



PRISON VOICE

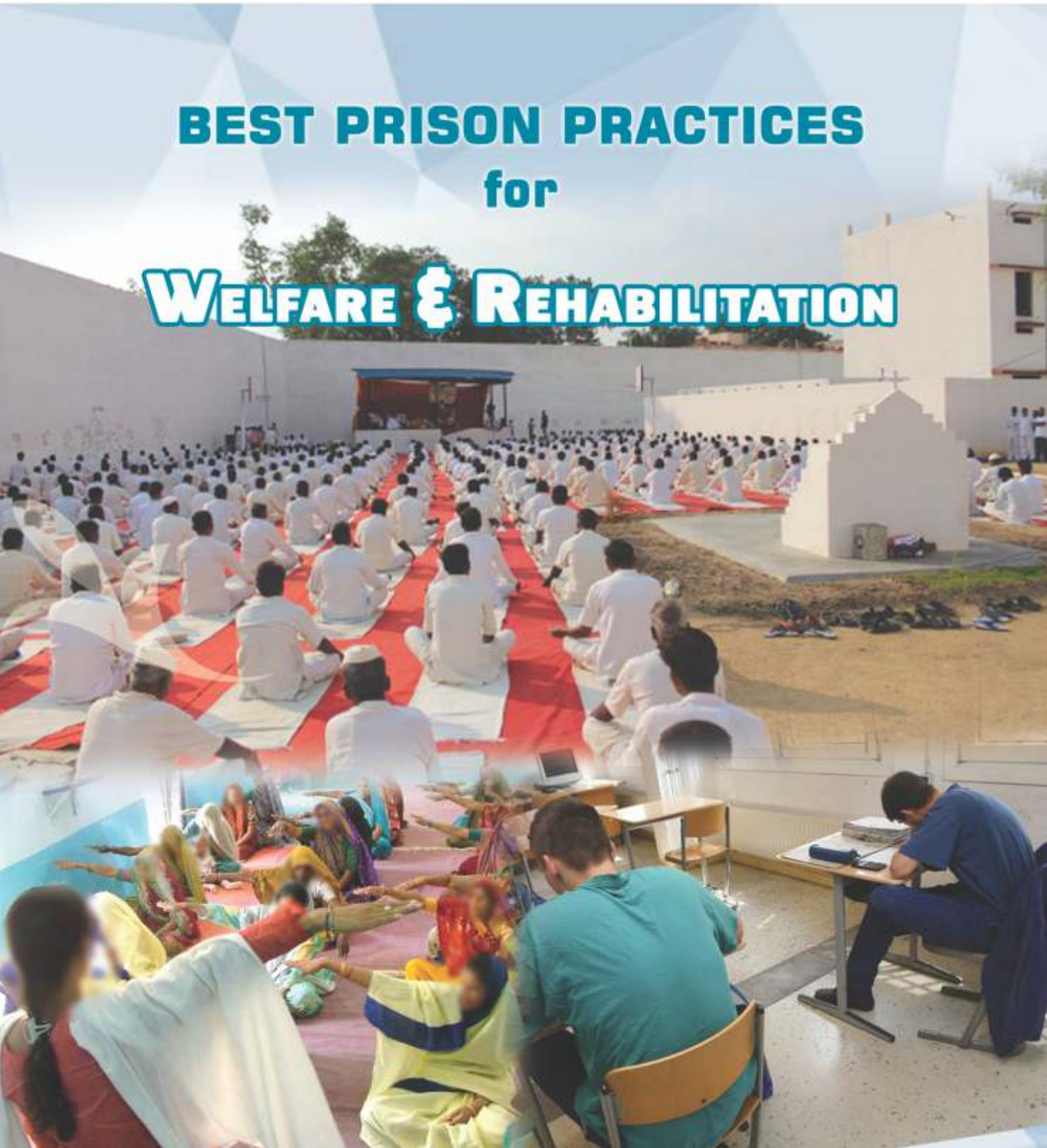
June 2019

Vol. XVI Issue 10

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹ 20/-

BEST PRISON PRACTICES for WELFARE & REHABILITATION



Full Timers 2019-20



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PRISON VOICE NATIONAL MONTHLY

PRISON

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Are you willing?

"Help a Child of a Prisoner

*Prevent a Potential
Criminal"*

*80% of the children of
prisoners are potential
criminals unless somebody
takes care of them. Prison
Ministry India has begun
a scheme to educate 1000
children of prisoners, by
giving*

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

*Please send your valuable
contribution.*

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NON-VIOLENCE AS OUR BEST PRACTICE

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father” (Matthew 5:44-45), said our Lord Jesus, whose other name is Love. Jesus took the resolution to love his enemies and he taught us to follow this practice. He is the leader who came up with this unique and best practice that was taken up worldwide.

This is not an easy command of our Lord. But it is a command of love. We may have people in our lives whom we are tempted to nurture anger against and whom we have a difficult time loving. Perhaps we consider anyone we have issues with as our enemies. To love them does not necessarily mean we must become best friends with them, but it does mean that we must work towards developing true affection, care, concern, understanding and forgiveness towards them. This can be hard, but it must be our goal as a human being. The best practice of Jesus was leading by example. He lived an exemplary life by loving his enemies and the explicit illustration of this is when on the Cross he prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”.

Best practices are a set of guidelines, ethics or ideas that represent the most efficient or prudent course of action. They are simply the best way to do things and have been worked out through trial and error, and are found to be the most sensible way to proceed. Mahatma Gandhi is revered in India as the Father of the Nation. In Indian prisons, we practice non-violence as the best practice as the Father of the Nation has taught us. Mahatma Gandhi was arrested 13 times and put behind the bars. It is one who had experienced prison life that taught our nation that non-violence was the best practice.

Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC
Chief Editor



Young men and women at Mekelle Prison, in northern Ethiopia, are provided with microfinance and insurance loans to start cooperatives based on business ideas developed in educational and vocational classes offered while they are behind bars. In order to maintain ties to their communities, prisoners who demonstrate good behaviour are allowed to maintain jobs outside the prison during the week and go to prison on the weekend in Slovenia. In India in an effort to democratize education for prisoners, the Indira Gandhi National Open University has set up 94 study centres in jails across the country that offer a broad range of educational and vocational classes leading to degrees, free of cost. At Beveren Prison in Belgium, officials have introduced flat-screen computers in every cell to help prisoners acclimate to technologies that have developed during their time behind bars. Italian prisoners in Calabria can reduce their sentence by three days at a time for every book they read behind bars. The initiative is intended to incentivize reading and culture in the country's overcrowded prisons.

Each country worldwide has its best practice which has to be brought together. When the open jail concept was brought forth in India for the first time, we had objected believing that prisoners being criminals would create even more problems. But now, this idea which concretized in Kerala has spread to the different states of India. After taking into consideration some of the best practices from around the world, we need to adopt unique and best practices from other countries to better the services offered to our brethren behind the bars and to make them better citizens. I end with this quote from Mahatma Gandhi, “Non-violence requires double faith, faith in God and faith in man.”

INTRODUCTION

Fr Sebastian Vadakumpadan, born in 1968 at Muringoor, Kerala and ordained priest in 1996 in the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, like the Good Shepherd, spent 14 precious years seeking after the lost behind the bars. As the national coordinator and CBCI secretary to PMI, he led the movement with the faith of Abraham, passion of Elijah and leadership qualities of Moses. Under his able leadership, PMI became part of Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC) and International Catholic Commission for Prison Pastoral Care (ICCPCC). With immense gratitude, highest appreciation and paying great tribute to him, this article briefly delineates some of the significant contributions of Fr Sebastian Vadakumpadan to PMI.

PMI FAMILY

Fr Sebastian was well acquainted with prison ministry while he was studying at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, the birthplace and motherhouse of PMI. As a seminarian, he was actively involved in the prison ministry of the Jesus Fraternity. In 2002, he was appointed as the national coordinator of PMI which he meritoriously did until 2006. In 2011, he was again appointed as the PMI National coordinator, and since 2014, as CBCI secretary to PMI. On 31 May 2019, he was transferred to his archdiocese and took charge as the Director of Bharat Matha Law College, Aluva and parish priest of St. Joseph's Church, Karukunnu.

CONTRIBUTIONS

His dream to have a home for prisoners' children was realized through the establishment of Kolbe Home in 2016 in Bangalore, adjacent



Rev. Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS,
National Coordinator & Secretary to C.B.C.I
for Prison Ministry India

FR SEBASTIAN VADAKUMPADAN

The Good Shepherd, who sought after the Lost

to the PMI National office where 18 children pursue their studies. The second stage of its construction, meant for the separation of junior and senior boys, is in progress. Purchase of a plot of land at Karjat, between Lonavala and Mumbai, for the Central Regional office and a rehabilitation centre for released prisoners will be written in golden letters in the annals of PMI. Credit goes to him for launching the North East Regional Office at Guwahati, Assam in collaboration with the Ursuline Franciscan Congregation. His contributions can also be found in the development stages of Jeevodaya Institute, Bangalore for the released women prisoners under the care of Holy Cross Sisters. Another of his great

achievement would be the introduction of the Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration on the second Sunday of August in all Indian Catholic parishes. The role he played in bringing PMI to the special desk of the Justice, Peace and Development Commission of CBCI is remarkable.

BOOKS

Fr Sebastian authored many relevant books published by PMI. They can be called text books and are very significant in the formation of prison ministry volunteers. Some of his major writings are: *Prison Ministry India - Volunteers' Guide*, *Our Hearts Were Burning: Prison Ministry India Volunteers' Handbook*, *Undertrials in Criminal Justice System of India*, *The Justice that Heals not that Kills*, and *Create Homes not Cells*.

OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Like Jesus, who went from cities to villages preaching the word of God and seeking the lost, Fr Sebastian travelled to all the Indian states and union territories and motivated PMI volunteers. He reached out not only to the four corners of India but also to other Asian countries and even to international destinations through the ICCPPC, especially as its Asian delegate.

ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL

The personality of Fr Sebastian can be defined as a blend of mysticism and asceticism. Sr Adele, who visits Bangalore Central Prison daily and is one of Fr Sebastian's close collaborators, out of her long experience with him states that he has a spirit of fervent prayer and penance, the basic requirements of a PMI volunteer. His ascetical life is visible to all close to

him. He is good in doing mortifications, abnegations and fasting. He enjoys sitting before the Blessed Sacrament adoring the Eucharistic Lord and interceding for the intentions of PMI.

GREAT LEADER

Fr Sebastian is a loving and approachable person with whom people can share their joys and sorrows. He respects all, encourages all and makes everyone feel that she/he is good and capable. He is wise in his approach to solving problems. His diplomatic talents were evident in situations such as obtaining permission from prison authorities. His art of negotiation, manifest in his dealing with parish priests in connection with the Prison Ministry Sunday celebrations, was truly remarkable. Being a creative and proactive person, he has trained a large number of priests, seminarians, nuns, lay faithful, especially college students, inspiring them to do prison ministry. His leadership qualities made him the Asian delegate of ICCPPC and he has presented various well-researched papers in national and international conferences.

CONCLUSION

The PMI family is greatly indebted to Fr Sebastian Vadakumpadan's commitment to prison ministry. Like the Good Shepherd, he left behind the 99 and sought after the one, who was lost and entangled in thorny bushes. PMI shall always be grateful to him and shall express our continued gratitude towards him by praying and offering Holy Masses for him. PMI and *Prison Voice* wish him God's abundant blessings and great success in his entrusted God-assigned tasks.



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May 27, 2019

Dear Fr. Sebastian and Fr. Francis,

Greetings to the team of Prison Ministry India!

On this day we thank Fr. Sebastian for all the work that he has done for Prison Ministry India. We wish him all success as he begins his new work in the college in his diocese. We pray that God may bless him in his new ministry.

Today we also welcome Fr. Francis as the new director of Prison Ministry India. We pray that he may have a fruitful ministry working for the prisoners in India.

May God bless both of you.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Bp. Allwyn D'Silva
Chairman
Prison Ministry India.

"Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them." Heb. 13:3

FULL-TIMERS DAY-OUT



Rev. Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

A Love Bomb Exploded and Healed many Broken Hearts

Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC
National Secretary, PMI

Rev. Dr Francis Kodiyan, born in 1961 at Chendamangalam in Ernakulam - Angamaly Archdiocese, joined the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS) and was ordained priest in 1989. On 28 May 2019, he took charge as the CBCI secretary to PMI and began his mission as the PMI National Director. This article briefly sketches his major contributions in prisoners' release, reformation, rehabilitation and redemption.

Studies

Fr. Francis did his philosophical and theological studies at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy from Kerala University, Master's degree in Psychology from Annamalai University, and a Licentiate and Doctorate in Spiritual Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome.

Conceptualization of PMI

The 1981 sharing of the Love Bomb concept with the co-founder at the phone cabin of St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor and the profound God experience at St. Elijah Ashram, Niravilpuzha on 11 March 1983 inseminated within him in a special way the 'love for the lost.' Then onwards, the pertinent question in his life was the reformation and rehabilitation of sinners, the lost sheep of Jesus such as prisoners and prostitutes. In 1986, as a seminarian, Brother Francis along with Brother Varghese Karipperry founded the Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor.

Call within a Call

The inner call of God for Fr. Francis was exceptional even from his seminary days. From 1980 onwards, both Francis and Varghese Karipperry from the Archdiocese of Thrissur began to regularly visit several prisons in Kerala, and imbibed the pain and agony the prisoners underwent in prisons. Fr. Francis started asking himself, "How can I become a Love Bomb to explode love into the lives of these broken-hearted people? With much enthusiasm and zeal for their souls, both of them formed a prayer group, and invited other brothers to pray and do sacrifices for the prisoners. They began to raise their hearts to God through the intercessory prayers for the least, the last and the lost. With their priestly ordination, their hearts started burning with even more zeal for the less privileged ones in society.

PMI Rehabilitation Centres

Immediately after his priestly ordination, he was appointed as the first full-time worker and Assistant Director of Jesus Fraternity at Pastoral Orientation Centre (POC) of Kerala Catholic Bishops' Conference (KCBC), Palarivattom (1990-1991). During this term, he founded Snehashramams - the rehabilitation centres for released male and female prisoners at Thrissur and Thiruvananthapuram.

PMI International Outreach

During his stay in Europe, he introduced PMI to the International Catholic Commission for Prison Pastoral Care (ICCPCC) and Prison Fellowship International founded by

Chuck Colson and invited PMI volunteers to participate in their international conferences. After his higher studies, he was appointed as Personal Secretary to His Eminence Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican (1998-2001).

PMI Research and Documentation Centre

Returning from the Vatican, he served as the Mission Superior of MCBS Maharashtra mission and became the First Rector and Dean of Sanathana - Divyakarunya Vidyapeetham, MCBS Theologate, Thamarassery (2004-2008). During this tenure, he masterminded the reformatory research and documentation centre (RRDC) in Thrissur and served as the chief editor of its research magazine known as *Reformatory Explorations* - a psycho-spiritual and criminal-social quarterly. In 2008, he was elected as the Provincial Superior of MCBS Emmaus Province, Kottayam (2008-2014) and was also elected as the President of Kerala Conference of Major Superiors (KCMS), Aluva (2008-2014).

Books

Francis has written many books manifesting the history, spirituality, theology, and methodology of prisoners' renewal and rehabilitation. Following are some of his major works: *Religious Conversion Trajectory* (1998) - First volume of the doctoral thesis on the developmental stages of the conversion of sinners, *Conversion Trajectory of Charles de Foucauld* (1998) - second volume of the doctoral thesis on the developmental stages of the conversion of Charles de Foucauld, *Saga of Divine Providence: The History of Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry India* (2000), *My God AND My Lord: The Ecclesial Identity of Syro-Malabar Church* (2002), *The Holy Eucharist: Theological and*

Missionary Perspectives - Malayalam Edited (2006), *The Holy Eucharist: An Antidotes to Death Culture*, Edited (2007), *Rainbow: Theological Foundation of the Jesus Fraternity and Prison Ministry* (2007), *Love Bomb - Prisoners' Reformation Trajectory* (2018).

Man for Others

Fr. Francis has a heart for others. He is kind and compassionate. He has a remarkable ability to see good in every person. At the same time, he is dynamic and creative. He is one of the pioneer missionaries of MCBS Satara-Solapur Mission, Maharashtra. All throughout his missionary life, he would set apart his time, energy and facilities for the renewal, reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners, street children, beggars, mental patients and other differently abled children in society. Fr. Francis was sent to Rome for doctoral research in Theology and has become an expert in spiritual theology, spiritual direction and discernment. He is Visiting professor of Spiritual Theology and Missiology at various seminaries and religious institutes and gives lectures on Ecumenism, Introduction to Theology, Ecclesial Movements, Mission Methodology, Leadership, Managerial Skills and Dream Realization. He was appointed as the coordinator of prison ministry in India, while he was serving as Mission Superior at MCBS Rajasthan Mission.

Dear Fr Francis Kodyan, a coordinator like you, youthful and so full of energy as the leader and guide for Prison Ministry India is a God-given gift. Together, we can do something extraordinary for the brethren behind the bars. Your presence in our National Office and in this noble service will be our motivation to do better. Our heartiest welcome to you dear Fr. Francis Kodyan!

THE PRISON MINISTRY ITSELF IS THE BEST PRACTICE



Walter Kamble
*Nashik Road, Lay representative,
PMI Central Region*

The prison ministry itself is the best practice of Prison Ministry India. The very first bomb which exploded with love and compassion within the high walls of the prison in the country advocated solidarity with prison inmates. The mandate given by Jesus himself, "When I was in prison, you visited me," has been a call to witness a wonderful ministry and the best practice of Christian virtue.

The seed which was sown in the 80s through the PMI has now engulfed the entire country and every seed has exploded as a Love Bomb. The prison ministry in Nashik Diocese had begun much before 1980. The priest from St. Anne's Church used to visit the Central Prison at Nasik road during Christmas and offer Mass for the Christian prison inmates.

When the Jeevan Prakash Catholic prayer group, during their prayer service, were reflecting on the words of Jesus: "When I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in

prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:35-37), it was providence that I had been leading the group. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, we decided to visit the brethren behind bars. That was the Christmas of 1990. We approached the prison authorities and organized a revival crusade in the prison, wherein, as if led by the Holy Spirit, about 2500 prison inmates were present.

The praise and worship service inspired a mixture of faith and awe within the inmates present there. The talks and message of the love of Jesus moved them and they responded well. I gave witness as to how when I was a grave sinner, Jesus had accepted me and forgave me my sins and redeemed me. I witnessed that in distress, I had attempted suicide, but how the good merciful Lord had saved and brought me into his embracing love. After the prayer service was over, a brother whose hands were tied was brought to us, and he knelt down and cried. He said, "Mujhe Yesu ko apnana hai, mai paapi hoon, mujhe Yesu was vachan chahiye". The prison authorities told us that this was one of the most notorious inmates, Raju (name changed). Therefore, he had to be always handcuffed. We prayed over him and assured him that we would come back. Before returning, we gave Raju a Hindi Bible which he very reverently accepted.

It was then that we had the certainty that the Lord was calling us to this ministry. With the permission of the prison authorities, we were allowed to visit the prison every third Sunday of the month, which we did prayerfully. Raju, who had accepted Jesus, started coming along with the other inmates

for the prayer services, started reading the Bible and asking questions during the prayer services, and was even writing to us every week. After one year he said that he wanted to be baptized. It was a moment of great joy for us, and at the same time, we were scared about the prison rules. We asked him to wait and to pray. In the meantime, because of his reformed behaviour, the authorities started allowing him to come to the prayer service without being tied as he was always talking of Jesus' love and compassion to them and to the other inmates. It seemed that he was filled with the Holy Spirit. The prayer group would visit only on the third Sunday, but then this inmate started gathering other people in the prison and they started a prayer group within the prison. The name given to this group by Raju was "Yesu Masih Ke Rahasyamee Ecclesia" (The Secret Church of Christ).

For almost five years we had been going to prison. The prisoners had started writing letters to us and we would respond to them very prayerfully. Raju, by now, was fully in love with Jesus and the Bible. He, in his own capacity, started sharing his reflections with other inmates and the prison authorities. He would even pray over the then superintendent of prisons, which he was allowed to do. Raju was catechized personally and through letters regularly. He was now very eager and was waiting for his baptism. As he was not aware of the legalities and rules, he kept insisting that he be baptized.

I spoke to our parish priest and though he was willing, we could not find a way to baptize a person in prison. Offering mass and prayers were acceptable, but how will the prison authorities respond to such a request? It was a difficult moment for us too. We prayed during our intercessions

and lifted up this request to the Lord. The Holy Spirit in his wonderful way showed us the path. There was a Tamil priest who was an assistant in the parish. I asked our parish priest if we could take him for the Christmas Mass in prison. The parish priest agreed, and he too came along with us to offer Mass together with the assistant priest. The mass was celebrated with great joy and the message of Christ's birth along with the testimonies moved the prisoners and the prison authorities. After the homily, Raju was called forward and the assistant priest performed the baptismal rites in Tamil, which no one could understand. Only Raju was able to understand what was going on. And in this manner, Raju was baptized in the prison and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. His joy knew no bounds; he leapt and started praising the Lord. We were a little scared and asked him not to tell the others about his baptism. But after the Mass was over, he shouted, "Mera Prabhume baptisma ho gaya hai, mai ab prabhuka hoon". Raju, after this, was totally transformed and he could no longer hide his love for Christ. His prayers and his transformation brought many prison inmates to Christ. He was released earlier from prison due to his behaviour and now he is proclaiming the Good News in his home town somewhere in Tamil Nadu. He keeps in touch with me. Whenever he calls me, he asks that I pray for him over the phone and he, in turn, would pray for me. Due to his aggressive attitude in proclaiming the Good News, the local church did not allow him to speak there. So, Raju has started his own prayer group and now he is proclaiming the Good News with great enthusiasm.

Though this may be one of the rarest and isolated cases, I feel this was one of the best moments of my prison ministry and the best practice I could ever undertake.

AMONG THEM THERE WAS AN ARTIST

Mr. Abhishek Benjamin
PMI volunteer, Punjab

We live in a society where good and evil exists. In this journey of life, we come across different people with different characteristics. Life teaches us many things – good & bad, but every experience teaches us a wise lesson. The term ‘prison’ carries a lot of baggage with it, such as punishment, pain, trials and hardship. Prison leads to exclusion of people from society. It has positive features also, such as learning of skills, education and so on. The basic question to be asked is, what is the purpose of prison or correctional homes?

It is going on to be eight months since I became a PMI volunteer. I knew when I visited the Central Jail, Hoshiarpur Punjab for the first time with the permission letter in hand, praying to God to be with me at that moment that this was what I wanted to do. The prison staff told me to wait as the jail superintendent was busy at that time. While waiting, I experienced many things: it was like the first time someone’s brother, father, or mother would wait to meet the inmate. Finally, I was allowed to meet the jail superintendent. He was a person beyond my imagination – a simple, down-to-earth man. While meeting with us, he appreciated the work done by the PMI and granted us permission to perform PMI activities in jail.

I started going to jail daily and regularly. As a PMI volunteer, I learnt something different from the prison and the prisoners. I remember the day we celebrated Christmas with the prisoners and the prison staff along with our Director Rev. Fr. Sijith John and the staff members of Navjeevan Charitable Society Jalandhar. We distributed blankets and shawls to the poor men and women. I noticed many things then; some were very poor and they did not have proper clothes to wear. I saw one old man, around 90 years of age, taking a blanket from

the jail superintendent. He was not even able to move properly. God only knows what he has done! Jean Vanier, a great philosopher, said, “To live with Jesus is to live with the poor. To live with the poor is to live with Jesus.” And I sympathised with them. Among them, there was one Catholic gentleman named Peter (name changed). I came to know from the jail staff that he was there because of the murder of his wife. While talking to him, he did not appear to be an angry young man but rather like a polite, down-to-earth person. Talking to him, I felt that I was talking to a corporate businessman with his good English and his quotes about God from the Holy Bible. And I told him that I will pray to God for his release from jail.

Moving to the women’s section, my heart broke when I saw new-born babies with their mothers in jail. Inside I was crying. Seeing us, they expressed happiness and thanked us for donating shawls to them. John Holmes says, “There is no exercise better for the help than reaching down and lifting people up.”

One day we conducted a drawing competition in the Central Jail Hoshiarpur, Punjab. A total of 11 prisoners took part in the competition. From the prison staff, I came to know that among them there was one artist plus drawing professor. Mr Gurpreet Singh (Name Changed) who was in jail for possession of drugs was also one among them. Before being jailed, his paintings were quite popular and he had exhibited them on different venues across the state. He was good-natured and different from the other prisoners who were present there for the competition. We pray that God have mercy on him.

The prisoners feel a sense of belongingness with us and enjoy their time with us. This gives me real pleasure to work for them and encourages me to work wholeheartedly.

A great artist said, “Life is like a rainbow; you need both rain and sun to make its colours appear.” By sharing these examples and encouraging their use, we hope to increase the range, quality and consistency of support for prisoners.

We have been visiting prisons and interacting with prisoners and their families. There are so many people in prison. However, in some cases, the prisoners are innocent but are imprisoned since they do not have any evidence to prove their innocence.

Sarita (name changed) and Varun (name changed) were examples of such an instance. They were a simple couple with sweet little children, a daughter, Jenova (name changed) and a little son. There were poor but hardworking family. The children would go to school and the parents would work in the field. One day, when both Sarita and Varun were returning home after completing their work in the field, they saw their neighbours - a husband and wife quarrelling. In a fit of rage, the wife poured kerosene on herself and set herself on fire. Her husband was probably too startled or too angry and did not do anything to save his wife. Sarita and Varun rushed over to try to save her. Unfortunately, she could not be saved and she died. It became a police case. The dead lady's husband, to save his skin, put the blame on Sarita and Varun, saying that they had burnt his wife alive and killed her. Nobody came forward as an eye witness to the incident and nobody wanted to get involved in the incident. Sarita and Varun were illiterate and were very simple

people. They had no idea on how to save themselves from the cops. They kept pleading with the cops, but due to lack of evidence, they were arrested and sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment. Their children were all alone, left to

Sr. Fulmani
Gujarat State Co-ordinator

appeared for her 12th Board exams and has passed. Since she is hardworking, we have

I often take my tiffin to their house and eat with them

themselves in this insensitive world.

When I came to know about them, I found out facts about them and got to understand that they were really innocent. I then brought them to our hostel. The girl stayed in our hostel and we put the boy in the boy's hostel. With the contribution of PMI members, we could finance the education of these two children. We provided them with all the basic requirements - clothes, books, stationery, medical assistance etc. Whenever I visited the prison, I would meet Sarita and tell her about her daughter's progress. Sarita would cry tears of joy and tears of helplessness. She was happy that her children had a house to stay in and were being looked after. But we could also see the agony in her eyes - she wanted to hug her children, love them, care for them, be with them but none of this was possible. She was paying a price for something that she had not done. Now her daughter has

decided to help her pursue a career in nursing.

We were trying hard to get bail for Sarita. It took us quite some time, but finally, we succeeded. Now Sarita is out of prison. However, her daughter is still staying with us since she is studying. Sarita comes to the hostel to meet her daughter and it is so nice to see both mother and daughter together.

We visit prisoners' families, provide food, clothes, medicines, impart health education, and pray together. We also partake in their festivals. I often take my tiffin to their house and eat with them so that they do not feel lonely. This makes them feel happy and they experience the love of God. If they are sick, we take them to the hospital, we pay for their expenses with the help of contributions made by god-sent angels. PMI is a channel which helps us help others and in turn derive a feeling of fulfilment and satisfaction - a feeling that cannot be expressed in words.

The word has become flesh

Prison Ministry India
(Jharkhand)

The *Directory of Prison officials in India 2017*, in all its hundred odd pages, has this sentence running through it, 'Promoting Good Practices and Standards'. So, it is apt that we speak about the best practices that we, the PMI volunteers, adopt in our prison ministry.

The best practices in Prison Ministry India with respect to Jharkhand is a puzzling topic. It is not because we do not have anything that we practice specifically in our prisons, but because we have a multifarious approach to the diverse problems that we face. So, we find it difficult to gauge and tell which of them is the best practice. Only time will tell which practices were/are the best. But as of now, we are sure that all that we are doing are beneficial for the concerned persons.

With this introduction, I embark on the task of outlining the work of the PMI volunteers, with respect to prisoners in Jharkhand. There are about 30 jails in Jharkhand and we are actively working in the following jails: Chaibasa, Dhanbad, Dumka, Garhwa, Gumla, Hazaribagh, Khuti, Palamau, Ranchi, Saraikela, Simdega, and a few others. In some of the prisons, we have restrictions as to how many can enter on a given day. But in the others, we have the liberty of taking any number of volunteers inside the prison, especially on Sundays.

In most of the prisons, though we do not have contact with all the inmates, the jailors understand the value of our visit. The spiritual ambience that is created on a Sunday permeates through the week in many

of the prisons. Khuti Prison is an example of this. They have daily morning prayer service conducted by the inmates and the 'word has become flesh' in here and now have become the lived experience of the inmates. So, it is not surprising that many Christ Bhakts, not necessarily Christians, find our visit very soothing. Our presence enables them to fight the odds in prison and gives them the hope that the Lord they call upon will find a way out for them. The organ and the other musical instruments used as accompaniments in the Sunday liturgical service in some of the prisons, like Ranchi, is no less competent than any of the well-established parishes elsewhere in India.

The time spent interacting with the prisoners after the liturgical services are vital to instilling hope and trust in them. We can safely say that many things start from there. That is how we come to know about new inmates, families of the inmates and the very many struggles those families would be facing.

The house visits to the families of inmates are an important part of our volunteer service. We visit the families of some of the prisoners and see how best we could assist them in securing justice for the prisoner as well as to bring joy to the family. Very often we would be able to do very little for a family, but the very fact that we visit them makes a difference to that family. Our visits do not discriminate on the basis of religion, caste or class. We have a very inclusive approach.

The home for the children of prisoners started in Ranchi is an offshoot of these visits or rather an effort to implant some of the best practices found elsewhere in the country in Jharkhand. At present, there are eight girls who are being taken care of in the Girls' home in Ranchi. There are training centres trying to impart professional skills to released prisoners in Ranchi.

It is also imperative that we take up the cases of needy prisoners, who cannot afford the lawyer's fee. There are ample numbers of cases where the private lawyers have abandoned or given 'no instruction' to the court, just because they did not secure the

desired fee. As and when PMI volunteers come to know about such cases, they take up the case, investing their time, money and energy to bring justice to these people.

It is true that the territory we trod is enormously vast and the impact we are able to make in Jharkhand is minuscule - a drop in the ocean. But what keeps us going is the assurance that our efforts make a difference to the family/ person we came in contact with. It is true that every long journey starts with the first step we take.

These are some of the steps we have taken in making the PMI relevant in Jharkhand and make the name of PMI reverberate within the prison walls of Jharkhand.



PMI friends bidding farewell to Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan

The States/UTs have adopted various schemes for welfare and rehabilitation of prisoners. For first time, NCRB has made an effort to compile and publish State/UT-wise information on best practices in the field of welfare and rehabilitation of prison inmates. This will facilitate sharing and emulation of good practices by Prison Authorities of States/UTs. The State/UT-wise information collected on good practices is reproduced as:-

Andhra Pradesh


1. RO Plants have been installed in all the Prisons of Andhra Pradesh to provide safe drinking water.
2. As part of providing wholesome and hygienic food to the prisoners, kitchens of all Central Prisons and the Prisoners' Agricultural Colony are provided with semi-automatic chapatti making machines.

Goa

1. Regular spiritual program, Yoga practices, work shop, skill training are conducted through NGOs. Prisoners are allowed to participate /conduct the spiritual programs.
2. Separate enclosure for women prisoners has been maintained at Sub Jail, Sada, Vasco. Female doctor conducts OPD at Sada Jail once in a week.

Gujarat

1. The facilities of outdoor games like volley ball and indoor games like carom, chess etc. are being provided to them. Some religious festivals like Navratri, Diwali, Ramzan Idd, Bakri Idd, Natal, Janmashtmi, Raksha Bandhan, Ganesh Utsav, Ramnavmi etc. are celebrated in every prisons in which all prison inmates participate.



Best Practices in the Field Welfare and Rehabilitation of Prison Inmates

2. Meditation programmes, programmes on de-addiction, prayer and other discourses are conducted for inmates in various prisons on regular basis.

Haryana

1. Proposal for 'Prison Calling System' has been approved from Government and would be launched/installed in jails for welfare of prisoners. This system has already been launched in Central Jail Ambala. It would facilitate the prisoners to share their happiness and sorrow with their families. It would also help the relatives of prison inmates residing at a long distance to minimize their expenses and time.
2. All wages to the prison inmates which are earned by them for the work done by them are being disbursed in various jails through saving bank accounts opened in various nationalized banks.

Himachal Pradesh

1. 6 Mobile Canteen Facilities have been introduced in 3 jails of the State for providing mobile canteen facility by the inmates of these jails, so that public can be benefitted by the good quality service at cheaper rates and prisoner availing open air facility can earn their livelihood and support their families. These Mobile Canteens are running successfully with commendable profit.
2. Dairy farming has been started in District Jail Dharamshala, Model Central Jail

Kanda(Shimla) and Model Central Jail Nahan.

Madhya Pradesh

1. Regular medical check-up camps are organized to bring down the death rate of prisoners lodged in various jails. During 2014, a total of 1.26 lakhs prisoners were benefitted by medical check-up.
2. Coordinated with Health Department for streamlining treatment of TB/AIDS to ensure continuous medication/follow-up. A scheme has been sanctioned where 92 visiting doctors will cover various jails of State. Prison Statistics India-2014 171 3. Ensuring better medical care and cover

Maharashtra

The best practices being followed in the area of rehabilitation of prisoners in the state:

1. Imparting vocational training. The prison department has trained inmates in motor mechanic work and washing centres.
2. Grant of Rs.5,000/- per prisoner is sanctioned by Women and Child Welfare Department for rehabilitation of released convict prisoners.

Manipur

1. Vocational training programme for the female inmates has been carried out regularly in the field of dhoop, dish wash, doll making. 6 months training course in the field of tailoring and embroidery under well experienced Instructors have been provided to female inmates. Making of plastic bags and plastic morah (stools) has also been introduced at Manipur Central Jail, Sajiwa.
2. Wages are paid to the inmates on regular basis.

Mizoram

1. Raising of funds by Prisoners Welfare Committee (PWC) which is utilized to supplement the Government money for the common need of the prisoners, and also for

meeting the expenditure in respect of poor and needy prisoners especially for medical treatments and home-going fares etc.

2. Provision for entertainment items viz. volley ball, carom board, chess/draught and acoustic guitars.

Nagaland

Under the scheme of welfare and rehabilitation of prison inmates, various small scale rehabilitation schemes such as tailoring, carpentry, mora making, tea plantation and pineapple cultivation have been started in 5 (five) jails to keep the inmates engaged during their stay in the prisons. Chaplains are appointed in all the jails for reforming the prisoners.

Odisha

1. Literacy campaign has been launched in jails. Full time teachers have been appointed in circle Jails/district jails/special jails and sub jails to impart primary education to the prisoners.
2. A hostel for children of the convict inmate in the Odisha has been constructed for accommodation of 100 children and to provide them free fooding & lodging, education etc. up to eighteen years of their age, which will be functional very soon.

Sikkim

1. Regular supply of newspapers and materials of entertainment to the prisoners barracks.
2. Arranging to remit the wages earned by the convicts to their family members by money order, Bank or through visitors.

Tamil Nadu

1. Introduction of telephone facility for prisoners. One day emergency leave to prisoners by the Superintendent of Prisons to enable them to attend the funeral ceremony of the prisoner's father, mother, wife, husband, son, daughter,

full brother and full sister even if the particular prisoners has already availed the 15 days of emergency leave.

2. The service of psychologists is utilized to treat and counsel the prisoners, who suffer from depression and indulge in violent behavior.

Tripura

1. Legal Clinics have been set up in all jails in the State involving convicts for counseling.
2. Prisoners are getting facilities for short term temporary release for 30 days from jails as per eligibility on the recommendation of District Magistrate under the provisions of "Tripura Prisoners (Release on Parole) Rules, 1998".

West Bengal

1. A "SIM-Less Telephone Facility in the Correctional Homes in West Bengal" has been introduced in the Central Correctional Homes to facilitate communication of the inmates with their near and dear ones.
2. Promoting creative pursuits amongst the inmates through art and crafts.

Andaman & Nicobar Island

For achieving the goal of rehabilitation, reformation and re-socialization of prison inmates, lodged in various prisons, the Prison Prison Statistics India-2014 178 Department of A & N Island has organised various festivals and flea markets. It has been found that with there initiatives, the social problem faced by the prisoners to Re-integrate into the society has reduced to some extent.

Chandigarh

1. Regular Yoga classes/spiritual classes are being conducted. About 80-100 inmates

are taking part in the daily Yoga classes and spiritual sessions. The World Yoga Day was also celebrated in the jail whereby about 400 prisoners took part in the yoga programmes.

2. Adult education programmes for jail inmates started. The higher education facility is also extended for the inmates through IGNOU.

Delhi

In Delhi, two types of services are provided for rehabilitation of prisoners, These are "Rehabilitation" and "Financial Assistance". The details are given below: 1 Rehabilitation Grant i. Amount of 'Rehabilitation Grant', to the released prisoners who have spent a period under incarceration between 6 months and up to 5 years shall be Rs. 30,000/-.

- ii. Amount of 'Rehabilitation Grant', to the released prisoners who have spent a period under incarceration above 5 years and up to 10 years, shall be Rs. 40,000/-.
- iii. Amount of 'Rehabilitation Grant', to the released prisoners who have spent a period of incarceration above 10 years, shall be Rs. 50,000/-.

Karnataka

1. Prison Call system (i) Modern and advanced - biometric based prison call systems have been installed at all Central Prisons. (ii) Proposed to scale to other prisons also
2. Security gadgets (i) Hand Held Metal Detectors and Door Frame Metal detectors (ii) X- ray baggage machines in all central prisons and district prisons (iii) CCTV systems in all 8 central prisons and 10 district prisons to monitor the activities of inmates (iv) Proposed to install CCTV systems in 20 District Prisons during 2016-17 (v) Mobile Jammers existing in all central jails and district prison Mangalore.

Source: Internet

When you celebrate, the whole existence participates with you

Sr. Lettitia, North East Regional Co-ordinator

Women's Day Celebration: On 10 March 2019, Prison ministry volunteers celebrated Women's Day in the Central Jail Guwahati. The celebrations started with a few games to warm up the participants, and the winners were given prizes. A short cultural programme was organised with a prayer. 'Woman as a role model' was highlighted in the Chief Guest's speech. She said that it was **the responsibility of the woman, the mother in the family, to hold the members of the family in unity and peace** which leads to the development of society in every possible way.

At the end of the programme, useful gifts and snacks were distributed to all the women and the children present with their mothers. Every woman took an active part in the celebration and the volunteers dispersed in a happy mood.

Holy Week Programme: Archbishop John Moolachira from the Archdiocese of Guwahati was kind enough to give his valuable time for the Prison Ministry and offered Holy Eucharist for the prison inmates. The Maundy Thursday programme was held on Wednesday, 17 April 2019 with much anticipation and excitement. The washing of the feet was a touching experience of the forgiveness of God.



The celebrant, Archbishop John, gave an apt message for the day. The Archbishop's presence in the jail made a difference in the level of spiritual healing.

Easter Programme: An ardent lover of prison ministry, Rev. George Panthanmackel MSFS, the Provincial Superior of North East province, offered Holy Mass in the jail with an inspiring message. He said that **Jesus is risen and He is living now to give us a future**. We shared Easter wishes with one another with tea and snacks. There was a short cultural programme organized for all who were present. Thanks to Rev. Fr. George for sparing his precious time to be with the inmates and the ministry.

Training on Detergent-making programme was held on 4 May 2019 for the women's section of the Central Jail, Guwahati. Around 30 women learnt the life skill that would enable them to maintain themselves and their families financially. It was their dream to receive training on the above-said programme/skill and it was fulfilled with the help of Rev. Fr. Saji George MSFS, the Director of FASCE India, Narengi. He sent the trainers and also the materials. May God bless his social activities through FASCE India and may he be a blessing to all who are under his care.

Healing Programme: Through Rev. Thaddeus Kujur SDB, a healing session was conducted for the inmates of the Central Jail, Guwahati. Many of the inmates of the jail experienced healing from their long-term sicknesses.



The National Coordinator(s) of PMI Transferring the Mantle of Authority

Sr. Getrude SCS
Kolbe Home Directress

The charming gardener who made the souls blossom". With tears in our hearts, the Prison Ministry India family gathered to bid farewell to Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan, the National Coordinator. The Holy Eucharist, on the day, was celebrated by Fr. Sebastian and the co-celebrants were Fr. Varghese Karipperry - the founder of Prison Ministry India, Fr. Francis Kodiyan MCBS - the newly appointed National Coordinator, Fr. Stanley MSC - the newly appointed Assistant National Coordinator, and priests from the nearby communities in Bangalore and closely associated with PMI. After the homily, Sr. Fidelis HC, the pioneer of Prison Ministry, Bangalore said a few words appreciating Fr. Sebastian and all the selfless work that he had rendered in the past years towards the growth of PMI. She also welcomed Fr. Francis Kodiyan, after which Sr. Lini MSC, the National secretary gave the introduction to the symbolic Handing Over Ceremony, where Fr. Sebastian handed over the chapel key of the national office, the Holy Bible, and the emblem of Prison Ministry India to Fr. Francis Kodiyan, keeping in mind the principles of PMI (Prayer is our powerhouse, God's providence is our bank balance, inconvenience is our

convenience, begging is our lifestyle). Then the letter from Most. Rev. Allwyn D'Silva, the Chairman of PMI was read out by Fr. Varghese Karipperry (thanking and welcoming letter).



It was a heart-warming and moving moment when everyone greeted Fr. Sebastian and bid goodbye to him. We could not accept the fact and many were in tears - all those who worked with him, neighbours, friends who were a great support to him and to the national office. The tears did not end; that same evening when Fr. Sebastian was ready to leave the children of Kolbe Home, they would not leave him, kept holding on to him, and embracing him tightly, they wept bitterly. The unreserved love of the little ones was just remarkable. Together with every volunteer of PMI, every member from our rehabilitation centres, we say to him, "We miss you!!!" We also welcome with much joy, Rev. Francis Kodiyan, the National coordinator, saying to him, "We will all work together for a noble cause."

The PMI Full-Timers Course 2019-20, commenced from 13 May 2019, went on till 28 May 2019, and was held at the Passionate Community, Carmelaram. A total of 40 volunteers took part in it including people from different congregations, lay people and priests from different states of India.

Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC, National Secretary, gave us a hearty welcome at the beginning. We had a rosary followed by the inaugural Holy Eucharist celebrated by Rev. Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan, the National Coordinator and co-celebrated by Rev. Fr. Francis Kodiyan MCBS, Rev. Fr. Paschal OCD, professor and active member of PMI, and Fr. Thomas Pasala, one of the volunteer full-timers for 2019-20, followed by the inaugural ceremony.

Every day, we had a meaningful morning prayer conducted by different groups. The Holy Eucharist celebrated by different priests strengthened and enlightened us on the noble mission of PMI.

Courses conducted: The Prison Ministry India team led by Fr. Sebastian, Fr. Francis MCBS, Sr. Lini MSC, Sr. Adele, and Sr. Clara HC enlightened us with their experience and knowledge and laid a strong foundation for our future ministry. Passionate and positive-minded resource persons were organized to speak on inspirational and motivational subjects: Management skills & Lead like Jesus by Mr. Selvam George, Juvenile Justice Act by Rev. Fr. Edward Thomas SDB, Legal class by Rev. Fr. P.D. Mathew SJ, Counselling by Fr. Wilson CMI, Interpersonal & Life skills by Ms. Ivy. All these resource persons imparted to us their knowledge and experience to make us well-equipped for the ministry. We salute you all!!!!

Day out for the full-timers: 19 May 2019 was a day that refreshed our mind and spirit. The National Park and Lalbagh Botanical Garden were well worth the visit. We had lunch at a hotel and then visited Christ Deemed to be University, Dharmaram College, Infant Jesus Church and finally the St. Mary's Basilica, Shivaji Nagar. At all these places we were accompanied by Sr. Lini.

Visit to Central Jail Bangalore: It was a remarkable experience. Thanks to Sr. Lini, Sr. Adele, Sr. Roce, Sr. Marina and Sr. Shiney, who made the entry possible for 40 of us. We were dumbfounded by the facilities provided to the inmates. A brief interaction with the Superintendent was much appreciated. We salute the jailors of Bangalore Central Jail.

Prison Ministry Sunday Outreach Programme: Fr. Sebastian offered two masses for our languishing brethren behind the bars at St. Alphonsa's Forane Church, R. T. Nagar and he created awareness of our ministry and the needs of our brethren. Keeping in mind, 'Begging is our lifestyle', the full-timers 2019-20 stood with the buckets for the alms. Thanks to the Vicar and the parish members for all their support and generous contribution.

We were also very touched by the gesture of Mr Suraj Thomas (Advocate) and his family, for providing more than 45 of us with lunch which included a variety of

A Brief Report

dishes. We thank him for sharing his experience of how he had taken risks for the release of foreign prisoners and many others.

Visit to Jeevodaya Ashram: The Holy Cross Sisters work selflessly, giving new life to young girls and women under their loving care. The girls have a home away from home. We enjoyed the dances and dinner equally well. The Kolbe Home boys, full of life, energy and talent, welcomed us with lively songs and dances. Thanks to Sr. Gertrude for taking care of the little ones. We appreciate the dear nuns.

On 27 May 2019, in the evening, we put up a cultural program, well equipped to explode the 'Love Bomb' after 15 days of intensive sessions. On 28 May, the valedictory function along with the farewell of Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan and the appointment of Fr. Francis Kodiyan MCBS as the new National Coordinator of Prison Ministry India were held. The Full-timers 2019-20 dispersed slowly to different parts of India with heavy hearts after saying goodbye to each other while at the same time rejoicing to be able to continue our work for the least & the lost. A big thank you to PMI team for bringing us together to work under the umbrella of PMI. Assuring our prayers to each one of you. Long live PMI!



Thanks to
**THE
NATIONAL TEAM**





A heartfelt yearning

That's where my dialogue with God began, I started to pray."

Gabirel used to say to himself, addressing the Lord: "I don't know you, but I know that you will not leave me in here!" The new priest remarked, "after some time I realized that God had listened to my prayer, to the prayer of my mother and of the Church, that never stops praying for youths who have gone astray." He added: "the time I spent in prison helped me rediscover myself, it made me realize the value of what God gave me in my parents' home and it made me understand that I recovered freedom inside the prison."



Discovering the mercy of God through other inmates. The memory goes back to the years in prison. "I remember some experiences that marked that period in my life: the brothers-inmates whom I met in prison, who took care of me and gave me advice... They were the first to teach me what I now recognize as acts of mercy, and through them I discovered the love of God."

The prison remained a fixed point in Gabirel's life, even after having entered the Seminary:

"I was given specific tasks in the area of apostolate, involving Church activity in concrete situations, such as the pastoral care of vocations, the pastoral care of health, and pastoral care in prisons, on two occasions. During the first year of Theology, I used to carry out my ministry in prison almost every Saturday and also after then, when I started living in the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, two years ago. During that period I accompanied prison pastoral care, with spiritual and liturgical activities, by promoting a dialogue with the families and children of detainees, as well as through sports and social activities. I now live in another parish, and my presence in prison is less frequent, but I continued visiting my convicted friends and I organized some occasions for encounter and celebration."

A "heartfelt" yearning. Thus for Gabirel

I know that you will not leave me in here

Prison Voice Story

An ex-convict made Priest: the story of Gabirel Everardo Zul Mejía in the Mexican prison of Apodaca
With God nothing is impossible lets read following true testimonial story of prisoner turned Priest



Once a *pandillero*, i.e. affiliate of a crime ring, now a Minister of God, an ex-convict turned priest. It's the peculiar story of thirty-five year-old Gabirel Everardo Zul Mejía from Mexico. On Friday evening July 2018 he was ordained by his archbishop, Mons. Rogelio Cabrera López, in Monterrey. He asked that this solemn occasion be lived out not in the cathedral, as will happen for ten of his seminary companions, but inside the walls of the Apodaca prison, sadly known for the living conditions of its detainees (a revolt in 2012 left 38 dead), a phenomenon seen throughout Mexico. If on Holy Thursday Pope Francis washes the feet of convicts – Gabirel must have thought – also a priestly ordination inside a correction facility could be a powerful sign. All the more powerful in the light of the fact that new priest, who has a passion for football and Vallenato music (traditional Latin-American folk music originally from Columbia), considers himself first of all a "convert", thanks to the experience in prison and the encounter with detainees. That is where he discovered the mercy of God, and that is where he wants his mission as shepherd and witness to the merciful love of God, to begin.

From criminal rings to prison. He thus described some of the stages of his life: "Before my conversion, before encountering Jesus Christ, my life was overwhelmed by the conflicts linked to what in Latin America is called "*pandillerismo*" – , i.e., criminal activity organized in rings, the so called "pandillas" - .

"Unfortunately back then I didn't appreciate the love of my parents and brothers. My behaviours led to my arrest and detention in the Topo Chico prison. I remember that they placed me in a ward that went under the name "Observation."



Practice of 3'R' theory in our jails

National festivals are celebrated grandly in all four jails in Hyderabad as well as in Andhra Pradesh. For the past 20 years, Vimochana, the A.P. unit of Prison Ministry India has been celebrating festivals on a big scale to the appreciation of one and all.

1. Why do we celebrate the national festivals grandly?

- It is because of our love and respect towards national festivals.
- It is because of our concern for prisoners who have limitations in celebrating their festivals.
- The prison authorities respect and implement the basic UN Human rights, which says, "The responsibility of prisons for the custody of prisoners and for the protection of society against crime shall be discharged in keeping with a State's other social objectives and its fundamental responsibilities for promoting the well-being and development of all members of society." Hence our efforts to promote the well-being of prisoners were welcomed by prison officials and they extended their cooperation.]
- Our regular weekly visits attract 5-10% of the inmates to the general prayer, meditation and counselling sessions in the men's jail and 90-100% to the festival events, including the jailors and other officials. As a result, we have a wider field to sow the seeds of morals values and motivational instructions for them to become responsible citizens.
- It is a special and higher dose of the "three R's" [Release, Reform and Rehabilitate] being administered on festival days. Our cultural programmes and the snacks distributed help the prisoners release their tension, help them on the path to reformation as they are motivated to become better human beings. Information



Mr. M. D. Vincent
First General Secretary
PMI-Andhra Pradesh

regarding our rehabilitation centres are shared with them on these occasions.

- Apart from the regular volunteers, the staff and students from our educational institutions gain an opportunity to visit the prisons and know the darker side of life. They are enlightened and inspired by the good services rendered by Prison Ministry India.

2. How do we celebrate?

As per the dictum, "Many a man fails not because he plans to fail, but because he fails to plan." Our planning starts 2-3 months before the event. In our monthly meetings we cover details like allotting coordinators-cum-helpers to each jail, which school/college is to be invited to perform the cultural programmes, which institution will sponsor the food, which popular speaker [priest/brother/nun/lay leader] would give the special message, which VIP is to be invited, etc. Arrangements for the stage, sound system, transport, and MC and other duty allotments to volunteers are also decided beforehand.

The state or unit coordinator presents a request letter to the DG for permission to organise cultural programmes and to distribute snacks/fruits in prisons on the festival day. We also enclose a copy of the participants from the respective schools/colleges. The DG gives us the permission in writing, circulating copies to the superintendents of all prisons.

3. Which specific national festivals are celebrated and how are the cost factor managed?

Republic Day on 26 January, International Women's Day on 8 March, Prison Ministry Sunday just before 15 August, Good Friday, Christmas and New Year, Diwali, and Rakhi day are some of the important festivals celebrated in prisons.

The content of the cultural programmes are dances and skits with focus on classical performances based on gospel themes such as the Ten Commandments, beatitudes, parables of Christ, the Lord's prayer, and the story of our patron saint, Maximilian Kolbe.

4. What is the response?

- Prisoners: They thoroughly enjoy the entertainment and say, "We forgot that we were imprisoned. We are grateful to PMI and wish that you would organise more of such programs". They relish and benefit from the special message delivered by the special speaker of the day and say, "Sir please bring this gentleman as often as possible to address us." Some prisoners tell that the programme helped them to transform themselves while others vow that when they are released, they would contribute not only to the Church but also to PMI by financing the snacks and they do so. A few ask whether they could join PMI as volunteers once they are released.
- Prison Officials: Several times, officials from the Correctional wing of the Police Department, the DG, DIG, the superintendents and the jailors publicly state, "We have seen NGOs that do services for media coverage and advertisements in newspapers. Whereas, PMI is the only NGO that serves the prisoners selflessly with genuine concern and dedication. Our doors are open to you always to repeat such quality programmes that are thoroughly enjoyed by and benefit the inmates.

- Students: It is a different experience altogether for them. It is a revelation to them that such a world exists and we thank God for his protection. We are happy that we could generate smiles on the frowning faces of these worried and unfortunate prisoners.
- Heads of the Institutions: "Involving our students in a noble social cause help them to be socially responsible and to do their best for the welfare of society. We are thankful that PMI gives this opportunity to us. We will be ready to rise to the occasion whenever our help is asked."
- Volunteers: There is no greater joy than seeing the faces of the prisoners blooming in response to the programmes presented. It is worth all the trouble. The Lord is performing miracles in our life, apart from the immeasurable happiness and peace of mind derived by our humble involvement in organising the programmes.

5. The Challenges

Well that was a golden period the Lord blessed us with. Now things have changed (for the better). Our super cop, DG of prisons Mr V.K. Singh, is bringing in marvellous changes in prisons by introducing petrol bunks, food courts etc., where prisoners work and earn their living. He has also put in measures to raise the standards of living of the volunteers, who wish to work in prisons. He told us that those who have graduated in Psychology, Sociology or done B.Ed., etc are allowed and not others. We are running short of such professionals. Hence our state and unit coordinator brought this to the notice of our regional chairman, the Rev. Poola Anthony, who has kindly sent around an appeal to all provincials and superiors of the region to help us with such professionals and also to see to it that some of their candidates go for such professional courses to help the PMI in the near future. The DG also expressed the wish that the cultural programmes could be performed by professional individuals and professional teams. This involves a lot of expense and is a big challenge for us!

6. Conclusion

After every programme, the programme coordinators present a report of the event. An evaluation of the programme, listing things that went well and things that went wrong are noted down with possible correctional measures for future programmes. We thank God Almighty for blessing us with this vision. We thank the founders, the national and

state coordinators, the national and regional chairmen who inspired and supported us to serve the prisoners. Our heartfelt thanks to the prison authorities, our volunteers, the heads of the institutions and the ever-willing students for making the festivals in prisons memorable. We hope to gear up to meet the new challenges and continue our humble services in the vineyard of the Lord. Long live PMI!

BOTTLED UP EMOTIONS IN PRISON CELLS



A. Jesu Raja
Secretary, PMI, Tamil Nadu

Opposite poles attract

God created man and woman for each other. So, from the beginning of the world, the opposite sexes have always been attracted to each other. It is natural and it is not wrong. Our ministry is a challenging ministry, not like other ministries. It is also very risky. Solitude and isolation are the biggest punishment one can be given, and which the prisoners undergo.

Absence of laywomen in men's prisons

In the Catholic Church, religious women are trained for many years to become a nun. The training period, with the help of the Lord Almighty, teaches each nun to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as her spouse. But it is not so for the laywomen. So, in the Tamilnadu prisons, we the Prison Ministry state team has advised all our volunteers that lay women be not taken to men's prisons.

Hold functions with younger children in men's prisons

In our ministry, many people are interested in visiting the prisons just for the sake of visiting the prison. They will also boast of having visited the prison. We would like to mention an incident that happened in a central prison. The nuns had taken matriculation school children for a program to the central prison. One of the prisoners dragged away one of the girls and kissed her. It was a shock to the child and the nuns. The incident came to light after a long time. The department controls the prisoners and they conceal and bottle up their emotions in their cells. But the visit of the young girls instigated their inner feelings and provided the opportunity for the unpleasant incident to occur. When we perform for functions, we usually enact the dance performed by the hero and heroine in a movie. We advise the volunteers in Tamilnadu to avoid taking grown-up or teenage girls for such programmes.

Lead us not into temptation

In the Lord's Prayer, we come across the sentence, "**lead us not into temptation**". The Lord does not lead us to temptation. Many times, we provide room for these temptations. When we do our ministry, we must be more prudent and vigilant than while doing other ministries. We always feel safe until some such incident happens. Why should we provide the opportunity for such incidents to happen?

*The National
Coordinator(s)
of PMI
Transferring
the Mantle of
Authority*



Hearty Welcome to National Office



Fr. Stanley MSC
Asst. National Co-ordinator



Sr. Jane Agnes Singh SJC
National Team Member



Sr. Mangal S Shaharao SCC
National Team Member





Our beloved Rev. Fr. Sebastian

We the PMI family acknowledge and appreciate your selfless service extended to the brethren behind the bars and to all of us.

We admire your simplicity, hardwork and faithfulness.

Thank you for what you are.
Prison Ministry India Family



Our Beloved Rev. Fr. Francis Kodiyan

*So glad we are to welcome you and have you as our National Co-ordinator!
As you are God-given gift to the PMI family we assure you of our full support and say, together we can do something extraordinary for the brethren behind the bars.*

Hearty Welcome
Prison Ministry India Family

