



PRISON VOICE

September 2018

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Issue 1

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹ 20/-

Life Imprisonment

is not a

**Lifeless
Imprisonment**

With Best Complements



From- Holy Cross Sr.Sc.School Ialkhadan Bilapur (C.G)

**For the 12th National Conference of
Prison Ministry India**

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PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY

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Are you willing?

"Help a Child of a Prisoner

Prevent a Potential

Criminal"

80% of the children of

prisoners are definite

*potential criminals unless
somebody takes care of them.*

*Prison Ministry India has
begun a scheme to educate
1000 children of prisoners,*

by giving

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

*Please send your valuable
contribution.*

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Just because some people
make bad choices
Does not mean they are bad



Sr. Lini Sheeja MSC
Chief Editor

Freedom is not our gift to the world. It is God's gift to humanity. Everyone longs for freedom because we were created for freedom. But many a time we are controlled by forces internal or external to us. When we or others try to control us, our life becomes nothing. Prison life is regulated. For every minute and for every step there are rules to be followed. There is advisory for every mundane affair and minute detail like whom to talk to and whom not to, what to do and what not to do, how to act and behave and how not to.

The brethren behind the bars are deprived of their human freedom which they long for. Prisoner within the four walls reflect on many questions. Physical custody and separation from their loved ones make them lose hope. We feel suffocated when we are away from our own homes and live in a place which is not ours. We try to pack off as early as possible and get back to our shelter. If we go for a trip we buy many gifts for our dear ones, our imaginations running riot.

Today, lakhs of prisoners are behind the bars, many of them on life sentences who have to serve time in prison for years. As we had chosen the topic of 'Life Sentence' I had the chance to speak to some life sentence prisoners. They said

that when the sentence was passed their life had shattered. Some said to me that they had not wanted to commit the crime; circumstances made them act in a way that branded them as criminals. God looked upon all that he had made, and indeed, it was very Good (Gen 1:31), if so how can God create a 'Criminal'. No mother gives birth to a child to make him/her criminal. Every mother or father invests a lot of time, money and take interest in nurturing their children to bring them up as 'good' persons. Just because they made bad choices, they are not bad.

Life imprisonment does not mean lifeless imprisonment. There is life, there is hope. While the life sentence prisoner serves the term inside the prison the family members, the mother, father, wife or husband, the children, grandchildren and all the loved ones wait outside with a lot of hope. They count every minute, just waiting for their return. 'One day he/she will return' is the thought which energizes the family members to get up every morning. They accept infinite disappointment, but never lose hope. A single thread of hope is still a very powerful thing which gives the prisoners and their children life. Let your hopes, not your hurts, shape your future.

It was a simple promise that I made 26 years ago and now it has become a strong commitment to Jesus and a small sacrifice for Jesus.



Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan LLM,
National Coordinator & Secretary to C.B.C.I
for Prison Ministry India

We had gone for the Prison Ministry Sunday Mass to Our Lady of Velankanni Church, Yelahanka New Town, Bangalore. Fr. Amal, the parish priest gave us tea and snacks. However he was not taking any coffee or tea with us. "Don't you drink tea or coffee?" I asked. He said, "I don't drink tea, coffee or any other drinks." "How long has it been since you started this?" I inquired. "I stopped 26 years ago", he mentioned. "Is there any special reason for it?" I inquired.

He said, "It was all a simple promise; the day I joined the seminary I made a simple promise in the chapel. As I had decided to become a priest, I promised to God in front of a statue of Jesus, I would sacrifice my coffee, tea and drinks for the Lord; the last

26 years I kept my promise. For some time it was a great strain, but today it has become a total commitment and a sacrifice for the Lord. This little promise has become a 26 years old tree; I thank the Lord for the strength that he has given me to continue this sacrifice." Our little sacrifices

help us to make bigger commitments. The commitment to a priestly life should be always supported by many little sacrifices. Unless we are able to do many little sacrifices for/towards our call, either to priesthood, sisterhood or to married life we may lose our strength and conviction. The small roots help the big tree to stand up high towards the sky. If we forego these simple roots in our lives, we may easily fall into different temptations in our lives.

Any life demands a lot of small sacrifices to keep our life worthy of God and the people we serve. It is told that there are a lot of differences between promise and commitment. A promise is the first step that we make to others and often it is to show others. The promise has to turn

into commitment. Commitment is always made to ourselves. There is no need of showing to others. A committed person needs no one to watch them. We should try to graduate from promise to commitment in our lives. We should not forget the little sacrifices which are very essential for a



total commitment. Those little sacrifices always go unnoticed by others, but they are extremely essential to our lives. The roots of the tree are unnoticed by others but the tree cannot exist without those roots.

I would like to share another experience with you. I went to collect the children of our Kolbe Home, the rehabilitation centre in Bangalore, from school. I was waiting for the children at the school. The first child who came towards the vehicle was Hari, studying in UKG. As he came first to the vehicle, I told him,

"You are the first." "No Father, I am not; God is first, next is you and third is me," said Hari. I was surprised by his answer. The young child is aware that God is first in all things, which I often forget in my life. God can teach us important lessons even through a small child. I thanked God for Kolbe Home and their formation. The way they are trained and raised mould their thinking to that level. Let us position God first, collaborators second, and ourselves third in our lives.

Release Programme at Bangalore Central Jail, Parappana Agrahara

Seventy-nine prisoners from across the State were released for good conduct at the Bangalore Central Jail, Parappana Agrahara in the presence of Dr G. Parameshwara, Home Minister of Karnataka, on 9 September 2018. Twenty-eight prisoners from Bangalore, eighteen from Mysore, eight from Belagavi, fourteen from Kalaburagi, five from Bellari, four from Vijayapura and two from Dharwad were released on that day. Mr Ganesh (62), a retired havildar from the Indian Army, looked up at the open sky for a few seconds and took a deep breath as soon as his name was read out by the prison official. Convicted for life in a murder case in 2006, he had served 13 years in prison before he was released from the Bangalore Central Prison in Parappana Agrahara for good conduct along with the others from across the State on Sunday. A released prisoner who was asked to share his experience and punishment while in prison said that he did not experience the punishment; rather it was his family and his near and dear ones who had suffered the punishment of his being away from them for years because of the wrong he had committed. Additional Director-General of Police (Prisons) N.S. Megharikh handed out bouquets to the released prisoners.



A. Jesu Raja
Secretary, PMI, Tamil Nadu

LIFE SENTENCE

Life sentence means, "a punishment of life imprisonment or of imprisonment for a specified long period".

Life sentence is usually awarded to those who commit murder for gain (Sec. 302 of IPC). There are a lot of ideas about life sentence floating around – Life sentence is 14 years or 20 years. But these are all misconceptions. The Supreme Court has cleared all these misconceptions by the Judgment of the Bench of Justices, K. S. Radhakrishnan and Madan B. Lokur, that Life imprisonment implies a jail term for the convict's entire life. The convict undergoing life imprisonment is expected to remain in custody till the end of his life, subject to any remission granted by the appropriate government. In the Supreme Court judgment Criminal Appeal No. 490-490 of 2011, dated 20th November 2012, Point 70 says, "The nature of a life sentence is incarceration until death, judicial sentence of imprisonment for life cannot be in jeopardy merely because of the long accumulation of remissions" (emphasis given by the Judges).

Section 433 A of the Cr P C reads as follows:

433A Restriction on Powers of remission or commutation in certain cases: Notwithstanding anything contained in Section 432, where a sentence of imprisonment for life is imposed on conviction of a person for an offence for

which death is one of the punishments provided by law, or where a sentence of death imposed on a person has been commuted under section 433 into one of imprisonment for life, such person shall not be released from prison unless he had served at least fourteen years of imprisonment.

When we visit prisons we come across inmates who have spent many years in prisons and there are also old aged and handicapped inmates. For these three categories we presented a memorandum to the honourable governor of Tamilnadu for premature release.

Due to the continuous effort and with the prayers of many people the Government of Tamilnadu issued a GO no. GO (Ms) No. 64 dated 01/02/2018 for premature release. The GO says, "The Life Convicts who have completed 10 years of actual imprisonment as on 25/02/2018 and the life convicts who are aged 60 years and above and who have completed 5 years of actual imprisonment on 25/02/2018 including those who were originally sentenced to death by the Trial court and modified to life sentence by the Appellate court (other than those whose convictions have been commuted) may be considered for premature release subject to satisfaction of conditions. The Life Convict prisoners who have completed 20 years of their actual imprisonment as

on 25/02/2018 may be considered for premature release, subject to satisfaction of conditions. The Life convict prisoners of the following categories of medical infirmities may be considered for premature release based on the State Medical Board report."

We gave the petition for the three categories namely long term prisoners, old age prisoners and mentally and physically sick prisoners. All the three categories are being taken into consideration. There were about 1500 inmates in the list who are about to be released. The process of release is not done all together, but in batches. There are some inmates who do not have anyone to welcome them back in society. We, the

Prison Ministry, are their relatives and welcome them to our Kolbe Home.

This Kolbe Home is a short-stay home for released prisoners, to identify their talents and to place them back in society. We also identify their relatives if any are left and reconcile them with the released prisoners.

Those who come out of prison after a long gap of many years find it very difficult to cope with the current world; because they see a different world in prison and what they see here is different. We counsel them to become a part of society with prayers and the blessings of the Divine presence in the Eucharist.



Submission of Petition for Premature Release of Life Sentence Prisoners to Hon'ble Governor Banwarilal Purohit, Govt. of Tamilnadu by PMI Tamilnadu Team.



Liberating touch of God




Sr. Adele SCCG

I have been serving the brethren in Central Prison, Bangalore from 2004 as a volunteer of Prison Ministry India. During these past 14 years, I have been part of the lives of many inmates of the prison. Some of them were fortunate to get bail after conviction, whereas some of the life convicts were released only when their punishment was reduced by the High Court. Several others were fortunate to get premature release on the basis of good conduct with the recommendation of the Prison Advisory Board, appointed by the Home Ministry of Karnataka Government. As a member of this Board, I had the pleasure of recommending inmates with good conduct and helping them get release.

We call People who are in prison in white uniform "convicts." Some of them are life convicts while some others are convicted for a short period. The term "convict" denotes, "A person serving a sentence in prison." They have been judged guilty by the Court. In the last 14 years of my life serving the brethren behind the bars, I had met several convicts who allegedly had not been involved in the crime they were accused of. Those with good financial background might escape the conviction, but a majority of them who are from low economic backgrounds get convicted.

The main concern of any volunteer of Prison Ministry should be to assist in the inner transformation of prisoners during the period of imprisonment before they are released from prison. During my daily visits to the prison, I see that a good many inmates of the prison are frustrated and are in distress, because they are in bondages. Many of them are not able to accept their present situation of being in prison. They nurse within themselves feelings of guilt, anger, hatred, and some of them hold grudges against those persons who were responsible for their imprisonment. As a result, they are dominated by a strong urge to take revenge and they long to get a chance to retaliate. These negative feelings should be replaced by willingness to accept. If they had been guilty, seek forgiveness from God and from those who were victims of their misdeeds, and attain a state of mind to forgive all those who had hurt them. Otherwise they would continue to live with these negative feelings. In the long run they will fall into a life of crime again.

We need to focus on their inner release, morality and spirituality before they go out of the prison cells. If a released prisoner could live a life based on the right values after his release, he would be able to take

the right decisions in life and gain the inner freedom to choose what is right and morally good for him and for others. They should be released from the wrong understanding of what is true freedom.

When I recall my experience in the ministry with these rejected brethren in the prison, memory of several people who passed through their prison life, come before me. Some of them, who were radically reformed during their prison life, loom large in my mind. Faces of some of them stand etched in the corridor of my memory, because after being transformed during the period of imprisonment, they have become not only torch bearers, but have become torches themselves today; leading exemplary lives in society, helping erring brethren inside and outside prison.

There was a prisoner who was a rowdy. He was known popularly as "Long Shiva" because he was a dacoit who carried a long iron rod with him whenever he went with his gang. In prison too he was a leader who was trusted by the Jail authorities; he would be taken along with the jailors as their guard during rounds. One of his friends introduced him to me and I came to know that he was born in a Catholic family, and his baptismal name was Vincent. He got the nick name "Long Shiva" from his gang. He was unhappy in spite of all that he had acquired before being imprisoned and was on the verge of despair. It was at this juncture that he was brought to me by one of his friends. I encouraged him to attend the prayer meeting being held in the prison chapel and to listen to God's word.

Those were the days when Vincent dwelt deep on God's love, his forgiveness and mercy. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life." He felt the desire to turn to the Lord in repentance. In prayer, he experienced the unconditional love of God and he prepared himself for his first confession at the age of 30. He received his first Holy Communion and Confirmation when our Archbishop visited the prison. Thus the good Lord touched and changed Long Shiva the dacoit, into Vincent.

It is God who created us and sustains us. He gives us the **liberating touch** and sets us free from all evil habits and tendencies that lead us to a life of crime. Thus Vincent, who was known as "Long Shiva"- the rowdy in the crime world, came to be known by his real name Vincent. When he was released, his parents accepted him with great joy. During the first few weeks after his release he avoided meeting his gang and avoided the danger of being influenced by them. He got married and is now living happily with his family as a good Catholic spreading the joy of the renewed life he experiences.

I am grateful to the Lord who called me to this ministry and entrusted me with the service for the neglected folk of society, to rekindle their faded hopes. "The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers in to the harvest" (Lk 10: 2).

Your past is just a lesson, not a life sentence

Life Sentenced



Sr. Joyce SJC,
Coordinator, Salem - Tamil Nadu.

“No one’s born a prisoner by birth. All are God’s children, only situations and circumstances make a man a prisoner”

Man enjoys the season of spring but unfortunately becomes a life sentenced prisoner. Falls in love and gets married. He experiences joy and his life is a bed of roses. After 3 years of married life he becomes a “life prisoner.”

DESPAIR AND DISTRESS OF A LIFE SENTENCED PRISONER.

If a person commits a crime, people accuse him of all kinds of offences and finally demand that he be hanged or put behind the bars till his death. Custodial tortures ranging from assault to various types of death are not uncommon.

STUDYING CRIME

The government has enforced certain laws to reduce crime in society but it is a nightmare. There is a need to find the cause for crime, rectify the matter and only then could crime be stopped or avoided. For example a dispute about a piece of land could be settled in the police station to avoid further conflict between the two parties.

PROBLEMS FACED BY A LIFE SENTENCED PRISONER (HEALTH)

Firstly, he suffers untold agony; secondly, his immediate family loses the breadwinner

and security. Thirdly his relatives and friends are put under stress and suffering. Fourthly, the community at large suffers humiliation and disgrace. Lastly, he loses his dignity and self-respect.

He is confined within the four walls of the prison and is beaten up by the cops in prison very brutally. Sometimes he is also crippled physically and psychologically.

EMOTIONAL IMBALANCE

1. The person feels guilt for his crimes and suffers psychologically for many years.
2. Lifers often say it is better to die than to live.
3. A life convict normally suffers imprisonment for life, reckoned as the equivalent of 20 years for some, more than 25 years for others.
3. He regrets his momentary impatience which forced him to commit the crime.
4. He longs and waits for an opportunity for some good-hearted people to release him from behind the bars.
5. The future plans - education and employment of his children - are in jeopardy.

MY EXPERIENCE: - To further understand the trauma of those under life sentence I would like to share with you the experience

of one of the convicts, Suresh (name changed). He has now spent nearly 27 years in the Salem prison. He had a very good-natured wife and they were living happily in Dharamapuri, with their two children – a four-year-old girl, and a two-year-old boy. Suresh had a lot of friends and he was also a member of one of the government parties. In 1989, because of his friends' influence, he joined them and murdered an opposing party member. The police came and took them to the police station, never giving them time to attend to their wives and children. After the formalities were completed, they were prosecuted and sentenced to life in the year 1991. But after spending a few years in prison, his friends were released and they resettled with their families. Now Suresh is left alone, waiting for his friends, hoping that they would support him. But to his surprise they never came for him. From 1997 onwards his children were taken care of by the PMI and the Bethel Institution. Now the girl is married herself and has two small kids. The boy is yet to be married. Suresh is in prison, serving a life sentence. At times he is depressed and has no hope of a future. He has also developed a nerve-related problem in the brain. His question is when will he be released? Who will take care of his wife? Will he be able to get a chance to re-live with his wife and children, etc.?

What is our response to these.....??

REFORMATION OR REBIRTH

The government could give a chance to such prisoners, counsel them for reform, and put them back in society. For it is we who have put them in this state of mind!

He should be shown mercy and given common forgiveness, as according to the

scripture Jesus said, "Woman, I too won't judge you" even when she was condemned for the crime by everyone else.

What is our role and commitment towards the prisoners?

God works in mysterious ways and sometimes puts people in our lives for a reason. Volunteers and councilors can come forward and make them realize the value of life and that they are "precious in the sight of God." Humanity becomes crippled when there is no hope in oneself.

We as PMI volunteers provide them with a ray of hope, by praying for them, and by being with them in their loneliness and by listening to them, and making them understand that we are their own brothers and sisters.

"If CHRIST SHOULD COME TODAY"

Is my own house set in order, If Christ should come today,

What tasks should be unfinished, If I should call the way;

Suppose an Angel told me at early morning light,

Your Lord will come this evening; you will go home at night.

Would ecstasy be clouded by thoughts I'm done.

The seed I might have scattered, The crowns I might have won.

The soul I meant to speak to, The press in prayers I meant to spend in prayer. Press upon my heart.

Oh! Eyes which have no sight, In vain may be you are weeping should Christ return tonight.

You don't have to be perfect to be amazing



Bro. Antony Casimeer, SM
Marianist, Bangalore

Struggles of Life

A young man asked Socrates the secret of success. Socrates told the young man to meet him near the river the next morning. They met. Socrates asked the young man to walk with him into the river. When the water reached up to their necks, Socrates took the young man by surprise by pushing his head under water. The man struggled to get out but Socrates was strong and held him firmly until he started turning blue. The young man struggled hard and finally managed to surface. The first thing he did was to gasp and take a deep breath.

Socrates asked: "What was it you wanted the most when you were there?" The man replied: "Air." Socrates said, "That's the biggest secret of success. When you want success as badly as you wanted air, you will get it. There is no other secret."

This short story reveals that struggles and failures are very important and are integral parts of life. How many of us could say, "I do not have any struggles in life?" None of us can say that we do not have struggles. Indeed, it is very true that we all experience some sort of struggle in our life. Every human being has their own share of struggles and failures. It is very important to acknowledge how we deal with them for that shows how strong are our will and determination. Struggles are there in every field of life, either in religious life or married life. Everything depends on how a person faces difficult times and how s/he meets these challenges. An obvious question true for everyone is, "Am I afraid of life's struggles and challenges? Or am I ready to welcome the struggles with optimism?"

We all fall short in our struggles and some of us are tired of the unlimited pain life offers us. How many of us realize that our struggles are a pathway to a better and more meaningful life. Without struggles life becomes spiritless. There is a beautiful saying that God spoke to human beings **"If you never felt pain, then how would you know that I'm a Healer? If you never went through difficulties, how would you know that I'm the Deliverer?"** We come across many people who went through many struggles in life and later went on to become famous. A good example is of Job from the Old Testament of the Bible. Job was a poor and simple man who always remained faithful to God. God decided to test his faith. Job was given everything in life but then had to go through extreme tests/hardships. He had to choose either to cling on to the perishable wealth of this world or remain faithful to the will and love of God. Finally, he endured and overcame the difficult times and remained faithful to the Word of God. God lifted him up to a greater level. If Job had run away from the struggles, I am very certain that he would have lost the imperishable gift of God's love. He was very

patient with every struggle that God put him through. Now the question is does God allow struggles in order to test us? Certainly the answer is 'Yes.' We see in the book of Psalms (11:5), "He examines the good and the wicked alike." God gives us many tests and exams in our lives. Unfortunately, most of us fail in these tests by relying on our human strength. The person, who completely trusts in God alone, never fails even if s/he undergoes unbearable hardships. One thing that we must remember is: God never gives us struggles which we cannot overcome. He does give us difficult times which we can

bear. The difficult times are not to punish us, but to teach us valuable lessons through that experience. Finally God asks to all who read this article, **"If your life was perfect, without struggles then what would you need me for?"** If you really need the presence of God in your life, then be ready to accept the struggles that life offers you.

"People will hate you, rate you, shake you and break you. But how strong you stand is what makes you." - **Unknown**

May God bless you all!

Karnataka- PMS- Report

The Prison Ministry Sunday was celebrated with an Orientation programme for the volunteers at Shimoga diocese. 16 nuns who act as volunteers gathered at the Bishop's House where the bishop, the Most Rev. Dr Francis Serrao gave a detailed explanation on how spirituality, a way of being, influences our expression in service. It was very useful for our Ministry as religious volunteers. During the talk he also appreciated the hard-work put in by the volunteers. Sr. Theresa Mascarenhas, the Secretary of the Karnataka State Unit



spoke on best practices of the Prison Ministry. While dealing with the dos and don'ts, she answered many questions of the new volunteers. The participants expressed that the class was very motivational and useful for their continued service in the 4 jails that come under the Shimoga diocesan jurisdiction. We had a meaningful Holy Eucharist celebrated on this occasion and the whole diocese observed this day as Prison Ministry Sunday and prayed for the prisoners and volunteers.

Feast of St. Maximilian Kolbe

Date: 1st September 2018

Venue: National Office and Kolbe Home

Time: 10.30am to 3.00pm

Invitees: Fr. Justin, General of Rosarian Congregation, Fr. Paschal OCD, neighbouring communities (Nuns and Priests), neighbours, PMI Bangalore Unit Members, Jeevodaya members, benefactors and well-wishers.

All the invitees started arriving from 10.00am and refreshment was served for them. People were introduced to each other and they interacted informally. At 10.45am the programme started with the welcome speech by Fr. Sebastian, the National Coordinator. He also welcomed Fr. Baskar as the Assistant National Coordinator to the National Office with a bouquet.

Fr. Justin, the General of Rosarians, was the resource person for the day. He gave a talk for 45 minutes in which he spoke about the need to temper our ego and embrace the virtue of humility in general, and in particular as volunteers of Prison Ministry India who serve the brethren behind the bars. He gave multiple

examples from his life and highlighted the importance of the virtue of humility and how it was the most difficult virtue to practice.

Soon after that we had Adoration led by Sr. Lini MSC, thanking and praising all the wonders the Lord has done throughout the past year. Meanwhile we had made arrangements for making confession for those who wished it. The Adoration was concluded by 12.00pm and all were asked to proceed to Kolbe Home for the Thanksgiving Eucharistic celebration. Fr. Sebastian was the main celebrant and Fr. Baskar MSC, Fr. Paschal, and Fr. Johnson were the co-celebrants. The children of





Kolbe Home along with Sr. Justina were the choir and sang melodiously.

After the mass, everyone proceeded to the dining hall for a short cultural programme performed by the Kolbe Home children. We bid farewell to Fr. Varaprasad for all the services he rendered to the National Office and to Kolbe Home. Fr. Paschal and Sr. Gertrude spoke about his service and thanked him for his dedication and commitment. The programme concluded with the vote of thanks given by Sr. Lini MSC, the National Secretary. She thanked Fr. Justin for his inspirational talk, the neighbouring communities and all the priests and nuns who had supported the Prison Ministry Sunday in various ways, expecting nothing in return. All the Unit members were thanked for their selfless service and dedication. The neighbours

were specially thanked for their willingness to reach out to us and help us and our children regardless of time and cost. The Sisters from Jeevodaya and all the inmates, children of Kolbe Home, for whom we are here, were also thanked. Finally all the benefactors and well-wishers were specially remembered. Fr. Sebastian prayed over the meal and food was served.

Once again we extend our heartfelt thanks to all our neighbours, who are very close to our hearts, the neighbouring communities and all the priests and nuns, who are very supportive of us extending their service in many ways, the PMI Bangalore Unit Members, all the benefactors and well-wishers.

From: National Office, Bangalore.

Karnataka State Executive Meeting

The Karnataka State Unit Executive Committee meeting at Bangalore took place on 17-8-2018 from 10.15 am to 1.30 pm. The Archbishop Most Rev. Peter Machado was invited and was felicitated as he is the new Archbishop of Bangalore Archdiocese and the Head of all the Commissions in the region of Karnataka. He gave us an inspiring speech and promised his support to the Karnataka State Unit of PMI. Each diocesan unit presented their report and Mr Anil Ronald was felicitated for his appointment to the Karnataka Public Service Commission. In his farewell speech he thanked the team for their cooperation that enabled him to carry out his service as the treasurer, and handed over his responsibility to the newly appointed treasurer Fr. Prakash D'Cunha of the Mangalore unit. He also requested that the youth be motivated to write the KAS and KPS exams so that they could get into higher posts in the government. After this, the executive body had several discussions with regard to the progress of each unit. Fr. Benny started the meeting with the prayer.



Sr. Theresa SCB presented the minutes and the team elected Fr. Prakash OCD as the treasurer in place of Mr Anil Ronald Fernandes. After these useful discussions Sr. Shiny gave the vote of thanks and we wound up the meeting with a small concluding prayer.

Maximilian Kolbe Volleyball Tournament

in Central Prison Bangalore on 16 August, 2018

The Volleyball tournament started at 11 am. Sri.M. Somasekar, the Chief Superintendent, Sri.Ramesh, the Superintendent and the other jail authorities, Rev. Fr. Sebastian, PMI National coordinator, and Rev. Fr. Bonaventure were the chief guests of the day. The team from the Central Prison were the staff, the convicted inmates and under trial inmates. The opposing team was St. Peter's Pontifical Philosophy students. The event was organized by the Prison Ministry India, Bangalore. Bright in green the under trial inmates won the 1st prize and the 2nd prize winners were the St. Peter's Philosophy students. The 1st and 2nd prize winners were awarded with trophies, gifts and cash, but the philosophy students gave their cash awards and gifts to the inmates. The two referees and the best player were also awarded. The function ended at 3.30 pm.....

Interview with a prisoner



Editor: Good morning, Jenish (name changed)!

Jenish: Good Morning, Sister!

Editor: I'm Sr. Lini, the Editor of *Prison Voice* magazine.

Jenish: What is *Prison Voice* Magazine?

Editor: The voice of prisoners. It's the magazine published by Prison Ministry India and circulated all over India.

Jenish: What do you mean by that Sister? Does it go to all the prisoners?

Editor: No, Jenish. It is sent to many other people called volunteers of Prison Ministry India and all those who are interested in the welfare and wellbeing of our brethren behind the bars.

Jenish: Oh! Ok Sister. That means there are many who are interested in our welfare.

Editor: Yes Jenish, you are all our brothers and sisters. None of us are born criminals. Circumstances or environment brings us to this place where none of us wish to be.

Jenish: My circumstances..... My short-temper..... (Jenish becomes emotional, there was silence for a few minutes).

Dear Sister, I never intended to kill my wife. But it happened! I'm an Engineer. I'm from a middle class family. My parents loved me and all my love was for my parents. They gave me the best education, best clothing and best food. My parents never interfered

in my personal life. They corrected me when I needed to be changed. But they never entered my space. I had freedom.

I fell in love with a girl who was charming and lovely. Again that was the best gift I received in my life. My in-laws weren't for it. But my parents respected me and my feelings and blessed our marriage. After our marriage we came to Bangalore and settled here. After 2 years we were blessed with the arrival of a pretty baby girl in our life.

My parents and siblings came to visit us, blessed us and returned to our hometown. But my in-laws came and stayed with us for months. They were poisoning my wife each time and the quarrels began. Our blessings turned to curse. Fights began on religious ground. Their stay was not pleasing to me and after a few months my only wish was that they would leave my house. I wanted to engage a maid to look after my baby. They were against this and said that they would take care of my daughter. They took away the feeling of freedom from my house. They instigated my wife to fight me and made our life miserable.

I was short-tempered and it became worse. Early morning I would go for work and return only at night. At times even over the phone we had heated arguments which spoiled our peace of mind. One day out of anger I spoke harshly to my in-laws and asked them to vacate my house. They didn't! The only support I had from my

wife's family was from my sister-in-law (My wife's younger sister who also stayed in Bangalore).

I couldn't accept my wife's recent behaviour. I had loved her so much, left my affectionate parents and hometown only for her sake; had come to this unknown place only to be with her and live with her happily. She couldn't accept that the boy whom she loved so deeply would talk to her parents so harshly and insult them. Both of us never took time out for an open dialogue. We held on to our views and opinions. "Might is Right" took away our purpose of coming together. Our life lost meaning and love. 'Ego' overtook us. Why should I bend was the constant question.

Finally one day there were more heated arguments on religious ground between us. My mother-in-law interfered and I lost control; I threw their bags from our house. The situation got worse, they were all angry with me. Standing next to the dining table I took a knife from there and wanted to throw it at my mother in-law, but my wife came in between and she left us alone on this earth. (Long silence)

Editor: What happened, Jenish?

Jenish: My wife died, leaving us all alone. I couldn't accept that. With that same knife I tried to kill myself. Cut my hands! By then the police arrived at my house. Everything was beyond my control, beyond my imagination. 'A circle of loss'! My child lost both her parents; I lost my lovely and lively child; my in-laws lost their daughter; my parents lost me as I'm behind the bars. It took me years to

accept and digest the things that happened to me. Now I'm serving time in the prison here, serving my fellow brethren with the best of my ability. I'm thankful to the Chief Superintendent, Mr. Somashekar and the Superintendent, Mr. Ramesh who provide us with great inspiration for working hard and being service-minded.

Editor: We understand you, and you are our brother. As this interview is going to be published is there any message that you want to convey to the readers?

Jenish: Yes, dear Sister.

Not to be egoistic.

Not to be possessive.

Husband and wife should have certain privacy for family life to prosper.

Parents should maintain distance with their children after giving them in marriage.

We all of us need to learn to control our anger. Don't react, rather respond.

Editor: Thank you Jenish. None of us are perfect. What defines us is how well we rise after falling.

Interviewed by: **Sr. Lini MSC**
Chief Editor



An Awareness session given on PMI for the future teachers... at Holy Cross, Bilaspur.

Introduction

The Indian Penal Code provides for six types of punishments for offences. The second type of punishment is Life Imprisonment (also known as a Life Sentence or Life Incarceration) is a sentence of imprisonment for a serious crime under which the convicted person is to remain in jail for the rest of his or her life. Life Imprisonment, as distinct punishment for certain grave offences under the Code, was authorized by law with effect from January 1, 1956 when the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act 1955 came into force. It was earlier known as transportation for life. There are fifty-one sections in the Indian Penal Code which provide punishment with imprisonment for life, but there is always a debate as to the exact duration of imprisonment of life. This article purports to analyse the law in India relating to life imprisonment through the study of various statutes and case laws prevalent in India.

The Indian Penal Code 1860: Section 55, I.P.C. provides that when sentence of imprisonment for life has been passed, the appropriate Government may without the consent of the prisoner commute the punishment for imprisonment of either description for a term not exceeding fourteen years. This section empowers the appropriate Government to commute the sentence of imprisonment of life. Exercise of such right is at the discretion of the appropriate Government. This section does not lay down that life imprisonment shall be an imprisonment for fourteen years and a prisoner is not to be automatically released after expiry of fourteen years of imprisonment. It is for the appropriate Government to commute the sentence and for this



Sr. Leena Kattookaren FMM
Andrapradesh

purpose rules have been framed by the State Government.

Life Imprisonment in India:

Life Imprisonment means the entirety of the life unless it is curtailed by remissions validly granted under the Code of Criminal Procedure by the Appropriate Government or under Articles 72 and 161 of the Constitution by the Executive Head viz. the President or the Governor of the State, respectively.

But the executive has the power to commute or pardon the sentence according to the power vested in them by statute namely Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Constitution.

Till life ends but under various statutes its literal meaning is defeated. Life presentment where death has been commuted to life sentence has to be served for the entire life of the convicted but subject to remission, as minimum of fourteen years must be spent in imprisonment. Various precedents have been set regarding this substantial point of law. Life imprisonment when death sentence has been commuted to sentence of life, in its literal meaning is defeated.

Life imprisonment when death sentence has been commuted to sentence of life, in its literal meaning is equivalent to imprisonment

Power of President to grant pardon or commute the sentence

In common parlance, to pardon means to forgive a person of his offence. The term 'pardon' has been defined as an act of grace, proceeding from the power entrusted with the execution of the law, which exempts the individual on whom it is bestowed upon, from the punishment. The law inflicts for a crime he has committed. It affects both the punishment prescribed for the offence and the guilt of the offender. In other words, grant of pardon wipes off the guilt of the accused and brings him to the original position of innocence as if he had never committed the offence for which he was charged. Under Indian Law, the president of India and the governors of the states have been given the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence.

Conclusion

What conclusion can be drawn from the above decisions is that life imprisonment can be interpreted as being imprisonment for the whole of a convict's natural life within the scope of section 45 of the I.P.C. On a careful study of Sections 45 and 47 of the I.P.C. and sections 432, 433 and 433A Cr. P.C. it can be clearly seen that a prisoner sentenced to life sentence has to serve at least 14 years in prison.

Although the Supreme Court in a catena of cases has fixed the term of life imprisonment, but the Government however, should come up with a law fixing a definite period of life imprisonment resolving dichotomy and thus, put an end to the series of life imprisonment term-determination cases. Every prisoner has a right to change his/her attitude, conduct and behaviour, and re-enter society.

Twin Celebrations at Berhampur Circle Jail



Sr. Shanti Pulickal SCC
Berhampur Diocese

Every celebration is an occasion of joy. When it is repeated on two consecutive days in a Central jail, it becomes not only a matter of joy but also the proclamation of God's merciful love. The first was an eye camp held on 11th August, 2018 and the other was the Prison Ministry Day celebration on 12th August, 2018. Our bishop the Rt. Rev. Sarath Chandra Nayak was with us on both days, showing

by his presence that neither we the PMI volunteers, nor the prisoners were alone.

For the past few years our ministry in the Central Jail has given the prisoners the assurance that we are with them in their struggles, pain and problems. Many of them were suffering from eye problems. So Sr. Shanti, the coordinator, approached the Jail authorities with the idea of an eye

camp. They said, 'we know that you work selflessly for the welfare of prisoners and so we welcome any form of service from you.' The Ecos Eye Hospital in Berhampur was happy to help and promised to do free medical service. We had to meet all the other expenses including those for spectacles. Since God's providence is our bank balance and begging is our life style we were confident about finding the resources. The eye camp was to take place last June but had to be postponed at the last moment. It was providential that it took place on the eve of the Prison Ministry Sunday as a tribute to our patron saint, St Maximilian Kolbe.

The jail authorities had agreed to let us begin the service at 9 am. Our team consisting of Bishop Sarath, Fr. Vijay Nayak, the Provincial of the CM Congregation, Fr. Bimal Nayak, the Procurator of the Diocese, Sr. Shanti, the coordinator, and two seminarians from Vianny Bhavan Seminary were present on time along with the Asst. Director of the Ecos Hospital, Sir Niranjan Sahu, one doctor and 5 ophthalmologists. They brought along the necessary medical equipment and medicines. The jail had nearly 900 inmates. Of them, 160 prisoners had different kinds of eye complaints. They waited for us in faith, hoping for total healing. They welcomed us with smiles and bouquets. After a short prayer by Sir Niranjan, the Bishop spoke about the eyes as the precious gift of God which we should use well and take good care of. He thanked Sr. Shanti and the Prison Ministry volunteers of Berhampur Diocese for

organising this eye camp. Fr. Vijay Nayak, the CM Provincial spoke about how dear the Prison Ministry is to God. Jesus has included visiting prisons and working for their welfare as important works of mercy. He too appreciated the PMI volunteers for their committed service in the Jail. Brother Antony of Vianny Bhavan thanked the Bishop, the CM Provincial, the Director of Ecos Hospital, Dr Pal and the medical staff present for their encouragement, support and service. The medical staff worked tirelessly till 4 pm and checked 160 patients. Some of them even had worms in their eyes and some could not sleep well due to pain in the eye. These were treated with medicines. 66 persons needed spectacles. The Bishop, Fr. Vijay CM and the Provincial of the Sisters of the Cross, Sr. Cessy Scaria sponsored all the expenses. Sr. Shanti thanked them in the name of the Prison Ministry, Berhampur Diocese. She also thanked the jail authorities, especially the Jailor, for making all the arrangements in the jail to make the entire process comfortable.

We were happy to celebrate the Prison Ministry Day on 12th August with a Holy Mass by our Bishop. About 60 Christians were present along with a few members of other religions. The Bishop spoke about the life and great sacrifice of St. Maximilian Kolbe in prison and assured them that we were with them and that they were not alone. The day ended on a happy note as we shared the joy of PMI day by distributing cake to all.

When something's gone something better is coming

AWARDING CEREMONY AT CENTRAL JAIL, NAGPUR

Prison Ministry India, organized Fantasy 2018, a Drawing Competition to all Prisoners in National level with the theme "You are not alone." 968 brethren participated from different prisons of India and the 2nd prize was won by Thakur Amardeep Singh an inmate of Nagpur Central Jail. To honour and appreciate him and to encourage the other inmates a programme was organized on 20th July 2017 in the Central jail, Nagpur. The PMI team and Sr. Shanthi, RGS Coordinator, Nagpur Unit organized this special event.

The programme began with a prayer song by Sr. Pushpa RGS along with the Prisoners. After which she welcomed the representatives of PMI, Sr. Diana CTC, Central Regional Co-ordinator Fr. Wilferd Fernandes Maharashtra State Co-ordinator and Mr. Sushil one of the PMI volunteer from Pune. Mrs. Rani Bhosle the Central Jail's Superintendent, the assistant Superintendent and all the Prisoners.

Mr. Yogesh (Guruji for the Prison) too welcomed PMI team, and the officials present. He requested Mrs. Rani Bhosle to give the cash award Rs. 5000/- and a certificate to Mr. Takur Amardeep Singh



who got the 2nd Prize. The amount will be deposited in his personal account. All those who participated in the drawing competition were given certificates and appreciated them. She encouraged them to participate in all the activities conducted in the prison by various organizations.

Sr. Diana gave short message and focused on the theme "You are not alone." God is with us and live a meaningful and fruitful life. She encouraged them to take part whenever the opportunity is given. Fr. Wilferd Fernandes gave a very touching message on 3 'R's – Release, Reformation and Rehabilitation. They had to release all their angers, revenge, addictions and bad habits and be reformed and reintegrated to the family and society. The programme gave real boost to the life prisoners to amend their ways and lead a meaningful life.

At the end of the programme Mr. Lakshman, Guruji thanked the Superintendent, and PMI members for organizing the programme to honour the prisoners with the certificates and accompanying them with their thought provoking messages.



Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, irrelevant of our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. Human beings are born independent, free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act accordingly, living in a high spirit of love and brotherhood. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination as these rights are fundamental to us because we are human. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

One such area where we need to focus is on the conditions in our prisons which are still an area of torture; warehouses in which human commodities are kept and the expenses to maintain prisons and prisoners are born by the Government; where inmates range from driftwood juveniles to heroic dissenters.

Hence “convicts are not by mere reason of the conviction deprived of all the fundamental rights which they otherwise possess.”

The word ‘prisoner’ means any person who is kept under custody in jail or prison because he/she committed an act prohibited by the law of the land. A prisoner also known as an inmate is anyone who, against their will, is deprived of liberty. This liberty can be deprived by forceful restraint or confinement. The Indian socio-legal system is based on non-violence, mutual respect and human dignity of the individual. By committing a crime, a person does not change from being human and still is endowed with all the aspects which demand him to be



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Safeguarding **PRISONERS' RIGHTS** At The Next Level

treated with human dignity and respect that a human being deserves.

Human rights are necessitated because of human life. Being in a civilized society organized with laws and a system as such, it is essential to ensure for every citizen a reasonably dignified life. Even if the person is confined or imprisoned because of wrong(s) committed, (s)he is entitled to his/her rights unaffected by the punishment for wrongs, simply because if a person is under trial or a convict, his rights cannot be denuded.

“No one shall be subject to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of punishment.” If a person commits any crime, it does not mean that by committing a crime, he/she ceases to be a human being and that he/she can be deprived of those aspects of life which constitute human dignity.

In order for a prison system to be managed in a fair and humane manner, national legislation, policies, and practices must be guided by the international standards

developed to protect the human rights of prisoners. Prison torture in all forms is banned by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the 1949 Geneva Conventions (signed 1949), the American Convention on Human Rights (signed 1977), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (signed 1977), and the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (signed 1988). Prison authorities have a responsibility to ensure that the supervision and treatment of prisoners is in line with the rule of law, with respect to individuals' human rights, and that the period of imprisonment is used to prepare individuals for life outside the prison following release. But often national legislation and rules relating to the management of prisons are out-dated and in need of reform.

At present the situation is different. In many cases we can see that the disturbing conditions of prisons in the past do not exist now. Prison Welfare schemes have been introduced in prisons everywhere in order to enable opportunities for productive work for prisoners so that they do not indulge in other illegal activities while they are in jail and utilize their time in doing some fruitful activity. The jail authorities help the prisoners or inmates, as referred to by jail authorities, to conduct themselves in a better way which helps them to lead a better life after their release. The atmosphere provided by the jail authorities compels the prisoners to work which diverts their mind from mischief. Some of the welfare activities that have been proved effective in many countries and in our central jail must be introduced everywhere in India for the positive growth and development of prisoners and help them to lead their

lives productively outside prison following their release.

- Prisoners can participate in games and sports activities within jail. For example, sports fest is organized during winter sports festivals, which are popularly known in the jail as "Tihar Olympics." Drug de-addiction centres can be opened up in every prison so that drug abuse and drug addiction of inmates can be curbed that they live a better life after prison.
- Prisoners can be made to work in various factories so they understand the importance of work and inculcate these principles in their life outside prison too.
- Recreational facilities, vocational training and education can be given to the inmates such as computer courses, games and competitions, yoga and meditation, creative art therapy, painting etc. Recreational facilities help the inmates to change their behaviour and become good citizens.
- Job placement should be provided to prisoners so that they can earn their living and live with dignity back in the society where they lost it when they were arrested.
- The inmates can not only prepare eatable goods but also shirts, carpets, khadi clothes, etc. Other than these a few inmates can be trained to engage in creative work like making furniture, showpieces like small temples, flower vases, braille books for the blind, etc. These goods can not only be sold but can also be used by the inmates.
- The inmates can help government and private sector contractors in cleaning, and maintenance of roads, construction

work and various other developmental programs outside prison under proper supervision and in line with safety procedures for prisoners.

- Such types of programs should not be optional and this should be strictly enforced by the jail authorities. Every inmate has to be involved in it. This motivates the inmates to live a better.

Healthcare

- Healthcare and right to health is a principle that applies to all prisoners, who are entitled to receive the same quality of medical care that is available in the community. However, this right is rarely realized in prisons, where usually healthcare services are extremely inadequate. Prison health services are almost always severely under-funded and understaffed and sometimes non-existent.
- The right to health includes not only access to preventive, curative, reproductive, palliative and supportive healthcare but also access to the underlying determinants of health, which include: safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, safe food, adequate nutrition and housing, safe health and dental services, healthy working and environmental conditions, health-related education and information, and gender equality.
- Improved prison management and prison conditions are fundamental to developing a sustainable health strategy in prisons. In addition, prison health is an integral part of public health, and improving prison health is crucial for the success of public health policies.
- Thus, we should, in confluence with advocates and social activists working

all across India aim at getting prisoners released, especially indigent ones, who are or have been undergoing trials and have been languishing in prisons for a long period of time.

- For this purpose, we can help poor prisoners economically and socially by filing bail applications, filing for surety bonds and in cases where the indigent prisoners are unable to pay for the same, by providing monetary assistance in collaboration with NGO initiatives all over India.

The prisoners who have been in prison for long periods of time need constant care and support because they should not lose their humanity by committing a crime. They are endowed with and deserve an equivalent amount of human dignity and respect. Prisoners need to be visited regularly to ease their rigorous prison life and need to be talked to about the problems that they face. Also educational, rehabilitation and mental health counselling can be provided to prisoners.

The prison is supposed to be for a reformatory purpose. However, the entire purpose fails when the prisoners are denied the very rights that are fundamental to their being human beings. Thus, we should take steps to ensure that their basic human rights are not infringed upon and that they live with dignity because after-all, they are humans too.

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**Waiting in the queue to
visit the prisoners
who were not visited by anybody
for years**

(Bangalore Central Jail, Parappana Agrahara)



**At the Inaugural Function of Volley Ball
Match at Central Prison, Bangalore**



**Volley Ball Match
at Bangalore Central Prison, Parappana Agrahara**

"Alone we can do so little.
Together we can do so much"

Hearty Welcome to Fr. Baskaran Lenus MSC
as Assistant National Coordinator and
may your service bring hope to our brethren
behind the bars.





**Festal song by Kolbe Home Children on the Feast Day
Celebration of St. Maximilian Kolbe - Bangalore**



**Sr.Shanti, the coordinator giving specks to
one of the prisoners.**



At the Inaugural function of Release Programme, at Bangalore Central Jail, Parappana Agrahara



**After a fruitful meeting with Bp. Paul,
Raigarh diocese, CG.**



**State Executive Body is formed and the New State Coordinator
Fr. Theodore Kujur (Raigarh Diocese), Secretary Sr. Prathibha
JMJ (Raigarh), Treasurer Fr. Joby Kallungal VC (Durg)
Welcomed with floral bouquets...
Hearty Congratulations to the entire CG PMI Executive body!**