

“REFORM TO REINTEGRATE”

PRISON MINISTRY SUNDAY



9 August 2020

PASTORAL LETTER

*This Pastoral Letter to be read out either on 9th August 2020
or on any convenient Sunday as decided by the Bishop*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Mathew Albin born and brought up in a Catholic fishermen family was 7 years old when his father was brutally murdered at sea. Hearing the terrible news, he rushed towards the shore and wept bitterly lying on his father's lifeless body. He grew lonely in the malicious world of treachery and became a street boy, wandering through the streets crying for food and craving for love. The street gangs dragged him into the world of crimes and cruelties and in course of time Albin became a notorious criminal, a hired killer much in demand, a threat to society and a challenge to the police department. However, by the providence of God he was miraculously rescued and transformed through the intervention of Fr George Kuttickal MCBS one of the pioneers of Prison Ministry India. For more than two decades Mathew Albin has been serving as the director of Shantibhavan a home for the aged, mental patients, wandering beggars and the abused. With the motto of helping, healing and caring Albin takes care of more than 100 destitute. PMI could narrate thousands of similar stories of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of hardcore criminals. Today when the Catholic Church celebrates the Prison Ministry Sunday let us remember and pray for prisoners all over the world especially the 4.5 lakhs of languishing in the 1412 Indian prisons, their families, victims, the officers and the volunteers who serve them.

Pope Francis

On November 7-8, 2019 Pope Francis convened an international conference of worldwide prison chaplains on Integral Human Development and Catholic Prison Pastoral Care at the Pontifical Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development chaired by His Eminence Peter Cardinal Turkson. During this conference Pope Francis urged those who take care of prisoners to change their outlook and approach in treating prisoners. He asked us to offer prisoners better opportunities for reformation, development and reintegration. For real social reintegration begins by guaranteeing opportunities for development, education, decent work, access to healthcare, as well as generating public spaces for civic participation. If they are prevented from regaining the full exercise of their dignity, they will once again be exposed to the dangers of violence, insecurity, and desperation. Those prisoners, who already served their sentences for the evil committed, should not be subjected to a new social punishment with rejection and indifference. Such aversion exposes them to falling back on the same mistakes and coming back to prison.

Reform to Reintegrate

Anchoring on Pope Francis' invocation to reform and reintegrate prisoners, Prison Ministry India which works under the justice, peace and development commission of the CBCI has taken this year's Prison Ministry Sunday theme as Reform to Reintegrate.

At the very outset I would like to remind you dear brothers and sisters, one of the significant teachings of Jesus, “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny” (Mt 5, 22-23). Experience teaches us that it is better not enter into prison. Prevention is better than cure.

Eightfold Path for Prisoners’ Reformation

Through the last 34 years of service to prisoners PMI developed an eightfold path to reform, rehabilitate and reintegrate prisoners. This reformation methodology begins with outreach. PMI has more than 8000 volunteers who outreach the 1412 prisons in India. You are also welcome to do prison ministry in your area. Very humbly may I remind the parish priests, trustees, religious and pious association members to take care of prisoners, their victims and families. For Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Lk 19, 10). PMI endeavors to release the deserving prisoners through legal assistance, facilitating premature release, and providing financial assistance to the needy.

Repentance and Reconciliation

The paramount task of PMI is to lead prisoners to repentance, reconciliation and reformation. As we know the most fundamental teaching of Jesus was to repent. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Mt 3, 2). “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18, 3). As St John the Baptist preached “Bear fruit worthy of repentance” (Mt 3, 8). True repentance leads to reconciliation with God, society, family and self. Here comes the relevance of Jesus’ teaching: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5, 23-24). Repentance and reconciliation are acts of grace and a spiritual warfare therefore I kindly request your valuable prayer and fasting for the fruitfulness of the PMI reformatory ventures. “For nothing will be impossible with God” (Lk 1, 37).

Rehabilitation and Reintegration

You may know that PMI has many homes to rehabilitate the released prisoners, both for men, women, children and juveniles. If you know some released prisoners who need special attention you can approach the directors of PMI rehabilitation centers. PMI also has many homes for prisoners’ children both for boys and girls in different states and are always ready to welcome more children in need. Your recommendations in this regard will highly be appreciated. I take this opportunity to extend my most warm thanks and highest appreciation to those priests, brothers and religious who serve at these homes and all those who collaborate with them spiritually and financially. PMI also assist the released prisoners with their reintegration. We facilitate them with job, marriage, family settlements, and even assisting them in constructing their houses. Like Mathew Albin thousands of released prisoners have been reintegrated into the main stream of society and I earnestly ask you to continue your prayer and support so that this challenging mission may continue to liberate and reintegrate many more.

Redemption

Reformation and reintegration reach its summit with redemption. The ultimate goal of PMI is the redemption of the lost. Jesus came not merely to seek and liberate prisoners from their bondages and dungeons but to save them. The story of the good thief illustrates this very well. The moment the good thief, Saint Dismas said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”. Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Lk 23, 42-43). The fundamental goal of our life is to return to God, return to paradise. Prison ministry is the best and surest way to realize this goal. “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25, 34-40).

Conclusion

Through the celebration of Prison Ministry Sunday, the Church declares that prisoners are our brothers

and sisters and she is ready to provide them a second chance if they are ready to repent, reconcile and renew themselves. Dear brethren behind the bars, we love you, we are with you, we pray for you and we are ready to do whatever is possible for your reformation and reintegration. Dear brothers and sisters, prison visits are equivalent to visiting Jesus for he said, "I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25, 36). During these Covid19 pandemic days we pray for you in a special way. Your continued financial support for the prison ministry will highly be appreciated. PMI does the ministry trusting in the divine providence and does not promote foreign projects. Begging is the style of PMI. Our volunteers will stand outside the church with buckets expecting your collaboration. In case you need bank details, please find it in the brochure. 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 and I am sure Jesus who came in search of the lost will bless you abundantly. I acknowledge and appreciate the PMI volunteers for their profound commitment in reforming and reintegrating prisoners, which all of us know, is one of the most challenging tasks. May Saint Maximilian Kolbe the patron of PMI intercede for the fruitfulness of the ministry and may Mary our blessed mother be always there to protect you.



Bishop Allwyn D'Silva
Chairman, Prison Ministry India

LITURGY

Entrance Antiphon

Jesus our master identified himself with the people in prison by saying that "I was in prison and you visited me". You include every one as your sheep. Lord, give us the grace to include all our brothers and sisters whom we have excluded as disposable and worthless.

Penitential Rite

Once a judgment has been made upon a prisoner, for the general public the matter is closed. But for God it is not a closed chapter, it takes a "renewed mind" to forgive your enemies and do good to those who despitefully use you. It takes a "renewed mind" to visit prisoners especially with very deplorable living conditions. It certainly takes a "renewed mind" to provide housing, clothing and food for people who have raped, maimed, robbed, abused and destroyed the lives of other members of the society. While the normal or natural mind would prescribe a punitive response to crime and criminals, a "spiritual mind will prescribe redemptive response without minimizing the pain, horror and negative consequences of the criminal act. Let us sincerely ask ourselves do we have the same heart as Our Master has?

Collect

Merciful father, you know the secret of all hearts, the just and unjust deeds we have committed. Hear our prayers for those in prison. Give them patience and hope in their sufferings and bless their desire to return home soon. Bless Lord all the people who are working for their good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of Holy Spirit one God forever and ever.

First Reading: Ezekiel 34 11-15

Response: The Lord is Compassion and Love

My soul, give thanks to the lord, all my beings, bless his holy name. My soul, give thanks to the Lord and never forget all his blessings. **R...**

It is he who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with love and compassion. **R...**

The lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy. His wrath will come to an end; he will not be angry forever. **R...**

For as the heavens are high above the earth so strong is his love for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west so far does he remove our sins. **R....**

Second Reading: Hebrew 13: 1-8

Acclamation:

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

Gospel : Lk 15: 1-7

Prayer of the Faithful

Cel. Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus shows great compassion towards the sinners and the poor. Let us therefore pray that we will be guided by the Holy Spirit to show our compassion towards others saying,

Response: Lord, Graciously 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. Let us pray to the Lord.
- Lord, you were an innocent prisoner. You had experienced the plight of a prisoner. We bring before you all our brothers and sisters behind the bars with their mental torture and physical discomforts. We request your blessings upon them and their families. Bless the jail authorities to be kind, gentle and understanding towards the inmates. Let us pray to the Lord.
- Lord, we ask your blessings upon all the volunteers of prison ministry who dedicate their time and energy for the least, lost and last. Jesus our Good Shepherd, we ask your guidance and protection always upon them and in their ministry. Let us pray to the Lord.

- Lord, we pray for all those who are wrongly accused and imprisoned. Lord as you know, they are undergoing a lot of agony and bitterness within them. Merciful God, graciously bless them with positive self-realization and legal assistance that they may be released fast. Let us pray to the Lord.

(Pause to pray for personal and community needs)

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

Prayer Over the Gifts

We offer you, O Lord, the sacrifice of reconciliation and praise, that, being moved to compassion, you may both pardon our offences and those in prison and direct our wavering hearts and minds. Through Christ our Lord.

Communion Antiphon

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

Prayer After Communion

Grant us, merciful God, that, receiving in this gift the forgiveness of sins, we may be able by your grace to avoid sinning from now on and to serve you in the least, lost and last of the society. Through Christ our Lord.

BANK DETAILS

A/c Name	:	Prison Ministry India
Bank	:	South Indian Bank
Branch	:	Koramangala
A/C No	:	0416053000001419
IFSC Code	:	SIBL0000416

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