

## **PRISON MINISTRY SUNDAY**

**August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

### **PASTORAL LETTER**

**Please read this pastoral letter in all the churches on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2009,  
in connection with Prison Ministry Sunday.**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

On this Prison Ministry Sunday, the church once again encourages the believers in Christ to live the words of Jesus, "When I was in prison you came to visit me". There are more than 3, 60,000 Prisoners in our country, languishing in 1397 prisons. The church tries to proclaim through the prison Ministry, the profound dignity of every human person despite of their cruelties, human dignity comes from God our creator, whose image we are all made. Despite their criminal behavior they are longing for love and affection. The thick wall of prison divides the world 'outside' and the world 'inside'. Those outside, they can go out where they want, when they want, meet with friends and relatives, but it is not so inside prison. The prisoners suffer from utter loneliness and helplessness. Love seems far away from their life. It is to such persons Prison Ministry India is reaching out.

When the adulterous woman was brought to Jesus for stoning her to death, Jesus not only challenges people who condemned her, He himself refused to condemn her and said to the woman. "Neither do I condemn you, go and do not sin again" (Jn 8, 9). Today the church invites us to do the same. The volunteers of PMI go regularly to the prisons and teach inmates about the unconditional love and forgiveness of Jesus. PMI recognized by the CBCI, also help the children of prisoners for their education. There are about 28 rehabilitation centers all over the country, and released prisoners are given a chance to renew their life at such centers, where they are formed mentally, spiritually and psychologically. This helps them to come back to the main stream of life. The inmates of rehabilitation centers are settled in marriage. Even a simple help or gesture can even those condemned to death. Our make a great difference in the life of prisoners. The PMI volunteers rekindle the spiritual flame in prisoners, lift them to high moral standards and renew their lives through counselling, cultural program, visiting the families, retreat, prayer, training in skills, free legal aid and the like.

Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to me". With this attitude we go to the prisons and render possible services seeing the image of Christ in each person. Prison Ministry does not entertain any projects or foreign funds. Begging is our style, God's providence our bank account. There are about 6000 volunteers all over the country working for the welfare of prisoners, their children. We invite you my dear brothers and sisters to join with the prison ministry in creating a new society, by being a volunteer of prison ministry, sponsoring a prisoner for

his/her resettlement, education of the children, render financial help for the marriage of the children etc.,

PMI Sunday is celebrated in connection with the feast of St Maximilian Kolbe. He was imprisoned in the Concentration Camp during the IIInd world war. He sacrificed his life for another. Jesus said "there is no greater love than that he lays down his life for others". We will surely be rewarded for the beautiful service we render to our brethren behind the bars.

"When I was in Prison You came to see me... now you enter the kingdom prepared for you".

May Almighty God bless you all!  
Yours in Christ Jesus

+ Most Rev Bp Peter Remigius  
Chairman, Prison Ministry India

## **POSSIBLE LITURGY FOR THE PRISON MINISTRY SUNDAY**

### **Entrance Antiphon**

He has chosen me and sent me to bring Good News to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to announce release to captives and freedom to those in prison. Alleluia!

### **Penitential Rite**

Jesus tells us, I was in prison and you visited me. He commands us to see God in them. He came to this world in search of these lost ones. He was always with them, moving with them, sharing the Good news with them in order to save them. Let us sincerely ask ourselves, how do we see the so-called least, lost and last of the society, specially, the brothers and sisters in prison and their families? How do we judge them?

### **Opening Prayer**

Father of mercy, the secrets of all hearts are known to you alone. You know who is just and you forgive the unjust. Hear our prayers for those in prison. Give them patience and hope in their sufferings and bring them home soon. Bless all the people who are working for them. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the holy spirit one God for ever and ever.

### **First Reading: Is. 61:14**

Psalm

**Response: O Lord, you are good and forgiving**

O Lord you are good and forgiving, full of love to all who call. Give heed, o Lord, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my voice. R..

All the nations shall come to adore you and glorify your name. O Lord, for you are great and so marvelous in deeds, you who alone are God. R..

But you, God of mercy and compassion, slow to anger, O Lord abounding in love and truth, turn and take pity on me. R..

**Second Reading: Gal. 6:1-5**

**Acclamation:**

Alleluia, Alleluia; I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. Alleluia!

**Gospel: Matthew 25:31-40**

**Prayer of Faithful**

**Response: Lord hear our prayer**

Lord, you were an innocent prisoner. You had experienced the plight of a prisoner. We bring before you all our brothers and sister behind the bars for the grace to renew their lives as we pray, your response,

**Lord hear our prayer**

- Lord we pray for the victims of crime in their struggles. Victims of the crime are often ignored by the society and criminal justice system. Lord, give them the courage and people to help them to face the challenges. For this we pray

**Lord hear our prayer**

- Lord we pray for men and women in prisons. They may realize the need of renewing their lives they may make use of all the opportunities in the prison to prepare themselves to be contributive members of the society. For this we pray....

**Lord hear our prayer**

- We shall offer to God all those who care for prisoners such as police, prison to staff judges, advocates and political leaders. They may carry out their responsibilities with justice, patience and kindness. For this we pray

### **Lord hear our prayer**

Lord, see all those who are imprisoned unjustly: They suffer the bitterness, frustration and revenge. Lord help them to get fast release. For this we pray.

### **Lord hear our prayer**

- Lord, give the spirit of wisdom and understanding to the prison ministry volunteers who minister love and forgiveness to those who have done wrong. For this we pray

### **Lord hear our prayer**

- Lord we pray for the universal church. May the Pope, Bishops, priests and consecrated people be the powerful instruments of your liberating love and shall be helpful to the brethren behind bars to rejuvenate the image and likeness of You in them. For this we pray.

### **Lord hear our prayer**

### **Concluding Prayer**

Loving Father, you are the happiest when we your children reach to you. Stretch out your healing hands and touch all brethren behind bars and help them to lead a renewed life. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord, Amen.

### **Prayer over the Gifts**

Lord, accept the gifts we offer you in faith and may this offering release peace and love to all who are in the prisons. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

### **Communion Antiphon**

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

### **Communion Rite**

Lord, you have refreshed us with your body and blood. Help us to offer our love and friendship to those in prisons and to all those in need, that we may be united one day with all your people in the land of living. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

## **PRISON MINISTRY: A CALL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

"Speak to God about prisoners before you speak about God to prisoners"

Prison Ministry India is a national voluntary organization working for the release, renewal and rehabilitation of prisoners as well as women in distress. Jesus said, I was in prison and you visited me. Though this was the ministry of Jesus from the

beginning of the church it was not given much importance in our church. Jesus was for the sinners and for the downtrodden, but in our ministries, we still forget to take care of the strayed ones and keep them away from our society. It was true that some voluntary groups and individuals were interested in visiting prisons and doing some kind of service to the prisoners in certain extend. But it got a new phase when some seminarians took initiative to take challenges to bring changes in the life of the prisoners. It was really a divine inspiration that prompted Bro Varghese Karipery and Bro Francis Kodiyan MCBS to take leadership in forming a group specially dedicated for the service of prisoners. It was truly divine, that is why it could grow so fast and become a national organization having thousands of volunteers rendering their selfless service in bringing up the lost brethren of our society.

We have always experienced God's special intervention in this ministry. The initiatives of the seminarians were very much appreciated and KCBC recognized it as church's ministry very soon. We got the recognition from CBCI in the year 2000. Now it has become a national organization having around 850 units and more than 6000 volunteers. In the year 2002 we could achieve a great honor by receiving the Spirit of Assisi National award for its humanitarian and spiritual service for the betterment of our suffering brethren. Number of priests, nuns, seminarians, laymen and women are engaged in this ministry. We have established 28 rehabilitation centers for the welfare of the released prisoners and the children of prisoners. The national office is at Bangalore and we have four regional offices in different parts of our country. All our activities are done with the help of our well-wishers and benefactors. Prison Ministry India does not have any foreign fund or projects.

It was again the divine intervention that in 2004 the Prison Ministry India got the permission from CBCI to celebrate the Sunday before August 15 as Prison Ministry Sunday. The theme of this year's Prison Ministry Sunday is "Let us come together to make a difference". This is a day set apart to pray for our suffering brethren behind the bars. People are still keeping these unfortunate ones away from the society. We even consider them as animals or good for nothing. But many of them are waiting for a chance to bring changes in their life. The life in the prison has melted the hard heart of many. But if we don't give them a chance in the proper time they may again fall into the same fate and lose their whole life.

Yes, Prison ministry Sunday is also an occasion to give awareness to the public about this particular ministry, our responsibility to give them a chance. Because we are specially loved by God and we are saved by the precious blood of Jesus. Though we have gone wrong and done mistakes, Jesus has always forgiven us and given chances for us to live again. Same Jesus have commanded us "Forgive others as I have forgiven you". There is a great blessing in loving these unwanted ones because Jesus

says, "If you love only those who love you what greatness do you have? Again, he says, if you greet only those who greet you what greatness do you have? Instead, you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you". Yes, we are called to make a difference, difference in the life of an unwanted one.

Prisoners are not our enemies. Very often many of them are victims of situations. The only difference is that "they are inside and we are outside". It is God's providence for us that we are safe. Because, he loves and forgives us unconditionally. We need to show this love and forgiveness to those people who are suffering in the society. By doing this service to the suffering human beings, we are fulfilling the command of Jesus as well as getting the reward from the good Lord. Because Jesus says, "whenever you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it for me".

Yes, we are in need of your help to help the least brethren of our society. The national co-ordination work, functioning of the regional offices, legal help and release of the prisoners, maintenances in the rehabilitation centers education of the children of prisoners, marriage of women inmates, and various training programs all depend on your generous contributions. Once a beggar putting a small coin in our collection box for prisoners said, "thank God, I am a beggar, but not in the prison". Life in the prison is pathetic and unimaginable. Let us come together to make a difference to bring them back to the main stream of the society by extending our helping hands towards them. "Your mite is our might, come forward, may your small contribution make a difference in the life of one of these least brethren". God bless you all.

Fr Josekutty Kalayil MST, National Director, Prison Ministry India Prison Ministry India, P.B 3410, I main, 11th cross, Venkatapura, Koramangala, Bangalore -34, Karanataka, Ph:080-25520859, 09448484960, E-mail: [pmi2005@rediffmail.com](mailto:pmi2005@rediffmail.com), [prisonvoice@rediffmail.com](mailto:prisonvoice@rediffmail.com), Web: [prisonministryindia.org](http://prisonministryindia.org)