



PRISON VOICE

July 2021

Vol. XVIII

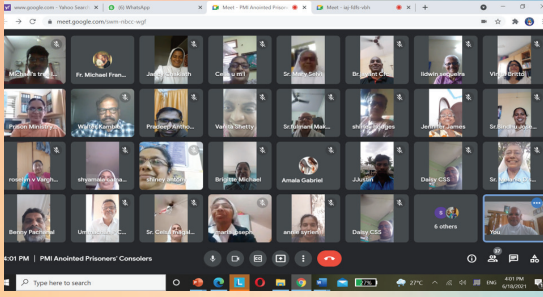
Issue 7

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-



Fr Stan Swamy SJ
Prophet of the 21 Century



PMI Anointed Prisoners Consolers Meeting



Farewell to Sr Marina DSFS



Farewell to Sudheer Sir at Pala Subjail



PMI Vishakapatnam Assists Prisoner's Family



PMI Volunteers Distributing Kitchen Vessels to Aluva Prison



PMI Volunteers Visiting Berhampur Prison



Seminar on Prisoners' Reformation, Nazik



Reintegration of Chandra

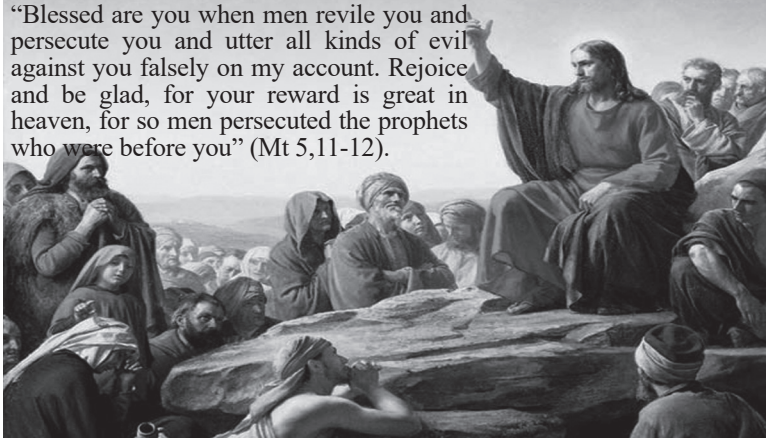
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PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Mt 5,11-12).



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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.

BANK DETAILS:

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Bank : South Indian Bank
Branch : Sarjapur Road
A/C No : 0416053000001419
IFSC Code : SIBL0000518

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Prisoners' Reintegration and Redemption

PRISON MINISTRY
SUNDAY - 2021



PASTORAL LETTER

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

As we celebrate Prison Ministry Sunday, let us consider prisoners as our brethren and do whatever is possible for their integral human development.

Every diocese shall have a Prison Ministry India (PMI) unit to look after the needs of prisoners, and parish priests shall take special care to reach out to the lost sheep in prisons. Consecrated people have a special responsibility to participate in the release, reformation, and reintegration of prisoners. Pious associations and lay faithful are cordially invited to take part in the prisoners' reintegration projects of PMI. For Jesus came "to proclaim good news to the poor... to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Lk 4: 18-19).

Prisoner's Rehabilitation and Reintegration


Alphi (43) was an inmate of Sneathramam, Kerala, a rehabilitation centre for released women prisoners of Prison Ministry India. She was married to Mr Johnson. They have an eight-year-old child studying in Standard III. They had neither land nor house of their own. PMI bought a small plot of land for them. With the financial assistance of the PMI Ruby Jubilee housing project, they completed the construction of the house and now live peacefully glorifying the Lord. Savitha was in high school when her father was imprisoned. She had no possibility of continuing her education. PMI came to her assistance and now she is completing her M.Com. Though Gopal completed his life sentence, he was not released from prison as he could not pay the compensation to the victim. PMI paid the compensation and now he is released and leading a pacifist family life.

"It is something beautiful, a gift of God, to take

care of the people, men and women in jail. Let us thank the Lord for his great love to share the joy of loving," said Saint Mother Teresa, a Saint of the Gutters, when she addressed PMI volunteers during the second national convention held at Navintha Retreat Centre, Delhi in 1995. When the then Chief Minister of West Bengal met Mother Teresa, he told her about 34 girls in prison who were arrested from brothel houses. These young girls with pathetic family backgrounds had been forced into prostitution and thrown behind bars. They all were picked up by the mother of love and were reformed and reintegrated. Mother Teresa witnessed the tremendous change in the life of every person who was picked up from the dark cells of prisons. Prison Ministry India has rehabilitated and reintegrated thousands of prisoners and their families from the time of its inception.

Prisoners' Redemption

God came down in our sinfulness! God came down when we were lost! In the eyes of God, we never lose our worth. We always remain precious in his sight; for God is infinite love. God cannot but love, fire cannot but warm up. PMI volunteers believe strongly that no one is beyond transformation, and our Redeemer has taught us that no one is beyond redemption as he assured Paradise to the 'Good Thief'. God also chooses the filthiest of places, stinking places, for his work of redemption. Behind the walls of maximum-security prisons, hard-core criminals are being transformed into messengers of hope. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk 2:17). The purpose of Jesus coming to this earth was to call sinners and to redeem the lost. Jesus who cried out from the Cross, "I thirst" (Jn 19:28) continues to thirst for the souls behind the dark cells of prisons.



What shall we do for the reintegration and redemption of prisoners? If you want to be a part of this noble work of God's redeeming mission, you can reach out by volunteering in three ways.


Firstly, the origin of Prison Ministry India is from the Blessed Sacrament. Those hours spent before the Blessed Sacrament were powerful moments for the growth of this ministry. Before each visit, members spend time in prayer. They recite the rosary, make intercessory prayers and fast. Basically, Prison Ministry India is a prayer group for the reintegration and redemption of our brethren in prison.

Secondly, you can visit prisons and PMI rehabilitation centres and homes for prisoners' children. "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. Would you please find a job for me?" These heart-breaking cries of prisoners moved the hearts of PMI volunteers and the result was the first rehabilitation centre, Snehashramam established in 1991. Today, Prison Ministry India runs 20 rehabilitation centres for released persons and their children.

Thirdly, you can financially support PMI for prisoners' rehabilitation and reintegration. One of the basic principles of PMI is 'begging'. We beg to give prisoners a better future. We beg to provide them a life of dignity. We beg to make them kings and queens. We do not have any foreign funding to meet expenses, but we actualise our plans and visions by meeting people personally. Here we become not mere distributors of easy money, but we become one with the helpless in their struggle. PMI volunteers stand at the church doors with a bucket in their hands, begging something from those who have to give to those who don't have.

PMI Ruby Jubilee

This year, Prison Ministry India celebrates its Ruby Jubilee with many new projects for the integral development of prisoners and their families. I am glad to share with you some of the major Ruby Jubilee projects such as homes for prisoners' children, houses for released prisoners, establishment of special PMI Task Forces



such as Terrorists Saving Squad, Death Row Commandos, Mafia Redeemers, scholarships to prisoners' children, and releasing prisoners with legal and financial assistance. Let us praise and thank God for the unfathomable blessings showered upon our brethren behind the bars and the PMI volunteers. Let us continue to pray for our incarcerated brethren especially during these days of pandemic and closely collaborate with PMI in their endeavour to implement the jubilee projects. I take this opportunity to praise and thank God for all the blessings showered upon prisoners and their families in the past 40 years and extend my heartiest congratulations to those who pioneered this beautiful ministry.

Conclusion

As we celebrate Prison Ministry Sunday, let us remember and pray for prisoners all over the world especially the 4.7 lakh people languishing in the 1350 Indian prisons, their families, victims, the officers and the volunteers who serve them. Dear brethren behind the bars, we love you, we are with you, we pray for you and we are ready to do whatever is possible for your reformation and reintegration. Dear PMI family members, your visits to the prison are equivalent to visiting Jesus for he said, "I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:36). During these COVID-19 pandemic days, we pray for you in a special way. Your continued financial support for the Prison Ministry will highly be appreciated.

Along with my brother bishops, I express my sincere gratitude to the dioceses, major superiors and well-wishers for your generous contributions towards this ministry. I am sure Jesus who came in search of the lost will bless you abundantly. I acknowledge and appreciate the PMI volunteers for their profound commitment in reforming and reintegrating prisoners, which all of us know, is one of the most challenging tasks. May Saint Maximilian Kolbe, the patron of Prison Ministry India, intercede for the fruitfulness of this ministry and may Mary, our blessed mother, be always there to protect you.

+Bishop Allwyn D'Silva
Chairperson, Prison Ministry India

FR STAN SWAMY SJ A MARTYR OF THE MARGINALIZED




Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor

“Well done, good and faithful servant, come and share the joy of your master” (Mt 25:21). True to His promise, I am sure the heavenly Father has already received the soul of Fr Stan Swamy, a Martyr of the Marginalized into his eternal abode. There were many an upsurge and nationwide mourning at the untimely and unfortunate irreparable demise of Fr Stan. In the passing away of Fr Stan, the nation has lost a relentless crusader of justice. This editorial is penned as an obituary to pay our rich tribute, draw inspiration from this magnanimous soul and take his legacy forward in the mission of justice and reconciliation.

Fr Stanislaus LourduSwamy, popularly known as Stan Swamy, saw the light of day on April 26, 1937 in Viragalur village, Trichy, Tamil Nadu. Having successfully completed his studies at St Joseph's College Higher Secondary School, he joined the Jesuits on May 30, 1957 when he was 20. He was ordained priest on April 14, 1970. Ever since then, Fr Stan was truly a prophet who lived his life fully for others particularly for the Adivasis, Dalits and other marginalized communities. He was a voice of the oppressed in Jharkhand and Bihar. An Octogenarian, who stood up for what was right uncaring about the price to be paid for his right. He was imprisoned on false charges of terrorism. According to NIA he was such a threat to national security that he had to be shut up in a prison. What was the threat he posed? He sympathized with those who were struggling for their basic rights and dignity. Jharkhand Janadhikar Mahasabha, a coalition of progressive organizations that

defends democracy and the rights of the oppressed in Jharkhand, the State where Fr Stan Swamy worked at Bagaicha, the Jesuit Social Centre in Ranchi issued the following statement: “Stan has been a crusader of people's rights for decades”.

When languishing behind the bars, he was denied even a sipper to quench his thirst as he was suffering from Parkinson's. And his death was the result of false allegation. The nation was silent. No one uttered a word fearing dire consequences. Our concern perhaps seldom transcends maintaining of status quo. We are proud orchestrators of unparalleled quality and high-octane education portals. We glory in educating some of the elite of our country. Of course, we have educated some of the best bureaucrats, industrialists and business men either to be silent or to manipulate. The demise of Fr Stan who stood for truth and values and who laboured tirelessly and consistently for the upliftment of the lost and the least for four decades has awakened our conscience and left behind a volley of questions for our introspection regarding justice and reconciliation. Fr Stan Swamy broke himself and suffered so that others may have life, life in abundance. May his rich legacy live long as he resonates the words of St. Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness with which the Lord, the just judge, will reward me” (2 Tim 2: 7-8).



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FR STAN SWAMY: AN EPITOME OF ANTIFASCIST, UNDERTRIAL, AND INNOCENT PRISONERS

■ ■ ■ ■ ■



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

Undertrial Prisoner

Fr Stan Swamy (84), a man suffering from Parkinson, was systematically denied bail by various courts. Ironically, his last bail application came up for hearing in the afternoon of 5 July 2021 when the director of the Holy Family Hospital gave a statement that Fr Stan had passed away. Stan Swamy represents innumerable undertrial prisoners all over the world and invites our attention to raise our voice against the pathetic plight of undertrial and remand brethren behind the bars. In India undertrial prisoners formed 70% of the total prison population. Seven in 10 of the 4,78,600 people in Indian jails are undertrial, according to the 2019 National Crime Records Bureau data on prisons. A majority of India's undertrials are from marginalised castes. Nearly two in three (64%) on average were from the Scheduled Casts (21.7%), scheduled tribes (12.3%) and other backward classes (OBCs, 30%).

Innocent Prisoner

Stan Swamy like Jesus Christ represents innocent prisoners around the world and invites our attention to pray and work for their speedy emancipation. PMI has launched a special task force known as Innocent Prisoners' Redeemers. You are welcome to join this group to dedicate your time and talent in liberating innocent

prisoners. Studies reveal that between 2.3% and 5% of all prisoners are innocent. It's a tragedy that millions are incarcerated as a result of false accusation and wrongful conviction. However, Fr Stan did not allow his spirit to be arrested by his inhumane treatment and a vengeful state. Even in Jail the free bird sings, he told Jesuit colleagues.

Antifascist Prisoner

Neofascists derive inspiration from European fascism of the 1930s whose idols are Mussolini and Hitler, and its public resolve is to create a uniform, nationalist state, inimical to minorities, through lies, manipulation and violence. Those who oppose such an ideology are meant to be eliminated. Some have been murdered, most have been incarcerated. Stan Swamy was one of these. He himself was aware of the implications of his work. He had consistently fought for the rights of tribal people in Jharkhand and elsewhere, a people who stood to lose their lands to major corporates abetted by the government. Stan Swamy had been imprisoned in Talaja jail in Mumbai since October 2020 as a so-called "urban naxal" but in reality, incarcerated for his commitment to awakening and

emancipating the poor tribals in Jharkhand from the clutches of landlords and mines merchants.

One of Stan Swamy's last messages from jail was: "What is happening to me is not something unique, happening to me alone. It is a broader process that is taking place all over the country. We are all aware how prominent intellectuals, lawyers, writers, poets, activists, student leaders – they are all put in jail just because they have expressed their dissent... I am ready to pay the price whatever may it be." He was not alone in his imprisonment — there were 15 others: intellectuals, writers, activists, poets. All of them had "offended" the regime in power and were labelled "terrorists" or "urban naxals." None of them faced trial, all of them were refused bail. In life and in his martyrdom, Fr Stan Swamy has become a beacon for all who struggle for human rights, especially the rights of the Tribals and other marginalised people, and a role model for young men and women across the nation. PMI plans to organise a special task force known as Antifascist Prisoners' Emancipators. Those who are interested to join can contact us. July 25th is the International Day of Solidarity with Antifascist Prisoners. The day is designed to help raise awareness and solidarity with antifascist prisoners who face frequent arrests, torture, biased trials followed by terrible prison conditions.

Prophet

Over the last two centuries the Catholic Church in India followed a well-worn path.

Through its schools, parishes, hospitals and orphanages, the Church emphasized service to all and especially to the poor and the outcast. The service approach is at best palliative, not prophetic. It seeks to heal the wounds and offer remedial relief. It does not ask who causes the hurt or why people are wounded. What does it mean to be prophetic? It's nothing but to speak truth to power. Fr Stan Swamy did it and was persecuted and thereby he proved that he is the prophet of the 21st century. "I am not a silent spectator, I am part of the game, and I am ready to pay the price." Thus sang the caged bird before paying the biggest price by his own life.

The Pathfinder

Stan Swamy the pathfinder shed light to new ways and means to the Indian Church. He points to another road for the Church than the usual and traditional one of schools, hospitals and parishes. The road that reaches out the poor and the marginalized, and those who are in periphery. The road that seeks truth, justice, equity and righteousness to the tribals, Adivasis, Dalits, the oppressed and suppressed of the society. This new road which Stan Swamy points out to us maybe a narrow and dangerous one but of course will lead to life and life in abundance. With courage and in companionship, we are invited to walk this way together. Stan Swamy's legacy highlights that the 21st century Church shall be concerned about the rampant injustice, the persecution of minorities, the oppression of women, Dalits, and tribal people.

FR STAN SWAMY SJ PROPHET OF THE 21 CENTURY



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Commitment

Fr Stan Swamy, born on April 26, 1937 and joined the Jesuits, was struck by the tribal people. He began to love them, learn more about them by living with them, seeing how sophisticated their culture, tradition, language and mode of self-government was. He was also surprised to see them living in such a rich land of forests and minerals, and yet they were extremely poor. He observed and spoke about it too that this was because they did not have rights and no one in the government actually delivered their rights to them. Fr Stan then made it his life commitment to fight for the rights of the tribal people. He also constantly called out the government's failure to implement the 5th schedule of the Constitution which tells that in every State government the governor has special powers to specifically look after the areas in which tribal people live in those States.

Voice for the Voiceless

Stan Swamy worked with many others to bring about the PESA Act of 1996 which granted powers to the Gram Panchayat of the village of the tribal village, by which if anyone wanted to come and take their land for construction or for mining, they had to get the consent of the Gram Sabha. He also realized even after the New Land Acquisition Rules and PESA Act, the tribal people were not being given adequate compensation for their land nor were they aware of their rights. He travelled from village to village, inside the forest and

educating these people about their rights. He helped the younger tribals demand their rights every time someone wanted land. He claimed in his statement that the more tribal people demanded their rights, the more the police would just arrest them and throw them in jail calling them Naxals. In 2017 he partnered with other human rights activists including Sudha Bhardwaj to set up something called "Persecuted Prisoners Solidarity Committee" or the PPSC including Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Jharkhand States in which tribal people live.

Priest for the Incarcerated

PPSC conducted research on the number of tribal people who were languishing in jails because they didn't have enough money for lawyers and the police had fabricated evidence against them. He released that information saying that a large number of these tribal people had a monthly income of less than Rs 3000, which meant they couldn't afford a lawyer. Several times their version of the story and that of the police were completely different and they were just in prison while their families had no breadwinner, because the police had fabricated cases against them. Fr Stan, then went to the High Court against the Jharkhand government in 2017, and filed a case on behalf of 3000 young tribal people who

were languishing behind the prison walls on account of false claims framed by the police against them.

Fr Stan, in His Words

In a video, he put out right before he was arrested, he said that it was this case that caused him to become a thorn in the side of the government, which was why they were getting him moved out of the way. He said, he had been interrogated by the NIA for 15 hours and the Agency had asked him to come to Mumbai for the next round of interrogation. He also said, because he was very old, 83 at that time, frail and ailing with Parkinson's disease, and the pandemic was raging in October 2020, he refused to come to Mumbai and said he would make himself available through video conferencing. Nevertheless, on 8 October 2020, Fr Stan was arrested by NIA and brought to Mumbai under the Elgar Parishad case.

NIA in Its Words

He was charged under the UAPA Anti-terror law which is a very strict one that doesn't allow for bail. NIA said that Fr Swamy had helped the cause of the Communist Party India Maoist which is a banned organization while he was working with other organizations. There were several sorts of source-based information in newspapers that he had also received money from various organizations, but none of the newspapers had an official quote from anyone in NIA. It took more than two months to provide him a straw when he asked for one. He filed a plea before the court saying that he had a bag when he left Ranchi in which he had a sipper cup and a

straw, but the NIA took 3 weeks to respond that they didn't have a sipper.

Health Deterioration

He contacted Covid19 in a very crowded prison and he was complaining of fever and weakness. The Bombay High Court asked him to appear on video conference and the judges noted that he couldn't even hear the person sitting next to him. He then said before the court, "Taloja Jail has brought me to a situation where I can neither write nor walk nor eat by myself." He was taken to JJ hospital and he had no opportunity to explain what he should be given. He said, "The medicines which the jail authorities are giving me, my deterioration is more powerful than the tablets they are giving me." When the NIA argued against sending him to a private hospital and asked to send him to JJ Hospital, Fr Stan exclaimed, "I would rather die in prison than be sent to a government hospital again because it's of no use." Fr Stan was finally moved to Holy Family Hospital on 28 May 2021.

The Earthly and Heavenly Power

The earthly power thought of silencing him, but the heavenly power made him to be heard. Fr Stan worked over 3 decades for the tribal community and he was nowhere known. Thanks to the Almighty who elevated him for all his untiring service before his death as an 84-year-old priest. Thanks to the Indian Government who actually thought of silencing him, their intervention in turn in the life of Fr Stan Swamy through his arrest, made a way for him to be heard throughout the universe. God's ways are always perfect. When he applied for bail, he got an extension in jail. Human law chained him but the Divine Law set him free by receiving him in His hands.



Offshoots of Jesus Fraternity

Fr Varghese Karippery

Genesis

“Be a love bomb. Let it be exploded not to kill but to heal”. Even after 40 years the spirit of this statement continues to do wonders through different challenging ministries. On December 8th 1981 these words echoed in a small phone cabin at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala. After 40 years when I look back, I see many offshoots and movements from Jesus Fraternity bearing hundredfold fruits such as Prison Ministry India, Sarathi, Penuel, Emmanuel, Shanti Bhavan, FBA, Snehashramam and so on.

Fraternity

Firstly, the spirit of love bomb concept helped us to develop a friendship between Bro Francis and Bro Varghese Karippery. We fostered this friendship by daily praying before the Blessed Sacrament at the Malankara Chapel of the seminary.

Jesus Fraternity

Secondly, we extended our friendship by forming a prayer group in our batch of the Major Seminary.

Torpedo Prayer Group

Inspired by the Holy Spirit we launched a program called Torpedo Prayer Group (TPG). We prayed hundred times “Thank you Jesus” for the repentance and renewal of alcoholics and drug addicts. School children took up this program and it made a great impact on addicted people. They reported many renewal cases as a result of it.

Rehabilitation Centers

In 1989 Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference (KCBC) recognized the Jesus Fraternity and included it in its justice, peace and development commission under the able leadership of Most Rev Francis Kallarackal. Different units were formed in different places for the integral development of prisoners. In 1991 Jesus Fraternity launched Snehashramam, the first renewal and rehabilitation center for released prisoners.

Three R Theory

It was at Snehashramam that we developed a methodology called “Three R” Theory for the renewal and rehabilitation of prisoners. Release, renewal and rehabilitation are the three significant stages for the reintegration of prisoners. We implemented it at Vettukad Snehashramam near Thrissur in Kerala and it became very effective in prison ministry.

Prison Ministry India

We spread prison ministry towards the whole of India in 1994 with the real spirit of Love Bomb and made it a great movement in the Catholic Church. When we extended our ministry to the other States of India, we took a secular name known as Prison Ministry India (PMI).

Sarathi

This spirit was taken to another new movement in the Church called “SARATHI” which is A Helpline for Drivers! Now it is under Justice, Peace and development commission of Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference. Here we developed a new theory called Labor Service to motivate drivers. Actually, this theory of Labor is not simply a money-making program but it is one’s own original contribution for one’s existence here on earth. Labour is a real service to society. By this insight so many drivers come forward to do many services to society.



JESUS FRATERNITY

Shanti Samaj

‘Shanti Samaj’ is another important program for working people to empower them in doing many charitable works for the down-trodden. They do counseling on the streets, feed the hungry and give hope to the rejected ones.

Lady Global

Lady Global is a program to empower girls in their work-oriented studies by the empowered women of society. Women empowerment by women with the logo: ‘Think Globally, Act Locally, Reform Personally’. Through this program many girls from poor financial background get help for their studies and are now earning members of their family.

Global Children

‘Global Children’ is another movement to motivate children and their parents to help the children from the weaker section of society for their studies. They sponsor the poor children from their savings. It also helps them to broaden their hearts.

Shanti Mother Samaj

‘Shanthi Mother Samaj’ is a program meant to strengthen the widows in their life by emotional support and financial backings. Members of the group share their life experiences and strengthen themselves and motivate each other. They involve themselves in different business programs and earn money for their livelihood. Throw a seed and it will grow! Good thoughts and friendship make good impact on society and transform many people in their life situations.

Tithe Communion

This is a new group in which its members share their tithe and help paralyzed people.

Every month more than fifty people share their tithe and give five thousand or more for the bed-ridden people on every Sunday. It is like a Divine Bridge.

Dialysis Helping Ministry

Every month people sponsor for the medicines of dialysis patients. Each patient is given a thousand rupees. It is going on well by the providence of God. It is the law of other centeredness that compels us to do all these services to humanity.

Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

[Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(Mt 5, 3-12)




Penuel-Emmanuel Ashrams

Fr Sebastian Vechookarottu

Penuel and Emmanuel Ashrams located at Thampalackadu, Kottayam, Kerala, are homes for the homeless, mental patients (men) and Renewal Centre for alcoholics and drug addicts. They were founded in 1996 under the initiative of Fr Sebastian Vechookarott of Kanjirappally diocese. Both ashrams run smoothly under the wings of eternal Mercy and Providence, consoling, healing and redeeming hundreds of people suffering from alcoholism and drug addiction. The name 'Penuel' was given to the Ashram inspired by the verse from the Bible in Genesis 32:30, "I have seen God face to face." Whoever comes to the Ashram and does service there, really feels seeing the face of Jesus in the inmates who are rejected and abandoned by society.

History

Soon after my appointment as the Parish Priest of Thampalackadu in Kanjirappally Diocese, I witnessed the recovery of three persons from drug addiction. This inspired me to begin an Ashram for them in 1996. We took a few mental patients wandering in the streets and began the ashram in a rented house near the Church. It was a simple beginning with the support of some families in the parish and with the blessing of Mar Mathew Vattakuzhy the then Bishop. Soon the number of inmates increased up to 30 and we were badly in need of more facilities. By the grace of God and by the



contributions of many people we could buy 1 acre of land and construct a new building. In 2001 the Ashram was shifted to the new building with more than 100 homeless, mental patients.

Renewal Centre for the Alcoholics and Drug Addicts

I have been conducting renewal retreat programs for alcoholics and drug addicts and their families since 1993 in different parts of Kerala. We constructed separate buildings and facilities for the Emmanuel Retreat Centre near the Penuel Ashram. We formed a Charitable trust known as Penuel-Emmanuel Ashrams and registered it as per government laws. We commenced 7 days retreat program regularly from 10 to 17 of every month and convened fellowship programs in different places of the State. More than 10,000 persons attended the renewal retreat. I hope half of them stopped their bad habit and began to lead a good family life in Kerala or elsewhere outside.

In 2013, I handed over the Ashrams with all the assets and liabilities to the Diocese. Now both Ashrams work under the social department of the diocese. By the grace of God both the Ashrams developed well under the able leadership of the diocese. Fr. Sebastian Perunilam, who was Prison Ministry India volunteer from the seminary and Jesus Fraternity director of Kottayam zone and diocese is its present director. The following are some of the special features of the Ashram.

Offspring of Prison Ministry India

My journey of seeking after the least, lost, and last began during my priestly studies at St

Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam. There I joined Prison Ministry India prayer group initiated by Fr Francis Kodyan MCBS and Fr Varghese Kariperry. It was Prison Ministry India (Jesus Fraternity) that inspired and encouraged me to work for the renewal and rehabilitation of alcoholics and drug addicts as a preventive method of not committing crimes, thereby avoiding going to prisons. I was also active in the anti-alcoholic movement of the diocese and the State, conducting awareness programs in streets, slums and schools.

Power of the Eucharist

We received enduring strength from the Holy Mass together with Word of God and the Rosary. People came to the Centre after many treatments in different de-addiction centres. Miraculously they were healed and liberated from their prolonged bondages and experienced change in their life totally. I believe that all this happened by the power of the Holy Eucharist.

Providence of God

From the very beginning, till now I and all those who have been involved in the ministry experienced the unfathomable providence of God. There were hardships and crises, but thanks to the prayers of the inmates and others we felt the tremendous intervention of God in overcoming all such hurdles. Prayer and trust in Divine Providence secured our daily bread without fail.



Participation of the Families Irrespective of Religion or Caste

Many people participated in the activities of the ashrams. Many come daily to help us by washing clothes, preparing food, etc. Many shared their testimony on how their various intentions and prayer requests were being heard when they came and served the inmates of the Ashram. Some who did not believe in God changed their life and became strong believers after coming to the Ashram. As they had no one, neighbours took initiative and took them to their houses for the celebration of Christmas, gave new dresses and shared gifts with them. All these experiences made them feel that they were loved and cared for.

Conclusion

Being with them and moving with these people who are incarcerated, I began to experience the fruits of my priestly ministry. Wherever I went in different parishes and performed other ministries, the fruits of the Holy Spirit manifested themselves. I praise and thank God for the turning point in my priestly life which began with my association with Prison Ministry India that led to development of Penuel and Emmanuel ashrams.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12, 9-10).



Sarathi: A Help Line for Taxi-Auto Drivers



Dr Sebastian Thekkanath

Introduction

Sarathi, an offshoot of Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India, is a registered Trust, under Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council for the integral development of Taxi-Auto drivers in Kerala. It works through its local unit members who are local Taxi-auto drivers formed as Self-help groups. Since its origin in the year 2000, Sarathi could reach out to more than one lakh drivers and there are hundreds of such self-help groups of Sarathi members spread all over Kerala. Sarathi aims at the integral Development of drivers and their families in order to make them messengers of peace and harmony and agents of sustainable development.

Inspiration

In 2000, after an year-long prayer and reflection at Sachidananta ashram, Narasighpur (M.P) with swamy Sadananda (CMI), Fr Varghese Karipperry returned to Kerala with the intention of living at Ernakulam market and KSRTC bus stand to experiment the itinerant style of Jesus Christ. Fr Varghese Karipperry, who belonged to Thrissur Archdiocese accompanied by Fr Sebastian Thekkanath, approached Bishop Mar. Thomas Chakiath, the then Auxiliary bishop of Ernakulam - Angamaly Archdiocese and shared with him the wish and desire of Fr Varghese Karipperry to experiment the itinerant lifestyle of Jesus Christ at Ernakulam – market and KSRTC Bus Stand. The Bishop in his response explained to them the unorganized field of Taxi–Auto drivers and challenged them to launch a new ministry of the Church under the leadership of Fr Varghese Karipperry and promised him whole hearted support from his side.



The Name 'Sarathi' – One Who Leads


The name Sarathi for this ministry is from the classic Epic Mahabharata. 'Parthasarathi', the pilot of Sree Krishna, was Arjun. It is from this that we decided to take 'Sarathi' as our help line for drivers. Drivers are the ones who take hundreds and thousands of passengers to various destinations, either in a car or in an Auto rickshaw or even in any other vehicles. We formed 'Sarathi', a registered trust (The Sarathi Trust (IV/170/2001EKM), a help line for Taxi-auto drivers.

Founder Director - Fr Varghese Karipperry

For the integral development of Drivers, as the Founder Director, Fr. Varghese Karipperry launched the service on 11th March 2000. Fr. Varghese visited the Taxi stand at Cochin International Airport and many other taxi-stands and shared with them about this new venture of the Catholic Church for them. The response of the drivers was very positive and this gave him enthusiasm in visiting more taxi stands. Within a short period, this became a talk among the drivers in all the Taxi –Auto stands. Sarathi state office was opened at Karayamparambu in a rented house. Then, the 'Sarathi Trust' was registered with Fr. Varghese Karipperry as Chairman and the other Trust members were Fr Sebastian Thekkanath (EKM), Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, Fr Thomas Perappadan (EKM), Fr. Joseph Mackolil (KLM) Mr. Jose Moonjely and Adv. Lilly James.

Motto, Vision and Mission

'Change your Perspective and Celebrate your Life' "Change your Outlook about Life and in turn Change your Burdens of Life": The ultimate goal of Sarathi is the mind resetting of drivers to help them enjoy life in its fullness and to motivate them to think more not about what they get but what they can do for society. Sarathi tries its level best to motivate the drivers to 'Think Globally, Act Locally and Transform Personally'. Our Vision and Mission are Motivation, Appreciation and Integral Development. We maintain the vision of empowering drivers for sustainable development. Our mission is to empower the



drivers based on human values, by promoting work, dignity and self- esteem, for making them messengers of peace and agents of social harmony, irrespective of caste, creed and political affiliation of the drivers.

Dream

Drivers' network all over India, customer-friendly driving, accident-free roads, awareness campaign for safe driving, counselling facilities for drivers, welfare schemes for drivers and other income sources for drivers.

Who Are Drivers?

A person needs the help of a doctor only when he or she falls sick. A person needs the help of a teacher only when he or she does some course of studies, whereas a person needs the service of a driver, even before his or her birth and it continues to the end of one's life. The service of drivers in our life is inevitable. We can say, the 'drivers' are very important to society. It is a very responsible service. Driving needs much commitment, because, when we travel, our life is in the hands of drivers.


What Has Sarathi Done in This Field?

Thousands of drivers are registered as life members in Sarathi program; All over Kerala and some cities in other parts of India too are covered; We have reached out to thousands of taxi-auto stands; We have helped many drivers to earn a second income; Through Sarathi, SHGs of drivers helped thousands in need; We could motivate thousands of drivers to share what they get with the poor.

Activities

Sarathi News Letter: Highlighting good qualities of drivers; News of drivers; Literary expressions of drivers; Tips for healthy relations; Glimpses of their working conditions.

Identity Card: Membership in an innovative movement; For information and networking;



Token for discount facilities; Useful at the time of crisis; To increase the self-esteem of Drivers.

Alternative Learning: promotion of rural employment and marketing; Self-employment and entrepreneurship development; Employability and quality improvement program; Road safety learning and awareness.

Sarathi Sticker: Symbol of friendship; Symbol of dignity; Mutual understanding and cordiality.

Akshya Nidhi: Saving schemes; A welfare program; Mutual help funds.

Celebration of National and International Day: International environment day celebration by planting saplings of trees; Gandhi Jayanti by cleaning the city and stand; HIV-AIDS day by conducting awareness program; May Day by conducting awareness class for drivers.

Thank You Card: A new culture of appreciation and acknowledgement; Consideration to passengers; Mutual acceptance and encouragement.

Spirit of Sarathi: Lead me O' Lord, to the world of hope, to the world of understanding, to the world of appreciation, to the world of self-fulfillment, Lead me O Lord.

Conclusion

Since its inception, Sarathi has been making an impetus not only among drivers but also among the general public through its meaningful and timely interventions to improve the life of drivers. And the positive results of this has been revealed in society through the involvement of drivers and their Sarathi groups in many of the social issues of their locality and it has been very well recognized by the public. But Sarathi is well aware that it has only touched the shore of the ocean and it has to go miles and miles more. Our dream is to shake the society positively through this unrecognized but hard working group of people, who really move the society day and night, and reach millions of people to their destinations safe. Let us recognize their commitment, for a livelihood.



Shanti Bhavan Sarvodaya Charitable Trust

Mathew Albin

Shanti Bhavan Sarvodaya Charitable Trust, Alappuzha, Kerala, is celebrating its Silver Jubilee on completing twenty-five years of service to the most abandoned and rejected of society such as mental patients and beggars. Shanti Bhavan, the brainchild of Mathew Albin, is a home for the people who are humiliated and rejected from family and society. The biblical foundation, spirituality and motivation behind the commencement of this home for the homeless can be found in the gospel of Mathew 25.” Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me (Mt 25,34-37). “For 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).

Life Renewal

I, Mathew Albin, had a severe, rotten past and was wading through a life of crimes and filth. My bizarre life was filled with the echo of shrieking voices and wailing of my enemies with their bloody rages. I sought to ride high in an ailing life of deception and deceit. I was leading a life persecuting

my enemies without fear of God and humanity, and shattered like a mad horse. At last, my devious life led me to prison. The prison life drifted my thoughts towards a revelation and I began to reflect about my past. I was overwhelmed with guilt and in my desperation turned to the Almighty. The sermons of Rev Fr George Kuttickal MCBS, prayers of Prison Ministry India volunteers, interventions of Sr Annie Scaria and Sr Pushpa brought serenity to my mind and I became a new man. Now I am grateful to them with immense satisfaction. The Almighty gave me a chance to open a new door of hope.

Shanti Bhavan

When I was released from prison, I began a shelter for the children of the street, who are known as the “image of God” without any discrimination of cast, religion, colour, or tribe. I felt a deep satisfaction in brightening their lives and dreams through Santhi bhavan. Humanity has to fulfill the plans of the Almighty. When the wounds of age shatter relations, then humanity is thrown away to the streets. Life becomes incomplete when humanity forgets to listen to the shrieking voices from an empty stomach. In the Old Testament, the prophet Nathan narrates the story of a man who deceived and killed a soldier named Uriah and abducted his pretty wife Bethsheba. When Nathan told the story of the man who breaks the law of God, King David seething with anger asked, “Who is the man?” “You, you are the man.” Nathan shouted. When David recognized that divine mercy is more important than royalty, he repented and cried loudly with mourns. The Almighty

sanctified David and made him into a new man. (2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Kings 1, 2).

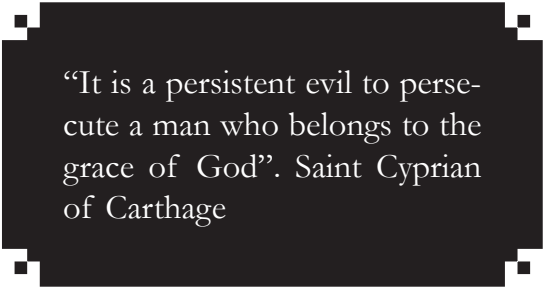
Almighty God gave tranquility to the heart of Mathew Albin and taught him that the call of God and His selection are beyond all human imagination. In the repentance of the wicked man, who will not put back his dagger without seeing blood, there is certainly an intervention of God. During my last days in prison, I attended a Bible convention due to the insistence of the nuns. The experience in the convention changed my mind, and the Holy Spirit explained to me the meaning of “the holy Scriptures”. “God has a plan about me. He will find a master from here, and he will make a church in this prison under his leadership.” That was the prophecy I heard in Kalamassery convention. There I met Fr George Kuttickal MCBS who became my spiritual master.

Snehashramam

In 1990 I shared my experience in a Bible Convention held at Thrissur Sakthan Thampuran Nagar, in the presence of Mar Joseph Kundukulam, Archbishop of Thrissur. After the convention, I visited Bishop Kundukulam and requested him to open a shelter for those who are released from prison. With his blessings a committee was formed which included Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, Fr Jospeh Mackolil, Fr Varghese Karippery, Fr George Kuttickal, and Fr Sebastian Kochupurackal and they decided to start a shelter home at Vettikkad in Thrissur district. The opening ceremony

of fundraising was held at the bishop's house, Thrissur. Mathew Albin donated a “one rupee coin” blessed by Fr George Kuttickal. On receiving that coin Bishop said “I receive this donation from Mathew Albin as the representation of thousands of prisoners from Kerala.” The building named “Snehashramam” was completed in 1991 with a cost of Rs 20 lakhs, as a shelter for those who are released from prison.

In 1997 I was released from prison and launched “Santhi Bhavan” at Punnapra in Alappuzha District by the inspiration of Fr George Kuttickal. We began with one wandering orphan from the street. When we complete twenty-five years of service, there are more than two hundred inmates from different States of India. Mr Mathew Kuncheria from Pulincunnu donated a building for the remembrance of his son Jerry Mathew. The financial assistance from Prison Ministry India under the able leadership of Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS renders great help to the activities of Santhi Bhavan. During this covid19 pandemic years, Santhi Bhavan offers shelter for the deserted and dejected people with the help of Jesus Fraternity/Prison Ministry India, and other individuals, NGOs and social organizations. By the grace of the Almighty, Santhi Bhavan continues its saga of charity to the poorest of the poor.



“It is a persistent evil to persecute a man who belongs to the grace of God”. Saint Cyprian of Carthage

St Joseph Cafasso: Priest for Death Row Prisoners

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

St Joseph Cafasso was born on 18 January 1811 to deeply religious parents at Castel Nuovo, Italy. As a boy he was called the little saint. Though poor, his piety and talents saw him as an ordained priest at the early age of 22. He was an Italian Roman Catholic priest who was a significant social reformer in Turin. He was one of the so-called “Social Saints” who emerged during that particular era. He is known as the “Priest of the Gallows” due to his extensive work with those prisoners who were condemned to death. But he was also known for his excessive mortifications despite his frail constitution: he declined certain types of food and conditions in order to remain as frugal and basic as possible unless his doctor ordered otherwise.

Early Life and Childhood

Giuseppe Cafasso was born to peasants in Castelnuovo D’Asti as the third of four children. His sister Marianna (the fourth and last child) was later to become the mother of Giuseppe Allamano. St Cafasso had been born with a deformed spine which contributed to his short stature and frail constitution. It was often said that no one who knew Cafasso as a child ever could recall him having sinned, seeing him as a

model person. In his childhood Cafasso felt called to become a priest and so commenced his ecclesial studies early in Turin and Chieri in order to achieve his dream. During this period, he came to know another native of the town - Giovanni Bosco - whom he would later encourage and support in the work of caring for the street urchins in Turin, giving them training in various trades. The two first met when Bosco was 14 but both soon became lifelong friends. On the day when the 12-year-old Bosco met Cafasso, he ran home to tell his mother that he had met a Saint.

Priesthood and Mission

St Cafasso received his ordination to the priesthood in the archdiocesan cathedral on 21 September 1833. He was made prefect and then professor of Moral Theology and finally the rector of the seminary of Turin. Fr Cafasso, the pearl of the Italian Clergy, though of small stature and deformed, was the source of the richest blessing, not only for the clergy and the people of Turin, but also for ‘*death row prisoners*’ as he was known as the priest of the gallows. He served as Spiritual Director for many. Bishops, clergy, princes and workers alike came to his confessional with thousands of men of all classes deriving untold spiritual benefits at his retreats. He showed keen interest in the work of St Joseph Castelino who had espoused the cause of orphans, the poor and the distressed of all kinds. Fr Cafasso was the Spiritual Director of Fr John Bosco, known as Don Bosco. For 25 years the founder of the Salesians submitted himself to the authority and the direction of Fr



PRIEST OF THE GALLOWS

Joseph Cafasso. As his holy friend Don Bosco could hardly have chosen a better model than Fr. Cafasso, though only 3 years older.

Call within a Call

Fr. Cafasso became prominent quickly as a preacher. Though he was unimpressive to look at, his voice held people spellbound, as he preached about the ardent love of God for each soul. It was Fr Cafasso's special blessing in the confessional that truly defined him. He was said to have the Charism of Counsel that spoke to the exact needs of the penitent, leaving hardened sinners weeping for joy over God's mercy which was nowhere more evident than in his work with *condemned prisoners*. Though small and weak, Fr Cafasso wasn't hesitant to stand up to the most frightening men in the dark cells of prisons.

The Most Hardened, Most Vicious Criminals Loved Most

Once by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he seized an enormous inmate by the beard and told him that he wouldn't let him go until he confesses his sins. Awkwardly he began impelled by the priest's courage and order, but before long the penitent was weeping and he emerged from the confessional giving praise to God. He told the other prisoners that he had never been so happy in his life and convinced them all to go to confession as well. It was the most hardened, most vicious criminal whom he

loved most. He ministered to more than five dozen men who were sentenced to death, working not only to make them repentant, but to make them saints. He prayed with these men, heard their confessions, offered mass with them and accompanied them to the scaffold. He even promised that if they offered their executions to the Lord, they would go straight to heaven.

In addition to spending hours each day in the confessional, hours in the prison and hours at prayer, Fr Cafasso was a well-respected professor in instructing young priests in teaching moral theology and a prolific writer. He was known to be the last in the Chapel each night and the first to be there each morning, celebrating mass at 4.30am.

Intercessor for Unrepentant Sinners

He died at the age of 49, entirely worn out by a life of service to sinners. The cause for his canonization commenced after his death that led to his beatification in mid-1925 and his canonization two decades later on 22 June 1947. Pius XII on 9 April 1948 declared him to be the patron saint of all Italian prisons and prisoners. In his apostolic exhortation *Menti Nostrae*. On 23 September 1950 the pontiff further offered him as an example to all priests who serve as confessors and spiritual directors. Every year, the feast of St Joseph Cafasso is celebrated on June 23. On this special day when we celebrate his feast, let us ask for his intercession for prisoners, unrepentant sinners and those who try to bring the love of Christ to hard core criminals.



Saved from the Gallows: Krishnan and the Billionaire

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

For a young man who was sentenced to death in Abu Dhabi and who had lost all hopes in life, it was a second birth. Thanks to the noble and great heart of Lulu Group Chairman MA Yusuffali whose sincerity and efforts paid off and as a result a 45-year old Indian national, Becks Krishnan, from Puthenchira, Thrissur, was acquitted in a case involving the death of a Sudanese boy.

Car Accident

Becks Krishnan was sentenced to death by UAE's Supreme Court in 2013 after he rammed his car into a group of children in Abu Dhabi in September 2012, killing a six-year-old Sudanese boy. He was charged with dangerous driving and murder after examining CCTV visuals and testimonies of witnesses. Krishnan, who used to work as a driver for a private company, pleaded that he had dozed off at the wheels due to overwork. However, his plea was rejected and he was sentenced to death by the apex court in Abu Dhabi.

Response from Krishnan

It was on September 13, 2012 that Krishnan, employed as a private company driver in Abu Dhabi, killed a six-year-old Sudanese boy in a car accident. He claimed that he had not rammed his car into the boy intentionally even though the victim's family's lawyer presented it that way in court. "I could never commit such a cruel, intentional act. I don't have the heart for it. The boy who died was around the same age as my son," Krishnan told a local news channel after his return.

Death Sentence


The lower court in Abu Dhabi sentenced him to serve 15 years in jail during trial after the prosecution accused him of deliberately murdering the boy by ramming him with his car. The upper court also upheld the verdict but Krishnan received a shocking verdict on his appeal filed at the Abu Dhabi Supreme Court as the apex court favoured Capital Punishment in 2013. Krishnan claimed that he had not rammed his car into the boy intentionally even though the victim's family's lawyer presented it thus in court.

Life behind the Bars

Every time a fellow inmate at the Al-Wathba prison in Abu Dhabi was taken away for execution at the firing range, 45-year-old Becks Krishnan's heart would race. He remembered those moments vividly. There would be subtle changes in meal-times and their cells would be locked in advance. During his time in the prison, he recalled at least seven inmates being taken away for execution, including his cell-mate, a Pakistani national who was shot dead in April. Having been sentenced to death by the UAE Federal Supreme Court for ramming a Sudanese minor with his car, the dread of possibly being the next in line always loomed over Krishnan's mind.

Graceful Interventions

Krishnan's family continued their effort to get the attention of Indian authorities to intervene in the case and get him released. It was his brother-in-law Sethumadhavan, a prominent trade union leader in Kerala, who contacted the office of Ali and requested him for help. Ali, the chairman of Lulu Group and known for his philanthropic work, especially for Malayali expatriates in the Gulf countries, took a keen interest in the case and began talks with the victim's family in the hope of finding a middle-ground. The talks were long-drawn as the family was relocated



to Sudan in between. Yusuff Ali negotiated with the family of the victim for nearly six years, convincing them to pardon Krishnan. Finally in January 2021, the victim's family, which had moved to Sudan by then, agreed to pardon Krishnan.

Blood Money and Release

It was difficult initially because the boy's mother wanted the law to take its own course. Convincing them to pardon Krishnan was the difficult part," said Ali in a statement. After winning the family's pardon for Krishnan, Ali deposited 500,000 Dirhams (approximately Rs1 crore) in the court as 'blood money'-- Blood Money or Diah under Islamic law is a type of monetary compensation paid by an individual who kills someone. Krishnan was freed from Al Wathba jail in Abu Dhabi following the conclusion of the settlement. He also offered Krishnan a job at one of the Lulu properties.

Gratefulness for New Life

Becks Krishnan (45), who was released from an Abu Dhabi prison after spending nearly nine years on murder charges, reached his home in Irinjalakuda on Wednesday at 1.30 am on 9 June 2021. He was received at Cochin International airport by his wife Veena and son Adwaith. "For me, it was a second life. Never did I think I could meet my family again. I am thankful to Yusuffali Sir, who facilitated my release from prison after negotiating with the victim's family and convincing them" emotional Becks told the media.

Yusuff Ali in His Words

"We had to convince both the parents and the negotiations went on for several months. It was difficult initially because the boy's mother wanted the law to take its own course. Convincing them to pardon Krishnan was the difficult part," Ali said in a statement. "It was a matter of helping a fellow human being, whose family was praying for his return home. I did what I could and convinced the victim's family to accept the blood money. The money

was deposited in January and his release was ensured. There are times when no amount of money can save lives. But God alone can do it. I'm grateful to my God for giving me this precious opportunity to save someone's life. God worked wonders," said Yusuffali with humility before God.

Begging Our Lifestyle

Do things for people not because of who they are or what they do in return, but because of who you are. MA YusuffAli became a great blessing for Becks Krishnan and his entire family through his graceful intervention. You become a blessing, because you have been blessed by God who never looks at our backgrounds and our past. Everyone who passed by the Tax Booth of Mathew, looked at him with condemnation. When Jesus our redeemer passed by, He looked at him with mercy and love. With one look and two words, 'Follow Me', the life of Mathew was transformed. Prison Ministry India believes strongly, 'No one is born a criminal and No one is beyond redemption'.

There are millions of prisoners languishing behind the prison walls who are unable to pay for their compensation. YusuffAli paid the compensation for Krishnan and gave him a new life. We, in the Prison Ministry India, celebrate Prison Ministry Sunday on 1 August this year. Due to the Pandemic we do not know whether our volunteers will be able to reach out to you all with buckets in their hand at Church gates and prayers in their hearts for you. As we celebrate Prison Ministry Sunday, we stretch out our hands to you and ask your support in reaching out to the languishing brethren to pay their fine, to educate their children, and to provide groceries for their families. Psalm 23:5 says, "You anoint my head with oil and my cup overflows". My dear friends, I believe in these words of our God of the Lost and say, when you take out from your cup to share with the broken ones and the needy, God will fill your cup more and more. May the God of the Lost bless you and your families!



PMI Karnataka State Gathering

Sr Theresa Mascarenhas SCB

On 7th June 2021, 29 members logged in from various parts of Karnataka at 9.50 am onwards and we began the meeting with an introduction by Sr Theresa Mascarenhas the secretary. Fr Benny Pachanal, the PMI Karnataka state coordinator, led the opening prayer. Mr Michael Noronha welcomed the participants. The secretary presented a brief report which explained the situation of Karnataka state Prison Ministry India.

Most Rev Francis Serrao

Most Rev Francis Serrao, bishop of Shimoga and chairman of justice, peace and development commission of KRCBC, in his presidential address acknowledged the honour and invitation given to him to preside over the meeting and appreciated the work being done for the most neglected and struggling people using great amount of generosity through voluntary fund. He said that this was unknown to many bishops like him. Bishop added that the support PMI volunteer gives to the prisoner through visits, reconciliation and medical assistance and even for burial shows that we don't abandon and condemn them.

PMI Bangalore

Fr Clement Deep the coordinator of PMI Bangalore presented the report explaining to us that they were unable to do much in prison due to the pandemic but much was done by the team to the families of prisoners and children in Kolbe home, Premodaya and women's rehabilitation

centre that is Jeevodaya. They have spent Rs 1,69,000 on release work, educational aid, medical aid and providing ration kits to 11 families. During covid times along with Ration kits, counselling was given to the families of prisoners. Apart from this the unit has contributed 1,60,000 to national office, 1,50,000 to Premodaya, 1,15,000 to Kolbe Home, 50,000 to Jeevodaya, 50,000 to state unit, and 20,000 for the surgery of Mr Aruna, a rehabilitated prisoner. Rs 5000 was spent for the funeral of Asha's father. Along with this they have generated funds while celebrating online mass on prison ministry Sunday and awareness through videos.

PMI Mangalore

PMI Mangalore unit's detailed report was presented by Fr Lancy Lewis OCD. The unit continued the regular 30 minutes adoration and monthly meeting. During this gathering they passed a secret bag for collection through which they have collected Rs. 9210/-. Though they have stopped regular visits to the jail, they continued their curtesy visit and kept the rapport with authorities through which they were able to reach out with reading materials, recreational items, 100 face shield, and 510 face masks. They were able to release 3 prisoners and rehabilitate one by spending Rs 55,000/- . Further bail money of Rs 10,000 was given to poor deserving cases. The Unit contributed T-shirts for Prison staff on Sports day amounting to Rs 24,750/-. They celebrated Christmas and gave Christmas gifts worth Rs 41,000/-. Apart from this they have contributed Rs 15,000 to the National Office. Fr Lancy concluded the report introducing Mr Jerom Lobo, the new co-ordinator and himself remaining as the spiritual director of the unit.

PMI Mysore

Mysore PMI unit report was briefed by Bro Dolphi DDS. There are 7 jails under the diocesan jurisdiction among which Mysore and Nanjangud are active on regular basis. They have continued counselling and regular visits whereas Chamrajnagar, K.R. Nagar and Madikeri units are visited occasionally to give programmes. Lot of activities are being done by the team in the jails for all round development of prisoners. The team has maintained good rapport with the officials, prisoners and families. Soft skills course was given to the jail personnel and skill training programmes and legal aid were organised periodically for prisoners. Annual retreats were conducted in the jails and counselling were organised regularly by Sr Lilly SJT in women's cell and ICPE team in men's wing.

PMI Mandya

Mandya diocesan coordinator Fr Josekutty MST told that as he was being quarantined with covid infection, he was unable to be in touch with anyone. PMI Mandya unit regularly visits Mandya jail and have a good rapport with the prison authorities. Whenever they request them, they avail of their services to the prisoners. They held Christmas and other celebrations in jail. They have extended help during the covid lock down, and released few prisoners. For Mandya Diocese an Associate coordinator has been appointed recently in the person of Fr Biju Allapat who lives in Bangalore.

PMI Gulbarga

Sr Reena Dsouza, Holy Spirit sister from Gulbarga shared that they were allowed to

visit 2 jails out of 6 in Gulabarga diocesan limits, even during covid lockdown. Therefore, they were able to celebrate Christmas program, organise eye camp and give spectacles to ten people worth Rs 1000/- each and Rs. 500 each for indoor games. They receive good support from the diocese too.

PMI Belgaum


Sr Helen Moras stated that Belgaum unit is very actively present in Belgaum, Gadag and Haveri Jails. Since Sr Irin is transferred, the service to Hubli and Dharward Jails is discontinued. Sr Lavina along with other volunteers visited the prisoners and gave them toilet articles on request. When they were informed about a Catholic Mr Rohi Antony's death, they joined the family members and helped them for his burial. They have distributed ration kits to the family of prisoners and released 4 people @ cost of Rs 44,000/-.

PMI Chikmangalore

Mr Pradeep Rebello said that his bishop is interested and he has been getting his support since the last 20 years but there are no religious and priests to help him continuously. They come for some programmes only. Though during covid19 they haven't done anything, they have helped the jails earlier with solar heater, water filters etc. and every Christmas and Independence Day was celebrated with good programmes and sports.

PMI Udupi

Mr Rosario the co-ordinator of Udupi introduced Sr Melania the secretary and she read a detailed report of activities including 3 health camps where they distributed lot of medicines, food and spectacles. She spoke of



the keen support they get from the Bishop and Vincent De Paul members. The team regularly meets on 2nd Monday of every month. She enumerated their visits to the prison as 120; counselling the prisoners as 167; family visits of the prisoners as 6; virtual counselling of the prisoner's families as 11. They had celebrated the 5th anniversary of PMI Udupi and they have donated 27 food containers each with spoons, buckets for bathing, buckets and mugs for toilets and 9 brushes for toilets, 300 eggs and varieties of fruits.

PMI Bellary And Karwar

Fr Ponnu Swamy didn't get connected and Karwar Diocese hasn't presented the report but Sr Laveena BS from Belgaum shared that she had learned recently that Karwar had celebrated Christmas programme in the jail.

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

Fr Francis Kodiyan, the PMI National coordinator expressed his happiness in having Bishop Francis Serrao, a Jesuit to guide us. He pledged his readiness on behalf of the Karnataka volunteers to obey and be loyal to him. Appreciating much of our work in His address Fr Kodiyan reminded us that we were good in reaching out, reforming and releasing. We need to concentrate also on the rehabilitation, reintegration and redemption part. He invited us to focus on the spiritual aspect for which he has opened an intercessory prayer for the sanctification of the incarcerated worldwide.

Prison Ministry Sunday

Prison Ministry Sunday is celebrated on the 2nd Sunday of August in association with the Patrons Day – St Maximilian Kolbe Day on 14 August. This is to create



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awareness among the public by reading out the CBCI chairman's letter, offering prayers, programmes outside and inside prisons. PMI launched Special Task Forces to specially pray for those incarcerated in high security prisons such as serial killers, mafias, abductors, terrorists, drug and human traffickers. Since we are not allowed in these places, we need to pray for their conversion and help them attain redemption.

PMI Ruby Jubilee Projects

Fr Francis invited the unit coordinators to actively participate in the Ruby Jubilee projects (1981-2022). 1) Support Kolbe Homes in 4 states, 2) Participation in the Special Task Forces, 3) Scholarships to 400 children of prisoners, 4) Join in releasing 400 prisoners, 5) Collaboration in the construction of 40 homes for the homeless and reformed prisoners, and 6) Invite more volunteers to PMI. Finally, Fr Francis informed that it is time to have a new executive team and this shall be formed according to the guidelines given in the PMI Volunteers Guide. Bishop Francis and Fr Francis recommended that we need to present this report in the KRCBC. Fr Francis requested the team to help him in selling the raffle tickets in support of fund raising for Ruby Jubilee projects. He also suggested that the Volunteers of Karnataka PMI send the report and the articles to the PMI magazine so that the work done is known to all. The meeting decided to meet in Shimoga for the next meeting in November 2021. Sr Helen Moras proposed the vote of thanks. With the blessing of Bishop Francis, the meeting was concluded at 12.15 pm.



Spiritual Renewals through PMI Online Intercessory Prayer

Maria Augusta Dsouza

I am Maria Augusta D'Souza. By profession I was a banker. I am a PMI volunteer in Mumbai for the last 4 years. I have been serving the kids last four years at Dongri Children's Home besides my many other social works. Last year I retired and was preparing myself to give more time to PMI. For the past two years I have been praying to God to show me how I could improve myself and how I could use my time wisely. This pandemic gave me a ray of hope as our ministry went online, since we could not go on our weekly visits. I would go and counsel our kids and besides that we as a team would teach them various subjects like Maths, English and how to write their names and how to sign.

I personally feel my Lord had such an awesome plan for me in inspiring me first to take a temporary transfer since I was working in fort which needed a minimum of one hour travel from my residence to Bank office by train. I truly submit myself to God's plan, though human we are, we try to see what suits us better on this earth. If one submits to God's plan it's not only the best for us but it gets the best out of us. I am totally blessed because I totally follow God's will. What made me a different person is the online prayer of PMM and PMI. Every day at 3pm with our family we join the PMM prayer. We also join PMI Intercession 24x7 all days once with family and the other slot with friends. It made me use my time wisely, to be conscious of the gifts of discernment and the gifts of the Holy Spirit and to use these gifts every moment of my life. There was so much to look forward for the next blessed day.

As we started praying online from the very first day, I felt that this was the best gift. We gave ourselves now to praying with our family

for others needs and also PMI family all over the country and UK. Now we have the church at home and there is fixed prayer time to pray and to pray for God's plans for each one of us and now it's been a practice to have our own intercessory family prayers. I experienced special graces received through prayers.

I got the opportunity to do many online courses like Legal short-term course, refresh my counselling course, care giver course, volunteer training, Bio Medical Ethics course, social worker, to name a few, which really will benefit our children's home kids. During this April when all my family were suffering from covid19 positive it was only through the power of prayer we got through this infection. Entire intercessors of PMM and PMI prayed for my family. A big thanks to Rowena Luis, Bibian, Joseph, Jennifer James our Death Row Commandoes and the entire team. There were angels helping us including a Muslim neighbour and one of our own prayer team, Mrs Phiona D'Silva, a Dongri team member who lives in our area and provided us with food requirements. If I would not be a part of this online prayer group, I would have missed the opportunity of being warriors. Surely, I experienced God's abundant grace upon my family and me.

Today I can proudly say a big thanks to Fr Francis Kodyan MCBS and Fr Varghese Kariperry for your dreams to turn into reality. Today we have been totally transformed with the support of all, giving us the opportunity of being a part of PMI. Big thanks to Fr Francis, Sr Amala and Sr Lini for your constant support and prayers for us all. Big thanks to Most Rev Dr Bishop Allwyn D'Silva and Rev Fr Glasten who have faith in me and recently gave me an opportunity as Assistant Coordinator of Dongri Unit. I humbly ask you all to keep me in your prayers and I promise to give my best to our ministry. Thanks to Sr Jean who was my first teacher and her team taught us how we can make a difference in our children's life and ours as well.




Order of Friars Minor's (OFM) Collaboration with Prison Ministry India

Bro Pradeep Anthony OFM

St Luke's Gospel explicitly states that one of the missions of Jesus is to set the prisoners free (Luke 4:18). I truly see that this has been the goal of OFM collaboration with PMI over the years. In this Ruby Jubilee Year, the PMI has carried Christ's mission all over India. I have collected the experiences of our Friars who served in Prison Ministry India. I see in them the common aspect of joy to witness to Christ's Mission.

Fr Thomas M J OFM (2006)

Any successful story or any successful effort always began from a reference point. As a follower of Christ and to be a Joyful Franciscan, I always looked at the "Gospel of Jesus" as my reference point in my life and ministry. "Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd" (Mathew 9:36). "Be compassionate like Jesus" was the inner voice that was always whispered in my young ears. My involvement with Prison Ministry India (PMI) was the right platform to bear the fruits of my 'inner voice, "Be Compassionate like Jesus". My association with prison ministry started from Novitiate, went on all through my formation period and as a young priest my involvement in the National Office of PMI helped me to persevere in the path of




"being compassionate". Prison ministry is a ministry of compassion with reference to Jesus who was always compassionate to the weary, oppressed, rejected, unwanted, uncounted and exhausted.

Fr Naveen (2007)

Br Pradeep's request reminded me of the rich experience that I had in the year 2007, the year of regency which I had in the Prison Ministry India national office at Koramangala, Bangalore. The national coordinator, Fr Sebastian Vadakumpadan, assistant director Fr J.L. Savari Nayagam HGN and the secretary Sr Johnsi HSM with their rich experiences contributed a lot to enrich my experience in prison ministry. I was placed to work in the national office, Bangalore but the nature of the work was not office work, like publishing Prison Voice, visiting the central prison, Parappana Agrahara. That was really a rich experience which I still cherish even after 14 years. It was the custom in the national office to have daily adoration of one hour in the morning before beginning the work. The central prison in Bangalore at that time had around 5000 people inside the Parappana Agrahara jail including all the inmates. Looking at the life inside, it made me realise how much was the human need for someone to listen to their problems. During those visits I came across dedicated and committed sisters like Sr Lilly Pereira FMM, Sr Adele and so on and their commitment made me realise how much more joy there is in giving than in receiving.

Fr Roshan Lobo (2015)

I had a great experience of working with the PMI in 2015. Visiting the Central Prison



Bangalore every Sunday for the Eucharist and meeting the inmates gave me an opportunity to understand their struggles and be empathetic towards them. It was truly a learning experience and I cherish every moment of it. Along with it I was overseeing the construction of the Kolbe home.

Fr Emmanuel (2017)

My article 'Regency at Prison Ministry India is an Adventurous Journey' illustrates my view on prison ministry. I acknowledge that PMI gives a fabulous opportunity to serve our brothers and sisters behind the bars, especially those persons who are merely considered as numbers. The principle of PMI to rely totally on God's providence made me wonderstruck. PMI also taught me that in spite of busy schedules, God can't be forgotten.

Br Nideesh John OFM (2018)

I was very fortunate that I could be part of the PMI in the year 2017. I got involved in all the activities of the National office of the PMI. The most memorable days in Prison Ministry were the preparations we made for the Prison Ministry Sunday. I could visit most of the parishes in Bangalore to coordinate the program and I witnessed how the volunteers and faithful love and serve the prisoners for their betterment. I could witness the prisoners' life-transforming experiences and witness their deep faith and conviction in Jesus. It was a memorable day when I reached an innocent prisoner who was falsely accused in his old age to an old age home in Kerala. My life experiences with the rehabilitated men and women

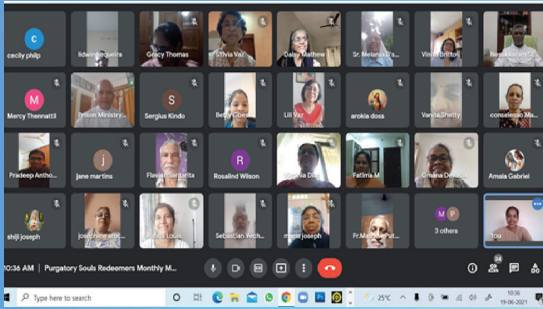
under the care of Prison Ministry changed my outlook toward those in prisons. I enjoyed being with the prisoner's children. The whole team of PMI depend completely on the providence of God. My life with the PMI family enriched my vocation and gave me more strength and confidence to face the challenges in life.

Br Alphonse Velankanni OFM (2019)

Prison ministry India is a situation where one realizes one's own strength. In the same way PMI also demands or calls for a lot of hard work, commitment, service attitude and perseverance. St Francis served lepers during his time. In the same way, we are serving our brothers and sisters behind the bars, the lepers of our time, who are neglected by society, who are not considered as persons rather as numbers and criminals, who are in the clutches of the evil one. PMI is a ministry of prayer, challenge of love and hope of life. The Prison ministry helps one to live in communion with one another. Though we are coming from different religious backgrounds, we focus on three things, 1. Release. 2. Reformation. 3. Rehabilitation of our brothers and sisters behind bars. In fact, we pray together, work together, play together, and eat together as one family and there is community spirit in everyone.

Br Pradeep Anthony L OFM (2021)

Thanks to Fr Francis Kodiyan, the co-founder of PMI who asked me to collect the experiences of Friars to write an article. This really enabled me to begin my regency journey with the existing foundation laid by many.



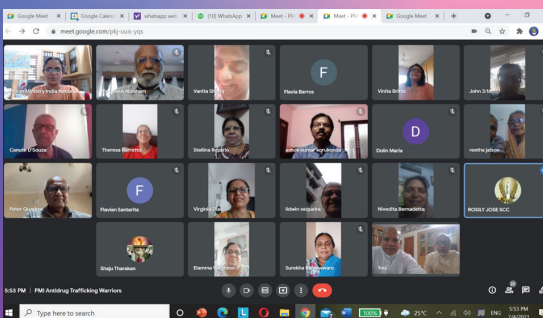
Innocent Prisoners' Redeemers Meeting



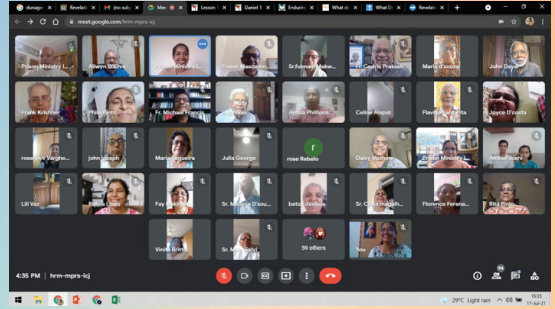
National Office Staff Visiting Open Prison, Devanhalli



PMI Volunteers Donating Books to Trivandrum Central Prison



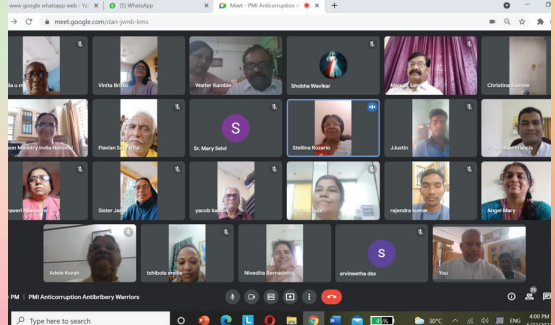
PMI Antidrug Trafficking Warriors Meeting



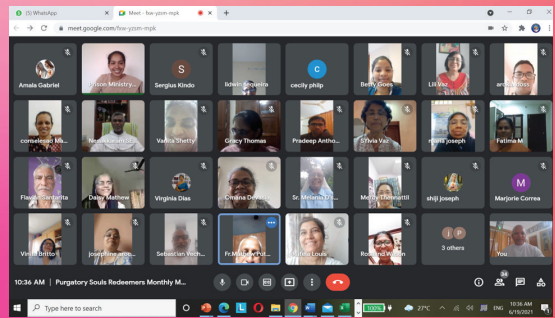
Memorial Meeting in Homage of Fr Stan Swamy SJ



PMI Meeting with Ramanathapuram Bishop Mar Paul Alappat



PMI Anticorruption Antibribery Warriors Meeting



PMI Purgatory Souls Redeemers Meeting

Voice for Fr Stan from Prison Ministry India

Fr Stan Swamy SJ is 2 years senior to me by age and I know him as a young priest. He was quite good in conducting programs, particularly awareness programs on concrete realities in the tribal belt. While being Director and Chairman of Caritas India and travelling to all the dioceses I had witnessed his passionate and effective work among the tribals. His focus was to create and promote equality and justice. His commitment and passion were admirable; his simple way of life was accepted by the tribals which created a rage for the present government which accused him of instigating people to go against the government. I'm sure, the Jesuit family will continue this mission and live his dreams for the vulnerable people for whom he lived. May God grant him eternal rest and bless him to see him face to face.

**+ Emeritus Bishop Peter Remigius
Former Chairperson – Prison Ministry India**

Fr Stan Swamy SJ, a human rights activist, incessantly campaigned over thirty years for the rights and dignity of the tribals of Jharkhand. This led to him being unjustly condemned as his Master and Lord, Jesus Christ was. This rare gem of a priest took his incarceration positively, saying, "It's a blessing given to me to spend my last days in prison with these innocent brethren languishing behind the bars." Fr Stan saw Jesus's face in the tribals during his long journey with the Adivasis, the Dalits and the least of these. He continued to see the face of the Crucified Master in the sufferings of our brethren behind bars. Just like Christ, Fr Stan died a martyr without being accorded a fair trial. Truly, heaven has got one more saint now – who will intercede for justice and dignity for the prisoners, the undertrials and the marginalised, particularly those in our motherland. May his noble soul rest in peace.

**+Bishop Allwyn D'Silva
Chairperson – Prison Ministry India**

Fr Stan Swamy, an epitome of antifascist prisoner, innocent prisoner, undertrial prisoner, is a prophet and pathfinder of the 21st Century. His ideals, values and contributions to the Indian Church, especially to the tribals, Adivasis, Dalits, the dejected and rejected of the society, will highly be valued today and forever. As the Good Shepherd carried his sheep on his shoulders, Fr Stan carried the vulnerable and the brokenhearted on his shoulders. He lived for his sheep, fought for their rights, died for their emancipation and became the voice of the voiceless. May Jesus our Redeemer receive him in his arms!

**Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS
PMI National Coordinator**