ministry of compassionate love. Let his spirit continue to guide the ways ahead.

### *Note to Prison Voice Contributors*

We thank all the contributors for your inputs to *Prison Voice*. We would like to bring to your notice a few things that would make the publishing of your articles a seamless process for us, the printers and for you.

- a) Send in your articles, letters, commentaries, criticisms to: [prisonvoice123@gmail.com](mailto:prisonvoice123@gmail.com).
- b) Take pictures with a camera or a camera on your phone, and not with the WhatsApp app. Send any pictures you want published via email at full resolution, and not through WhatsApp to maintain printable resolution of the image.
- c) Write your articles in English (India). This option is available in MS-Word in the Review tab, under Languages. Set the default language to English (India) since we follow different spellings and grammar rules here in India.
- d) The magazine needs to follow a uniform script and style, so any stylish fonts or bold font that you use may not be reproduced in the printed article.
- e) Give a subtitle to your title, which is different from the theme given for the month. Otherwise we would have 4-5 articles with the same title, with no way to distinguish among them. Any title we provide may not capture your vision.

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC  
Chief Editor

# KOLBE HOME

## GOD'S WONDER



**Sr. Gertrude SCS**  
Directress, Kolbe Home, Bangalore

### 1. Introduction

Kolbe Home meant for the integral development of prisoners' children is a venture of Prison Ministry India (PMI). The children are taught to come to terms with life-realities not through scolding and punishment but through love, care and understanding, which are the best ways for formation. In our society, most of us look down on prisoners' children and those pushed to the fringes of society. Through education, spiritual and psychological training, and above all, through motherly, fatherly, brotherly and sisterly love, Kolbe Home strives to bring them to the mainstream life, by reconciling them with God, self, family and society.

### 2. Inspiration

When Fr Sebastian Vadakumpadan, the former PMI national coordinator noticed the manner in which prisoners' children were being treated by society, he was inspired to do something concrete for their upliftment. The rejection of a prisoner's child from a boarding home because of his father's crime disturbed him. This disturbance became the inspiration from which Kolbe Home was born. He discussed this concept in the PMI executive meeting and the executive body decided to establish a home for the vital development of prisoners' children.

### 3. Inauguration

The dream of Kolbe Home was realized within no time, thanks to the incessant assistance of divine providence and the generous contribution of the people of Bangalore and PMI benefactors. On 15 December 2015, Bishop Peter Remigius, the then PMI chairman blessed Kolbe Home and Most Rev Bernard Mores, the former archbishop of Bangalore inaugurated it. The first batch of 8 children was admitted in 2016.

### 4. Administration

Kolbe Home is an institution under the PMI national office which falls within the care and protection of the Justice, Peace and Development Commission of CBCI. The PMI national coordinator is its director. Its daily running is entrusted with the Satyaseva Catechist Sisters. Sr Gertrude, the superior, in collaboration with nuns from different congregations run the home and is in charge of the formation of the children. Like a mother, she trains these children to realize their life-goal to be better citizens of tomorrow. These children have been deprived of the basic needs of life and Kolbe Home tries to fulfil these needs.

### 5. Methodology

The prime focus of Kolbe Home is to work for the welfare of prisoners' children and

for the children of the least, lost and the last. Kolbe Home aims at primarily developing human intelligence such as love quotient, intelligent quotient, emotional quotient and spiritual quotient in the children. It strives to provide qualitative education in order to form them into dignified, responsible and respected citizens of our nation and train them to cope up with mainstream life. Through education, spiritual and psychological assistance we strive to bring forth in them the human and divine virtues needed to become great citizens of the postmodern era.

#### 6. Goals

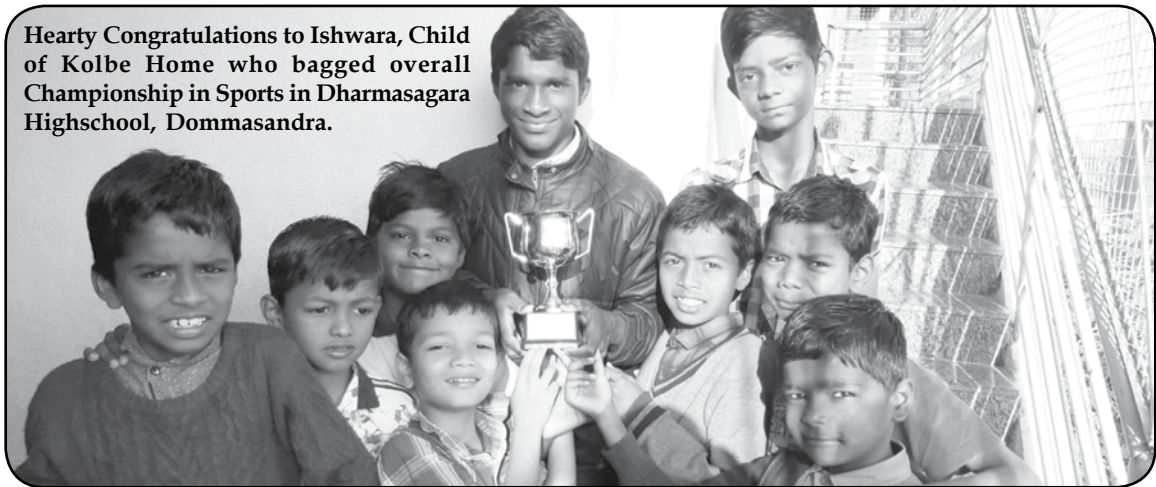
1. To provide integral and holistic human development for prisoners' children.
2. To provide quality education in order to form them into dignified, responsible and respected citizens.
3. To work for the overall welfare of prisoners' children, and children of the least, lost and the last of society.
4. To assist in the character formation of prisoners' children by love, care and education.

5. To help the children grow strong enough to stand against the hurdles and hardships of their lives.
6. To make the children responsible towards their family and for others who are in need.
7. To mould them in a way that they can forgive and forget their bitter experiences and the people who caused it.
8. To motivate them to work hard for a secure and standard living.

#### 7. Conclusion

Kolbe Home is a place where God does wonders for prisoners' children daily. It is also a home that provides love, care and concern for the children who do not have these human, psychological and emotional needs met at the proper times. Through our ministry for prisoners' children, we give them an assurance that they too are precious and loved by everyone. Kolbe Home bears witness what Jesus experienced in Nazareth, "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men" (Lk 2: 52). Your valuable assistance in this regard will be of great benefit to many children to mould their future.

Hearty Congratulations to Ishwara, Child of Kolbe Home who bagged overall Championship in Sports in Dharmasagara Hignschool, Dommasandra.



## You Have Touched Me and I Have GROWN



**Sr Beena Thekkan SdP**

*Directress, The Monvila Snehashramam  
Trivandrum, Kerala*

**S**nehashramam is a rehabilitation and renewal centre for female ex-prisoners and abandoned girls situated at Monvila in the Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala. It is a home-away-from-home for the homeless and unwanted girls and women who stray on to the streets without hope in life. This rehabilitation centre is under the ambit of the Jesus Fraternity under the Commission for Justice, Peace and Development of the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council managed in collaboration with priests, nuns and laity. The selfless and generous contribution of many enables to run this mission successfully. Rev. Dr Francis Kodiyan and Rev. Fr Varghese Karipperri are the two great priests who dreamt into existence this humanitarian service centre and initiated this praiseworthy mission.

Snehashramam is a response to the need of the hour. It aims to restore as far as possible, victim's independence, physical, mental, social and vocational ability as well as their full inclusion and participation in society by providing suitable and life-enhancing services that enable them to rebuild their lives as dignified human beings. It helps these unfortunate girls to accept the various painful experiences in the past and look forward to a renewed life with unswerving hope and to build up from where they had lost. Snehashramam gladly takes forward this responsibility of society and of the Church with indefatigable zeal and profound faith in the provident God.

The following services and objectives are carried forward and accomplished regularly:

- Physical and psychological assistance
- Spiritual renewal
- Reconciliation with God, self, family and society

- Vocational training
- Rehabilitation
- Recreational activities
- Accompaniment and animation
- Home placement
- Job placement

The foundation stone for Snehashramam was laid on 1 May in the year 1992 by the Most Rev Dr Soosai Pakiam, the Archbishop of Trivandrum Archdiocese and it was inaugurated on 11 October 1992 by V. Rajaya, the Governor of Kerala. At the initial stage, the administration of the House was under the care of a few nuns belonging to different congregations. It was on 5 December 1995 that the administration of the House was entrusted to the Congregation of Deena Seva Sabha. They rendered 23 years of long and praiseworthy service. The mission and its administration were then entrusted to the Congregation of Sisters of the poor of St. Catherine Siena, on 6 January 2018 during the zonal meeting of Jesus Fraternity in the presence of Fr. Shaji Stephen, the state director of Jesus Fraternity.

The Snehashramam sisters visit the shelter homes and prisons carrying the good news of love and care. Girls released from other shelter homes or prisons are gladly received and warmly accepted for further assistance after having fulfilled legal formalities. Snehashramam stands for a noble cause and strives to bring peace and joy, justice and love to those marginalised, particularly to women who are drawn into crime due to poverty and

despair, forced to sell their very womanhood for survival, brutally molested in brothels and flesh-trading centres, despised and abandoned by society and by their own families and those vulnerable and exposed to impending human degradation. Care is taken to prevent adversities and to preserve the good elements inherent in the individuals.

The mission is of the larger community. Collaboration with generous persons and service providers are received and encouraged. However, as the mission is entrusted to the Sisters at Snehashramam, they take great effort to help the inmates to have a deep experience of God's infinite love. Programmes and activities of the centre are scheduled with life-enhancing activities. The inmates are given opportunities to attend daily mass, read the word of God, for worship and adoration, regular confession and retreat. They are taken for recreational outings and annual picnics. The scars of their psychological, mental and physical wounds are healed through counselling and guidance. Seminars offered on different aspects of life such as etiquette, self-esteem, social life, family life, forgiveness and other such topics have proved effective. Professional psychological, as well as psychiatric help, is given to those who have been assessed as patients. Great trust and attention are paid to the overall wellness and wellbeing of all the inmates of the rehabilitation centre.

Respect for work and dignity of labour is instilled in them through vocational training such as the art of tailoring, the art of making handicrafts, the art of soap production, cloth clip assembling, gardening, animal husbandry and agriculture, etc. They are not only trained well, but care is also taken to get them settled into family life. Matrimonial arrangements are made after careful attention and enquiry. In the past 28 years of providing service, Snehashramam could accommodate and train 554 girls and out of that 49 have been married off. Constant communication and contact are maintained with past inmates and they are

called on occasionally to attend refresher and renewal programmes. On special occasions, they are invited with their family members to their alma mater, Snehashramam.

In addition to the direct mission of the rehabilitation centre, the nuns of Snehashramam along with members of the Jesus Fraternity, play a crucial part in the Prison Ministry. On allotted days and time, they visit 8 jails in and around Thiruvananthapuram district. Holy Mass, confession, prayer services and counselling are arranged and offered to those who are cut off from their families and society and kept behind the bars. On special occasions and days like Onam and Christmas, these brothers and sisters are recognized and valued with the distribution of gifts. Seminarians from different places are sent to Snehashramam during their holidays for a fixed number of days and under the guidance of the director, they too visit the prisoners and offer them love and support through life-enhancing programmes. Interventions such as these in their lives have had a tremendous positive impact on reconciliation, healing and wellness. Along with the Prison Ministry cell, Snehashramam also finds time to visit the families of the prisoners and they are given hope and psychological support. Jesus Fraternity volunteers and benefactors also extend financial support to the prisoner's children. A summer camp is organized for 5 days in Snehashramam for the children of the prisoners and at the end of the camp, they are given educational materials.

In the current scenario, in line with technological advances, there is a growing need for a specialised and standard way of rendering psychological services. It is a call and challenge to bring into full effect love, justice, peace, harmony and wellness for all. In the challenging circumstances and situations, Snehashramam does not lose hope but moves ahead with great faith and trust in God and rely on the goodness of many a person with a humanitarian heart.

# VAN THUAN HOME

## Reformation: A Grace of God

Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

### Introduction

Van Thuan Home is the first PMI rehabilitation centre for released male prisoners in Karnataka. PMI celebrated the silver jubilee of its national-level ministry with its headquarters at Bangalore on 19-20 November 2019. Van Thuan Home is a jubilee gift from the Lord. PMI constructed a four-storied jubilee memorial building for the Reformatory Research and Documentation Centre (RRDC) which was blessed by Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva, the PMI Chairman on 20 November 2019. We decided to use this building for the rehabilitation of released male prisoners in Karnataka with the name Van Thuan Home. I appreciate Fr George Kalassery VC who daringly took the responsibility of its directorship.

### Launch & Goal

On 1 February 2020, Mr Prakash, a volunteer from the PMI Bangalore unit brought Mr Siva from the central prison Bangalore and with him, we launched the Van Thuan Home. In Van Thuan Home, we apply the eightfold path for prisoners' reformation, that is, reach-out, release, repentance, reconciliation, reformation, rehabilitation, reintegration and redemption. The person behind every reformation is Jesus Christ. He is our redeemer. PMI volunteers, representing Jesus, become true instruments in the hands of God in conveying his unconditional and forgiving love to the released prisoners and thereby reform, rehabilitate, and reintegrate them in mainstream society.

### Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan

The name Van Thuan comes from the name of venerable Francis-Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận. Pope Francis invited PMI to participate in an international conference of prison pastoral care in the Vatican on 6-8 November 2019. Fr Francis Kodiyan, the PMI national coordinator went to the conference and presented a paper on the contributions of Prison Ministry India. The gift given to the participants by His Eminence Peter Cardinal Turkson, the president of the dicastery for the Integral Human Development was a relic of the Venerable Francis Xavier Van Thuan.

Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan was born on 17 April 1928 in Hue, Vietnam, into a family with a long history of martyrs. He felt the call to religious life when he was just a young child and was ordained a priest on 11 June 1953. Having earned a doctorate in Canon law in Rome in 1959, he returned to Vietnam, first to teach, and then later on became the Rector of the Minor Seminary. He was appointed Bishop of Nha Trang on 24 April 1975. Pope Paul VI promoted him to Coadjutor Archbishop of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City. A few months later, he was arrested and imprisoned on 15 August 1975. Without ever being tried or sentenced, he spent thirteen years in prison, nine of which were in solitary confinement, until his release on 21 November 1988. In 1991, Van Thuan came to Rome and Pope John Paul II appointed him the vice president, and later president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. In 2000, the Great Jubilee year, he preached the annual Lenten spiritual exercises for the Roman Curia. In 2001, he was appointed as a Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church. On 16 September 2002, he died after a lengthy illness. On 4 May 2017, Pope Francis named him as Venerable, a significant step on the road towards canonisation.

### Conclusion

The success of a rehabilitation centre and the integral reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of a released prisoner depend on many persons. First of all, every reformation is a grace of God. It is only by the divine grace that we can transform a lost sheep. Secondly, it is the role of PMI volunteers to convey to the inmate genuine selfless love and to reawaken in him/her the lost motivation for life. It is the duty of the PMI volunteers to instil in him/her a drive for reformed life. Thirdly, the PMI volunteers need a lot of assistance from benefactors both spiritual as well as material such as to get a job for the inmates, to reconcile with their families and society, to deal with the police and lawyers, to settle them in a family life through marriage, to construct a house for them, etc.

### Children First

“Teach your children what life is about; help them to understand what values are and what is necessary to make it in life”, said Hermann J. Steinherr. Children are the most important component of each family and society as a whole. Jesus did not hesitate to tell his adult disciples, “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Mt. 19:14). We, the Sisters of St. Anne’s of Chennai strongly believe at heart that we need to put children first in our ministry and hence the most vulnerable children are at our care at Lourdes Convent Bangalore. Yes, they are the children of prisoners and they have full freedom at our Home as they feel at home under our care.

### Premodaya - a Home of Love

Premodaya Home for Children is one of the key ministries that Lourdes Convent in Bangalore has undertaken. It is a home-away-from-home for the children of prisoners, both under trial and convicts. This Home is an offshoot of Prison Ministry, Bangalore and it primarily caters to the children of prisoners who need care and protection which are extended by our nuns.

### Prison Ministry

The vision and mission of the Congregation of St. Anne’s have a special place for marginalized communities and children. One of the marginalized segments of society, marred by legal parlance is the prisoners behind bars. In the early 1990s, our congregation fore-fronted Prison



**Sr Jerlin SSA**

*Sister-in-charge, Premodaya*

Ministry and gave ample space for the nuns to venture into and serve the needs of prisoners who were uncared for and of their families. Sr. Carmelita took interest in this form of ministry and served them with commitment, providing legal assistance and extending care to their families. In due course, the objective of serving the children of prisoners gained momentum and thus the Congregation gave physical space for running Homes for the children of prisoners. Thus, Premodaya - the home for the girl children of prisoners was founded on 1 July 2001, at Bangalore, in the campus of Lourdes convent

with the guidance of Fr. Paschal, then President of Prison Ministry, Karnataka.

### A Special Home

Premodaya is a special home as it caters only to children of prisoners. As the name denotes, all the children who come into this home are showered with affection and care and reminded that they are especially loved. This home, from 2001 to till date has accommodated 214 children. As part of the rehabilitation process, they are given shelter, food, healthcare, education, recreation, and skill development and the

PREMODAYA  
Home Away From Home

overall personality development of each and every child is ensured. In this process, volunteers, teachers and benefactors become stakeholders along with our nuns.

**Premodaya – a centre of holistic learning**

Premodaya is the most cared for ministry for all the nuns from Lourdes Convent in Bangalore. All the nuns pay utmost care to the inmates and ensure their needs are met and that they are loved. The children are given clean spaces for residence with all the necessary requirements like good sanitation and study hall. They are served nutritious food, clean water and good dress materials. Education is ensured in our school adjacent to the Home and they are provided with free education up to high school and are guided to pursue higher education.

Good-hearted people support them and ensure their continued education and care. The children are provided with space for learning performing arts, theatre skills, life skills and thus develop comprehensive growth. Here in Premodaya, the need of every child is given individual attention to safeguard their personal growth. Children here do not feel the absence of their parents as sisters take their place with lots of love and care.

**A Continuing Mission**

This mission for the children of prisoners will be continued. We try to visit the prison so that we may come into contact with families who are unable to manage their children’s care and education as one or both the parents are behind the bars.





## Our Inner Strength: GOD'S GRACE



**Sr. Shanti Pulickal SCC**  
Coordinator, Berhampur Diocese

The desire for success is deep-rooted in every human being. Some achieve it early in life, some at a later stage and some go through life regretting over lost opportunities. Success is the result of certain achievement either in one's personal life or in the life of an organisation or community. In this article, I would like to write about the success story of the Prison Ministry at Berhampur diocese.

At the beginning of 2019, we had the commission meeting of prison ministry to plan our activities for the year. We did this in the light of the vision and mission statement of PMI which is the release, renewal and rehabilitation of prisoners. We formulated the following activities:

- Arrange spiritual discourse, prayers, volleyball matches, counselling and moral instructions in prisons.
- Spoken English classes for the prisoners who are pursuing their higher studies.
- Encourage prisoners to write their university exams.
- Conduct medical camps.
- Provide recreational facilities.
- Provide free legal aid.
- Family contact of victims with offenders.
- Extend prison ministry to all the prisons in Berhampur diocese and find volunteers for each prison.

In spite of all our limitations, the Lord worked marvels for us and gave us the joy of experiencing some success in our ministry. Providing recreational facilities was a new programme that we had taken up last year. We provided a few carom boards and made sure that they were used well and regularly. An idle mind is the devil's workshop. Many prisoners become lethargic, depressed and moody due to lack of activities. So, we conducted two volleyball matches last year and the previous

year and provided all the materials needed for it. The joy reflected on their faces as they played or watched the game was ample proof of the success of our effort. Many came to thank us for understanding their needs and helping them to rejuvenate themselves. Some of the prisoners had severe eye problems and even worms were crawling out of their eyes. Hence, we conducted 3 eye camps in different jails and provided spectacles and medicines for all who needed it. We humbly thank God for enabling us to be of help to the helpless ones in prisons. A few Seminarians from the Vianny Bhavan seminary had been teaching spoken English in the jail every Sunday for 2 hours for the past 5 years. They also spent time listening to the broken-hearted and depressed ones, counselled them and tried to transform and renew their lives. Our contact with the families of prisoners had been minimal but we still helped 3 of the released prisoners with financial aid to settle back with their families, resume their life and arrange hostel accommodation for their kids. Financial aid and encouragement had been given to 2 prisoners to write their university exams this year. They are awaiting their results.

During one of the Eucharistic celebrations in a prison, Pope John Paul II told the inmates, "I come to you as a witness of God's love to tell you that God loves you." All our efforts at prison ministry are to reveal to the prisoners the merciful love of God so that experiencing it through us they may be transformed, renewed, released and rehabilitated. May the Lord grant us the inner strength to walk in solidarity with all who are betrayed, exploited, driven from home, imprisoned, detained without trial, held hostage, silenced and abused.

## Food for Freedom: **BEHIND THE IRON BARS**



**Charmaine Edwin**  
*Volunteer, Trivandrum PMI*

The sale of food prepared in prisons, especially the Thiruvananthapuram Central Prison, is a big hit here. When the Kerala Prison Department ventured into the food business, they themselves did not expect that the project would become a huge success. The sole model before the project was the food-making unit of Tihar Jail in Delhi. The project was named "Food for Freedom" and is currently enabling prison inmates to learn skills to earn a better livelihood.

According to the prison department (Kerala), the project was not profit-oriented but based on the idea of service and also to motivate and engage the inmates effectively. It all started four years ago as a small project at Thiruvananthapuram Central Prison. Even though the State Prison Department was initially surprised, later they encouraged the project and it was taken up in other prisons also. Currently, 8 prisons including 3 central prisons are involved in "Food for Freedom" with much success.

A place which most people dread to enter has become busy with the introduction of this project. The main aim of this was to teach the inmates some useful skills along with carpentry and masonry as they usually idle away their time. Some of the inmates have already got placements as cooks in restaurants and they can lead a peaceful

life... beyond the bars, as they already know that they will have opportunities for jobs once they are released! The Thiruvananthapuram Central Prison has already trained many of its inmates who can now cook delicious food.

Raju (named changed) is 50 years old and is in prison, currently working in the Food-for-Freedom unit as the main cook. He says, he feels happy and is more confident and satisfied when people buy the food. He also feels like a part of society, and not like a 'culprit' behind the bars. Raju concludes that this kind of working environment makes them forget their past as moreover, it is like a correctional home!

To conclude, a sincere 'Thanks' to our State Police Chief & DGP Of Kerala Lokanath Behera, who put the initial effort to create a working environment for the brethren behind the bars.

Now the doubt-laden question arises... 'What is happening in prisons nowadays???' Long ago these kinds of success stories were heard of only internationally. But now the same success stories happen here in our own 'God's own Country' when inmates are directed through the right track to lead a life of their own once they are released.

The prisons are now proving to be the right place to correct the wrong person. Let the stories continue...

## *I Need You to Love me* **LITTLE LOUDER TODAY**

**Shri Francis Zaithanga**

*Horeb Retreat Centre, Aizawl, Mizoram*

I am writing this as requested by the state secretary, PMI, Mizoram State. I wish all the readers the best in the name of our Lord with the hope that someone may benefit and find a new life.

I used to run a motor workshop in my locality which was going quite smooth. After some time, I started drinking liquor and taking drugs. As time went on, I got addicted to drugs and spent all my earnings for the habit. I could not continue running my workshop, which finally shut down. As I continued taking drugs and drinking liquor, I started selling whatever I could get my hands on. I got so addicted that I wanted to take liquor or drugs right from the morning. When I could not find what I wanted, I used to threaten my wife and my family members. As the situation became worse, my wife took all my children and went back to her parents.

When my family left me, I became free to do whatever I wanted. I started hanging out with friends who were leading a similar life. We started roaming the streets to find someone to fight with. I, being rather small in stature, used to get bashed up and severely injured. As I was always creating disturbances in the society, the village leaders and even the police would catch and keep me in jail frequently. During this time, I was not afraid of anyone including my father. I used to fight with people in

order to get money for drugs or drinks.

I landed up in jail many times and finally one day, in the year 2010, while I was in the Central Jail, the PMI volunteers came. I was moved by their preaching and mentally prepared to live a new life. When I was released from the Central Jail, my house was empty and I started a new life all alone. One day, I went to fetch water from the fountain to fill a 20-litre container. While I was carrying the water, I heard an inner voice telling me, "You are like this empty container. Fill it up and share it with others also". Just out of jail, I was physically tired and weak and did not intend to fill the 20l container. After I heard the voice, I filled the container until it was overflowing.

I then went to the parents of my wife and begging their forgiveness asked them to allow their daughter to come back to me. When I started my new life, I had a strong determination not to go back to my old life. I went to the parish priest for confession. I could continue to live a better life with the help of the prayers of my parents, my wife and well-wishers.

Although I lived a changed life, many people still doubted that I really had changed. In order to prove myself to the people that I really changed, I started getting actively involved in many social activities.

I enrolled myself in church activities and YMA (Young Mizo Association) which is the biggest NGO in Mizoram that works to help the poor in whatever way they could, fights against drug abuse, prevents illicit trafficking, digs graves for people who die, etc. I got involved in all these activities. Because of my involvement in the Church and the YMA activities, I slowly earned back people's confidence.

Due to the inner voice urging me to help the needy, I started a centre called "Horeb Retreat Centre" in my father's land by constructing a small inn with bamboo walls and tin roof for the needy. With the help of some friends, we roamed the city at night to find people who were in need of help. We gathered up some drug addicts who did not have a house to go to (some were not welcomed/not wanted in their own home). I gave them shelter and food, dressed their wounds and gave them medicines (during this time we brought 2 dead bodies lying on the streets to their respective homes). It was not possible to go on without help from others. In the meantime, I joined PMI after knowing that it was a ministry run by Catholics, working in jails to spread the good news to prisoners and help them in any way that they required. While visiting the jails, I used to share my experience and my past life, which I felt was quite effective.

In the year 2017, the PMI Mizoram unit offered an invitation to use my home for the PMI Rehabilitation Centre. After I gave my approval, the PMI garnered funds for the reconstruction of the building. The PMI Mizoram unit regularly helps to meet our requirements. The PMI volunteers also donated from their own sources, money,

blankets, bedsheets, old clothes, shoes, etc. The home can accommodate 12 people now.

At present, there are 8 inmates. Out of these, 3 do not have anywhere to go. They will be welcome here in the home as long as they chose to stay. We used to go to the nearby jungles to fetch bamboo for making brooms which were sold in the market to meet our expenses. In spite of their weakness and bad health, the inmates had to go to the jungle.

In the year 2016, a couple (both HIV+) with their daughter, entered the Centre. After some time, the woman delivered a boy. But, without informing the management they left the centre with their daughter, leaving their new-born child behind under the care of the centre. After a year, they came back with their daughter. Unfortunately, the woman died and the father stayed on for some time and left his children behind. The Home is now looking after the two children.

The practice of searching for needy people at night is still done, especially during festivals and Christmas time. There are still plenty of people who are in need of our help.

My dear brothers and sisters, I have decided to serve my Lord by helping people in need. There are hard times, difficulties and frustrations while running this Home. Knowing that he will not forsake me, I continue to run the home despite all the hardships with the conviction that by this some souls may be saved.

The article "Vocational Training in Indian Prisons" written by Vineetha S. and Vijay Raghavan which was published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (21 April 2018) is quite important to those of us who work within the Prison Ministry. The original purpose of labour within prisons was tied up with the notion of punishment according to this article. Slave labour and prison labour were very similar in how they treated and utilised both slaves and prisoners. Then in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lord Macaulay and other prison commissions pointed out to the abysmal conditions in prisons and asked the colonial government in India to abolish outdoor labour for prisoners. The idea of rehabilitation and reformation of prisoners entered the prison policies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. With this shift came in the idea of treating prisoners more humanely and for the need for vocational and industrial training.

However, the researchers point out that there is a huge gap between the policy and practice of vocational training programmes in prisons. According to the 2003 Prison Manual, there are 12 objectives that have been formulated for these training programmes that include,

- Developing the right attitude towards work
- Promoting their physical and mental well-being
- Improving their self-confidence and self-reliance
- Imparting occupational skills so that they can be gainfully employed.

In the justice system, the idea of the work programme is to make the prisoner realise the benefit of leading a disciplined life and cooperating with others. The concept of wage emerged to make them learn responsible behaviour and to realize the benefit of earning through one's own hard work. However, what many researchers have pointed out, according to this article, is that vocational training programmes are monotonous, uninteresting and not particularly motivating.

In the current scenario, there is no difference between work and vocational training. The

## Deeper Call for PMI Volunteers

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Ms Teena Antony

prisoners are made to work without providing any training beforehand. Most of the vocational training and work programmes offered in India were instituted in the 1950s and 60s and these include spinning and weaving, carpentry and furniture-making, soap-making, chair-caning, cardboard and envelope making, agriculture, candle-making, tailoring, embroidery and textile printing. Work in most prisons is mechanical and routinised. For instance, if a male prisoner is allocated to the weaving section, he is either assigned to a handloom or a power loom based on his physical capabilities. The inmate has to perform certain routine actions to work the machine. Prison departments across the country portray prison industries as profitable. However, this comes at the cost of undue importance on production than on adequate training of inmates.

Additionally, there is gender disparity in the kind of work offered in prisons, with the women's section having access to fewer options for work and vocational training. The current training opportunities available to women include tailoring, embroidery, agriculture, cleaning and kitchen work; work needed for the maintenance of the prisons. Tailoring, for instance, ensures that the clothing requirements of the prison are met. There are sometimes, short-term training programmes like jewellery-making or mushroom cultivation - "safe jobs" that women can do. Often, the explanation given for the lack of option is that the women prisoners are not interested. However, the researchers say that when this idea was put forth to the women prisoners, they not only

rejected the claim but expressed the desire to learn new skills.

The work or training allocated to prisoners is done quite arbitrarily. Though the prison officials do ask about the previous work experience of a prisoner, often when the work area is finally allotted to him/her, it depends upon the need and vacancy in the manufactory and the physical fitness of the person. If the manufactory is located outside the prison, only persons deemed trustworthy are allowed to work there. The “trustworthiness” is decided based on the nature of the crime committed, length of sentence and so on. Long-timers are generally allotted such work because the belief is that they would not do anything to jeopardize their term of sentence, parole and release. Those deemed “risky” are allocated gardening, cleaning or cooking chores inside the main gates of the prisons.

Normally civil officers are appointed to do the training, though often, they end up doing the filing and other administrative work. Hence, the senior inmates end up training the new inmates. The inmates are given one month to learn the trade and during this period, either they are not paid any wages or given the wages of a semi-skilled labourer. Since the inmates are usually limited to just one aspect of production, rarely do they get the opportunity to learn all the aspects of a particular manufacturing job. Occasionally the prisoners get the chance to learn other skills such as computer applications, horticulture, masonry, making fly ash bricks, etc. But once the skill is learnt, there is no prospect of practising these skills causing them to forget the trade.

Another site of conflict is between the civil officers and uniformed officers. Civil officers are mute witness to the physical and verbal abuse suffered by the inmates, which sometimes tend to spill over onto the civil officers also. Procurement of raw materials for the manufactory is done by uniformed officers and the accounting and filing is done by civil officers. Due to the authoritarian stand taken by the storekeeper, material procurement becomes

difficult. The administrative workload in addition to the training and the hostile attitude of the uniformed personnel all lead to the civil officers not staying around for long.

The prisoners are paid minimum wages, a portion of which is taken towards their upkeep. In certain states, a portion is paid towards a common fund set aside for victims. One portion is kept aside to be given to inmates on release and certain states allow a portion of the wages to be sent to their families. However, the entire set up of the system, the outdated skill training, lack of coordination among officials, near-compulsion to work, arbitrary allocation to a manufactory all seem to point to a punitive rather than a rehabilitative mindset.

There are several weaknesses to the vocational programmes offered:

- Rarely beneficial to inmates post their release
- Most programmes are outdated with little earning/rehabilitative potential
- Minimum wages entitled to prisoners are very low due to various deductions
- Monotonous work with little scope for innovation
- Work is not allocated according to aptitude
- Lack of trained personnel to guide inmates for new/existing programmes
- Trainers themselves do not have opportunity to update their skills
- Frequent shortage of raw materials
- Tools and equipment often outdated
- Unavailability of infrastructure and space due to overcrowding of prisons

The article by Vineetha S. and Vijay Raghavan ends on measures that could be taken to address the issues with vocational training in prisons, including providing prisoners with choices and freedom to choose vocations according to their interest. It seems as if this would be an area that Prison Ministry volunteers could look into and push for with the prison and government officials as part of our regular ministry.

# Services Rendered!



**Dr Michael Noronha**  
Mysore Unit Coordinator,  
PMI

The Prison Ministry India, Mysore unit started in July 2000 is the most active of the Prison Ministry units in the diocese of Mysore. It is the pioneer that started all the other six PMI units in the period 2000-2001, wherever there are prisons (Mandya, Nanjangud, Chamarajanagar, K.R. Nagara, Kollegal and Madikeri) in the four districts of Mandya, Chamarajanagar, Kodagu and Mysore which is under the jurisdiction of the Mysore diocese. Apart from starting the PMI units in Mysore diocese, the Mysore unit started the two PMI units in Chikmagalur diocese i.e., in Chikmagalur and Hassan. There are nearly 52 committed members covering almost all the major congregations in the diocese and a few long-standing dedicated laity in the Mysore PMI unit which has helped the unit to continue its activities. Every Wednesday and Saturday (other than declared holidays on these days) the PMI members visit the prison, and counsel and help the prisoners. The rapport between the prison authorities and the Mysore PMI unit is excellent and cordial. The Mysore unit has received support from the Mysore Diocesan CRI team for working towards the well-being and welfare of prisoners.

### Some of the services rendered in the Mysore Central Prison are:

As requested by the state PMI executive committee on 23 February 2019, our core members went to Mandya and helped reorganize and form the PMI unit there which was defunct for some years. Seed money of ₹5000/- was also given to them.

A diocesan PMI meeting of all the units was held on 24 February 2019 at Avila Convent from 9.30 am to 1.30 pm to facilitate the constitution of a new diocesan team in which the Mysore PMI unit also participated.

As an annual programme, we celebrated International Women's Day in the month of

March '19 in the women's section. Preparation for this event was through various competitions held in the previous month. A cultural programme was performed by the inmates. Snacks and prizes were distributed to the winners and toiletries given to all the inmates.

Mass is celebrated in the prison on every third Saturday of every month by the chaplain appointed by the bishop. Catholics are given the opportunity to confess and receive communion.

Eid was celebrated in the Mysore Central Prison on 15 June '19. Mr Munawar Pasha, the president of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind - Mysuru Chapter was the chief guest who spoke on the "Spirit of Eid". He was accompanied by Mr Waseem. It was celebrated in the men's section and a number of inmates attended. Payasam was distributed to the over 900 inmates which was sponsored by a lay PMI member.

The Mysore PMI unit under the directions of the state and national PMI unit is a registered body and the AGM of our unit was held on 29 June 2019. The unit has had its accounts audited for all the 19 years of its existence. The respective returns have been filed with the Registrar of Societies.

In the month of June 2019, our member, Dr Michael Noronha who was nominated as a non-official member of the Mysore Central Prison Board participated in the board meeting held in Mysuru prison which was attended by the Principal District Judge, Deputy Commissioner of Mysore and the Deputy Commissioner of Police at Mysore Central Prison, wherein discussions of the agenda were held to bring

about reforms for the benefit of the inmates. Since the sub-jails of Nanjangud and K.R. Nagar also fall under the jurisdiction of the Mysore Central Prison our member has been nominated to represent these prison boards also as a non-official member and has attended the respective board meetings.

The Mysore unit has started a Skill Development Training Programme in the Mysore Central Prison for the convicted inmates with the collaboration of the Ursuline Franciscan Sisters and the Lunar Bags and Slippers Company. The proposal has been accepted by the Mysuru Central Prison authorities and the work is likely to commence in January 2020. For the smooth conduct of the programme, the UFS Mysore Province has been asked to collaborate with the Lunar Bags Company and the prison authorities through an MoU.

The Pallotine Brothers visit the Bala Mandira (Boys Home) in Vijayanagar every Saturday and interact with them, teaching them soft skills, moral values, English, dance, music and also crafts. A special Christmas programme was held and a gift was given to each of the children and the officials as part of the programme. There are 50 children in this home.

Based on the National PMI office and the Mysore Bishop's circular, all the Mysore city parishes celebrated PMI Sunday in the second week of August 2019. The second collection made towards the cause of prisoners and their families were sent to the Bishops' House by the parishes.

On 5 August 2019, the Mysore PMI unit gave ₹5000/- each to the units of Nanjangud, Chamarajanagar, K.R. Nagar and Madikeri through the Bishops' House to help them celebrate the PMI Sunday festivities in their respective prisons.

PMI Sunday and Independence Day celebrations were jointly held on 5 September 2019 inside the Mysore Central Prison. A skit on the life of the Servant of God, Sr. Rani Maria and a cultural programme was presented by the Pallotine Brothers. All the inmates and the prison authorities appreciated the programme. As part of the Independence Day celebrations, a volleyball match and a singing competition

were held for the men prisoners. The winners and runners-up were given bags worth ₹250 each as prizes. Fr Ashwin OCD and Fr Rahul Phillips were the judges for the singing competition. Physical Education teachers of the Good Shepherd Convent were the referees for the sports event.

The Mysore Unit conducted a Value Education Session in the Mysore Central Prison for 3 days on November 5-7, 2019. It was well-attended by the inmates.

Soft Skills Training was conducted for the prison officials by Sr. Milagrin UFS, and Bro Jayaprakash, DDS Superior General. All the prison officials attended it. It was well appreciated and they desire more such programs.

As part of our annual programme, Christmas was celebrated in the Mysore Central Prison on 17 December '19 and also in the Rescue Home for Boys in Vijayanagar, by the Pallotine Brothers on 21 December 2019 with various cultural programmes performed by the children of Divya Jyothi School managed by the Ursuline Somasca Sisters. At the girls' rescue home, the sisters and teachers of Good Shepherd School organized a cultural programme as part of the Christmas programme. Snacks were distributed to all the inmates at all the three places, and gifts distributed to the children and staff in the boys' correction home as mentioned earlier. Bishop Emeritus Thomas Vazhapilly was the chief guest at the Mysore Central Prison.

Mass was celebrated inside the prison by the Bishop Emeritus Rev. Dr Thomas Vazhapilly on Christmas day and cakes were distributed to the prison staff.

Sankranti was celebrated in the prison on 18 January '20. Swami Shivakanthanandaji of Ramakrishna Ashram was the chief guest. He gave a talk on "Resolutions to be made in the New Year 2020". Yellu Bella was distributed to all the 900 inmates and the officials.

Mysore PMI unit paid an amount of ₹1,03,800/- towards "fine" for nine inmates whose release was recommended by the Government of Karnataka for their good conduct and behaviour.



## Hats Off to the Maharashtra PMI!

Maharashtra state executive meeting was held at Mumbai. Our state coordinator Fr Wilfred's key points were as follows:

- Main focus on MS Unit
- Everyone should be united
- PMI family >connect>forget about weakness> motivate>kick the ball
- Identify the prisoners' need
- If permission is not given it does not mean the work of ministry is over
- We can work for their families

The chairman, Bishop Alwyn D'silva said in his address: We have chosen the right person as our national coordinator, Fr Francis Kodiyan. He is the co-founder, was the provincial of his congregation; so, he "knows all people". Pope Francis says, "with compassionate love do our work". The bishop then mentioned Cardinal Van Thuan's 10 points, which cites God's liberating power:

1. I will live the present moment to the fullest
2. I will discern between God and God's works
3. I will hold firmly to one secret: prayer
4. I will see in the Holy Eucharist my only power
5. I will have only one wisdom: the science of the Cross
6. I will remain faithful to my mission in the Church and for the Church as a witness of Jesus Christ
7. I will seek the peace the world cannot give
8. I will carry out a revolution by renewal in the Holy Spirit
9. I will speak one language and wear one uniform: Charity
10. I will have one very special love: The Blessed Virgin Mary

The last point said by Bishop Alwyn was that Catholics have become very dry as we have become pre-bargainers of our old system.



**Rajendra Dushing**  
Treasurer, PMI Maharashtra

The guidelines given by our national coordinator Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan were very inspiring: Prayer is a powerful weapon. We should focus on the Adoration centre. Formation of intercessory group in each unit. Accept challenges. Spiritual power. Participation in Holy Eucharistic celebration. Upholding the PMI spirit.

At this meeting, Fr Manuel's suggestions about the utilisation of Fhanaswadi hostel in Sindhudurg diocese as a rehabilitation centre was discussed and a further meeting happened at Fhanaswadi. In this meeting, we discussed about meeting with the Hon. Sharad Pawar. Fr Manuel made arrangements to meet this stalwart of Maharashtra state at his residence. We, the volunteers from all the different dioceses like Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad, Nashik, Vasai and Sindhudurg met the Hon. Sharad Pawar and had a detailed interaction with him. Upon hearing the good work that we do for our brethren behind the bars, he immediately called the Additional DG & IG of Prison, Mr Sunil Ramanadan. He responded very positively. Secondly, to move this matter in a systematic way, he called the home minister of Maharashtra, Mr Anil Deshmukh. He also agreed and gave orders to both the high officials to have a meeting with us at the Mantralaya. The delegation was led under the able guidance of Victor Dantas and the Maharashtra state coordinator, Fr Wilfred. Our meeting was fruitful and the next day the Addl. DG & IG asked us to get the permission letter. All the members of the delegation were so happy that with the help of prayer and our coordination we received this permission.