



PRISON VOICE

July 2022

Vol. XIX

Issue 07

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-

Venerable Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Văn Thuan
Political Prisoner, Miracle of Hope and Prophet of Peace





**Farewell to Mr TK Thatty
Jharsuguda Superintendent**



**Joshua Mar Ignathios Blessing PMI
National Office Grotto**



**PMI Jharsuguda Welcoming
Superintendent Laxmi Kanti**



**Kolbe Children Visiting
Aquarium**



PMI National Office Grotto Blessing



**PMI Nazik Unit Visiting Women
Cell of Nazik Prison**



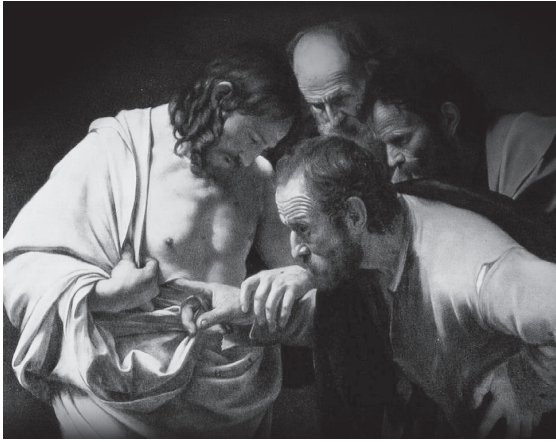
**Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee Blessings
to Fr Wilfred Fernandes**

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PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY



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Are You Willing?

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

80% of the children of
prisoners are potential
criminals unless somebody
takes care of them.

Prison Ministry India has
begun a scheme to
educate 1000
children of prisoners:
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A/C No : 0416053000001419
IFSC Code : SIBL0000518

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PRISON MINISTRY SUNDAY

14 AUGUST 2022



**Integral Human Development and
Pastoral Care for Prisoners**

PASTORAL LETTER

**Please Read this Pastoral Letter in all
Churches on 14th August 2022**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

What would we do if our mother/father/sister/brother/daughter or son, whether guilty or innocent, were thrown behind bars? Would we let the shock, doubt, trauma and fear paralyse us? Would we restrict ourselves to praying in the comfort of our homes? Or would we get into action – visit the prison, secure legal aid, petition for better living conditions in overcrowded jails, do whatever it takes to secure their release, and when finally released, ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration?

According to the World Prison Population List published in December 2021, there are 11.5 million prisoners worldwide. In India, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, there are 4,88,511 prisoners in 1306 different prisons. There are 413 death-row prisoners, 20,046 women prisoners and 1427 children living with their mothers. As we celebrate Prison Ministry Sunday, let us remember all these incarcerated members of our human family who are living in utter misery, pray for them in a special way and rededicate ourselves to seek, serve and save them.

To God, Through Our Brethren Behind Bars


We often hear that prison is not a safe place as it is the living space of criminals. But for us Christians, it is the living space of



human beings created in the image and likeness of God. The hearts of some of our brethren are filled with revenge and hatred. They need someone to guide them in their desperate moments. As Moses was entrusted to lead and guide the Israelites, we too are called to accompany them on their journey to receive God's mercy and grace.

As Saint Therese of the Child Jesus called Pranzini, a triple murderer, "my first child", the broken ones behind bars are our precious children. God gifted us Jesus, who asserted, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). This only begotten precious child of God was imprisoned, tortured and broken on the Cross. His pain and brokenness manifested the love and mercy of God and granted us our salvation. God today gifts us the prisoners. When we stoop down through prison gates, we open ourselves to the brokenness and wounded-ness of the incarcerated, and thereby encounter our living God. Through this encounter, let us tirelessly reach out, release, renew, rehabilitate, reintegrate and redeem our brethren behind bars by





committing ourselves for their integral human development.

Integral Human Development of Prisoners

The lost and rejected are God's precious children whom he relentlessly seeks out. Jesus respected and embraced the ones whom society rejected – the lepers, the tax collectors, the woman caught in adultery, the thief crucified next to him. For detainees to successfully reintegrate to civilian life, it is important to implement various programmes for their integral development such as education, employment, marriage, and family settlement. Let us recall the message of Pope Francis to participants of the International Meeting for Regional and National Responsible for Prison Pastoral Care at Sala Clementina on 8th November 2019:

“Places of detention often fail in the objective of promoting reintegration processes, no doubt because they do not have sufficient resources to address the social, psychological and family problems experienced by the detainees, and also due to frequent overpopulation of prisons that turns them into real places of depersonalisation. On the contrary, true social reintegration begins by guaranteeing opportunities for development, education, decent work, access to health, as well as generating public space for civic participation. As Christian communities we must ask ourselves a question. If these brothers and sisters have already served their sentence for the evil committed, why is a new social punishment placed on their shoulders with rejection and indifference? On many occasions, this social aversion is one more reason to expose them to fall back into the same mistakes”.



PASTORAL LETTER

The Venerable Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan

Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan is a fine example of a prisoner who has undergone integral human development. On 30th April 1975, when Coadjutor Archbishop of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam), he was unjustly arrested and detained in solitary confinement by the communist government for thirteen years. He was disturbed and devastated, his vision for the people and the kingdom of God shattered. One night, deep within his own heart, Thuan sensed a clear and unmistakable voice directly asking him, “Why torment yourself? You must discern between God and the works of God!” This enlightenment radically changed his way of thinking. When the communists put him in a boat along with 1500 other prisoners, he said, “Here is my cathedral, here are the people God has given me to care for, here is my mission – to ensure the presence of God among these despairing and miserable brothers. It is God's will that I am here. I accept his will.” This became the moment of his liberation.

After his release from solitary confinement, Thuan was kept under house arrest and not allowed to return to Ho Chi Minh City and take up his duties there. Exiled in 1991, his reintegration came about through being given a post at the International Catholic Commission for Migration the following year. He went on to become Vice President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in 1994, was appointed its President in 1998 and elevated to Cardinal in 2001.

At the conclusion of the Lenten retreat preached by Thuan to the Roman Curia in 2001, Pope John Paul II said of him, “A

witness of the cross in the long years of imprisonment in Vietnam, he has frequently recounted the realities and episodes from his sufferings in prison, thus reinforcing us in the consoling certainty that when everything crumbles around us, and perhaps even within us, Christ remains our unfailing support,” while in the 2007 encyclical *Spe Salvi*, Pope Benedict XVI wrote: “During thirteen years in jail, in a situation of seemingly utter hopelessness, the fact that he could listen and speak to God became for him an increasing power of hope, which enabled him, after his release, to become for people all over the world a witness to hope – to that great hope which does not wane even in the nights of solitude.”

Cardinal Thuan’s reflections in prison have been published as the books *The Road of Hope: A Gospel from Prison* and *Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage*. His beatification process began on 16th September 2007, his fifth death anniversary. Today, let us echo Thuan and say of the prisoners, “Here are the people God has given me to care for, here is my mission – to ensure the presence of God among these despairing and miserable brothers,” and pray for the renewal, release, rehabilitation, reintegration and redemption of our brethren behind bars.

Prison Ministry India Rehabilitation Centres

Jesus never gave up on those with less than perfect pasts for he knew that his infinite mercy gave them the chance for a better future. He brought this about through love, compassion and sacrifice and asked us to do likewise. The volunteers of Prison Ministry India (PMI) do so by offering their time, energy and life to provide a better future to

those labelled criminals by society. While the law looks back to the past with judgement, we look towards the future with mercy. When the law condemns the failed ones, we commend them to our Heavenly Father’s care. When the law puts them down, we lift them up. When the world fights for justice, we cry out for restorative justice. When the world brawls for punishment, we beg for forgiveness. When the law wants to kill, we want to save. When the world closes the book of a criminal, we open a new chapter saying no one is beyond redemption.

In Biblical times, God delivered the Israelites from captivity in Egypt and gave them possession of a land flowing with milk and honey – the Promised Land. In our times, through rehabilitation and reintegration, PMI volunteers continue to resonate God’s covenant as they lead the lost behind bars to PMI rehabilitation centres where these broken ones can find a land of milk and honey, where they find a new spirit. In Prison Ministry India’s rehabilitation centres, their hopes and dreams take wings, as volunteers channelise Christ’s love to help the lost reintegrate with society.

The heart-breaking cries of prisoners moved the hearts of PMI volunteers, resulting in the establishment of Snehashramam, the first rehabilitation centre, on 1st October 1991. Today PMI has twenty rehabilitation centres rendering full-time service for their integrated development. Each rehabilitation centre becomes a paradise regained for inmates staying at the centre. It becomes a tower of hope to the hopeless, help to the helpless and love to the hated from prisons.

A Mother’s Testimony

Prashanthi (name changed) was only eighteen years old when she was married

to Lokesh, an irresponsible alcoholic who came home drunk every day and beat her for no reason. Life was miserable for Prashanthi, who trembled with fear and hid behind the door when she would see him coming home. Even the basic needs of their little son, Anand, were not met with. One night, he started thrashing her as usual while Anand was in her arms. Lokesh dragged Prashanthi to the kitchen and battered her fiercely. In self-defence, she pulled out a log of firewood and hit him on the head. He dashed against a wall and dropped dead. Terrified, she ran to the police station while carrying her child, and admitted to the involuntary murder of her husband. She was arrested and sent to prison along with two-year-old Anand to Bangalore Central Prison. At the age of six, Anand was shifted to Kolbe Home in Carmelaram, Bangalore, a rehabilitation centre for prisoners' children run by the National Office of Prison Ministry India. With tears rolling down her cheeks, Prashanthi told Fr Francis Kodyan, PMI national coordinator: "If Anand had grown up with us, he would not have become the smart and intelligent boy that he is now. His talents in singing, dancing and in sports have also bloomed only because he has been under your care."

Conclusion

Let us collaborate with Prison Ministry India to rehabilitate and reintegrate these broken, vulnerable, rejected, lonely, deprived, harmed, damaged, destroyed, hurt and injured brethren behind bars.

Dear incarcerated brethren, we love you, pray for you, and commit ourselves for your integral human development. We also pray in a special way for the families of our brethren behind bars and their victims.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, you are welcome to join the 24/7

Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated and thereby pray for the renewal and rehabilitation of prisoners worldwide. You are also welcome to join the Special Task Forces of PMI to reform and redeem hardcore criminals such as terrorists, mafia dons, hired and serial killers, and so on. This year Prison Ministry India convenes its quadrennial national convention from 15-18th November in Goa with the theme Reform to Reintegrate. Your valuable prayers for the fruitfulness of this convention will highly be appreciated. In many states we are not given permission to visit prisons, and we request your earnest prayers in this regard.

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 a most challenging task. 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 as we rededicate ourselves to the integral human development of our incarcerated brethren.



+ Bishop Allwyn D'Silva
Chairperson, Prison Ministry India

PRISON MINISTRY SUNDAY



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor

Jesus the Incarcerated

“Let us not forget that Jesus not only suffered but also rose in glory; so too, we go to the glory of the resurrection by the way of suffering and the Cross” (St Maximilian Kolbe). “When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?” (Mt 25:39) Jesus began and ended His earthly ministry by identifying himself with the last and the least in the society, especially the prisoners. In Nazareth, He read “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” (Lk 4:18–19). Just before His crucifixion, Jesus reminded His followers in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats to visit “the least of these” in prison (Mt 25:31–46). Although He had done nothing wrong, Jesus himself died a criminal’s death. And as He hung on the cross, He invited a convicted criminal into His Kingdom. The Love bomb that exploded on Calvary has been continuing to sway humanity with its aroma of compassionate love and care through our founders, especially among the neglected people of society – the prisoners.

St Maximilian Kolbe

St Maximilian Kolbe, whose memorial, we commemorate as Prison Ministry Sunday, was a true champion who sacrificed his life for his fellow prisoner. His death was not sudden; it was a last-minute act of heroism. His whole life had been a preparation. His holiness was a limitless, passionate desire

to convert the whole world to God. The Immaculate Mother Mary was his inspiration. St Maximilian was arrested by the Nazis and taken to the Auschwitz concentration camp. There he offered his life for another prisoner and was condemned to slow death in a starvation bunker. He died on August 14, 1941, after an injection of carbolic acid. On 10 October 1982, Pope John Paul II canonized Kolbe and declared him a martyr of charity. The Catholic Church venerates him as the patron saint of families, drug addicts, political prisoners, journalists, and the pro-life movement.

Prison Ministry Sunday

On 17 August 2003 CBCI decided to dedicate a Sunday known as Prison Ministry Sunday to help the prisoners irrespective of their language, religion, caste, and creed in order to release, renew, rehabilitate and redeem prisoners; assist their families, and educate their children. Prison Ministry India celebrates Prison Ministry Sunday on the 14 of August this year on the feast day of St Maximilian Kolbe, commemorating the day of his death. Though we may not be doing heroic things, let’s replicate the heroic acts of St Maximilian Kolbe in humility for the reformation and transformation of our brethren behind the bars. Do a little act of charity in front of the churches for those who are in prison. As begging is our PMI lifestyle, let’s do this little act of charity in front of the churches for the love of those in prisons.



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PMI: AN OPPORTUNITY TO WALK THE EXTRA MILE

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Introduction

Jesus' statement "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (Mt 5, 41) laid the foundation for the practise of walking the extra mile. This verse refers to a form of imposition by the Roman law on the Jews. Any Roman soldier could order a Jewish civilian on the way to carry his baggage for one Roman mile that is roughly 1.45 kilometres. This habit of walking the extra mile, if we practice with passion in prison ministry, would transform innumerable hardcore brethren behind the bars. PMI volunteers are invited to develop the habit of going the extra mile and thereby saving innumerable incarcerated souls. This article briefly illustrates the nuances of walking the extra mile while doing prison ministry.

Jesus, Walked the Extra Mile

Jesus himself is the perfect model of walking the extra mile. When he redefined the Old Testament laws (Mt 5-6-7), when he offered paradise to the good thief on the cross (Lk 23,43) and when he said to the crowd who brought the woman caught in adultery "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (Jn 8,7) he proved himself a man who walked the extra mile. Above all by embracing an unjust death on the cross shedding his last drop of blood to save mankind he exemplified himself as the man who walked the extra mile.



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

Extra Mile Mindset

Walking the extra mile is our willingness to render more and better service than what is expected of us. The Extra Mile Mindset means the attitude of coming down to do more than is expected, trying a little harder and going above the norm. This is about going beyond and getting more than you thought you were paying for. Going the extra mile provides us an opportunity to manifest our generosity, kindness, patience, empathy and trust in the Lord. Our generous deeds would result in a positive rapport with the beneficiary. Walking the extra mile generously and unconditionally would result in unbelievable experiences of divine providence. When we do prison ministry let's practise this habit with big-heartedness, endurance, tolerance and above all putting God first. The moment we give our 100% into what we do and are fully immersed and involved in our ministry with kindness we give proof for the empowering grace of God at work in our life.

Chase Excellence

When doing the extra mile, it is important that we enjoy the journey of pursuing and instilling the spirit of excellence. It is a habit of chasing excellence; an attitude of not



WALK THE EXTRA MILE

being satisfied with the minimum; on the contrary this is an attitude of aspiring for the maximum. It is the ability to do as the best in the world. Do as if nobody else can do it better. Living on the road less travelled is the mindset that's going to best assist us to achieve what we want out of life and help us attract the best to ourselves.

QQMA Formula

Napoleon Hill, the architect behind the philosophy of personal achievement elucidates this spirit of excellence mindset with his QQMA formula. QQMA stands for the Quality and Quantity of service we render, plus the Mental Attitude with which we do the service. Hill puts an intention on each aspect of the service he provides and strives for excellence in delivering that service, in terms of quality, quantity and mental attitude. Service must be done wholeheartedly and to unlimited people. We must not limit our services to minimum people. Always try to touch maximum lives through our efforts. We will get positive vibes only if we have positive mental attitude while serving others. The habit of going the extra mile will surely put us in the good books of people who can make us more successful. We will be backed by the great natural law of increasing returns which will give us greater compensation than others in return for our exceptional services.

Do it Now Philosophy

There are myriad ways in which we can go the extra mile and embody the spirit of excellence. One of the easiest is simply to respond to people's messages and emails as soon as possible. We shall have a "do it

now" philosophy, meaning we don't put off something important that we can do right away. Most successful people tend to have an early morning routine. Robin Sharma describes it as 5AM club members. Waking up extra early to accomplish tasks like meditating, writing and answering emails helps us to live a life of excellence and thereby developing the habit of going the extra mile.

Become Extraordinary

Those who dare walk the extra mile will develop a special stamina to become extraordinary. Human tendency is to be satisfied with the minimum and mediocrity. Mediocrity, a frustrating villain, is a slow, soul-sucking poison; a silent assassin. If we don't overcome the tendency of mediocrity, we will never experience true greatness. Through constant practice of walking the extra mile, we can develop certain significant domains of exceptional people such as self-mastery, dedication, observation, commitment, communication, adaptability and become extraordinary. If we want to be extraordinary, follow the path of extraordinary people like Jesus by doing everything to excellence.

Conclusion

Prison ministry is an opportunity to walk the extra mile. If we go this extra mile generously, conventionally and unconditionally trusting in the Lord, we will be able to experience the amazing wonders and experiences of divine providence. Going the extra mile builds stamina, brings wholeness, victory and innumerable blessings! whatever the mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve, regardless of how many times we may have failed in the past, or how lofty our aims and hopes may be.



THE SIXTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

Pope Francis

1. “Jesus Christ... for your sakes became poor” (cf. *2 Cor* 8:9). With these words, the Apostle Paul addresses the first Christians of Corinth in order to encourage their efforts to show solidarity with their brothers and sisters in need. The World Day of the Poor comes this year as a healthy challenge, helping us to reflect on our style of life and on the many forms of poverty all around us. Several months ago, the world was emerging from the tempest of the pandemic, showing signs of an economic recovery that could benefit millions of people reduced to poverty by the loss of their jobs. A patch of blue sky was opening that, without detracting from our sorrow at the loss of our dear ones, promised to bring us back to direct interpersonal relations and to socializing with one another once more without further prohibitions or restrictions. Now, however, a new catastrophe has appeared on the horizon, destined to impose on our world a very different scenario. The war in Ukraine has now been added to the regional wars that for years have taken a heavy toll of death and destruction. Yet here the situation is even more complex due to the direct intervention of a “superpower” aimed at imposing its own will in violation of the principle of the self-determination of peoples. Tragic scenarios are being reenacted and once more reciprocal extortionate demands made by a few potentates are stifling the voice of a humanity that cries out for peace.

2. What great poverty is produced by the senselessness of war! Wherever we look,

we can see how violence strikes those who are defenseless and vulnerable. We think of the deportation of thousands of persons, above all young boys and girls, in order to sever their roots and impose on them another identity. Once more the words of the Psalmist prove timely. Contemplating the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Hebrew youth, he sang: “By the rivers of Babylon – there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors for mirth... How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” (*Ps* 137:1-4). Millions of women, children and elderly people are being forced to brave the danger of bombs just to find safety by seeking refuge as displaced persons in neighbouring countries. How many others remain in the war zones, living each day with fear and the lack of food, water, medical care and above all human affections? In these situations, reason is darkened and those who feel its effects are the countless ordinary people who end up being added to the already great numbers of those in need. How can we respond adequately to this situation, and to bring relief and peace to all these people in the grip of uncertainty and instability?

3. In this situation of great conflict, we are celebrating the Sixth World Day of the Poor. We are asked to reflect on the summons of the Apostle to keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, who “though he was rich, yet for [our] sakes became poor, so that by his poverty [we] might become rich” (cf. *2 Cor* 8:9). During his visit to Jerusalem, Paul met with Peter, James and John, who had urged him not to forget the poor. The community of Jerusalem was experiencing great hardship

due to a food shortage in the country. The Apostle immediately set about organizing a great collection to aid the poverty-stricken. The Christians of Corinth were very understanding and supportive.

5. That, in effect, is precisely what solidarity is: sharing the little we have with those who have nothing, so that no one will go without. The sense of community and of communion as a style of life increases and a sense of solidarity matures. We should also consider that in some countries, over the past decades, families have experienced a significant increase in affluence and security. This is a positive result of private initiatives and favouring economic growth as well as concrete incentives to support families and social responsibility. The benefits in terms of security and stability can now be shared with those who have been forced to leave behind their homes and native countries in search of safety and survival. As members of civil society, let us continue to uphold the values of freedom, responsibility, fraternity and solidarity. And as Christians, let us always make charity, faith and hope the basis of our lives and our actions.

7. Where the poor are concerned, it is not talk that matters; what matters is rolling up our sleeves and putting our faith into practice through a direct involvement, one that cannot be delegated. At times, however, a kind of laxity can creep in and lead to inconsistent behaviour, including indifference about the poor. It also happens that some Christians, out of excessive attachment to money, remain mired in a poor use of their goods and wealth. These

situations reveal a weak faith and feeble, myopic hope.

We know that the issue is not money itself, for money is part of our daily life as individuals and our relationships in society. Rather, what we need to consider is the value that we put on money: it cannot become our absolute and chief purpose in life. Attachment to money prevents us from seeing everyday life with realism; it clouds our gaze and blinds us to the needs of others. Nothing worse could happen to a Christian and to a community than to be dazzled by the idol of wealth, which ends up chaining us to an ephemeral and bankrupt vision of life. It is not a question, then, of approaching the poor with a “welfare mentality”, as often happens, but of ensuring that no one lacks what is necessary. It is not activism that saves, but sincere and generous concern that makes us approach a poor person as a brother or sister who lends a hand to help me shake off the lethargy into which I have fallen.

8. There is a paradox that today, as in the past, we find hard to accept, for it clashes with our human way of thinking: that there exists a form of poverty that can make us rich. By appealing to the “grace” of Jesus Christ, Paul wants to confirm the message that he himself preached. It is the message that true wealth does not consist in storing up “treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal” (*Mt* 6:19), but rather in a reciprocal love that leads us to bear one another’s burdens in such a way that no one is left behind or excluded. The sense of weakness and limitation that we have experienced in these recent years, and now the tragedy of

the war with its global repercussions, must teach us one crucial thing: we are not in this world merely to survive, but to live a dignified and happy life. The message of Jesus shows us the way and makes us realize that there is a poverty that humiliates and kills, and another poverty, Christ's own poverty, that sets us free and brings us peace.

The poverty that kills is squalor, the daughter of injustice, exploitation, violence and the unjust distribution of resources. It is a hopeless and implacable poverty, imposed by the throwaway culture that offers neither future prospects nor avenues of escape. It is a squalor that not only reduces people to extreme material poverty, but also corrodes the spiritual dimension, which, albeit often overlooked, is nonetheless still there and still important. When the only law is the bottom line of profit at the end of the day, nothing holds us back from seeing others simply as objects to be exploited; other people are merely a means to an end. There no longer exist such things as a just salary or just working hours, and new forms of slavery emerge and entrap persons who lack alternatives and are forced to accept this toxic injustice simply to eke out a living.

The poverty that sets us free, on the other hand, is one that results from a responsible decision to cast off all dead weight and concentrate on what is essential. We can easily discern the lack of satisfaction that many people feel because they sense that something important is missing from their lives, with the result that they wander off aimlessly in search of it. In their desire to find something that can bring them satisfaction, they need someone to guide them towards the insignificant, the vulnerable and the

poor, so that they can finally see what they themselves lack. Encountering the poor enables us to put an end to many of our anxieties and empty fears, and to arrive at what truly matters in life, the treasure that no one can steal from us: true and gratuitous love. The poor, before being the object of our almsgiving, are people, who can help set us free from the snares of anxiety and superficiality.

A Father and Doctor of the Church, Saint John Chrysostom, whose writings are filled with sharp criticisms of the conduct of Christians towards the poor, once wrote: "If you are unable to believe that poverty can make you rich, think of your Lord and stop your doubting. Had he not been poor, you would not be rich. Here is something astonishing: poverty has become the source of abundant wealth. What Paul means by "wealth" [cf. *2 Cor* 8:9] is the knowledge of piety, purification from sin, justice, sanctification and a thousand other good things that have been given us now and always. All these things we have thanks to poverty" (*Homilies on II Corinthians*, 17, 1).


9. The words of the Apostle chosen as the theme of this year's World Day of the Poor present this great paradox of our life of faith: Christ's poverty makes us rich. Paul was able to present this teaching, which the Church has spread and borne witness to over the centuries, because God himself, in his Son Jesus, chose to follow this path. Because Christ became poor for our sakes, our own lives are illumined and transformed, and take on a worth that the world does not appreciate and cannot bestow. Jesus' treasure



THE SIXTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

is his love, which excludes no one and seeks out everyone, especially the marginalized and those deprived of the necessities of life. Out of love, he stripped himself of glory and took on our human condition. Out of love, he became a servant, obedient to the point of accepting death, death on a cross (cf. *Phil* 2:6-8). Out of love, he became the “bread of life” (*Jn* 6:35), so that all might have what they need and find nourishment for eternal life.

10. On 15 May last, I canonized Brother Charles de Foucauld, a man born rich, who gave up everything to follow Jesus, becoming, like him, a poor brother to all. Charles’ life as a hermit, first in Nazareth and then in the Saharan desert, was one of silence, prayer and sharing, an exemplary testimony to Christian poverty. We would do well to meditate on these words of his: “Let us not despise the poor, the little ones, the workers; not only are they our brothers and sisters in God, they are also those who most perfectly imitate Jesus in his outward life. They perfectly represent Jesus, the Worker of Nazareth. They are the firstborn among the elect, the first to be called to the Saviour’s crib. They were the regular company of Jesus, from his birth until his death... Let us honour them; let us honour in them the images of Jesus and his holy parents... Let us take for ourselves [the condition] that he took for himself... Let us never cease to be poor in everything, brothers and sisters to the poor, companions to the poor; may we be the poorest of the poor like Jesus, and like him love the poor and surround ourselves with them” (*Commentary on the*



Gospel of Luke, Meditation 263). For Brother Charles, those were not merely words, but a concrete way of living that led him to share with Jesus the offering of his very life. May this 2022 *World Day of the Poor* be for us a moment of grace. May it enable us to make a personal and communal examination of conscience and to ask ourselves whether the poverty of Jesus Christ is our faithful companion in life.

Dear Prison Voice,

Congratulations on your 500th Mention!

The name “Prison Voice” was mentioned in a paper recently found by Academia written by Arnett, Chaz.

Dear Prison Voice,

Congratulations on your 490th Mention!

The name “**Prison Voice**” was mentioned in 3 papers recently discovered by Academia, including one by someone in **Cambridge, United Kingdom**.

Dear Prison Voice,

The name “Prison Voice” is mentioned in a paper published in Normes et hagiographie dans l’Occident latin (Ve-XVIe siècles) Actes du colloque international de Lyon, 4-6 octobre 2010.

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Gathering the Fragments, Gathering Humanity¹

**Venerable Cardinal Francis Xavier
Nguyen Van Thuan**

“Were you able to celebrate the Eucharist in prison?” is one question that many people have asked me... The faithful sent a little bottle of wine for Mass, which they labelled “stomach medicine,” as well as some hosts sealed in a flashlight... I will never be able to express my immense joy: every day, with three drops of wine and one drop of water in the palm of my hand, I celebrated my Mass. It depended on the situation, however. On the boat that brought us north, I celebrated at night with the prisoners who received Communion around me... In the re-education camp, the prisoners were divided into groups of fifty; we slept on common beds and everyone had the right to fifty centimetres of space. We arranged it so that there were five Catholics near me. At 9:30 pm the lights were turned off and everyone had to sleep. I curled up on the bed to celebrate Mass, from memory ... We made small containers...to reserve the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus in the Eucharist was always with me

At night, the prisoners took turns for adoration; Jesus helped us in a tremendous

way with his silent presence. Many Christians regained the fervour of their faith during those days, and Buddhists and other non-Christians converted. The strength of Jesus’ love is irresistible. The darkness of prison became light; the seed germinated underground during the storm. Every time I offer Mass I have the opportunity to extend my hands and nail myself to the cross with Jesus, to drink with him the bitter cup. Every day, praying and hearing the words of the consecration, I confirm with all my heart and with all my soul a new covenant, an eternal covenant between me and Jesus, through his Blood mixed with mine.

Jesus began a revolution from the cross. Your revolution must begin from the Eucharistic table and has to be carried forward from there. In this way you will be able to renew humanity.

Books by Francis Xavier Cardinal Van Thuan

1. Testimony of Hope - 2000
2. The Road of Hope - A Gospel from Prison - 2001
3. Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage - 2002
4. Five Loaves and Two Fish: Meditations on the Eucharist - 2003

1. Taken from Venerable Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, *Five Loaves & Two Fish* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media/The Daughters of St. Paul, 1997).



MARTYRS OF DACHAU NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMP

Dr Jaison Kunnel MCBS

Memorial Day for the Blessed Martyrs of Dachau has been celebrated in the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising on June 12 since, 2017, on the initiative of Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the present Archbishop of Munich and Freising. Dachau concentration camp was the first Nazi detention camp founded by Adolf Hitler; it is located about 16KM northwest of Munich in the state of Bavaria, in southern Germany. Between 1933 to 1945, about two lakh political prisoners were housed here in a detention camp. Of them, 41,500 died or were murdered while in prison. 26, 28, and 30 blocks of the Dachau detention camp were allocated for priests from various religious sections. These were known as the priest block. 90% of the prisoners in the clergy block were Catholic priests. Of the 2720 priests in the detention camp, 1780 were Polish, and 868 of them died of thirst. Four hundred forty-seven priests were from Germany and Austria, and 94 of them surrendered to death. The Catholic Church honours 200 people who died in Dachau as martyrs. The church has officially declared 57 of them blessed so far. They include priests, monks, and lay brothers.



The 108 Polish Martyrs

The Polish Catholic Church celebrates the feast of 108 Polish holy martyrs on June 12. These martyrs who died at the hands of the Nazis during their occupation of Poland

between 1939 and 1945 include 15 victims of the Auschwitz concentration camp and 43 from Dachau. In addition to this, 1,773 Polish priests were killed in Dachau. Pope John Paul II declared 108 Polish martyrs Blessed on June 13, 1999. These include 3 bishops, 79 priests, 7 monk brothers, 8 nuns, and 11 lay brothers. Here are two short life descriptions of two of the martyrs. Orionist priest Fr. Franciszek Drzewieckin was one of these Martyrs. When the German army invaded Wroclaw in September 1939, he went to help Polish soldiers in the forest, hearing their confessions. He was arrested in November and deported to Sachsenhausen and Dachau. Fellow prisoners remembered him as someone who “worked hard with kindness and consideration.” Blessed Stanislaw Kostka Starowieyski was married to Maria Theresa Szeptycka in 1921, and the couple were blessed with six children. The family went to daily Mass and spent mainly on charity, giving food for the poor and Catholic social activities. He became the president of the Diocesan Institute of Catholic Action in Lublin, Poland, in 1935. Then he was arrested with his brother Marian by invading Russian troops in November 1939; they escaped in Debiny Laszczowskiej, but Marian was re-captured, sent to the Russian interior, and was never heard from again. Finally, Stanislaw was captured by German troops and sent to the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau, Germany, for the crime of being a Catholic leader, and he died there on April 13, 1941.

Saint Titus Brandsma - First Saint of Dachau Nazi Detention Camp

Titus Brandsma (1881-1942) became the first martyr in the Dachau, elevated to the status of Sainthood by Pope Francis on May



15, 2022. It was in 1985 that Fr Titus was elevated to the status of the blessed. Titus, a Dutch, joined the Carmelites in Boxmeer, Holland, in 1899. He helped found the Catholic University of Nijmegen in 1923, where he taught philosophy and mysticism. Titus Brandsma was a severe critic of the Nazis from the beginning. When the Nazi government tried to control the Catholic media in November 1941, he opposed it and spoke against the Nazi government's terrorism. As a result, Titus was on the Nazis' blacklist. He was particularly effective at showing the weakness of an ideology based on hate and race superiority. The German newspapers named him the "Crafty Professor." He was arrested by the Nazi army at the Carmalitan Ashram in Nijmegen, Holland, on January 19, 1942. The Carmelite priest who had endured the hardships in many Nazi prisons was a victim of cruel medical experiments and died on July 26, 1942, after receiving a lethal injection in the Dachau detention camp. It was the day a letter from the bishops in Holland criticizing the Nazi government against the Jewish deportation was read in churches. Fr Titus is an excellent example of a journalist who stands for truth and justice.

Blessed Engelmar Unzeitig: The Angel of Dachau

Fr. Engelmar Unzeitig was known as "The Angel of Dachau" for his selfless service to the people affected by typhoid in the Nazi detention camp in Dachau. Hubert was born on March 1, 1911, in Griefendorf, Moravia, in the present day, the Czech Republic. Hubert's father died in 1916 during World War I in a Russian detention camp when he was five. Later the mother raised six children alone. At seventeen, he joined the monastery



DACHAU CONCENTRATION CAMP

of Missionary Congregation of Mariannahill (CMM) with a passion for becoming a missionary and took the name Engelmar. He studied philosophy and theology in Würzburg, was ordained to the priesthood on August 6, 1939, one month before the outbreak of World War II. Four of the only six years of his ministry life were spent in the Nazi detention camp in Dachau. Engelmar was locked up in the Nazi concentration camp in Dachau, charged with treason for protecting the Jewish people against Hitler's policies. However, the young priest also saw the prison as his mission field. He bore witness for Christ by giving spiritual teachings, doing secret rituals, and bearing with them. Engelmar had kept much attention on the case of Russian prisoners. He attempted to learn the Russian language through communication with them and thus keep them firm in their faith. Typhoid had spread to detention camps in late 1944, and 20 priests volunteered for the ministry. The disease had an average of at least 100 deaths per day. Engelmar and other clergymen volunteered for the ministry seeing death in front of them like Maximilian Kolbe. A fellow physician shares his memory: "The help given by Engelmar were the fruits of his ministry to priesthood and brotherly love. He happily heard the confessions of his poor orphans, gave comfort in their sufferings with pure calmness." May the martyrs of Dachau and the 108 Polish martyrs who testified to the Christian faith with their lives in adverse circumstances inspire us to bear witness to Christ.

FROM PIGSTY TO FATHER'S HOUSE



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Many a time we tend to think that God speaks only to the supposedly good people: the bishops, priests, religious and holy people. But the truth is that God speaks to everyone. Does God speak to the prisoner? Yes, He not only speaks but nay more He is present there with them. Our God of the vulnerable is living amidst these broken ones behind bars, for He said, *When I was in prison, you visited me*" (Mt 25:36). One needs to be open to the voice of God. God came down when we were lost and when we were in our sinful bondages. Are our sins greater than the mercy of God? Our God knows us through and through, for He said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jer 1:5).


Prison is a place rejected by society, because criminals and sinners are thrown there. The moment they are thrown behind bars they are labelled as criminals and no one wants them. But dear brethren, remember you are not alone! The God who created you, redeemed you and sanctified you is with you in these dark cells. You have a larger family of prison volunteers who come to you with love in their hearts and Word of God in their hands. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come 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.

Our Call as Response to the Cry from the Dark Cells!

The Israelites cried out to God and God called Moses. Prisoners cried out to God and God called us. Our call to serve prisoners is the response to the cry from the dark cells that God heard, called us and anointed us. It is a unique call, a call within a call. God called us, anointed and appointed us, hearing the cries from the dark prison cells of prisoners and their families across the globe. What a unique call it is! At the wedding feast of Cana, when there was no wine, Mother Mary said to the disciples, *"do whatever He tells you"* (Jn 2:5). It is the same Blessed Mother who tells each one of us from behind the bars - to do whatever her Son tells us as He listens to their cry having been one of them Himself, *When I was in prison, you visited me*" (Mt 25:36).

God's Children behind Prison Walls

Fear kills every one of our brethren behind the bars. The worry about what tomorrow will bring takes away their energy. When we meet our brethren in prison, most of the time, their only request is 'Sister, pray for me and my family. Tomorrow is my hearing, my bail order, my daughter's marriage.' And the list goes on. The pain, fear and suffering behind the prison walls are uncountable. A prison is a place of pain, tears, struggle and suffering! What would happen if they knew that their tears would one day turn



into graces? Jesus exclaimed about the sinful woman who anointed Him, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house, you did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair” (Luke 7:44-45). I’m sure that Jesus is exclaiming about our brethren who are crying out to Him from the prison walls, who wet His feet with their tears, whose kisses are unstoppable, from their brokenness and in their transformation. The woman was a sinner in the eyes of humans and in the eyes of the so-called Pharisees. But in the eyes of Jesus, she was a child of God and nothing else. Each brother/sister of ours from the dark cells of a prison is a child of God.

Failed Ones: The Precious Ones

The people, who witnessed the miracles of Jesus’ multiplication of five loaves, the healing of the leper, restoring of sight to the blind, and walking on the sea, abandoned Him when He was on the Cross. But the Centurion who never saw any miracle of Jesus exclaimed, ‘Truly He is the Son of God’ (Mt 27:54) when he saw Jesus crying out from the cross *Abba Father* and witnessed the death of Jesus. This was a conversion of heart. Watching the agony of Jesus, gazing at the way He died for humanity he changed himself and became a strong follower of Jesus. Sinners teach about responsibility, redemption, bravery and charity as well as saints do. In many ways, sinners may be better teachers. The failed ones are the ones most precious to God since He went through the valley, trampling on thorns and thistles to find the one that was lost. The 99 sheep never had the privilege to be carried by the Shepherd, but the one lost sheep had. Jesus remarked about the sinful woman to the Pharisees and the so-called righteous ones.



FROM PIGSTY TO FATHER’S HOUSE

From Pigsty to Father’s House

Mathew, the tax collector, renounced everything when he found Jesus. Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector declared that he would offer half of his belongings to the poor by paying back four times as much to anyone he had cheated. Paul the persecutor, who was not a perfect human, became a zealous servant of the Master. As the sinners in the Bible teach every believer to mend his/her way and to walk along straight paths, the rejected ones from the prison walls also teach us the lesson that *no one is beyond redemption*. The Prodigal Son sitting in the pigsty remembered his Father’s house. Our brethren too come to themselves in the prison cells as they listen, read and internalise the Word of God. “For nothing will be impossible with God!” (Lk 1:37).

God Thirsts for Souls

In the beginning of his public ministry the message Jesus preached was, “Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 4:17). Jesus is waiting for your return. Even if you are a hard-core criminal, a terrorist, a serial-killer, prostitute, your sins are not greater than the mercy of God. Our God who redeemed the thief on the cross, saying “today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk 23:43) is waiting with his open arms to receive each one of you. God thirsts for our souls. Let us repent of our sins and return to our Redeemer. “The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit” (Ps 34:18). The Lord is with you in your brokenness behind the dark cells and therefore, let us open ourselves to Him and experience our redemption.

Father's Letter¹

My Child,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you - Psalm 139:1

I know when you sit down and when you rise up -
Psalm 139:2

I am familiar with all your ways - Psalm 139:3

Even the very hairs on your head are numbered -
Matthew 10:29-31

For you were made in my image - Genesis 1:27

In me, you live and move and have your being - Acts
17:28

For you are my offspring - Acts 17:28

I knew you even before you were conceived - Jeremiah
1:4-5

I chose you when I planned creation - Ephesians 1:11-
12

You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in
my book - Psalm 139:15-16

I determined the exact time of your birth and where
you would live - Acts 17:26

You are fearfully and wonderfully made - Psalm 139:14
I knit you together in your mother's womb - Psalm
139:13

And brought you forth on the day you were born -
Psalm 71:6

I have been misrepresented by those who don't know
me - John 8:41-44

I am not distant and angry but am the complete
expression of love - 1 John 4:16

And it is my desire to lavish my love on you - 1 John
3:1

Simply because you are my child and I am your father
- 1 John 3:1

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could -
Matthew 7:11

For I am the perfect father - Matthew 5:48
Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand
- James 1:17

For I am your provider and I meet all your needs -
Matthew 6:31-33

My plan for your future has always been filled with
hope - Jeremiah 29:11

Because I love you with an everlasting love - Jeremiah
31:3

My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on
the seashore - Psalm 139:17-18

And I rejoice over you with singing - Zephaniah 3:17
I will never stop doing good to you - Jeremiah 32:40

For you are my treasured possession - Exodus 19:5
I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my
soul - Jeremiah 32:41

And I want to show you great and marvelous things -
Jeremiah 33:3

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me -
Deuteronomy 4:29

Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your
heart - Psalm 37:4

For it is I who gave you those desires - Philippians 2:13
I am able to do more for you than you could possibly
imagine - Ephesians 3:20

For I am your greatest encourager - 2 Thessalonians
2:16-17

I am also the Father who comforts you in all your
troubles - 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you -
Psalm 34:18

As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close
to my heart - Isaiah 40:11

One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes -
Revelation 21:3-4

And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on
this earth - Revelation 21:3-4

I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son,
Jesus - John 17:23

For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed - John 17:26
He is the exact representation of my being - Hebrews
1:3

He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against
you - Romans 8:31

And to tell you that I am not counting your sins - 2
Corinthians 5:18-19

Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled - 2
Corinthians 5:18-19

His death was the ultimate expression of my love for
you...1 John 4:10

I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your
love...Romans 8:31-32

If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive
me...1 John 2:23

And nothing will ever separate you from my love
again...Romans 8:38-39

Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven
has ever seen...Luke 15:7

I have always been Father, and will always be Father...
Ephesians 3:14-15

My question is...Will you be my child? John 1:12-13
I am waiting for you...Luke 15:11-32

Love, Your Dad, Almighty God.

1. Courtesy to *Catholic News Update Asia* Vol: XIV - Issue: 172 - June 20th, 2022.



Give me a Chance to Live Again

Sr Adele Korah SCCG

If you ever had an occasion to get in touch with the brethren languishing in prison, you hear several of them pleading in their distress, “Will you please give me a chance to live again?” When persons are arrested for having led a crime filled life and brought into the prison, I have seen and heard some of them lamenting with groans saying, “I want to live a new life, will you please give me a chance?”. If one has caused the death of his wife or any family member, he becomes disconsolate and finds life unbearable. When they close their eyes they see their blood stained hands and are hounded by grief and guilt and go through sleepless nights. It must have been a moment of uncontrolled anger and frustration that resulted in an impetuous action which ended in blood shed with crucial consequence. Today they repent, as they go through a lot of pain, remorse and even despair due to the consequence of their wrong deed which caused pain and sufferings to several persons. In their distress, they plead, “Please give me a chance, an opportunity to live a new life.”

New Life by the Touch of God’s Spirit

To be able to live a new life, as a first step, they need to be set free from their inner blocks of guilt, sinfulness, anger, hatred, frustration, fear, clutches and bondages. Besides, one needs to be strengthened in one’s inner being. It is only the touch of the Living God that can bring new life to a person. God created us in his image and

likeness. “God is LOVE” (1 John 4: 8) and His image is Love itself. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is perfected in us. St. Paul in his letter gives us directions and gives us the essential points to live a new life; a life based on values, a life built on love of God and love for one another. “For this reason. I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth takes its name, I pray according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through His Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love” (Eph 3:17). This is the secret of beginning a new life. A life rooted in love, rooted in a living God who directs our movements, our inclinations, our attitudes and behavior.

A Life Transformed by God’s Touch

What exactly does being rooted and grounded in love mean? Being rooted and grounded in love means to be rooted and grounded in God who is Love itself. We know that a plant can grow only when it is rooted in soil with a good supply of water. Persons who place their trust in the Lord are like trees which grow by the riverside. “They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruits in its season, and their leaves do not wither.” (Ps 1:3) A tree that has no water source will eventually die. A tree that has a constant supply of water will not thirst and will grow. As the tree relies on water, we need the water of life which is God’s Word and the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit and the Life-giving Water given by God sustains us and makes us grow in



GIVE ME A CHANCE TO LIVE AGAIN

his likeness and have a life that never ends which is eternal life.

Witnesses of Persons Rooted in Love


We can see some of the brethren within the prison today who witness to the above facts. I have seen the above features in a few inmates of the prison during my visits to prisons. They are the few who received God's transforming touch during their prison life. Some of them have become catalysts and are living an inspiring life within the prison today. As they continue to live in the prison with total resignation, after having accepted God's plan in their life, they spend their days as Good Samaritans and reach out to other inmates in their material and spiritual needs. Though they have not succeeded in getting bail or release from their case, rather than becoming disappointed, they are utilizing their time in leading others to a renewed life. They have truly become genuine bearers of God's light and love.

A New Life in God, Abiding in God's Love

They strive to spend their life in the prison abiding in God leading a life based on the commandment of love, and thus bearing the fruits of the Spirit. "Abide in me as I abide in you...I am the vine and you are the branches. Just as the branches cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." (Jn 15:5) Thus being rooted in God who is love, the branches will bear fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. They have begun to lead their lives directed by the Holy Spirit. A few of them have grown to become bearers of good news to those brethren who are erring from the right path. By sharing God's Word they assist those who enter into the prison by helping them to surrender themselves to God's plan and to renew their life. There were occasions when the inmates who received spiritual help from these persons in the prison are released, their parents noticed the changes in their sons and informed me about it. These are occasions when we raise our grateful hearts to the Lord, the author of all that is good.

"The Thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly, I am the good Shepherd" (Jn 10:10). Lord I pray for all of them whom you have touched and transformed that they may persevere in their life of faith and love. You have granted them your blessings in abundance even while they were undergoing punishment. I pray along with St. Paul "that you may have the power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and, to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph:3:18,19). We pray to you Lord Jesus, you who shed your precious Blood for the salvation of all, to anoint with your Holy Spirit all of us who enter into prison as your instruments, so that we may become truly good shepherds to all the sheep who have wandered away from you and are caught and sent in to the prison cells. May we become your hands and feet to continue our services to share your unconditional love with all those who are in need. Amen




Medical Camp at District Correctional Center, Mangalore

Edmund Frank

The Mangalore diocese has a very vibrant and active Prison Ministry India unit. It consists of twenty active members and functions as a cohesive and dedicated unit. At the diocesan level, it is under the charge of the Bishop of Mangalore Rt. Rev Dr. Peter Paul Saldanha. Mr Jerome Lobo is the Coordinator and Fr Lancy Lewis OCD, is the Spiritual Director. Both are appointed by the Bishop of Mangalore. The PMI Mangalore unit functions in close coordination with the National Prison Ministry India, which has its headquarters in Bengaluru.

The Prison Ministry India across the State of Karnataka is presently functioning with a handicap. The license to visit prisons has not been renewed after the Covid-19 -lock down norms came into force in 2019. This is the third year running now and has put severe restraints on the members having direct access to the prison inmates and being of assistance to them wherever possible. However, this has not dimmed the enthusiasm of the PMI Mangalore unit members in any way. Some innovative methods and some methods that were already followed with some changes are being successfully explored and adopted to keep the members connected with the prison inmates in various ways through the prison authorities.



One such method is organizing medical camps to the inmates more extensively and providing necessary items of daily use like dress materials to the inmates. During the pre-lock down years, medical camps were organized for any one ailment like testing blood sugar and its treatment or eye test or medical examination of skin diseases. These were half day camps with fewer medical staff for just over a hundred inmates as made available by the Prison authorities who came for the test. Such camps were conducted with greater frequency for one ailment at a time.

The situation being different now and the procedures to obtain permission for these tests becoming more stringent, as suggested by the Prison Superintendent, medical examination was planned for four ailments related to: 1) Skin diseases 2) Heart problems 3) Ear-Nose-Throat and 4) General check-up for anyone who wanted. The ECG equipment was also brought to the prison and inmates were subjected to ECG test where required. This needed more funding, medical staff and greater preparation. Difficult as it seemed though, by Providential Blessings this was all made possible without any difficulty. Thanks to the PMI Coordinator Mr Jerome Lobo, Secretary Dr. Tressie Menezes, and others who made this possible.

The medical camps were held on 12 June 2022 at the Mangalore District Prison in association with the Fr Muller Medical College Hospital. The hospital management being under the Bishop of Mangalore was able to extend a helping hand and sent the required contingent of doctors and other medical staff to carry out daylong medical

MEDICAL CAMP

examination of prison inmates. They also prescribed the medication and treatment. The medical staff was supported by the PMI members who also participated in the medical camps in full numbers.

The tests covered Ear-Nose-Throat, Skin related diseases and a general check-up. ECG was also taken of those inmates who complained of heart related ailments. A team of doctors from Fr Muller Medical College hospital ably supported by the medical staff carried out the tests and examination of three hundred plus inmates, both men and women. Medicines were distributed and treatment was prescribed in many cases. Arrangements are in place to take adequate follow up measures. The PMI members have collected the medicines provided by Fr Muller Medical College Hospital and the Government Wenlock Hospital, Mangalore.


Dr Sudaker Rao, RMO, Wenlock Hospital inaugurated the medical camp and said that such medical camps should be held at regular intervals as they are of immense help to maintain good health of the prison inmates. Prison Superintendent Mr. B. T. Obaleshappa presided over the Inaugural function and in his address said that these medical camps help in detecting the health-related problems in advance and make it possible for the prison authorities to take appropriate action and commended the efforts made by the Prison Ministry India team, Fr Muller Medical College Hospital team and the concerned Prison Officials in organizing the medical camp.

Prison Ministry India, Mangalore Unit is committed to work for the welfare of Prison inmates and helps in their rehabilitation after their release. The PMI Spiritual Director Fr Lancy Lewis, Sr Sharon Preethi, Assistant Coordinator, Dr Tressy Menezes, Secretary, Fr Muller representative Dr Jyoti and medical staff, PMI members and Prison officials were present at the inaugural ceremony. Mr Jerome Lobo, Coordinator PMI, introduced and welcomed the dignitaries and those present. Prof. Edmund Frank proposed the Vote of thanks. Mr Lucas D'Souza assisted with the camera and taking of pictures. Mr Lawrence Crasta anchored the program.

“During the most glorious events of our Lord’s public life - his transfiguration on Mount Tabor and his entry into Jerusalem - Mary remained hidden. But at times of gravest danger - the flight into Egypt, the way of the cross to Calvary, her sorrowful watch at the foot of the cross, and her vigil in the upper room with the apostles - Mary courageously chose to be present. She did not live for herself, but only for the Lord and his work of redemption.”

“The first seminary, the first formation program, the first college is the Catholic family. No director, however talented or skilled, can replace parents. If this most fundamental unit breaks down, the future of the Church and of human society becomes shaky and risks collapse. On the day he turned fifty, Pope John XXIII wrote in a letter to his parents, “Dear Mom and Dad, today I have reached fifty years of age. God has given me many positions in the Church, I have been to many places, I have studied much, but no school has given me more instruction or has been more beneficial to me than that which I received when I sat on your laps.”

Venerable François-Xavier Nguyen Văn Thuan, Road of Hope: A Gospel from Prison




Remembering Indian Jesuit Stan Swamy, who Died a Prisoner¹

Cedric Prakash

The celebrated Greek philosopher Aristotle developed the methodology of asking a question to ultimately arrive at the truth. Jesuit Father Stan Swamy, whose first death anniversary is on 5 July 2022, was no stranger to philosophy or the scientific method.

For years, he coached generations of young women and men, in social analysis. He taught them to ask questions to understand what is happening in society. Besides, he had the courage to question; and he asked the most difficult and uncomfortable questions.

Father Stan questioned the Church: he did not flinch from doing so. It was not easy at a time when questioning the system to which one belonged to, was not easily welcomed. But Father Stan, as a young priest, was shaped in the letter and spirit of Vatican II. He often questioned why some of the key directions of that pathbreaking council were not being implemented in the Indian Church. The 1971 Bishops Synod on 'Justice in the World' mandated the Church everywhere to work towards a more just social and economic order. Archbishop Helder Camara of Brazil was a great inspiration to Stan. He was a bishop who was committed to the poor and the marginalized. Camara once said, "When I



give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist."

Stan would often refer to Camara and to this quote. Interestingly, the Catholic Church will be celebrating 2025 as a Holy Year. In a message released recently by the Vatican, Pope Francis would like that the whole of 2023 be dedicated to the serious study of the Vatican II Documents. Stan studied these documents and lived them. Father Stan questioned the Jesuit Society; he loved the society and his loyalty was unquestionable. He was also pained because he felt that the Jesuits were not sufficiently internalizing the faith-justice mandate of the 32nd General Congregation, which said, "the mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement; for reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another." He constantly expressed his anguish about whom Jesuit educational institutions were catering to. Given what was happening in India and in keeping with the Ignatian vision of the "magis," he felt that the Jesuits as a body had to be more responsive. His vision and mission as a Jesuit could never be faulted. Ever since his incarceration in October 2020 and on his death, the Jesuit Superior-General Father Arturo Sosa has been sending out strong messages of support for the work of Father Stan.

On Jan. 15, 2021, on the hundredth day of Stan's incarceration. Arturo said: "Father Stan dedicated his whole life to the poorest

1. Courtesy to *UCA News*, 6-7-2022.

in the world, the indigenous Adivasi and the Dalits. He is the voice of the voiceless. He has stood before the powerful and told them the truth; he is committed to defending the human rights of minorities.” Father Stan questioned the development model that was being flaunted by the rich, the powerful and other vested interests. In an article written on the Indian website *Scroll*, a short time after Stan’s death last year, Harsh Mander wrote: “Stan Swamy said to us, ‘If you question this form of development, you are anti-development, which is equal to anti-government, which is equal to anti-national. A simple equation. This is why the government calls me a Maoist, although I am completely opposed to Maoist methods, and have nothing to do with them.’”

Father Stan questioned why the Adivasis (tribal people) were being denied their legitimate constitutional rights. His consistent question was: “how long will the Adivasis be victims of systemic oppression?” Just before his arrest, he said, “Over the last two decades, I have identified myself with the Adivasi people and their struggle for a life of dignity and self-respect... In this process, I have clearly expressed my dissent over several policies and laws enacted by the government in the light of the Indian Constitution. I have questioned the validity, legality and justness of several steps taken by the government and the ruling class. If this makes me a ‘deshdrohi’ (terrorist), then so be it. We are part of the process. In a

way, I am happy to be part of this process. I am not a silent spectator, but part of the game and ready to pay the price whatever be it.... I/we must be ready to face the consequences. I would just add that what is happening to me is not unique. Many activists, lawyers, writers, journalists, student leaders, poets, intellectuals and others who stand for the rights of Adivasis, Dalits and the marginalised and express their dissent to the ruling powers of the country are being targeted. Grateful to all who have stood in solidarity with me all these years.”

Father Stan questioned the entire system: the police, the National Investigation Agency, the corporate sector, and the government because of their corrupt, anti-people, anti-poor and other draconian policies. In an article in *News click* (18 June 2019) Stan wrote: “Several intellectuals, artists, writers, journalists, legal professionals, poets, Dalit & Adivasi rights activists, human rights activists have now become suspects in the eyes of the ruling class. They are now invariably called ‘Maoists’, ‘Naxals’, ‘urban Naxals’ etc. Cases, including serious cases such as the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act [UAPA], and Sedition have been foisted on them. Several of them have already been jailed, others are being harassed with raids on their workplaces and residences”.

Father Stan had the courage to question — and to act when he did not get the right answers. He paid the price for it with his life! May we have the courage to emulate him!



Forgiveness of an Angel: St Maria Goretti

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Introduction

St Maria Goretti was born at Corinaldo, Ancona, Italy of a poor family in 1890. In the year 1902, while defending her chastity against a man attempting to violate her, she preferred to die rather than give way and was stabbed 14 times. She was taken to the hospital, but died after forgiving her murderer. St Maria Goretti, who died at the age of 12, was an outstanding example of forgiveness and mercy, completely forgiving the man who ‘attempted to rape her and stabbed her 14 times for refusing to consent to him, one for each time she rejected his advances’. Goretti’s murderer died at the age of 88, having undergone a deep conversion of heart. During his last sickness he kept repeating, “I killed a saint, now I am going to join her in heaven”.

Goretti in a Pool of Blood

It was a hot, humid day in early July. After the meal everyone but Maria went back to their threshing. Maria sat sewing. She was only eleven years old. Her father, Luigi Goretti, had died by then and her mother and brothers had to work in the fields. This little girl was in charge of the household duties. They lived near Anzio, Italy, in a house they shared with Giovanni Serenelli, a widower, and his son, Alessandro, who was nineteen. Alessandro went to Maria’s room and called her but she did not answer, but went on with her sewing. This infuriated

the lustful, passionate youth grabbed the girl dragging her into the kitchen and kicked the door shut. She fought him when he told her his intention. She cried, “No. It’s a sin. God does not want it. You’ll go to hell!” Even being choked by Alessandro, Maria still refused to submit to him, preferring rather to die. Maria Goretti’s mother would always tell her children, “You must never commit sin at any cost”. Indeed Maria was willing to give herself to God at any cost. Alessandro, growing even angrier at her resistance, raised a knife and threatened her. She said, “No, no!” In a rage he struck her again and again with the knife. She shouted for help but the closed door was heavy and the noise of the threshing was loud. No one heard her.

She fell to the floor, and then dragged herself to the door. She opened it as Alessandro ran for his room. She screamed and this made him turn back. Being in a frenzy, he stabbed the girl six more times. Dropping the knife he rushed to his room and locked the door. Alessandro’s father, asleep, did not hear Maria’s shriek, but he woke up to the loud crying of the babies. He jumped up and seeing Maria in a pool of blood, yelled wildly to the threshers.

Merciful Forgiveness of an Angel


Maria’s body was horribly mangled. It was a miracle that she was still alive. She could hardly breathe. Her mother fainted. On being asked who had done this terrible deed, she whispered, “It was Alessandro. He tried to make me do something that is a sin. But he couldn’t make me do it. He couldn’t. I wouldn’t let him.” She was taken to the hospital in a nearby town. The police in the meantime came to get



FORGIVENESS OF AN ANGEL

the defiant Alessandro. A crowd of angry farmers surrounded the house. The police sent for more guards to take him away. The mob wanted to lynch him on the spot. The doctors were astonished that the girl was still alive. Her pain-racked body was covered with blood. They said it was hopeless. They called for the priest. Someone said, "She is an angel." Any day with God is a good day. The little angel prepared herself to go to heaven to see her loving Jesus. But God had a plan for her. As the patron saint of teenage girls and modern youth she was chosen to bring a unique message to the world. Her love for Jesus was great. She had set an example of purity, chastity and love for Jesus to the whole world. Martyred for her desire to preserve her purity, St Maria Goretti is an extraordinary example for young women, particularly at an age in which chastity and modesty is challenged and even mocked. One of the youngest among canonized saints, St Maria Goretti, was only 11 years old at the time of her death.

Maria was burning with fever and despite her suffering she reassured, "I'm all right." Her mother, in tears, gave her the crucifix to kiss and that comforted her. The chaplain enrolled her in the Children of Mary and a blessed medal was hung around her neck on a green ribbon. She kissed the medal often. She forgave Alessandro, as she fervently received Holy Communion for the last time. Maria said, "It is Jesus, whom I shall soon see in heaven." The pain grew worse and she died. Maria said on her death bed, "I want him to be with me in heaven"



Redemption of Alessandro

Immediately after his brutal assault on young Maria Goretti, Alessandro was imprisoned temporarily in Nettuno and then transferred to Regina Coeli prison in Rome to stand trial. Alessandro was sentenced to 30 years in prison. One night, after a priest had come to visit him in prison, Maria came to him in a dream, gave him lilies and offered her forgiveness. He dreamed that he was in a garden with Maria. For each stab Alessandro had given her in life, Maria in the dream handed her murderer one lily - fourteen in all. In his hands, the blossom of each flower turned to white flame. When the dream was over, he woke up a changed man. He no longer resisted his jailers and those sent to help him.

He was so transformed that his good behavior earned him release from prison three years ahead of schedule. He reportedly prayed to Maria every day, and called her "My little saint." Twenty-seven years later, Alessandro was released from prison. The first thing he did was seek out Maria's mother to beg her forgiveness. She said, "If my daughter can forgive him, who am I to withhold forgiveness?" After he asked for her pardon he accompanied her to Christmas Mass in the parish church. There he spoke before the hushed congregation, acknowledging his sin and asking God's forgiveness and the pardon of the community. After serving his sentence, Alessandro took up residence at a Capuchin monastery, working in the garden as a tertiary. Forty years later, on June 24, 1950 Maria was canonized at St Peter's Basilica in Rome, in the presence of her mother and Alessandro whose heart had by now been firmly converted to the Lord.



Reunion of Kindred Spirits: Grand Meeting of Minds and Hearts after the Pandemic

Amira Peter

As the sun rose on Saturday morning, PMI Poona volunteers awakened to a great excitement! After a long hiatus caused by the pandemic's "keeping safe distance", the PMI Poona team of Kolbe Knights was finally meeting in-person for a Refresh & Reunion. New and current volunteers were all invited to a fun-filled day to rebuild old acquaintances and build new relationships.

The day began with a meet and greet, light breakfast and registration. After an Opening Prayer and a brief welcome by Fr. Wilfred V Fernandes, Director of PMI Poona, Michell Pinto a PMI Volunteer and our training facilitator took over. We began with re-discovering ourselves in the context of our service to PMI "who am I?" and "what do I bring to the table?" We then looked at how our personal values that fit in with PMI's core values, bringing them to fruition through the vision and mission of PMI. Next, we explored what it means to work together as a team. All these lively and interactive sessions were conducted through group sharing and learning.

We then took a break for the felicitation of Fr. Wilfred who was celebrating the silver jubilee of his ordination this year. This was followed by a celebratory, fellowship meal

together. Post Lunch, Fr. Wilfred briefly shared the plans and way ahead for PMI Poona. The day reached a high point when we came together in a drum circle, making music together using different instruments. We listened to the rhythm of each other, blending our different and unique sounds to make a wonderful melody together. We learned many things from this beautiful and exhilarating session, including the importance of team work as we all work towards the same goal of serving our brothers and sisters behind bars in a loving and caring manner. After the Vote of thanks for an amazing day led by Michelle, we felicitated and appreciated Anthony Jacob, our steadfast PMI volunteer who kept the PMI flag flying high during the pandemic. He was our ardent foot soldier, our conduit for the fulfillment of critical needs of prisons like sanitization materials, laying to rest the deceased, release & rehabilitation, support of prisoners, etc.

The day concluded with the Holy Mass which we offered as a month's mind for the soul of Mr. Vinod Chettiyar – father of our youngest PMI Poona member. It was a glorious day indeed; spirits uplifted and re-energized, we all left with a renewed commitment to our Lord's call to serve as we fulfill the Scripture, Jn 10:10 "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly".

"The leader is one who knows, desires, and carries out a mission and who simultaneously stimulates others to know, desire and carry out that mission."

**- François-Xavier Nguyen Văn Thuan,
Road of Hope: A Gospel from Prison**

A Life Well-Lived, her Fragrance Lives on Forever - A Tribute to Nancy Misquith

Amira Peter

With a heavy heart, the PMI Poona family bid farewell to our beloved Nancy Misquith as she left for her heavenly abode on 21st June. On this summer solstice day, when new life is waiting to break forth, our dear Nancy has been set free from her earthly pain and suffering to a new and everlasting life with her heavenly Father.

Nancy was a founder member of PMI's Good Shepherd Unit and instrumental in setting its foundation for the years ahead. More recently, when Nancy fell ill, she lovingly adjusted her service, offering to become an ardent Intercessor and Prayer Warrior for PMI. She actively participated in the various intercessory and prayer groups of PMI, praying fervently for our prisoners, victims, their families, our volunteers and various projects. Nancy was a very vibrant and dynamic sister in Christ. She had a serving heart and was always seeking opportunities to serve in the Lord's vineyard with great enthusiasm.

As an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, Nancy brought Holy Communion to the home bounds of her Parish, with a caring and gentle spirit, comforting and helping the families cope with the challenges of being homebound. A vibrant Member of the Good Shepherd



Parish, Nancy served in many other administrative roles, providing literary and liturgical support to the priests as required. Her generosity knew no bounds as she was always looking for ways to reach out to others not only financially but also emotionally. Nancy was deeply rooted in Scripture and relied heavily on prayer in her life especially in her illness.

As I said my goodbye to Nancy, I could hear her whisper consoling words from 2 Timothy 4:7-8 *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."* Nancy is deeply mourned by her husband Nelson, son Sheldon, daughter in law Lisa and her grandson Jaden. Good-bye dear Nancy... till we meet again!



Mop Stick Making Unit Introduced by PMI Volunteers at Sambalpur Prison



PMI Jashpur Donating Moral Education Books to the District Jail Jashpur



PMI Jashpur Unit Donating Carrom Boards to District Jail Jashpur



PMI Jharsuguda Volunteers Meeting with DGP



PMI Maharashtra Volunteers' Training Program



PMI Pune Assisting to Install Snacks Stall for a Released Prisoner



PMI Telangana Meeting



PMI Volunteers Planting Coffee Plants at Kalapeti Central Prison



**Scholarship Distribution by
PMI Chennai**



**Vincent de Paul Society Members
Visiting Kolbe Home**



**Benefactors Visiting to
Kolbe Home**



**Kolbe Home
Birthday Celebration**



**PMI
National Office Grotto**



**PMI Volunteers from West Bengal
Visiting PMI National Office**



**SD Sisters Visiting
PMI National Office**