



PRISON VOICE

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SERVUS SERVORUM DEI
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD



Integrated Agricultural Farming at Mangalore District Jail.



Hearty Congratulations to Most Rev Dr Sagili Prakash, Bishop of Khammam, the Newly Appointed Chairman of PMI TCBC.



PMI Volunteers Meet, Snehashramam, Thiruvananthapuram.



Easter Celebration, Special Sub Jail, Thiruvananthapuram.



Easter Celebration, Irinjalakuda jail.



Easter Celebration, Kottarakkara Jail.



Easter Holy Mass, Idukki District Jail.



PMI ELuru Diocesan General Body Meeting.



Good Friday Ceremonies, Bengaluru Central Prison.



Easter Celebration, Aluva Jail.



Easter Celebration Alappuzha District Jail.



Easter Celebration, Kozhikode Jail.



Easter Celebration, Central Prison, Thiruvananthapuram.



Easter Celebration, Palakkad District Jail.



Easter Celebration, Special Sub Jail, Vaythiri.



Maundy Thursday Celebration, Jharsuguda Jail.



Holy Saturday Celebration, Central Prison, Thiruvananthapuram.



Easter Celebration, Neyyattinkara Prison.



Reintegration of Prisoners at Kolbe Home, Chennai.



Maundy Thursday Celebration, Kakanad Jail.



Maundy Thursday Celebration, Ponkunnam Sub Jail.



Saree Distribution, Naribandi Niketan, Burla.



Good Friday Celebration, Central Prison, Thiruvananthapuram.



Maundy Thursday Celebration, Kollam District Jail.



**Archbishop Joseph Pamplany and Team
Visiting Central Prison, Kannur.**



Good Friday Celebrations, Central Prison, Poojapura.



Maundy Thursday Celebration, Aluva Jail.



Maundy Thursday Celebration, Central Bengaluru.



**Holy Week Celebrations, Central Prison,
Thiruvananthapuram.**



Maundy Thursday Celebration, District Jail, Ernakulam.



Maundy Thursday Celebration, Kakanad Jail.



Maundy Thursday Celebration, Mananthawady Jail.



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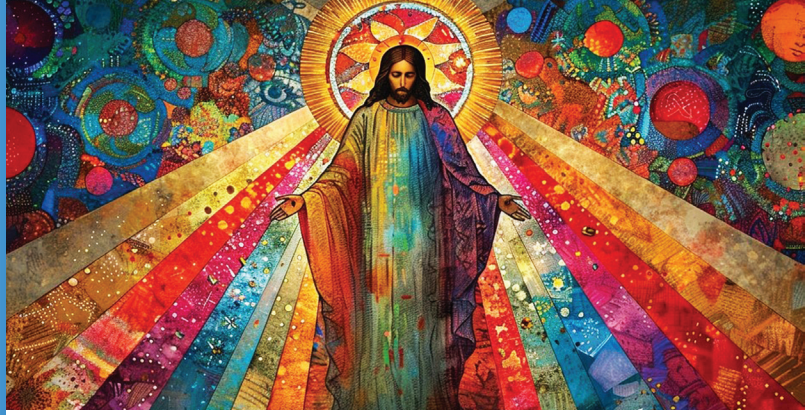
Are You Willing?

“Help a Prisoner’s Child Prevent a Potential Criminal” 80% of the children of prisoners are potential criminals unless somebody takes care of them. Prison Ministry India has begun a scheme to educate 1000 children of prisoners: Kindly contribute Rs. 5,000/- for the education of a child.

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“The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3,22-23).

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Sr. Amala DC

RESURRECTION OF JESUS: THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

Resurrection of Jesus

In the tapestry of human history, few narratives have evoked as much wonder, contemplation and transformation as the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It stands as a beacon of hope and renewal across centuries, symbolizing triumph over death and despair. Beyond its theological significance, the resurrection challenges us to confront our mortality and embrace the promise of eternal life and boundless love. It invites us to embark on a journey of personal transformation, shedding fear and doubt to embrace courage, compassion, and authenticity. Easter celebrations in prisons offer a unique opportunity for inmates to experience the transformative power of the resurrection, fostering hope, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Through embracing love and forgiveness, we can forge bonds of empathy that transcend the boundaries of race, religion, and nationality.

Washing the Feet of Women Prisoners

In a poignant Easter tradition, His Holiness Pope Francis washed the feet of women prisoners, echoing the humility and compassion exemplified by Jesus Christ. This act symbolizes the inclusive love and mercy central to the Easter message, transcending barriers and reaching out to those marginalized by society. Through this gesture, Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of solidarity, forgiveness, and reconciliation, offering hope and dignity to those in confinement. Dear volunteers let us heed the Pope's call to serve one another with humility and compassion, embodying the spirit of Easter in our actions toward all. Our

heartfelt thanks and deepest appreciation to all PMI volunteers for the incredible work you have done in organizing and facilitating meaningful Easter celebrations within prisons.

Volunteers Training Program: Empowering Prison Ministers

The PMI Volunteers' Training Program will take place from April 10th to 22nd, 2024 at RRDC, Bangalore. This training program will cover a wide range of topics essential for effective engagement in prison ministry. From understanding the facts of incarceration to developing communication skills, and fostering empathy, the participants will gain valuable insights and practical knowledge. Experienced facilitators and scholars will lead the sessions, offering firsthand expertise and insights into the challenges and opportunities of prison ministry. Their guidance will equip volunteers with the resources needed to make a meaningful difference in the lives of inmates. Your prayers for the fruitfulness of this program will highly be appreciated.

PMI Projects

PMI has spearheaded various initiatives to transform the lives of prisoners, their children, and their families. These projects encompass housing projects for released prisoners, scholarships for prisoners' children, employment schemes for the released prisoners, provisions for their families, etc. PMI offers vital support, both financial, legal and emotional to maintain familial bonds and alleviate the adverse impacts of incarceration, particularly on children and their loved ones. We express our gratitude to those who support the ministry aimed at uplifting the lives of prisoners and their families. ■

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATION OF PMI MANGALORE UNIT



Fr Francis
Kodiyan MCBS

“Why can’t you dedicate your life to the conversion of sinners? In the Catholic Church, there have been many who worked for so many special groups of people. But very few spend their lives for the conversion of sinners. Why don’t you dedicate your life to the cause of sinners?”

Conversion of Sinners

March 11th is an important day in the history of prison ministry. It was on this day 40 years ago, that is, on 11th March 1983 that I received the command from the Lord to dedicate my life for the conversion of sinners. On 9th March 1983 I went to the Elijah Ashram, Niravilpuzha in the diocese of Mananthawady, to pray alone for a week. Fr Valerian and Brother Stanley welcomed me. The Ashram was an estate

of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) located in a village where there was not even electricity. But it was a marvellous estate with hills, valleys and brooks filled with coconut, pepper, coffee and cardamom plantations. Amid this beauty was a small Ashram with a tiny Chapel. There, in the chapel, sitting by the side of the Blessed Sacrament from morning till evening I read the Bible and prayed silently looking at the Eucharistic Jesus. On the evening of



Friday 11th March 1983, I was in the chapel with the Bible in my hand and was praying. The sun was setting. The sanctuary lamp was burning. From a profound communion with the Lord, there emerged a great challenge, an inner call, a great God experience within me, “Why can’t you dedicate your life to the conversion of sinners? In the Catholic Church, there have been many who worked for so many special groups of people. But very few spend their lives for the conversion of sinners. Why don’t you dedicate your life to the cause of sinners”? I knew well that I myself was a great sinner and asked, “How can I do this myself being a great sinner”? The answer was instantaneous, “I always call sinners to repentance; I always call the weak to be my apostles”. This call within a call was so powerful that it has continued to inspire me to search, serve and save the lost sheep of Jesus wherever he has been.

Then onwards I was searching for sinners. One day when I saw for the first time a nameboard - Kottayam sub jail - I felt that here are the people to whom I should dedicate my life. After 40 years when I look back, I am grateful to the Lord for the growth and fruits of PMI. On the 40th anniversary of my call within the call – the birthday of my vocation, I wanted to do something special for sinners. Then came an invitation from Dr Edmond Frank to participate in the certificate distribution ceremony at Mangalore district prison on 11th March 2024. I accepted the invitation wholeheartedly and visited the district prison together with other eminent and distinguished guests and PMI volunteers.

Integrated Agricultural Training Program

PMI Mangalore unit under the able initiation of Dr Edmund Frank organized an integrated agricultural training program and organic farming methods in association with the St Aloysius Deemed University for the inmates of Mangalore district

PMI Mangalore unit under the able initiation of Dr Edmund Frank organized an integrated agricultural training program and organic farming methods in association with the St Aloysius Deemed University for the inmates of Mangalore district prison from 2 October 2023 to 31 January 2024.

prison from 2 October 2023 to 31 January 2024. The training was mainly intended for the transformation, rehabilitation and skill development of the trainees and to prepare them for a dignified living after their release. 31 prisoners underwent this training of 120 days and were given certificates by St Aloysius Deemed University. By this they became alumni of St Aloysius University with all its privileges. This is an exemplary skill training program which can be emulated by other prisons as well. Congratulations to Edmund Frank and team.

Birth and Growth of PMI Mangalore

In the evening, I was invited to participate in the meeting of PMI Mangalore unit. They were discussing the details of PMI Mangalore Silver Jubilee celebrations. I was much impressed to hear about the incredible initiatives they did for prisoners in the last 25 years and thought of sharing with you the same for your information. PMI Mangalore unit was founded on 19 September 1999 by Fr. Wilfred Rodrigues OCD at the Carmelite Monastery of Infant Jesus Shrine at Bikarnakatte. He served as the PMI coordinator for three and half years. This spiritual movement for the



integral human development of brethren behind bars developed in many ways in spite of various hurdles under the valuable care of bishops, priests, religious and lay leaders.

PMI Mangalore Unit Activities

PMI volunteers used to visit the jail at Kodialbail to undertake several activities in order to help the inmates have a better life and work to correct their past mistakes and prepare for a better life. The PMI Mangalore unit took up many cases of undertrials for speedy disposal of their cases and sought to release them in minor cases, through mediation. Rosario Cathedral parish, on the occasion of its 450 years of foundation, made a special contribution for the welfare of deserving prisoners. In 2016 PMI Mangalore unit held a state conference for 2 days which was very much appreciated. They regularly visit the prison and do counselling. In the past they did many skill development programs like jewelry making, stitching, sewing etc and provided materials needed for such programs. They conducted health camps like skin, general medicine, eye etc and convened yoga classes and value-based activities, entertainment programs such as drama,

orchestra and so on. They celebrated national festivals with distribution of food and gifts and provided recreational and reading materials. They released many inmates by providing legal and financial support and assisted many prisoners to start new business. They organized sports for prison staff and distributed T- shirts for them.

Jubilee Plans

As their silver jubilee memorial, they plan to establish a shelter for released prisoners and decided to provide educational scholarships for 25 prisoners’ children. The present PMI Mangalore unit coordinator is Mr Jerome P Lobo, Dr Tressi Menezes, the secretary, Mr Donald Coutinho, treasurer and Fr Rayan Pinto OCD spiritual director. I congratulate and appreciate PMI Mangalore team for their incredible initiatives and commitment. On 13 or 14 August 2024 PMI Mangalore will solemnly celebrate the silver jubilee of the PMI unit. Let’s extend our valuable prayers and support to our Mangalore coworkers and learn from their initiatives to make a difference in the life of the incarcerated.

POPE FRANCIS WASHES THE FEET OF WOMAN PRISONERS, ROME

How the Pope washed feet in a women's prison in Rome. The foot washing mass was held in the women's prison of Rebibbia, near Rome.

On the afternoon of Holy Thursday, Pope Francis travelled to the women's prison of Rebibbia in Rome to celebrate the Holy Mass in the Lord's Supper and to meet with the inmates and staff



of the facility. Upon his arrival, after greeting everyone waiting for him outside, the Pope presided over the Mass, concelebrated with the Master of Pontifical Liturgical Celebrations and Director of the Pontifical Musical Chapel, Monsignor Diego Giovanni Ravelli. Alongside the inmates, there was a representation of the officials and staff of the penitentiary center. Following the proclamation of the Holy Gospel, Pope Francis delivered an impromptu homily. Subsequently, as is customary, Pope Francis repeated the gesture of Jesus during the Last Supper when the Lord washed the feet of his disciples, to 12 inmates of different nationalities.

It is the first time that the 12 individuals are only women. At the end of the Holy Mass,

the Director of the Penitentiary Center, Dr. Nadia Fontana, addressed words of gratitude to the Pope and offered as a gift a basket of products grown on the farm inside the Penitentiary Center, a rosary, and two stoles made in the work-

shops of jewellery and sewing by the inmates themselves. Pope Francis, in turn, presented a painting of the image of the Virgin Mary, a giant Easter egg, and, for a child, a Kinder egg (the child is the son of one of the inmates).

Francis has travelled each year to a prison, refugee center or youth detention facility to emphasize his belief that a priest's vocation is to serve especially those most on the margins. In his brief homily, delivered off-the-cuff, Francis explained the meaning of the gesture. "Jesus humiliates himself," Francis said. "With this gesture, he makes us understand what he had said: 'I am not here to be served, but to serve.'" "He teaches us the path of service," Francis said.

Courtesy: Zenit.

VATICAN'S VENICE BIENNALE PAVILION LEADS VISITORS IN CATHOLIC TRADITION OF VISITING PRISONERS

- Courtney Mares -

Anyone wishing to visit the Vatican pavilion will need to register online for a guided tour of the prison. Pope Francis will also visit a women's prison in Rome during Holy Week this year.

Visiting prisoners is one of the Catholic Church's corporal works of mercy originating with Jesus' words in the Gospel of Matthew: "I was in prison and you visited me." All visitors to the 2024 Venice Biennale's Vatican pavilion will take part in this Catholic tradition by entering an active women's prison on Venice's Giudecca island, where the inmates will play an active role in the exhibition of works by nine professional artists. Upon arrival, visitors to the Vatican pavilion titled "With My Eyes" will be forced to leave their cell phones and IDs at the door, following the typical security protocols for family members visiting inmates. Chiara Parisi, one of the curators of the Vatican pavilion, explained that an added benefit of making the visitors relinquish their cell phones is that people will be forced "to let go of this instrument through which they are accustomed to looking at reality around them" and to behold the art "with their own eyes." For Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, the prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Culture and Education who is overseeing the pavilion, the idea to host an art exhibition at a prison was in part inspired by the many Catholic volunteers who are already serving in prison ministry.

It was also inspired by Pope Francis' message to artists last year, which encouraged artists to take up themes such as "the defense of human life, social justice, [and] concern for the poor" as they consider the social responsibility

of art. "It is no coincidence that the title of the pavilion, 'With My Eyes,' wants to focus our attention on the importance of how we responsibly conceive, express, and build our social, cultural, and spiritual coexistence," the cardinal said at a Vatican press conference on March 11. "We live in an era marked by the predominance of digital and the triumph of remote communication technologies, which propose an increasingly deferred and indirect human gaze, running the risk of it remaining detached from reality itself," he said.

Pope Francis will make history in April when he becomes the first pope to visit the prestigious Venice Biennale art exhibition on Sunday, April 28. The cardinal recalled how when he first invited Pope Francis to visit the Vatican's pavilion at the women's prison, the pope replied with his usual sense of humour that this was something that he needed to go see "with my eyes," making a joke about the title of the pavilion. The 2024 Art Biennale and its Holy See Pavilion will be open to the public from April 20 to Nov. 24. Anyone wishing to visit the Vatican pavilion will need to register online for a guided tour of the prison. Pope Francis will also visit a women's prison in Rome during Holy Week this year. The pope has made it a nearly annual tradition since his election in 2013 to preside over Holy Thursday Mass inside a prison and to wash the inmates' feet.

Courtesy: Vatican News.

PMI NORTH EAST PRISON VISITS



Sr Irene D'Souza UFS

In the month of December Sr. Irene D'Souza UFS went to Shillong along with one of the volunteers, to meet the Bishop requesting him to appoint one coordinator to take up the responsibility of the Prison Ministry.

Golpara

On 17th August Sr. Irene D Souza went to the Golpara Unit of PMI and visited the District Jail along with State Coordinator Fr. Pramod and Sr. Noel the PMI Volunteer and discussed with the Jailor regarding the ways and means to get permission for regular visits to the Prison. He guided us to write an application to the DC to get the permission.



Diphu

Sr. Irene paid a visit to the Diphu Unit along with one of the volunteers Sr. Euphraise, visited the Prison, and witnessed the program that was held on the occasion of the arrival of Diphu DC. On that day the DC inaugurated the weaving machine that was donated by the coordinator. They also exhibited the things they had made out of raw materials such as murras, detergent, baskets, traditional birds, so on.... In her speech she appreciated the inmates for the beautiful gifts and talents that they have and encouraged them to continue to make use of them in order help themselves.



Shillong

In the month of December Sr. Irene went to Shillong along with one of the volunteers, to meet the Bishop requesting him to appoint one coordinator to take up the responsibility of the Prison Ministry. He willingly accepted her request and appointed Fr Aggie Warbah the Coordinator for Shillong Prison. She also spoke to one of the women's groups regarding prison Ministry, and motivated them to join the Ministry as volunteers under the Shillong unit (if they are willing).

Tezpur

In the month of January Sr. Irene went to Tezpur and met Bishop Michael Akasius Toppo, and requested him to appoint one coordinator Priest or Sister to take up the responsibility of the Prison Ministry. The Bishop was kind enough to grant her request. He requested Fr. Roshon Kujur an SVD priest, the Rector of the Seminary, who willingly accepted to be the coordinator for Tezpur Prison.

Dibrugarh

In the month of February Sr. Irene went to Dibrugarh to visit the PMI unit. She met the coordinator Fr. Cyril and the sister-in-charge Sr. Martina and had discussion with them, collected all the information required and suggested them to have a group of volunteers, and to send the report along with photos whenever they conduct any special programs. She also checked their reports and the photo album.

Tura

Sr. Irene went on a visit to the Tura Unit, met Bishop Andrew and discussed with him regarding the Prison Ministry. In the afternoon along with the coordinator and sisters of other congregations, went to the Prison and organized confession for the catholic inmates which was followed by Eucharistic celebration. There after Sr. Irene gave a short talk on “you are not alone” followed by refreshment.



Guwahati - Meeting New Jailor and Superintendent

Sr Irene along with one of the volunteers Miss Angeli, through the help of Miss Nayamma Ahmed, the Assistant Jailor, went to the Jail and visited the new Jailor Mr. Praveen Kumar Hazarika and Superintendent Mr. Uthpal Dowarah who took up the new responsibility of the Prison. They welcomed us wholeheartedly and requested us to hold some health programs and to visit the jail at least once / twice a month. Sr. Irene assured them that she would be distributing some clothes to the inmates on February 8th, and, would conduct a health program for the women in the month of May. With these assurances we dispersed.



Guwahati - Giving out Cloths to the Inmates

On 8th February the PMI members went to the Prison to distribute cloths to the inmates ((gents, ladies and children) and offered them sanitation materials. We handed them over in the presence of the Jailor Mr. Uthpal Kumar and Assistant Jailor Mrs. Nayamma. They were very happy and requested to have a health program



for women. We assured them that if it is possible we may have the same program in the month of March 2024 if not in the month of May.

Mongoldoi - Rangya

Sr. Irene paid a visit to Mongoldoi to visit the District Jail there and met our former Jailor Mr. Kalayin Chaudari, thanked him for all the help



and support that he extended to us when he was in Guwahati Central Jail. She had witnessed the program on the Inauguration of the Sports and Games Day when materials were presented by the President of Assam Oil Cooperation Mr. Digboi. ■

PMI WEST BENGAL STATE GATHERING



Sr Carmina RNDM

Sr Carmina Mascarenhas RNDM was elected as the PMI WB state coordinator. Fr Harsha Bardhan from Asansol diocese was elected as the state PMI secretary and Fr Joseph Biswas from Krishnagar diocese was elected as the state PMI Treasurer.

The Prison Ministry India West Bengal Regional meeting was held at Krishnagar Bishop's House on 22nd of March 2024. There were 17 members present from various dioceses, religious congregations and NGOs. On the arrival of the members, registration was done and at 10 AM the meeting began with a prayer service conducted by his grace Bishop Nirmol Vincent Gomes SDB. Fr. Francis Kodian MCBS, PMI national Coordinator, welcomed the participants with a short preview of the PMI in West Bengal region's current state and its need for renewal. The participants introduced themselves and their involvement in prison ministry after which individual or groups involved in active prison ministry gave a brief report of their work and the challenges that they face.

Krishnanagar Society for Social Reconstruction (KSSR)

The organization has been working for prisons for more than 20 years now and is actively doing their service. The main activities in the prison are; value education classes, literacy class, inter-religious prayer service, sports and games, fishy culture training, celebration of various festivals and import-

ant days, vocational training, Para medical training etc.

Udayani Social Action Forum

From 2005 onwards the organization has been involved in visiting a particular prison in west Bengal and two counselors have been appointed for family counseling which has been done on a daily basis. They also contact lawyers for case discussion of different women in the prison in order to follow up their cases.

Sisters of Charity (SCCG)

They run a hostel for the prisoner's children up to class 12. The government supports the children for their education as it was the request of the IG to the congregation to care for these children. After the children complete class 12, the Sisters are required to find resources for their higher education.

Asha Deep Trust

They are involved in 4 prisons around Calcutta city and outside too. In every prison they have a vocational training class where they are given space to set up their tailoring machines and a sanitary pad unit. They do

the selling of the products produced by the prisoners in Alipur museum where a shop is reserved for the selling of these products. There are also other activities like Sports day, Women's day, Raksha Bandan, and many more other important days that are celebrated with the inmates. As there are a few nurse sisters among them, medical camps have also been begun in prisons.

Asansol Diocese

Fr Harsha Bardhan who was appointed for the prison ministry expressed that he was just beginning his work and hence needed help.

PMI West Bengal State Coordinator Administrative Team

Sr Carmina Mascarenhas RNDM was elected as the PMI WB state coordinator. Fr Harsha Bardhan from Asansol diocese was elected as the state PMI secretary and Fr Joseph Biswas from Krishnagar diocese was elected as the state PMI Treasurer.

PMI WB Executive Body Members

We constituted the executive body for PMI West Bengal Region. Their names are as follows:

Diocese/ Organization	Name of the Executive
Asansol	Fr Harshavardhan
Bagdogra	
Baruipur	
Calcutta	Fr Kishor Dominic Munda
Darjeeling	Sr Jean
Krishnagar	Fr Joseph Biswas
Raiganj	
Asha Deep Trust - AC	Sr Shreeja AC
Jesuits - Udayani Social Action Forum	Fr Anburaj Manuel
SDBs	Fr TC Francis
KSSR	Sr Mary Lobo/ Mr Bibhas Mondol

Presidential Address

His Grace Most Rev Nirmol Vincent Gomes SDB the CBCI chairperson for Prison Ministry West Bengal Region, appreciated the prison ministry and assured his as well as that of all the bishops' cooperation. In his presidential address he shared his past experience of working with the prisoners in different prisons. He stressed that for the effective functioning of any ministry, a team that was committed was most needed. He expressed his faith that after constituting the executive body we could work together as a team for the persons behind bars.

Input Session

After the tea break Fr Francis Kodiyan the PMI National coordinator gave a general introduction about the lifestyle of PMI and its functioning. He briefed the group about the birth of PMI and urged the participants to become love bombs to be exploded to bring love to the people behind bars. The session included PMI motto, source, power, lifestyle, method and spirituality. He explained about the patrons and copatrons of the PMI who have enkindled the love of Christ and love for the persons behind bars.

Future Plans

Few future plans were discussed to revive the spirit of PMI in West Bengal: Creating awareness among the parishes about PMI, appointing Diocesan coordinators and forming Diocesan team, preparations to be made for the Prison Ministry Sunday celebration. Vote of thanks was expressed by Sr Carmina Mascarenhas to his grace Bishop, Fr Francis Kodiyan and to all the participants for their availability and active participation and the program was concluded with blessing prayer by His Grace Bishop Nirmol Vincent Gomes. ■

Convocation Ceremony in the District Prison Mangaluru



Prof Edmund Frank

Rev. Dr Peter Paul Saldanha Presided over the function. Smt. Shoba B. G., Senior CJ and Member Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Mangaluru, Dr Alwyn D'Sa, Registrar, St Aloysius Deemed University, Mangalore and Rev. Dr Francis Kодиан, MCBS, Co-Founder and National Coordinator, Prison Ministry India, Bangalore, were Chief Guests.

St Aloysius Deemed University Mangaluru, in association with the District Legal Services Authority, Mangaluru, organised a 120-days duration training course in “Integrated Agriculture and Organic Farming Methods” for the inmates of the District Prison in Mangaluru from 2 October 2023 to 31 January 2024. The training was mainly intended for the transformation, rehabilitation and skill development of the trainees and to prepare them for a dignified living

after their release. The convocation ceremony to distribute the Diploma certificates was held on 11 March 2024 at 10.00 a.m. in the jail premises. The programme commenced with a prayer song by Ms Bharathi, Warder. Mr Obaleshappa, Jail Superintendent gave the welcome address and explained the significance of the event. Prof. Edmund Frank, the Course Organiser, explaining about the course, said that the training sessions were practical-oriented and covered areas which



included preparing the soil for cultivation, propagation of plants using quality seeds, cuttings, and grafting, growing vegetables, agricultural crops and fruit yielding plants, terrace and kitchen gardening, preparing vermi-compost and organic manure, mushroom cultivation, aquarium fish rearing and use of organic pesticides.

Mr Ravindra M. Joshi, Hon. PRL. District and Sessions Judge, Mangaluru, inaugurated the programme and in a ceremonious setting unfurled the marble plaque of the stage sponsored by Prof. Edmund Frank in the presence of all the dignitaries. Addressing the gathering, he complimented the organisers for organising this useful course which will extensively benefit the trainees. Rev. Dr Peter Paul Saldanha Presided over the function. Smt. Shoba B. G., Senior CJ and Member Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Mangaluru, Dr Alwyn D'Sa, Registrar, St Aloysius Deemed University, Mangalore and Rev. Dr Francis Kodiyan, MCBS, Co-Founder and National Coordinator, Prison Ministry India, Bangalore, were Chief Guests. Mr. B.T. Obaleshappa, Mr Bharat Nayak Asst. Commandant, KSISF and Prof. Edmund Frank, were present on stage with other dignitaries.

The Diploma certificates were distributed

to the 31 trainees by Most Rev Dr Peter Paul Saldanha, Bishop of Mangalore, Mr Ravindra M. Joshi, Hon. PRL, District and Sessions Judge, Smt. Shoba B.G., Dr Alwyn D'Sa and Rev. Dr Francis Kodiyan, PMI National Coordinator respectively, after which they addressed the gathering. In his presidential address, the bishop congratulated the trainees and told the inmates that some of them might be innocent. Although prison life curtailed their independence while in it, they should forget all ill feelings and come out with a clean conscience when they are released and God's blessings and guidance would be with them, he added. Mr Rajendra Kapade, Jailer, proposed the vote of thanks. Mr Lava Kumar, Warden was the Master of ceremonies

The programme was organised under the auspices of Rev. Dr. Praveen Martis SJ, Vice Chancellor, St Aloysius Deemed University and Mr B T Obaleshappa, Superintendent, District Prison, Mangalore and Mr Michael D'Souza, Course Sponsor. Prof. Glavin Rodrigues prepared the syllabus-modules and functioned as the Coordinator and Prof. Edmund Frank was the Organiser of the training programme. Mr Blany D'Souza and Mr Prasanna D'Souza were resource persons for terrace gardening and mushroom cultivation respectively. ■



KOLBE HOMES: OPPORTUNITY FOR BETTER FUTURE AND EFFECTIVE LEARNING



**Bro Brian
D'Souza OFM**

There are 3 Kolbe homes in India. They are located at Patan in Gujarat, Chennai in Tamil Nadu and Bengaluru in Karnataka.

One of Prison Ministry India's goals is to protect, prepare and provide the prisoners' children to have a healthy and stable foundation in life. PMI constantly works in this field to develop a secure space for these children to grow in more human and divine values. To inculcate in them a positive spirit to look for the future with hope and be good citizens of tomorrow. There are 3 Kolbe homes in India. They are located at Patan in Gujarat, Chennai in Tamil Nadu and Bengaluru in Karnataka. The Kolbe Home in Patan is under the care of SMMI sisters, the Kolbe Home in Chennai is under the supervision of PMI Chennai and Kolbe Home Bengaluru is under the guidance of the Prison Ministry India National office. I would like to elaborate the meaning of Kolbe. As we know the Kolbe homes are named after Saint Maxmilian Kolbe who was incarcerated in Auschwitz concentration camp during the cruel persecution of the Nazis. He selflessly volunteered to offer his life for another prisoner who had a family left behind. This sacrifice of one's life paved the way to be a witness of martyrdom for Christ Jesus. Thus, with his inspiration and values the Kolbe home teaches the children to be a change in the world.

K Stands for Kindle

The word 'kindle' means to ignite or inspire. This is one of greatest tasks of Kolbe home to inspire and instil in the children a goal or purpose in life. Generally, these children are exposed to the harsh realities of life, where they have gone through a lot of struggles, torments and abuse in their childhood. They have nightmares about their life and future. Most of the time, they lack the motivation and encouragement to move forward in life. Thus, it is our priority to support and encourage them to have a goal and purpose in life.

O for Opportunity

Kolbe home is a portal, a way to achieve greatness in life. Basically the children lack the basic necessities like food clothing and shelter due to their poor background. The Kolbe home helps them to overcome this through providing them with nutritious food, clean clothes and a good structure as their home away from home. Besides this the children simply fall in love with the care and concern provided by the sisters who look after them with motherly affection.

L for Life-Giving

Jesus Christ came into this world so that we may be saved from original sin and have life in abundance. This life can only be gained when we are connected with God. Therefore prayer acts as an intermediary to communicate with God our Father who is the source and summit of all living beings. Prayer is an instrument through which life can be transformed. The children in Kolbe home are accompanied in their prayer life by Fathers, Sisters and Brothers. When we inculcate a place for God in our hearts, we become more loving, caring, humble, obedient and forgiving. I strongly believe that prayer can motivate them to overcome their weaknesses and to build a strong foundation with moral values.

B for Better Future

Fundamentally the children from the marginalized section of society have lack of motivation to become great in the future. As President Abdul Kalam asked little children to dream. Here the dream refers to that which motivates one to sacrifice one's comforts like sleep, play, movies and pleasurable activities to achieve one's dream. The children are given

sufficient guidance through talks to think big in life in order to achieve the greatest possible dream in life.

E for Effective Learning

As Mahatma Gandhi rightly said, "live as if you are going to die tomorrow, learn as if you are going to live for eternity." In order to give them the best education we are sending them to CBSE school which provides the best educational aspirations in the children. The children are taught also the basic skills and soft skills which may be helpful in the future. Most of all the children are taught discipline and good manners which is very important to live as good citizens of tomorrow. Besides, these children are trained in gardening as well as cooking.

Conclusion

In conclusion, at Kolbe homes we provide opportunities that kindle life for a better future and effective learning. The purpose of our life in providing KOLBE homes for these children finds its meaning in the words of Jesus, "Whatsoever you do to the least of my people you did it to me." ■



PMI Jabalpur Diocesan Convention



Br Sunnlyal MMB

Most Rev Gerald Almeida Bishop of Jabalpur inaugurated the PMI Jabalpur Diocesan Convention and delivered the presidential address. Bro Sunnlyal MMB the PMI State Coordinator delivered the orientation talk based on the dynamics of prison ministry and the Biblical aspects of prison ministry.

PMI Jabalpur Diocesan Convention cum one day Seminar was held on Friday 8th March from 9 am to 4 pm at St. Thomas School's Auditorium Jabalpur under the leadership of Rev. Fr. Ranjit Lakra, PMI Jabalpur Diocesan Coordinator, with the support of Mr. Domenic Nazareth the State Executive Member of PMI. There were 70 participants for the Diocesan gathering. Most. Rev. Gerald Almeida Bishop of Jabalpur inaugurated the PMI Jabalpur Diocesan Convention and delivered the presidential address in the inaugural session. Thereafter Bro. Sunnlyal MMB the PMI State Co-ordinator delivered two talks based on the dynamics of prison ministry and the Biblical aspects of prison ministry as an orientation program. Sr. Sherly OSB the State Secretary delivered a talk based on the various activities of prison ministry all over M. P. using the power point presentation, as an input session. After the lunch break Mr. Alvarez State Executive Member from Indore shared his experience of 22 years prison ministry in Indore as an orientation talk.

Fr. George CMI the State Treasurer presented a power point presentation of his experience of prison pilgrimage all over M.P. as a motivational class. It was decided to hold the PMI Diocesan Conventions in all the 9 dioceses of M. P. in the year 2024 at the last state convention. Jabalpur Diocesan coordinator executed that decision. We expect the other 8 Diocesan Coordinators to take initiative to

conduct the PMI Diocesan gathering in their respective Dioceses in the coming months. We the State Executive Body of PMI appreciate Fr. Ranjit Jabalpur Diocesan coordinator, Mr. Domenic and all members of Diocesan Body for the success of the diocesan gathering. ■

THE MORE

WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

The more generous we are,
the more joyous we become.
The more cooperative we are,
the more valuable we become.
The more enthusiastic we are,
the more productive we become.
The more serving we are,
the more prosperous we become.
The more outgoing we are,
the more helpful we become.
The more curious we are,
the more creative we become.
The more patient we are,
the more understanding we become.
The more persistent we are,
the more successful we become.

PMI UDUPI DIOCESE



Sr Melania D Souza

The Vicar General Rev. Msgr. Ferdinand Gonsalves the president in his speech said that prisons are temples of God to reflect in order to change oneself and become good citizens.

Here is the Report of the medical camp held at Dt. Jail Hiriaddkka on 25.3.2024 in view of Easter celebration. The Camp began at 9.am. The Vicar General Rev. Msgr. Ferdinand Gonsalves the president in his speech said that prisons are temples of God to reflect in order to change oneself and become good citizens. The chief guest Dr. Sudeep Singh highlighted the health issues and how to manage them. The Jail Superintendent Mr. Siddram Patil praised the work of the PMI volunteers and appealed to the prisoners to avail of the benefits given by them. Mr. Rosa-

rio D'Souza Co-ordinator of PMI welcomed the gathering, Sr Melania D'Souza, Secretary, proposed the vote of thanks, Mr. Gratian. Botelho was the M.C. for the program and all the PMI volunteers patronised it. The 85 inmates of the jail benefitted from the camp. The required medicines were provided by the PMI. Breakfast and lunch were served to the - medical and jail staff and PMI volunteers. The PMI will Sponsor Easter Dinner to all the Brothers behind the bars and all the staff of the prison on Easter day on 31.03.2024. The camp ended at 3.30 pm. ■



Psycho-Social Awareness Program: Berhampur Central Jail



Sr Shanthi
Pulickal SCC

There was joy and hope on their faces. They enjoyed singing action songs and took active part in fun games with prizes.

It was a day of relief, renewal and rejoicing for the 30 women behind the bars. Psycho therapist and counsellor, Sr. Clarine SABS gave a talk on suicidal tendency, depression, and positive vibrations and how to be a part of society and family in spite of being in the jail. There was joy and hope on their faces They enjoyed singing action songs and took active part in fun games with prizes. We distributed sanitary

items for all of them. We also gave shirts and pants for the 30 mental prisoners rejected by their families. It being central jail, the security arrangements were tight and photos were not allowed. But everything was recorded in the book of life and in the hearts of those women. It was a day of joy and fulfilment for the 4 of us, Sisters Alphonsa FCC, Binita SCC, Clarina SABS and Shanti SCC. ■



Incubation Centers Setup in AP Prisons to Help Inmates Adjust to Life After Release

The Andhra Pradesh Prisons Department (APPD) has set up Social Incubation Centers (SICs) for in-mates of 14 prisons across the State, including Visakhapatnam Central Jail (VCJ), to help inmates adjust to life outside prison once their jail term comes to an end.

The Andhra Pradesh Prisons Department (APPD) has set up Social Incubation Centers (SICs) for in-mates of 14 prisons across the State, including Visakhapatnam Central Jail (VCJ), to help inmates adjust to life outside prison once their jail term comes to an end. The SIC will have psychologists, psychiatrists, financial experts, bankers, government skill development center representatives, de-addiction counsellors, social workers and academicians as members. Till the introduction of this initiative, there were no systematic interactive sessions with the inmates except for routine activities like checking on their health. Jail authorities will identify a section of the inmates for interaction with the SIC members, most of whom are convicts and whose prison terms will soon end. Speaking to The Hindu on Sunday, APPD Inspector General Sreenivasa Rao India said, “The Social Incubation Centre is a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country. It is the brainchild of our Director General Harish Kumar Gupta. It is currently in a nascent stage. We will update this concept and cover all the jails in the State in a phased manner. At present, we have been experimenting with the concept in 14 jails in the State. Our intention is to provide inmates with the best possible pathway into society by teaching them life skills during their imprisonment. We hope that this will help them after they are freed.” ■



SAMBALPUR WOMEN'S JAIL



Fr Timothy
Victor Pinto

The jailor, Mr Santhosh Barik pleaded with us to conduct a vocational training camp such as tailoring and carpentry. We agreed to the idea and are trying to organize finance for taking up this programme.

On Wednesday 27th March 2024, a team of women led by Sr Meena Barwa HM went to the Nari Bandi Niketan, Women's Jail Sambalpur. Their specific purpose was to present one Saree each to all the 31 sisters there. Mrs V Laxmi, Mahatab Nagar, Burla, St. Mary's Parish, and her companions brought 25 sarees for these sisters behind bars and I provided 6 sarees to make up the number 31. This was planned in November 2023, but got delayed due to sickness and hospitalization of V. Victor, husband of Laxmi. Sr. Meena, who described to me the proceedings said that many of the women were in tears. Praised be to the Lord.

On another occasion they visited the circle jail and distributed papaya which were collected from the house of Jyotish Lugun in Bhoipali village, Dantri Mother of Mercy Parish. They gave 55 Kilos of Papaya to the brethren behind bars in the circle jail. They were more than 700 in number. They used

them as vegetable for their meal. The jailor, Mr. Santhosh Barik pleaded with us to conduct a vocational training camp such as in tailoring and carpentry. We agreed to the idea and are trying to organize finance for taking up this programme. We expect to get 10 candidates for carpentry and another 10 for tailoring. This circle jail is meant for men prisoners and there are no women inmates. ■



BREAD BLESSED, BROKEN AND SHARED IN SUNDARGARH DISTRICT JAIL



Sr. Mercyan SU

Our supreme spiritual leader reminds us never to tire of asking the Lord for forgiveness and of learning to serve as he did. In the effort to imitate the supreme Pontiff, the PMI Jharsuguda organized the Holy Thursday celebration in the prison of Sundargarh District Jail.

Pope Francis washed the feet of women inmates at Robibbia prison in Rome on the occasion of Munday Thursday celebration on 28th March, 2024. Our supreme spiritual leader reminds us never to tire of asking the Lord for forgiveness and of learning to serve as he did. In the effort to imitate the supreme Pontiff, the PMI Jharsuguda organized the Holy Thursday celebration in the prison of Sundargarh District Jail. To set a right tone to the programme, in the beginning of the Mass Fr. Christopher Kerketta SVD, in his mellifluous voice, sang “Sab ka Mangal ho”(well-being of all). During the Eucharistic celebration, in memory of Jesus Christ who washed the feet of his 12 apostles, Fr. Christopher along with Fr. George SDB washed the feet of 12 prisoners.

On their feet being washed some inmates were in tears and others joined hands in deep prayer. They were touched by this profound gesture of love. In his homily Fr. Christopher encouraged the inmates to bear their present suffering courageously because it will pass away and it will certainly bear joyful fruit. He exhorted them to let go of all the negativity from their lives and fill their spirit with new hope and strength.

Sr. Elsy SU, Sr. Bimala, Sr. Prabha HM, Sr. Ursula, Sr. Gemma SCGR, Sr. Ramita FCC, Sr



Sarita and Sr. Aupama UMI sang hymns for the Mass. Within the celebration 446 inmates and the staff were given away a packet of bread. After the holy Mass the team made a visit to the women’s cell and shared the bread with them. They were so happy to interact with the visitors. The PMI Jharsuguda Unit is indebted to Deputy inspector General of Prisons Sambalpur range, Mr. Kulamani Behera, Superintendent and staff of Sundargarh District Jail for their whole hearted support in organizing this religious function for the brethren behind the bars. Special thanks to Sr. Marina SU, Provincial superior and team for their generosity for this noble ministry. ■

EASTER INSIGHTS TO RECIDIVISTS



Sr Sherly
Kidangan OSB

For everything that has happened to their lives in the past, the jail turns into a Lenten journey of passion and death. Let us explore how one can transform one's life to experience the joy of Easter behind bars.

“The greatest discovery of today is that we can change our lives by changing our attitudes,” says Albert Schweitzer. This attitudinal change is required for every human being, irrespective of who they are, where they are, and what they are. In each stage of our lives, we have to adapt ourselves to our surroundings and in accordance with the signs of the times. The season of Easter points out the prerequisites we are required to obtain. Easter symbolizes new life. It is new life in Jesus which consists in removing our previous lifestyles and grabbing the new menu card of our lives to chisel away the things we don't want in a new setting. It's an exhilarating new beginning for a magnificent awakening. Life has always been full of highs and lows. Its enticements and temptations leave us perplexed about what to do, how to do it, and why to do it. Despite all our good intentions, we occasionally stumble because we are fragile human beings. We awaken to a new life full of vitality and enthusiasm after receiving forgiveness and the restitution of our fallen moments, and we do so with firm resolve to never put on the old, rotting clothing but to put on Christ with greater fervor and love. It's like pouring wine into a brand-new wine skin. Upon examining the lives of numerous jailed brothers and sisters, we find that they too experience an 'Easter' / 'Lenten' season. Now it is the right time to reflect and offer up regrets. For everything that has happened to their lives in the past, the jail turns into a Lenten journey of passion and death. Let us explore how one

can transform one's life to experience the joy of Easter behind bars.

Attitudinal Change

Easter in prison is a time to rediscover hope and strive for a life of redemption. Investigating the potential of developing love and fortitude in one's deeds, habits, heart, and mind. It is mandatory to make an effort to learn who one is with its pros and cons, and to recognize and discover a renewed spirit and comfort even when confined; offer allegiance and accept internal and external changes in behavior and mindset to be a blossoming bud around the perimeter.

Face Challenges and Opportunities

Both individuals who live outside of prisons and those who are incarcerated experience significant life adjustments. Liberty is limited; one would be under the control of others, unable to make more choices due to various circumstances, estranged from family, etc. As such, it's important to look for opportunities within the circumstances to maintain composure and excellent manners. Every opportunity is to be utilized for the betterment of oneself and others. There could be a lot of challenges that come sporadically, but to remain serene and withstand them hopefully, one requires wisdom.

Foster Faith

Heb11:1 says, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” We frequently have no idea what the

Lord has in store for us, but we are sure that he will lead and guide our paths without faltering or wavering. He would hold our hands and walk with us. When you nurture staunch faith, it begins to take shape and sprout in our hearts. Life will take a different form based on the optimism that blossoms in the heart and that encourages better living within certain boundaries. A transformed individual with stronger convictions would successfully integrate into society.

Nurturing a Positive Outlook and Setting Meaningful Goals

These are like crafting a roadmap to a brighter future. Setting goals is very important in our lives. In the absence of a clear-cut vision and a clear goal, life will float without a navigator. Positive thinking should direct all our actions and be a guide and light in our lives. Therefore, it is necessary to set clear objectives that you screen through to find fulfillment and a sense of purpose. Never get stuck with obstacles that will destroy purpose and direction, but keep an eye on catching up with opportunities and possibilities. Propel all that hinders you from achieving the goal and shaping your life.

Illumine the Dark

In the darkest of nights, a single spark can ignite hope. Even in the midst of ambiguity and hardships, a glimmer of positivity, a kind glance from others, a kind gesture, or a word of encouragement can illuminate the path forward. Jn1:5 says, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” Likewise, when faced with the murkiest moments of life, even when the whole world fails to understand, we have to walk through the deepest tunnels all alone. A bit of spark from elsewhere will widen the horizon of hope and eventually make us feel relaxed and comforted. During those days of confinement, if everyone prepares to take this dire step and illuminates the path of each other with unwavering determination, one can experience the joy of the Risen Christ. Dare to be that spark in someone’s life.

Develop Resiliency

Developing resilience is akin to caring for

an inner strength garden. It has to do with a person’s overall growth, which includes their mental, emotional, physical, and psychological wellbeing. You must practice self-care, cultivate relationships with everyone, live in the present moment with self-awareness, and actively seek out possibilities for personal development. This will lead you to become more flexible and at-ease, and you will become a warrior of perseverance and resilience.

Be Assertive

Being assertive is an art that must be practiced in our day-to-day lives. Because temptations and allurements are so great that we are sometimes forced to behave otherwise. James 1:19 says, “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.” This verse teaches us a great lesson for our daily lives. Whenever we burst out with anger and tend to hurt others with our words, deeds, and actions, when we babble with others, we fail drastically to be assertive about ourselves. When we honestly and respectfully communicate with others, deeper understanding and love abound. When you are assertive, you maintain a stand of your own in expression, content, and communication. You will not fall back swiftly when someone throws pebbles at you, but you will stand firm and challenge the situation with firm resolution and trust.

Conclusion

Easter has its own significance, and the life in prison also indicates some of these aspects very well. Just as the season of Easter demands self-awareness, realization, renewal, and redemption, the life of an incarcerated person will also be aimed at the same. It admonishes them to come out of whatever they are due to various unexpected events to become people with high esteem. Then only we can experience the peace and joy of the Risen Christ. It is also a time to bring rays of hope, determination, and enlightenment to the future. It can be a time for reflection, forgiveness, and reconciliation; renewal and reaffirmation of the values of compassion; and second chances. ■

INDIAN NUN GRANTED BAIL IN STUDENT SUICIDE CASE

Carmelite Sister Mercy spent 51 days in jail in central Chhattisgarh state, may be released before Easter

A top court in a central Indian state has granted bail to a Catholic nun who spent 51 days in jail after being blamed for the suicide of a schoolgirl. Carmelite Sister Mercy, who goes by a single name, obtained bail from the Bilaspur High Court in Chhattisgarh state on March 28. She was arrested on Feb. 7 in Ambikapur, a major township in Sarguja district, but failed to get bail from the local court. “We are happy that the high court has granted bail to our sister,” said Sister Beena Therese, the provincial of Carmel Matha Province, Hazaribag. Sister Mercy is still in Ambikapur jail and may be released in a day or two after completing legal formalities, she said. “We are sure she will be with us for Easter. The top court order is a big relief for us,” Sister Therese told. Police charged the nun with “aiding and abetting” the suicide of a grade six girl student at the Carmel School in Ambikapur, where the nun was a teacher.

Police claimed the girl, who hung herself at home, left a suicide note blaming the nun. However, Church leaders suspect the authenticity of the police version. The nun was not even teaching the girl. She had caught the girl with three other students bunking classes and taken away their identity cards asking them to come along with their parents to the office the next day. But when news of the suicide spread in town, some Hindu activists staged protests in front of the school, demanding the arrest of the nun and principal. “We are sure the nun is innocent,

and she will be vindicated in court,” said Father Lucian Kujur, director of education in Ambikapur diocese. The priest said they were relieved after she was granted bail and were awaiting her release from jail. Chhattisgarh is ruled by the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party and hardline Hindu groups often target Christians and their institutions. The state witnessed unprecedented violence in 2022 and more than 1,000 indigenous Christians were driven out of their homes in the Bastar region. It topped the list of states in the country where persecution against Christians recorded a sharp rise in the first 75 days of 2024 – from Jan. 1 to March 15, according to a report by the United Christian Forum (UCF), an ecumenical body that tracks incidents of persecution against the community.

Courtesy: UCA News



INDIAN PRIEST, 10 OTHERS GET BAIL AFTER ONE MONTH IN JAIL

They were accused of violating the stringent anti-conversion law in northern Uttar Pradesh state



Eleven Christians, including a Catholic priest, have secured bail after they were remanded under the stringent anti-conversion law in a northern Indian state more than a month ago. The Barabanki district court in northern Uttar Pradesh on March 12 granted bail to Father Dominic Pinto of Lucknow diocese and 10 others.

“The district judge granted bail to Father Pinto and all those who were arrested with him,” Bishop Gerald John Mathias of Lucknow said. They were jailed for violating the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021, which criminalizes religious conversion without approval from the government, currently headed by the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Police arrested the priest and others on Feb. 5 following a complaint from a right-wing Hindu activist, who portrayed a routine prayer service as a mass religious conversion activity. The prelate thanked God and all those who prayed for their release.

It was “a totally fabricated case,” said Father Donald D’Souza, diocesan chancellor and spokesperson. The chancellor, however, did not disclose the conditions set by the court while hearing the bail plea. Pinto, director of the diocesan pastoral center, was arrested after a Protestant group rented out the center and conducted their prayer service there. The priest is among 15 persons, including five women, accused of organizing the service and the case was filed in Deva police station in Barabanki district by Hindu activist Brijesh Kumar Vaishya. Pinto was not even part of the gathering, said D’Souza. A Protestant leader, who is extending legal help, said: “The case will not stand in court as the arrest and judicial custody were in total violation of the law.” Under the sweeping anti-conversion law, a complaint has to be filed either by the victim or by his or her close associate in case of a religious conversion. In Pinto’s case, the complaint was filed by a Hindu activist. “Vaishya will not be able to prove his case,” said the Church leader, who did not want to be named. Top courts in Uttar Pradesh and neighboring Madhya Pradesh, also ruled by the BJP, had restrained police from registering conversion cases based on complaints from unauthorized persons. Madhya Pradesh also has its anti-conversion law, which Christian leaders say, is being used to harass Christians. They say violence against Christians increased in Uttar Pradesh after Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu monk-turned-politician, became the state chief minister in 2017.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION IN PRISONS OF ODISHA



Sr Mercyan SU

“Inspire Inclusion” calls for actions to break down barriers, challenge and create an environment where all women are valued and respected.

“Inspire Inclusion” calls for actions to break down barriers, challenge and create an environment where all women are valued and respected. Keeping this theme in mind PMI Jharsuguda Unit inspired, encouraged and brought smile on the face of women in three prisons of Nari Bandi Niketan District Jail of Sambalpur, Jharsuguda District Jail and Sundargarh District Jail

on 7th, 8th, and 11th March, 2024. At every jail the celebration began with arati of the inmates and imposing of chandan teeka by Sr Mercyan SU and Sr Ursula SCGR. A short prayer service was animated by Fr. FulJames SVD, Parish priest of St. Arnold Church, Fr. Pratap Ekka and Fr. Robinson. The prayer concluded with every inmate placing flowers at the lamp, a symbol of God the creator.



The women prisoners were given short messages by Sr Prabha HM and Fr. Fuljames to encourage and inspire. For the entertainment part the Salesian pre-novices performed beautiful dances and conducted games bringing smile, laughter and joy in the inmates. The Jail authorities, like Superintendent Mrs. Runibala and others expressed their gratitude to the PMI Jharsuguda Unit for their timely visit, generous contribution, for offering different training sessions and for the prayerful support. As tokens of affection, each prisoner was given gifts for their daily use as well as fruits. And the day ended with vote of thanks by Sr Ursula and Sr. Mercyan. A fitting conclusion was given to the festivity with shared meals with the inmates.

In all the jails prisoners expressed their gratitude by sharing their feelings. A few recalled that they laughed, danced and played games after a long time. They affirmed their womanhood despite being in prison. The SDB pre-novices were very happy to visit the prisons for the first time in their lives. They were touched by the pain of the inmates and they inspired to pray earnestly for them.

They were also touched by the kind and gentle dealing of inmates by the superintendent. Further, they were reminded of their founder, Don Bosco who was inspired to begin his mission for the poor and abandoned youth having visited the juvenile homes in Turin. The PMI, Jharsuguda is grateful to Fr Linus SDB, the Rector of Yuva Kendra Jharsuguda for his active collaboration in the prison ministry. Gratitude also goes to Fr. Fuljames, Fr. Pratap, Fr Robinson, Sr. Cicily HM, Sr. Prabha HM, Sr. Elsy SU, Sr. Leena, Sr. Ursula SCGR for their presence and support. A special word of thanks to Sr. Marina the provincial of St Ursula and all the councillors for their constant support and magnanimity.

Mother Anne De Xaintonge, the founder of the Society of St Ursula says, "We shall not carry flaming torches that throw a brilliant light, but we shall carry little lamps to enlighten girls, servants and distressed women." This is what PMI, Jharsuguda attempts to do. The call of PMI is to promote women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. ■



WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION, CENTRAL WOMEN PRISON, SHIMOGA



Sr Elize Lourd SCB

The volunteers of the Prison Ministry of India conducted special programmes for Women's Day and Sports events for the inmates of Women's Central Prison on Tuesday, 19th of March 2024.

The volunteers of the Prison Ministry of India conducted special programmes for Women's Day and Sports events for the inmates of Women's Central Prison on Tuesday, 19th of March 2024. The programme started at 10.30 am with a short prayer by Sr Elize Lourd SCB. Mrs. Ambika welcomed the gathering and explained the importance of the Women's Day celebration and how all of the women could contribute much for the same.

All the 52 inmates actively participated in the half day programme. The volunteers of Prison ministry India Shimoga conducted the special games, fun events and group singing competition. Sr. Elize & Mrs. Annamma Davis addressed the group with the theme: Inspired and Inclusion - with the pictorial method & exemplary models in every field. All the participants were awarded special prizes sponsored by the PMI team members. The volunteers distributed fruits and other edibles to the prison inmates and the staff. After the vote of thanks, the assistant superintendent Mrs. Shantha and jailor Mr. Nandesh personally thanked each member who participated in the event. ■



INCREDIBLE MIRACLES: PMI HOUSING PROJECTS IN ODISHA



Sr Shanti
Pulickal SCC

It is said that God is never outdone in generosity. His gifts are much more than what our small hands can contain. It depends only on our faith in God. When His blessings are beyond our comprehension, we call them miracles.

It is said that God is never outdone in generosity. His gifts are much more than what our small hands can contain. It depends only on our faith in God. When His blessings are beyond our comprehension, we call them miracles. We had such an experience on 2nd April 2024. It is about the blessing and inauguration of two houses built for the prisoners who had spent more than 10 years at the Central jail.

Joseph Nayak

Joseph Nayak (name changed) was a pious and peaceful person who cultivated his land and lived happily with his wife and 5 children. It was a tribal dominated forest area and his grandfa-

ther had cleared a part of it and had handed it over to the next generation. Joseph cultivated his land and lived happily with his family. But the tribals claimed the land as theirs but Joseph refused to move. The tribals attacked his crops, robbed his animals and finally on a fateful day he saw one of the tribals ploughing his land claiming that it was his land. Joseph lost all his self-control, and hit him with a stone and he fell to the ground. Without realizing the consequences, he smashed his head with more stones and the man died but Joseph was plunged in deep regret. The other tribals beat him, raised slogans for his arrest and he was taken to the



jail and convicted for 10 years.

House Blessing Barbershop

After his initial trauma, he decided to be practical and did odd jobs in the jail for a meagre income and looked after his family. Slowly he took up the job as a barber for the prisoners. His children were put in free boarding schools and the family survived with BPL rice and so on. His son joined the seminary and has completed his philosophy studies. Whenever we went to the jail for Holy Mass with our Bishop, he was at the altar holding his scepter and met us pouring out his sorrows. Finally, after completing his term in the jail he was released. But the Lord had a greater plan for him. An incredible miracle was waiting for him. Fr. Francis Kodiyan offered 3 lakhs of rupees from the PMI Housing Project to construct a house for a reformed and released prisoner in Berhampur diocese. He contacted me and I heard his name repeatedly during my online rosary. Fr. Kodiyan sent the money to Josephh's account. I too gave him Rs 20000 according to his request. The construction is almost over and the parish priest Fr. Isaach Nayak and Fr. Francis Kodiyan blessed the house and Sr. Shanti Pulickal, the PMI Berhampur diocesan coordinator was also present with the family members and friends. We prayed for the well being of all in the house. Fr Francis donated Rs 10000/- to purchase the chair, mirror etc for the barber shop under employment scheme.

Gracian Pinto

The other miracle happened for a prisoner's wife and 6 children, the youngest being 1 year old. Her husband was arrested for trafficking ganga (drugs). He was cautious at the beginning and with the money earned; he had purchased a small plot of land in the city and had laid the foundation for a house, 10 years before his



arrest. It was getting ruined and so we decided to help using the principle, prayer is our backbone and begging is our lifestyle. His wife was picking up plastic wastes and selling them to eke out a living. But now we helped her to get a job as a caretaker in the homes of sick and aged persons through an agency. As we relayed totally on providence we were helped by Fr. Francis, my provincial Sr. Leema Rose, OCD Provincial, Fr Bose, our Bishop, Mrs Mary Pulickal, DC Provincial Sr Martha, Sr. Dorette CSST, CM Provincial Fr. Mathew Nayak and so on contributing the full amount of Rs 50000/- or part of it to make a total of 3 lakhs.

The construction of the house is almost completed and it was blessed by Fr. Isaach, and Fr Kodiyan in the presence of Sr. Shanti Pulickal SCC and many relatives and friends who were present to mark the occasion. We cannot but praise and thank God who has a special love for the poor, needy and prisoners. Let us contribute our mite to help the unfortunate ones believing in the promise Jesus that whatever we have done to the last, least and lost is done for Jesus and he rewards us hundred-fold. Fr. Francis Kodiyan, the national coordinator of prison ministry, was eager to see the 2 houses and at our invitation he came from Bangalore to Berhampur and we proceeded to meet the prisoners, so dear to his heart and bless the houses, interact with the families, and give them hope and encouragement. The PMI at Berhampur is grateful to him and for all the sacrifices he made in spite of the scorching heat and other inconveniences. ■

FROM SHOCK AND DISBELIEF TO FINDING PURPOSE

- Steven Anthony -

He was attending a revival service at his Iowa prison. Somewhere amidst the worship and the Gospel message, Matt felt drawn to put his faith in Jesus Christ. Looking back, he now realizes the Holy Spirit was at work inside him.

Matt Took a Life. Then he Found Life and Purpose in Jesus

When Matt felt the unexplainable inner stirring, he had just begun serving 25 years for vehicular manslaughter. He was attending a revival service at his Iowa prison - an event similar to what Prison Fellowship now calls Hope Events. Somewhere amidst the worship and the Gospel message, Matt felt drawn to put his faith in Jesus Christ. Looking back, he now realizes the Holy Spirit was at work inside him.

“Talking about it gives me goosebumps,” he says. “That’s when I was spiritually re-born, and it was a beautiful time in my life despite being in prison.”

Depression and Anxiety

Matt credits his mom and dad for his positive upbringing in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. “I couldn’t ask for better parents,” he says. “They invested a lot into [my] education.” He went to private school where he excelled academically and athletically. Things changed when Matt went to college. He broke up with his girlfriend and lost interest in sports.

Matt began experiencing depression and anxiety. These feelings were compounded by a lack of goals and direction for his future. “I didn’t really understand at the time what I was going through,” Matt admits. “I had these negative emotions that I wasn’t really dealing with in the right way, because of my lack of maturity.” Matt tried dealing with his emotions by distracting himself with partying and chasing girls. One night, Matt drove home drunk from a bar. He passed out and ran a stop sign, resulting in a bad collision. “I stepped out of the vehicle, and everything was a haze,” Matt recalls. “It was a nightmare.” He remembers thinking, “This isn’t real. This isn’t really happening. Matt looked into the other car and saw a woman struggling to keep her eyes open. At the police station after the crash, Matt found out she had died. “I fell to my knees and cried,” Matt says. “I couldn’t believe it. I was in a state of disbelief, a state of shock.” Matt made bond, but his attorney told him he could go to prison for 25 years. Matt’s deepened depression made it harder for him to see any hope. In March 2003, he was sentenced to the exact

term he was warned about - 25 years.

Forward Looking

Upon starting his sentence, Matt endured a difficult four months at an Iowa prison. “I wasn’t in any physical danger or anything like that, but it was just a really dark place,” Matt says. But then he was transferred to another facility where he got involved in the Prison Fellowship Academy. “I’m really going to make the best of my time,” Matt determined. “I want to take advantage of everything, anything that I can do to better myself.” After Matt gave his life to Christ at the revival service, it took a mindset shift for him to fully comprehend the new direction of his life. “I never had thought about God as a relationship, as a personal God,” Matt says. “I always thought about God as somebody to be feared and revered.” Walking alongside like-minded people helped with that shift in his mindset - as did reading the Bible daily. Eventually,

Matt’s passion for his newfound faith leveled off, and sometimes he battled doubts. He brought these questions into the Academy, where peers and volunteers were understanding and willing to discuss them.

Embracing Forgiveness

Despite his questions, Matt didn’t stray from his mission to learn and become a better person. “There were certain moments, these ‘aha!’ moments, certain revelations that would come to me, where God would speak to me,” Matt explains.

Matt specifically credits a study by Prison Fellowship founder Chuck Colson for moving him forward. The subject was shame and carrying past burdens. Matt was struck by his inability to forgive himself for the crash while at the same time realizing he was forgiven by God through Jesus’ death on the cross. “That was a huge pivotal turning point where I was able to go forward from that and really forgive myself for what happened,”



Matt explains. The forgiveness didn't stop there. The mother of the woman who died reached out, and she and Matt communicated through a victim's advocate in the department of corrections. Their correspondence eventually led to the mother visiting Matt in prison. "That was very surreal," Matt admits. He wanted to tell her how sorry he was, but she quickly reassured him that she already knew. Matt says their conversation felt natural and that she simply wanted to get to know him.

Starting A New Life

Matt was released after serving seven years and says he had an easier time than many do adjusting to life on the outside. "I was able to get a job. I had housing secured. I had [the] support of my brothers and my parents," Matt says. Matt was also able to complete the schoolwork he began behind bars. He took liberal arts classes in addition to business classes. He earned a bachelor's degree and entrepreneurial management certificate. He was working as a sales rep but continued his education through a Master of Business Analytics program and got his degree. He's been working in that field ever since and enjoys what he does. Matt's newfound freedom led to him finding something else - love. He was working at a hospital in the radiology department when a certain woman caught his eye. Allison would eventually become his wife, but getting there was a process. They worked at the same hospital until she went somewhere else. Matt turned to online dating and found her profile. He admits there was some hesitation on her part because he was still rebuilding his life after being released. But she saw beyond his past and they started dating. Matt knew she was the one for him.

They got married and bought a house. They eventually moved to a nearby town. Matt found a church where one of his mentors attended and they began attending, as well. However, Matt and Allison went through a rough patch in their marriage—so

rough, that Matt thought they would get divorced. His ongoing battle with depression contributed to their struggles. He looked to the past to help him through it. "I started really going back to everything I had learned," Matt says. "I had strayed away from my faith, and I was really more consumed with running the race and being successful. I think God really got my attention." That attention-grabbing moment included a desire to return to prison, this time as an Academy volunteer. Matt connected with a prison ministry manager at Prison Fellowship and completed his training so he could serve the men at the Anamosa State Penitentiary. Matt got to talk with the warden, and it inspired him. "This has been a dark place for a while," the warden explained. "I'm confident that you guys are bringing the light here."

A New Calling

As a volunteer, Matt is most excited when it comes time to break off into small groups. "That's where the magic happens," he says. "Things are said that really resonate. People are sharing their hearts, and these men don't hold back." When he's at the Academy, Matt encourages the men by telling them to never downplay the impact they can have outside of prison. He adds that the men inside inspire him as well. They give him motivation in his own life. "It still drives me to this day to join God in His work and to be able to understand what He's doing spiritually, supernaturally - how He's orchestrating things," Matt says. Pouring into and listening to the men has also helped Matt find his purpose. "My calling is through Christ," he says. "It's to be able to make disciples of others and just to be able to pour myself into other people and be a servant." Matt knows he's not perfect, but he has a clear picture of the goal: helping bring others to Christ. He's grateful that his own story - as painful as it was at times - is being used to accomplish that mission.

Courtesy: PFI.

Repent and Believe in Christ



Br S Michael SHJ

Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark. The butterfly counts not months but moments and has time enough. Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Our brothers and sisters behind bars, knowingly or unknowingly ensnared by their weaknesses and sins against nature, are separated from the love of Christ and the oneness with their loved ones, losing peace in the world. Sin coerces each of us through worldly things to turn away from the love of Christ, but Christ stands ready to meet us at every moment, wishing to strengthen our weaknesses. By following our own will, we remain out of touch with the love of Christ and our loved ones, often immersed in the four wells of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and the media world. Christ calls us to return to His peaceful world. Christ's Facebook invites us to connect with the holy Book's words, whether face to face with those behind bars or elsewhere. Incorporating Christ's teachings into our online interactions through Facebook involves sharing positive messages, fostering understanding, and promoting the true life of Christ and His compassion. Engaging with the world of WhatsApp with a focus on the love of Christ includes sharing inspirational messages, true prayers, and reflections on our faith. It's a way to integrate our spiritual

beliefs into digital communication, fostering community and connecting with loved ones. Balancing worldly conversations on WhatsApp with Christ's love involves maintaining inclusive, meaningful, and respectful interactions, infusing digital communication with kindness, empathy, and consideration.

Many young people struggle with Instagram addiction, wasting valuable time not turning their hearts and minds to Christ but spending more time on unvaluable things like watching short videos on Instagram. Setting healthy boundaries through the word of Christ is crucial to managing Instagram usage. Using Instagram with a sole focus on Christ involves sharing content that reflects our faith and Christ's values. Being aware of the content we consume and post helps minimize unpleasant social media encounters and radiate Christ's love through the internet. Prioritize upbeat and encouraging messages, stay away from contentious debates, and utilize your platform to share compassion, love, and understanding. Fostering compassionate thinking involves keeping Christ's teachings in mind and heart. Even in environments free from



the busyness of social media, the beauty of nature provides true peace and allows birds to move with a free mind, enjoying the true spirit of the Creator.

In addition to Christ's desire for us to return from the world of social media, the Church is making every effort to win back everyone who has strayed from the love of both Christ and the Church. Therefore, the Church adopts the Sacrament of Reconciliation to mend the previously destroyed relationship between God and humanity. As far as we are aware, Reconciliation is a divine act in which God pardons sinners even before they seek forgiveness. The Church serves as a mediator and informs us that the sacrament of reconciliation is a genuine celebration of Christ's kind forgiveness, allowing sinners to find inner peace. The call to revisit the exact words of our Savior and Master Jesus Christ - "Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15) - is what reconciliation and penance for our time are all about.

The Church is concerned about this matter. Furthermore, for believers to

deepen their connection with the Savior, Pope John Paul II emphasizes the urgent necessity for Reconciliation among them in his apostolic exhortation "Reconciliation and Penance" (Reconciliatio et Penitentia). "The center of confession is not the sins we declare but the divine unconditional love we receive, of which we are always in need," as even Pope Francis underlined. Jesus, who awaits us with His unconditional love, hears us out eagerly and extends forgiveness, is the center of confession. Rabindranath Tagore says, "Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark. The butterfly counts not months but moments and has time enough. Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake." Let us enter Holy Week with deep and true faith, experience the true power of Christ, and enjoy heavenly freedom. May our hearts awaken with an Easter candle and lighten the dark candles of our brothers and sisters behind bars. ■

HOLY WEEK CELEBRATIONS, CENTRAL JAIL, BENGALURU



Veera Pinto

Lord's passion service, exaltation and veneration of the cross, preaching of the Word of God were conducted on Good Friday by Fr Salvador FDS and Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS.

We, the volunteers of Bengaluru PMI, had a meaningful celebration of Holy Week in Central Prison Bangalore. We began on Maundy Thursday. Fr Anil Prasad from KROSS celebrated Last Supper, washing of the feet of twelve inmates. There were Catholics and men of other faith too. Fr also preached an inspiring homily. Buns prepared in the prison bakery were distributed to all inmates present in the chapel. Lord's passion service, exaltation and veneration of the cross, preaching of the Word of God were conducted on Good Friday by Fr Salvador FDS and Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS. All the inmates were served kanji and butter milk prepared by Catholic inmates. Easter services, blessing of Easter Candle, Holy water and Easter mass were celebrated Fr Clement and Fr Maxmillan. Chapel was full and inmates were found sitting in the corri-

dor as well. Similar services were conducted by PMI volunteers/religious sisters in the women's section, as men or priests were not allowed there. Million thanks to priests. Even though they were busy during Holy Week, they chose to hear confessions, celebrated Holy Week services in Central Prison. Thanks to our volunteers for spending time with inmates. ■



YOU START DYING SLOWLY



Pablo Neruda

You start dying slowly ;

if you do not travel,
if you do not read,
If you do not listen to the sounds of life,
If you do not appreciate yourself.

You start dying slowly :

When you kill your self-esteem,
When you do not let others help you.

You start dying slowly ;

If you become a slave of your habits,
Walking everyday on the same paths...
If you do not change your routine,
If you do not wear different colours
Or you do not speak to those you don't know.

You start dying slowly :

If you avoid to feel passion
And their turbulent emotions;
Those which make your eyes glisten
And your heart beat fast.

You start dying slowly :

If you do not risk what is safe for the uncertain
If you do not go after a dream
If you do not allow yourself
At least once in your lifetime
To run away from sensible advice

Don't let yourself die slowly
Do not forget to be happy!

*Courtesy: Chilean poet who was
awarded the Nobe Prize for Literature in 1971.*



KCBC President His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Visited Central Prison, Thiruvananthapuram.



Holy Week Celebration, District Jail, Thiruvananthapuram.



Maundy Thursday Celebration, Mattancherry Sub Jail.



Easter Celebration, Devikulam Sub Jail.



Holy Week Celebration, Women Prison, Attakulangara.



Holy Week Celebration, Attingal Sub Jail.



PMI Awareness Retreat, Anand, Gujarat.



Prisoners' Release and Reintegration, Premodaya, Bengaluru.



PMI Pune Sponsoring Scholarships to Prisoners' Children.



PMI West Bengal State Gathering.



PMI Cofounder Visiting St Mother Teresa's Tomb.



Holy Child Home for Prisoners' Children, Ranaghat.



Women's Day Celebration, Shimoga.



St Joseph Pontifical Seminarians Visiting Devikulam Prison.



PMI WB State Gathering at Krishnagar Bishop's House.



St Joseph Pontifical Seminarians Visiting Ponkunnam Prison.



Major seminarians Visit to Snehashramam, Thrissur.



St Thomas Apostolic Seminarians Visit to Pala Prison.



Major Seminarians Visit to Peerumedu Jail.



Hearty Welcome to Venerini Sisters to Snehashramam, Thiruvananthapuram.



Sons of Snehashramam, Thrsissur.



PMI Volunteers' Visit to Women Prison, Thrissur.



Major Seminarians' Visit to District Jail, Thrissur.



PMI Pune Sponsoring Educational Scholarships to Prisoners' Children.



PMI Volunteers' Visit to Ponnani Prison.



Hearty Welcome to Venerini Sisters to Snehashramam, Trivandrum.



Major Seminarians Visiting Chavakkad Sub Jail.



Women's Day Celebration, Sambalpur Prison.



Women's Day Celebration, Sundargarh Prison.



Lucknow Diocesan Priest Fr Dominic was welcomed by Most Gerald John Mathias.



Women's Day Celebration, Gwalior Prison.



Fr Francis Kodiyan was Honoured by the Mangalore District Prison Superintendent.



PMI Mangalore Volunteers.



Most Rev Dr Peter Paul Saldanha Distributing Certificates to Prisoners who Participated in the Agricultural Training Program.



Women's Day Celebration, Mangalore Prison.



PMI Visit to Kohima Prison.



Computer Lab Inauguration, St Antony's Home, Kankavly.



PMI Jabalpur Diocesan Convention.



PMI Visit to Central Prison, Vishakapatnam.



Women's Day Celebration, Central Prison, Sagar.



PMI Volunteers Visit to Kolbe Home, Bengaluru.



PMI Pune Visiting Women Shelter Home.



PMI Housing Project – Kolbe Home Children's Home, Bengaluru.



PMI Housing Project – Bindhu, Kayyuni, Tamil Nadu.



PMI Housing Project – Santhosh, Berhampur, Odisha.



PMI Housing Project – Nayen, Mohana, Odisha.



PMI Housing Project – Bridgit – Pallithode, Kerala.