



PRISON VOICE

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NATIONAL MONTHLY

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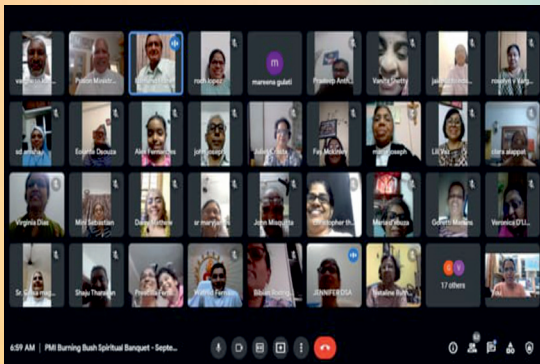
Holy Spirit Will Come Upon You



**Kolbe Boys Visiting HAL
Bengaluru**



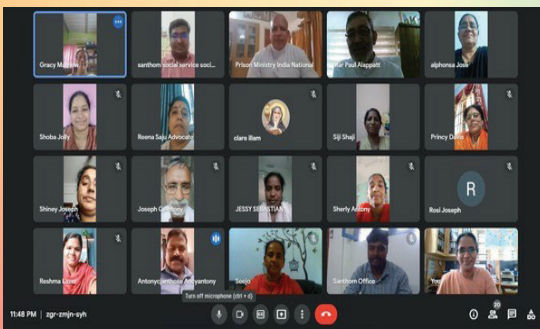
**Medical Camp Conducted in
Joherganj Subjail**



**PMI Burning Bush Spiritual
Banquet September 2021**



**PMI National Office Team Visiting
Observation Home, Bengaluru**



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**PMI Volunteers Celebrating
Independence Day at Gwalior Prison**



**PMI Volunteers of Jharkhand with
Bishop**



**PMI Volunteers Visiting
Berhampur Prison**

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PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY

"All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers" (Acts 1,14).



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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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DIGNITY OF LIFE

The Catholic Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 8. Mary played the greatest role of a woman in this world by becoming the Mother of God. As the Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved immune from all stain of original sin from the first moment of her conception by the grace of God, every conception is a design of God fearfully and wonderfully made to enrich the beauty and splendour of creation (Ps 139:13-14). Every birth is to be celebrated for life comes from God (Gen 2:7). This amazing enterprise of God is put into jeopardy by men's pride and greed in the name of population explosion over the years.

A large number of the incarcerated are women along with their children. Studies indicate that the plight of women is pathetic because women become easy targets of violence and victims of non-retaliation in comparison with men. However, appropriate efforts must be made to prevent inappropriate and improper incarceration of women in the first place. For, they contract disproportionately high rates of infectious and chronic diseases; and are subjected to sexual abuses, mental illnesses, substance abuses, etc, in prison. It is a noble job to support them for their mental and physical health, housing and employment opportunities after their release, which will stand in good stead towards strengthening their families and communities, especially the socially and economically weaker sections. Such initiatives will also help reduce inordinate involvement of women in criminal cases and ultimately contribute to creating a more just society.

Let us remind ourselves of the teachings of the Church, "God, the Lord of life,



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor

has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception; abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes" (GS 51 #3). St. John Paul II was a pro-life hero whose call for a great campaign in support of life continues to persuade people of all faiths to achieve a cultural transformation so that all may express the full truth about the human person and human life. Pope Francis challenges leaders to defend human life at every stage of its development. Resonating with the stand of the Holy Fathers and the teachings of the Church, PMI volunteers, have a moral duty to promote the dignity of life in general; and of women and children in particular and let us do it at every opportune platform. So dear volunteers, let us make an effort to support and donate a brick.

We too celebrate the feast of St Vincent De Paul on 27 September, a French priest of peasant origins who died in 1660. Pope Leo XIII honoured him as the patron Saint of charity and of all charitable organizations. We remember him as a great lover of the poor who at the same time reiterated a challenging love of the poor. Any little charity that we do every day, helps many poor people, women and children in particular, to get back on track in their lives. I wish you all a very Happy Birthday of our Blessed Mother and Happy Feast of St Vincent De Paul.

POPES COMMITMENT TO PRISONERS: A HISTORICAL INTROSPECTION



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

Jesus Christ our saviour was sentenced unjustly and was crucified mercilessly. Jesus commenced prison ministry by assuring paradise to the good thief on the cross. This unique salvific mission of Jesus to redeem the lost has faithfully been continued by his ambassadors on earth the popes and their representatives the prison chaplains. This article briefly reviews the commitment of Popes to prisoners in the history of the Catholic Church.

St Peter

The first pope St Peter was incarcerated in Mamertine Prison in Rome. Peter was put into prison by King Herod, but the night before his trial an angel appeared to him, and told him to leave. Peter's chains fell off, and he followed the angel out of prison, thinking it was a vision (Acts 12, 3–19). Pope Pontian (died 235) was deported to Sardinia and five years later was sentenced to forced labour in a mine.

Pope Pius VI and Others

Pius VI (1742-1823) was exiled and died in captivity. Both Innocent X (in 1650) and Clement XI (in 1704) paid surprise, secret visits to the construction sites of Rome's Carceri Nuove (New Prisons) in Via Giulia

and the San Michele correctional facility in Porta Portese. In 1824 and then in 1827, Leo XII paid two visits to inmates: the first was to the Carceri Nuove in Via Giulia and the second was to the children's prison in Via del Gonfalone. Pius IX paid a pastoral visit to inmates, visiting political prisoners in Rome's urban detention facilities and then, on 26 October 1868 he paid another visit to the newly inaugurated prison of Civitavecchia¹.

Pope Pius XII

Pius XII, during the Christmas of 1951, had dedicated a radio address to prisoners worldwide, expressing his sympathy for their plight: "Aware as we are of the fragility and immeasurable weakness that often wears the human spirit down to death, we understand the sad tragedy that may have taken you unawares and swept you up, through an unfortunate combination of circumstances that can't always be blamed on your own free will... And just as in Heaven, there is greater rejoicing for every sinner who

¹ Cfr. *Vatican Insider* 5 May 2015.



POPE TO PRISONERS

repents, so on Earth every honest man must kneel before those who may have fallen, perhaps in a moment of confusion, and have nevertheless been able to struggle to redeem themselves and rise up once more.”

Saint John XXIII

Pope John XXIII visited Regina Coeli prison, Rome on 26 December 1958. Speaking to prisoners, Pope John told them, “Now you need to rebuild your lives and you need to do one thing: eliminate the word ‘despair,’ and prepare yourselves to spend your lives doing good, because this is also the Father’s house and you are also sons of God.” The inmates gave him a missal with a white leather cover, which from then on, the Pope would use every day during his private Mass celebration. After blessing the inmates, John XXIII asked to visit the various sections of the prison. His meeting with a murderer who was down on his knees waiting for him was particularly touching. The man had tears in his eyes and would not look up. The young man was unable to speak, he simply sobbed. The prisoner asked him: “Does what you said apply even to me? I have so much sin in me. Can there be forgiveness for me too?” John XXIII, who was visibly moved, did not say anything, but bent over and embraced him.

Pope Paul VI

Paul VI visited the Regina Coeli prison, Rome on 9 April 1964. He broke down in tears while addressing them. The Pope told

the prisoners: “You are worthy of being loved, helped and saved.” He urged them not to give up hope and warned; “You can commit only one sin here - yielding to despair. Remove this bond from your souls, this true imprisonment and let your hearts expand instead and find reasons for hope once again, even in your present situation of constraint where physical, external freedom has been taken from you... It is Christ’s voice that invites you to be good, to start over, to restart your lives and rise up.” Paul VI wrote a prayer specially for prisoners that read: “Lord, you allowed yourself to be put to death in that manner in order to save your executioners, to save all of us sinners. And also, to save me? If this is so, Lord, it means that one may be good at heart even though the condemnation of the courts of men weighs on one’s shoulders”.

Saint John Paul II

John Paul II, who was almost killed by the gunshots inflicted by Mehmet Ali Agca on 13 May 1981 in St Peter’s Square, crossed the threshold of Rebibbia prison on 27 December 1983 to meet his attacker alone in his cell. The two sat down opposite to each other. For a moment Wojtyla put a hand on Ali’s knee. Then the two of them lowered their heads and began to talk in whispers. Agca, who had already been forgiven by the Pope after the attack, had more to say. Wojtyla bent over with his hand on his forehead, almost brushing against Ali’s head. As he left the cell, the pope said: ‘I spoke to him as if he were my brother, a brother I have forgiven and who has all my trust’².

² Cfr. *Vatican Insider* 5 May 2015.

Pope Benedict XVI

On 18 March 2007 Pope Benedict XVI went Rome's Casal del Marmo prison for minors to celebrate Holy Mass. On 18 December 2011 he chatted with inmates at Rome's Rebibbia Prison, in what was one of the most important and moving meetings of his pontificate. Benedict XVI spoke about overcrowding and decay in prisons, adding: "Anyone can fall, but that God wants everyone to come to him, and we must cooperate in the spirit of brotherhood and awareness of our own fragility, so that they can truly rise again and move forward with dignity ... and also find joy in life. And if we recognize this plan, God is with us, and even the dark passages have their meaning ... in order to help us become more ourselves, more the children of God. May the Lord help you, and we are close to you."

Pope Francis

It has become the custom for Pope Francis to visit a detention centre on Holy Thursday, part of his longstanding emphasis on ministering to prisoners and giving them rehabilitation and hope. The Pope washes and kisses their feet irrespective of their gender and religion. Visiting the imprisoned is an act of mercy that has implications for all Christians and not just those involved in prison ministry, Pope Francis said. On November 8, 2019 speaking to participants at an international meeting of national and regional directors of Catholic prison ministries, Pope Francis urged greater efforts to reform prison systems, address the root causes of crime and ensure acceptance and reintegration once a person completes his or her sentence.

POPE TO PRISONERS

Conclusion

Though all throughout the church history there had been attempts by Popes to visit prisoners it has become very effective, powerful and a custom with the papacy of John XXIII. Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis profoundly conveyed the unconditional and forgiving love of Jesus to prisoners. They have given us the model and inspiration how we need to take care of prisoners. It's our duty to continue their legacy by outreaching the neighbouring prisons to convey the forgiving love of Jesus and thereby to release, reform, rehabilitate, reintegrate and redeem them. For Jesus said, "I was in prison, you visited me" (Mt 25, 36).

Holy Spirit Will Come Upon You

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her (Lk 1,34-37).

THE AROMA OF CHRIST

Sr Adele Korah SCCG

Introduction

The Bible calls us the 'Aroma of Christ'. "Thanks be to God, who in Christ Jesus always leads us in triumphant procession and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. To God we are the 'Aroma of Christ' both among those who are going to be saved and among those who are on the way of destruction" (2 Cor 2:14-15). St Paul exhorts, "Be imitators of God as beloved children live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."


PMI Volunteers – Aroma of Christ

As volunteers of Prison Ministry India, we go forward to share our love and care with all the suffering brethren who are rejected by society and are thrown behind bars. We go as persons who have experienced the depth of love from God and are longing to share that love; the unconditional love of Christ with the brethren who have been deprived of genuine love in their lives and have reached a place where they have been reduced to a mere number, and are bearing the stigma of a prisoner, or a criminal whether they are guilty or not. We are the gospel in action, bearers of the good news which Christ came to share with us, the good news of God's unconditional love. We may be the only Gospel which thousands

of people may read in their lives. It is from our life that they will know that, "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" (John 3:16). By the experience of our total acceptance and unconditional love for them, unmindful of their past life, without judgment from our side, we enable them to be healed of their inner wounds of abandonment and rejection. I wish to narrate a short story here to illustrate our role as volunteers of Prison Ministry

Fire Makes You Fragrant

After days of heavy rains, a man found that there was a bad odour in his house because of the damp wall. He didn't have enough money to repair the wall. But he went and bought some incense- frankincense from the nearby shop and burnt it in coal. His 10-year-old son was so happy for the sweet scent that filled the house. But he asked his dad, "Why are you burning those good crystals which smell so good? It gives a very pleasant odour". His dad smiled and said, "Son only when it burns it gives good smell". The son questioned, "Does fire produce fragrance?" Not all substances produce pleasant odour when put into fire. Only frankincense gives this odour. Then the man transferred the coal and incense in to an old mud pot which was kept unused. The son shouted, "Daddy don't do that. The crystals will burn the mud pot. The man sighed and said, no son, crystals won't burn the pot. Mud pots are made of clay which is hardened in fire. So they don't get burnt in flames". The boy was puzzled with so many lessons he had learnt. They watched together the thick cloud of



smoke rising and filling their little house with fragrance. The son summarized, "If you are incense, fire makes you fragrant. If you are a pot, fire makes you stronger".

Aroma of Christ

It was a lesson for my spiritual growth. The Bible calls us the "Aroma of Christ" (2 Cor 2:15). We spread his fragrance in the midst of people living in the pain of rejection and various problems, deprivation, troubles and difficulties. If we are like mud pots tempered in flames, we who have experienced the comfort of God, we become useful vessels to others in their pains and trials of life. What a great lesson! As trials of life burns us let us become incense, giving the fragrance of God's love yet remain strong like the mud pot to comfort and strengthen others in their trials. Let us yield ourselves to God so that we may become channels of blessings to others. The ministry in the prison is not always easy. We are tried with refusal of permissions for entry, several restrictions, of waiting outside the prison for a long time in the hot sun before getting permission and so on. In such moments let us recall the fact that we are called to offer ourselves as a fragrant sacrifice of our comforts. We are chosen and called to leave our comfort zones to be tempered in flames and to offer ourselves as "a living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1) for the good of others. We pray that we be empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in endurance. "He has sent us too to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind and to let the oppressed go free." When we are in their midst, we are there to spread the fragrance of Christ. "We are the Gospel in



THE AROMA OF CHRIST

action that people today can read; we are the ultimate message of Christ, written down in word and deed. Jesus has no hands now, it's on our hands that He depends; to do all that he wants, Jesus has no other hands." When we reach out to them with the touch of Christ by offering them acceptance and unconditional love, we offer help to many brethren to receive new light and sight to see the new path traced by Christ our Savior for their salvation! Let us make the prayer of John Henry Cardinal Newman our daily prayer for radiating Christ by what we are and what we do in our Ministry in the prison.

Conclusion

Dear Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance everywhere I go; flood our souls with your Spirit and life; penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly that our lives may be a radiance of yours; shine through us and be so in us. That every soul we come in contact with, may feel your presence in our soul. Let them look up and see no longer us, but only Jesus. Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as you shine; so to shine as to be a light to others. The light, O Jesus, will be all from you, none of it will be ours; it will be You shining on others through us. Let us thus praise you in the way you love best by shining on those around us. Let us preach you without preaching, not by words but by our example. By the drawing force, the sympathetic influence of what we do, the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear for You. Amen.

Yoshie Shiratori: The Man that no Prison Could Hold



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Yoshie Shiratori

Shiratori Yoshie, (1907 – 1979) was a Japanese national born in Aomori Prefecture. He is famous for having escaped four times from several different prisons, which made him an anti-hero in Japanese culture. Shiratori worked in a tofu shop initially and later worked as a fisherman to catch crabs for Russia. After changing jobs several times and finding little success, he turned to gambling and stealing to make a living.

Aomori Prison Escape

Shiratori was first imprisoned at Aomori prison in 1936. He was forced to confess to a murder he did not commit. Falsely imprisoned in Aomori Prison, he was beaten and tortured every night by prison guards. Yoshie thought of escaping from the prison but it wasn't easy to do so. He kept record of everyday patrol time of guards which always had a gap of 15 minutes. During that time, he would pull out a metal wire which he got from the bathhouse and started to pick the lock. He somehow managed to succeed in it. But there were more locks ahead. However, after studying the guards' routine for months, he escaped by picking the lock of his cell with the metal wire that was wrapped around the bucket provided for bathing.

Akita Prison Escape

Three days later he was caught again stealing supplies from a hospital. He was

back to Aomori. He was sentenced to life imprisonment for his escape. In 1942, he was transferred to Akita jail in Akita City. The guards would force him to do manual labor and made him sleep on the concrete floor during winters. He was kept in a confined room whose ceiling was very high and the wall was made slippery so that no one could climb to the one window up above. They also handcuffed Shiratori all the time. On the stormy night of June, one of the guards on patrol duty looked inside the Shiratori's cell and was shocked to see the cell empty. Yoshie Shiratori had escaped again. What people did not know about him was that he was an expert lock picker. He freed himself from the handcuffs. He climbed up the slippery wall and made it to the window. The window had a wooden cover from outside and was rusty. Every night he would climb the wall, try to move the rusty window and make it lose. On the night of June 15, it was raining heavily and he chose that day to escape so that no one could hear his footsteps because of the storm.

Abashiri Prison Escape

Three months later on September 18th, the head guard Kobayashi heard a knock on his door. To his surprise it was Yoshie Shiratori. He let him in, fed him and listened to everything he had to say. Shiratori said he didn't mind staying in the prison but the amount of abuse he faced was the only

reason for escaping. He wanted to file a lawsuit on Japanese Prisons for corruption and the abuse they had done to him. He wanted Kobayashi's help to testify against the prison as he was the only one who treated Shiratori with respect. While Yoshie was in the toilet, Kobayashi called the police. He was back again in jail.

This time he was sentenced to 3 more years of life imprisonment and was sent to the northern part of Japan where the weather always remained cold. He was now in Abashiri Jail. Kept in summer clothes in harsh winter made his body weak. He was handcuffed with iron rings which required two metal specialists to open. The food served there was rice, miso soup and soya sauce. The windows were made so small a person could not pass through it. Yoshie always made sure to save some miso soup. He poured the miso soup on the window nut bolts and his iron handcuffs. The salt amount in miso soup oxidizes the iron material thus rusting them and weakening it. After 6 months finally the nut bolts started to drop off and the window could now be broken. One of the expertises of Yoshie was that he could dislocate his joints whichever way he wanted. He then dislocated himself to get out of the small window. For 2 years Yoshie had isolated himself in a cave and hunted animals to survive. He came out of the cave after 2 years and while passing through a Tomato farm, he plucked a tomato and ate it. The farmer saw this and attacked him. In the process of self-defence he killed the farmer. He was arrested again.

Sapporo Prison Escape

This time he was given death sentence and was sent to Sapporo Prison in 1947. The

Americans came to know about his abilities to escape jail. He was kept under 24 hour surveillance with 6 guards always watching him. Yoshie always looked at the ceiling thinking of a plan to escape again. That's what the guards thought. But Yoshie had already begun his escape by digging below the futon he used to sleep on. One day he overslept and guards kept on asking him to get up. When he did not wake, they went inside the jail only to find the wooden slates. Yoshie had escaped again. He ran off and sat on a bench nearby. A police officer sat beside him and started a conversation. The police man did not know who Yoshie Shiratori was. The police man offered him a cigarette. In Japan, cigarette was one of the costly items and seeing this gesture from the police man he cried. He confessed who he was. He was arrested and taken to court. Judges considered his plea after the number of times he had escaped. They acknowledged his lawsuit against the prison abuse and his death sentence was revoked and reduced to 20 years. He was treated well inside the prison. In 1961 he was finally a free man who had spent 25 years of his life escaping from prison.

Japanese Prison Reform System

After Shiratori's death, Japanese prison systems were reformed which were due to the daring escapes of Shiratori. The police officers behaved well with the convicts and with all the prisoners. Japan has worked to reform the prison system since the Meiji Era, which meant escapes have become rarer, and by the mid-1970s, the annual number of escapees have dwindled to just a single digit.



The Power of Intercession



Marjorie Correa

Who is an Intercessor?

“I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found no one” (Ezekiel 22:30). God was looking for someone to stand in the gap between him and the land and cry out for deliverance. This shows that God’s intention is to respond to the cries of our heart. God is looking for people who would pray on behalf of people and nations on the earth. He is looking for an intercessor. Who is an intercessor? An intercessor is one who pleads the case of another to God asking for divine intervention. Intercession is by nature, where an individual positions himself between two parties – one with a need and one with an answer – and seeks to bring the two parties together.

Moses, an Intercessor

God has given us a biblical pattern for intercession in the life of Moses. While Moses was on the mountain with God, a tragic sin was taking place in the valley below. Moses was so long in returning that the children of Israel assumed that he would not return. They began to doubt God’s presence and power. They asked Aaron to make them a visible representation of God in the form of an idol. Moses was so angry that he broke the tablets of the law. In Exodus 32:30 Moses says “You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the Lord, perhaps I can make atonement for

your sin.” Moses assumed the position of an intercessor and the next day went up to the mountain to intercede on behalf of the people of Israel. The prayer of Moses saved the children of Israel. “The Lord relented from the harm which he said he would do to his people” (Ex 32:14).

Why Become an Intercessor?

God can’t bring mercy, revival and restoration to the earth unless we pray and intercede. Jesus is an intercessor interceding for us at the right hand of the Father. We are supposed to become like Jesus and He is the ultimate intercessor. Secondly, the Scripture commands all of us without exception to intercede. “Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers and intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and reverence” (1Timothy 2: 1-2). How does one become an intercessor or a prayer warrior? What are the qualities needed?

A Person of Prayer

Prayer is the power house for every Christian as he journeys through life’s problems. There are several instances in the Bible that talk about the prophets and other holy men who spent hours praying and interceding with God whenever their nations or their lives were in peril. Moses, Joshua, David, Abraham, Elijah and many more never ceased praying for their people. Jesus often left the crowds and went to a quiet place where he could pray to his father. Though he was God he knew the power of prayer and fasting which prompted him to go into the desert and fast and pray for 40 days. This



is what helped him to resist the temptations of the devil as well as to face his passion and death on the Cross.

Stand Boldly before the Lord and Appeal to his Justice

“Two of the men turned and walked towards Sodom but the Lord remained with Abraham” (Genesis 18:22). He would not let the Lord go. An intercessor should be a man of courage. A true intercessor wants and longs for God’s presence, to walk along with God step by step all day and all night long. He should be a man who desires to find out the will of God. True intercession is to see the object of our prayers come into a close fellowship with God by whatever means and circumstances He decides is best. God’s justice will be executed upon every person, but it will be perfect justice.

Think of God’s Great Call and Purpose for his Life

A true intercessor will find arousing in him a sense of responsibility for the world. He should be able to sense the pain of God’s heart over the wickedness of man. He should approach God in humility and put forth his case. He should trust in God’s mercy. Abraham asked God to spare the city of Sodom if 45 righteous people were to be found. But there were not even 10. So God had no choice but to destroy the city.

A Man of Perseverance and Steadfastness

A true intercessor refuses to give up. He continues to pray on and on. He should be a man of sacrifice. If we persevere God will hear and answer our prayer. We have the

POWER OF INTERCESSION

story of the persistent widow in the New Testament who persisted in her request to the judge that he finally gave in. Jesus is always waiting patiently in the Blessed Sacrament to listen to us and to pray to Him. When everything is literally virtual these days, the idea of praying 24 hours before the Blessed Sacrament or as it is called - Incessant Intercession for the Incarcerated, is surely the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated

As intercessors of Prison Ministry India, we started praying for prisoners all over the world. We have been praying for their sanctification and transformation. We have also been praying for their families and for the prison staff to be more understanding and compassionate towards them. We have been praying for the judicial system to give them a fair trial. We take each and every prisoner by name and pray for them. We have been having all night prayer vigils interceding for God’s mercy on them. All these prayers I am sure can never fall on deaf ears. For me personally, being an intercessor has been a rewarding experience. It is time well spent. That half an hour slot that I give to the Lord I know will never go in vain. Every prisoner whose name we lift up to the Lord during this time will surely experience the touch of the Lord. What joy there will be in heaven when just one soul repents of his sins and is a reformed person. Let us carry on this good work of interceding for our incarcerated brethren to release them from their bonds of suffering.



Kamathipura to New York: Shwetha Katti's Remarkable Journey

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Kamathipura is an infamously known red-light area located at Grant Road, Mumbai. This was formerly called 'Lal Bazar' during the time of the British government for being the oldest prostitutes' area in South Mumbai since 1795. Women of various age groups are involved in flesh trade here. Many are trafficked and brought here from West Bengal, Nepal and Bangladesh. There are millions of real stories to be told about the girls and women from Kamathipura. This is a known place where women have sex for money and they are considered as garbage of society, immoral people, but for me, Kamathipura is a land of tears of girl children, young girls and women. Ms Shwetha, the heroin of this article has a story to tell us. Can we walk with her to know and feel the pains of Kamathipura women and the journey of Shwetha from Kamathipura to New York?

Born in Brothel House

Shweta, born and raised in Kamathipura, was the oldest of three daughters. She grew up in a brothel until the age of 16 in an environment where abuse and confinement of women was common. Shwetha was raised by commercial sex workers. Her mother used to go for work at 8.30am in the morning and returned by 7pm in the evening. It was normal life for her until she


was raped for the first time. She went to Marathi Municipal school where her friends called her cow-dung and black bamboo which affected her self-esteem so badly that she was unable to talk to anyone. She was so afraid even to utter a word. She was afraid that people would laugh at her for any word she may utter and any action she did.

Get out of this Place

All of us have close friends with whom we share all of ourselves. We have friends who try to lift us up. Our friends help us to realize our dreams. It was the same with Shwetha as she was close to Ms Radha, a commercial sex worker, who came to her one day while watching TV and asked whether she would like continue to remain in this red-light area, a place of sorrows and stigma, a place of weeping and moaning after men go away. "Do you want to end up like us? What do you want in your life? If you want to get out of this place, education is the only option you have. We don't have options and chances in our lives, but you have. Take advantage of it. Get out of this place and make your life. Become what you want to become. Take the opportunity right now. You will get this TV; you will get fridge and even home theatre later in your life when you realize your dreams. For which you need to think of your life seriously right now". Although Shwetha didn't take these words too seriously at that moment, but gradually it brought a change in her life and attitude.

Will I be Sexually Abused this Night Too!

Shwetha was living with her mother and step-father. She had witnessed her mother



getting beaten up every day by this stepfather and the misery left them with sleepless nights. Her father wanted her to take up no different business as a child but mother stood strongly not to send her for sex work. Shwetha never had a peaceful night as a child as she was in fear and trembling. Every evening while returning from school, her heart palpitated thinking what would happen to her that night. Whether her stepfather would sexually abuse her that night too? “Will he beat me up if I don’t say yes to his fleshly cravings”? With all these fear and misery Shwetha wanted to get out from the brothel house to a good fortune.

Dream to Fly High

In 2012, Shwetha joined Kranti, an NGO that empowers girls from Mumbai’s red-light areas to become agents of social change. Kranti gives vulnerable women opportunity to talk about their identity, to talk about who they are and where they come from. Shwetha could for the first time talk about herself to someone. With firm conviction to focus on her studies and achieve her dreams, Shwetha moved to Kranti, a shelter home, together with other 12 girls, which became her family. It was there that Shwetha started to love herself and believed that she was beautiful and wonderful. After finishing her intermediate examinations, she heard the staff saying that they wanted to send the girls to America to pursue their higher studies. When Shwetha was 12 years old she had the dream of flying to America for her higher studies. As soon as she heard the staff talking about America, she ran to them and blurted out her desire to go to America. She had the full freedom to approach them



KAMATHIPURA TO NEW YORK

as the staff and the girls were like a family. The staff immediately agreed to send her.

Kamathipura to New York

As Shwetha’s English was not fluent, Kranti sent her for English classes and to travel within the country so as to get exposed to various opportunities. Shwetha travelled to many states, participated in various workshops on sex education, gender and equality and public speaking. Kranti also helped her to come out of her trauma and to start believing in herself. Meanwhile she applied for her passport and initially couldn’t get through TOEFL. It took 10 months to get her passport and through a friend whom she had met in a previous conference she got full tuition scholarship. Her VISA was kept pending. Just one hour before her flight she got her VISA in the hand. When she boarded her dream flight Shwetha couldn’t believe herself. Tears of joy were rolling down and wetting the seat.

Conclusion

Born in one of Mumbai’s biggest red-light districts, Kamathipura, Shwetha was sexually abused by men and she blamed herself for it. Despite all setbacks, she still garnered the courage to dream big and pursue higher education in America. With her determination, she secured admission to New York’s Brad College in 2013 on scholarship. I wish and pray that many PMI volunteers would reach out to these lost girls and women to help them realize their dreams.

Kolbe Home - Transforming Lives

Bro Pradeep Anthony OFM

Introduction

Kolbe Home, an initiation of Prison Ministry India under the leadership of Fr Sebastian Vadakumpadan, is a haven for prisoners' children. It was founded in 2015 at Carmelaram in Bangalore. The reason for this initiative was the result of his experience of rejection of a prisoner's child by a well-established boys' boarding. Satyaseva Catechist Sisters take care of the children and it runs under the direction of Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the cofounder of Prison Ministry India and the national coordinator.

First Step of Kolbe Home

As the stone which was rejected became the corner stone (Ps 118:22), likewise the rejected ones from the society become the focus of attraction in the eyes of Jesus. Yes, the rejected stones in this context are mainly prisoners' children. Presently there are 25 children in Kolbe Home. These children come mainly from broken families, with a single parent, having no moral principles or ideals, and have witnessed in broad daylight the criminal activities done by their own parents. They carry a guilt which is not theirs. Many associate them with the criminal activities that their parents have committed. Ironically the society and their neighbors stigmatize this guilt more deeply

into them. Hence the first step of Kolbe home is to enable them to come out of these unhealthy guilt feelings. And then they are helped to boost their own self-esteem in a dignified manner.

Counselor Becoming Counselee

It is very mysterious and yet very beneficial to reflect on the words of the Lord Jesus who said: 'I thank You Father Lord of heaven and earth because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants.' (Mt 11:25) When Fr Francis Kodiyan, the co-founder the PMI, asked me to help all the children to set their goals, I borrowed the principles of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. According to him to achieve our dreams we need 4 essential requirements, which are: 1) Having a strong desire 2) Acquiring Knowledge 3) Hard work 4) Perseverance. However, when I had met most of them personally, I really understood that greater things are revealed to children by God. Their wounded self reflects the wounded self of Christ Himself. No wonder the Lord Jesus also said: 'Unless you change and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of God.' (Mt 18/3) Therefore, while teaching I am learning and while counseling, I am becoming a counselee.

Transforming Lives

The role of Kolbe home is to transform the personality of each child. Striking the balance between absolute freedom and absolute authority is the key to transforming the life of a child. Most importantly



we should remember that each child is unique and different, that is why more than uniformity, the focus should be on unity in diversity. Each child's background, psychological, social and emotional needs are different. Hence, the greatest challenge lies in striking the balance not in general but rather in particular. In other words, each part should be interconnected to make a perfect whole which implies that attention should be paid to each child according to his or her needs. To bring out the best from a child we need to really listen, talk, play, be with the child and above all, love the child and then at times there requires also disciplining of the child as scripture tells: 'what child is there whom a parent does not discipline.' (Heb 12:7b) Therefore, the time table and the rules of the house make the child disciplined as well as create in them a conscience of responsibility. Thus, it requires not only theoretical knowledge but also experiential knowledge of a child in particular. After doing all these only, we will be able to assess both the weakness and strength of the child.

Forming the Personality

There are three aspects which contribute to a personality. They are: i) Choice ii) Heredity and iii) Environment. Since several centuries many intellectuals and psychologists have been caught in the debate between nature and nurture. To name an ancient philosopher who stands on the side of nature is Plato. Plato profusely states that man has already innate ideas. Nature implies heredity, in this school of thinking geniuses are born.

The idea of aristocracy comes from this school of thinking. Aristotle, the student of Plato, took the side of nurture, for him man develops his personality by seeing and experiencing one's ambience. Later on, John Lock follows this school of thinking. Thus, nurture implies our environment and surroundings. In this school of thinking our personality is formed by our surroundings. They hold that geniuses are not born but made. I would like to stress on even another aspect too where, each human being is given free will by God which means a choice is to be made of what he or she wants. From the beginning of the human race God gifted human beings with the faculty of free will. A choice is what we are called to make and we become what we choose consciously and conscientiously. As Christians we are called to imitate Christ and His mother who always made their will to align with the will of God.

Conclusion

Kolbe Home aims at transforming the personalities of children by working on all these areas holistically and thus contributing to the integral human development of the children. It provides ample opportunities to change their environment in the best possible way. It provides nutritious food, good shelter and all the facilities possible. We are also conducting different games, various competitions and science exhibitions consistently in order to help the children to discover in themselves their own untapped potentials. Thus, we enable them to transform their lives.





PMI

Ramanadhapuram


Mrs Gracy Mathew

“There is no greater love than this that one lays down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15,13). Prison Ministry India Ramanathapuram Diocesan Meeting was held on 12 July 2021 under the chairmanship of Mar Paul Alappatt. We discussed the following points: How can we execute the ministry in our Diocese; what are the steps to be taken, and what are the activities to be done. Following were the participants of the meeting: Mar Paul Alappatt, Fr Francis Kodiyan, PMI National Coordinator, Sr Amala DC, PMI National Secretary, Diocese Social Service Director Fr Geo Kunnathuparambil, Assistant Directors Fr Nithin, Fr Augustin, PMI Ramanathapuram Prayer Service Leader Sr Mary Jose, Diocesan Social Service Program Manager Mr Ajith, and PMI Secretary Mrs Gracy Mathew.

Fr Francis Kodiyan gave a brief explanation about the ministry’s birth, the spiritual activities, cautions to be taken before stepping into prison, etc. He explained clearly that the ministry was created in the name of Jesus who died on the cross. He added further that reformation and rehabilitation are the only aims of this ministry. He continued that Saint Maxmillion Kolbe is the Patron Saint of PMI and the feast day

of the Saint is on 14 August and this day will be celebrated as Prison Ministry Sunday. Prison Ministry’s basic source and strength is the death of Jesus on the cross. It is only through suffering, prayer and fasting that reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners can be possible. The graces and blessings, which we get from the Holy Eucharist, leads us to work in the middle of the people who suffer in prison. All the members shall recite “Thank You Jesus” at all times.

The love of Jesus can be conveyed to prisoners by the following ways: Medical Camps, Tuition Centers, cultural programs, skill training programs etc. By these activities, we can enter into prisons; sow the seed of reformation and participate in the rehabilitation of sinners for Jesus. He also reminded us that people who work for the ministry must work with enthusiasm by visiting prisons, by participating in fasting and prayer to reach out and release. Through conviction, the inmates who are interested to grow in the love of Christ and love of brethren assist for their release, renewing them with powerful prayers, adoration and retreats. Reformation of prisoners can only be possible, by these actions. Another part of this consists in Job settlement, House settlement and marriage settlement which form an important segment of the ministry of this organization. Other than this, education & hostel facilities for prisoners’ children are provided by PMI. With special care and interest, PMI has built many houses in various places for assisting



their families in this regard. Fr Francis Kodiyan thanked our Bishop for taking the initiative to start a unit of PMI under Ramanathapuram Diocese. He expressed his gratitude and appreciated Fr Geo for the plan and team work under his deputation. It is of paramount importance that a member should have a firm spiritual base in his/her life and should have a prudent behavior while working with prisoners.

In his presidential address, Mar Paul Alappatt informed us in a fatherly manner of the following points: 1) There is no need for many volunteers simultaneously as the yield may not be increased by more numbers. Only those voluntarily interested to do this service should be taken for this ministry. 2) Those volunteers who are selected should be given training by a resource person from PMI office through timely psycho-spiritual orientation seminars. 3) Before starting Prison Ministry Unit in this Diocese, discussions must be held in the Presbytery, Pastoral Council and Religious Council and then only confirm the inauguration of it. 4) All the selected volunteers of PMI must participate in the Pastoral Council Meeting which will be held on September 11th 2021 at the Bishop's House. 5) Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS will be the resource person on the day of the Pastoral Council Meeting. Fr Augustine Chiriyankandath proposed vote of thanks and the meeting was concluded with the blessings of our beloved Bishop. "Be a love bomb. Let it be exploded. Not to kill but to heal the brokenhearted"

Prison Ministry SUNDAY

Rozelle Rebello

Locked behind prison doors,
A life of freedom to the wind goes.
Loneliness stares at you in the eye,
As days, months and years go by,
You may have friends few,
Daylight is rare in your darkness true.
The warm sunshine upon your face.
Or the blue sky you miss to gaze.
Prison visitors a ray of hope,
Making life worthwhile to cope.
Letters from loved ones you rely,
Oh the crime you did you're
wonderling why?
Yet just as the rainbow comes after a rain,
This too shall pass none in vain.
One day at a time as you read,
Do not quit to pray i beg and plead.
Courage my friend as the night
passes to day,
Let today count by your
kindness in every way.

PMI DIOCESAN DIRECTORS' TRAINING PROGRAM 2021

Reform to Reintegrate

Sr Amala DC

Introduction

The PMI Diocesan Directors' Training Program was held from 02-06 August 2021. Fifty volunteers participated from various dioceses across the country. Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS warmly welcomed Most Rev Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, all the dignitaries and the participants. His Excellency Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva inaugurated the Diocesan Directors' Training Program.

Biblical Foundations of Prison Ministry India (PMI)

Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva underlined that Prison Ministry is not a social work, but a Biblical entity. As we are one in God's eyes, we should never shirk doing what is good, for no one is beyond redemption. Prisoners must not be condemned, but encouraged and supported to return to their families. Anchoring on Isaiah 32:18, he reiterated that unless the world, society and our church are transformed by prayer, devotion to Jesus, fasts and sacrifice, the face of the earth may not change for the better.

General Introduction

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS highlighted the activities and style of function of Prison Ministry India. He emphasized that Jesus, who liberated captives, sought and saved the

lost is the founder of PMI. He reminded that the motto of Prison Ministry is b

BE A LOVE BOMB - a bomb not to kill but to save the lost and broken-hearted. He highlighted the eightfold path of prisoners' reintegration: Reaching out, Release, Repentance, Reconciliation, Reformation, Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Redemption.

No One is beyond Redemption

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC, PMI former national secretary dwelt on the 3Rs - Release, Reformation and Rehabilitation. She emphasized the Eightfold Path for prisoner's transformation, highlighting how Jesus had gone in search of the broken, the rejected, lost and sinful.

3R Theory


Fr Varghese Kariperry focused on the 3R Theory - Release, Renewal and Rehabilitation of a Prisoner. Jesus Christ and St Paul had applied a similar theory 2000 years ago. Isaiah 14:31 invites us to build up hope, not revenge; forgiveness will lead to self-transformation.

Ministry Inside Prison

Sr Adele Korah pointed out that, "We have to enter prisons with the right attitude to heal, re-kindle and instil hope in the lives of prisoners". While sharing her experiences with prisoners, she highlighted the importance of active sports and how it impacted the lives of Juvenile prisoners.

Ministry Outside Prison

Fr Benny Pachannal, Assistant Co-ordinator, explained the various services rendered for



the rehabilitation of reformed prisoners outside prisons. Over the years, the prison ministry expanded and built 4 rehabilitation centres for men, 5 for women and 9 homes for prisoners' children. The Research and Documentation Centre conducts training and awareness programs, arrange conferences and meetings at unit, state and regional levels; and jubilee celebrations as well with active participation at Diocesan Levels.

PMI Ruby Jubilee Projects

Sr Amala, national secretary highlighted the Ruby Jubilee Celebration, Inauguration of PMI Ruby Jubilee and Launching of PMI Ruby Jubilee Projects. PMI launched 40 Special Task Forces, convened Re-Awakening Retreat, Burning Bush Spiritual Bouquets, and Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated; opened 3 homes for prisoners' children, and released 4 books. Other ruby jubilee projects include 40 Special Task Forces, 400 Scholarships to Prisoners' Children, 400 Released Prisoners, 40 Houses for Released Prisoners, 4000 PMI Volunteers.

Milestones of PMI

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS spoke on the Milestones of PMI conceptualised by Frs. Varghese and Francis at St Thomas Ap Seminary Kottayam Kerala in 1981 such as constructing rehabilitation centres, homes for prisoners' children, prison quarters ministry and Launching of Crimino-Social and Psycho-Spiritual Journal and Prison Voice, PMI monthly. The recent milestones are releasing of the PMI Documentary Film by Lavy Pinto, blessing of Reformatory Research and Documentation Centre, and



PMI TRAINING PROGRAM

Van Thuan Home, Bengaluru, launching of PMI Special Task forces, Online Retreat, Burning Bush spiritual Banquet, Incessant Intercessory Invocation for the Incarcerated Worldwide and many more.

Central Region, Maharashtra State, Pune Diocese

Fr Wilfred spoke on the roles & duties of Diocesan Directors. He explained that a director should be simple, humble, have potential, be open to ideas, have good judgement, be co-operative, be filled with the Holy Spirit, be genuine and empathetic; have leadership qualities but most importantly should be a prayer warrior.

PMI Special Task Forces

Fr Michael Francis underlined the fact that the Special Task Forces were launched after spending hours in Eucharistic Adoration and Contemplation to address and save terrorists, mafia dons, death row prisoners, serial killers and habituals. He elaborated on how St Therese of Lisieux, at the tender age of 14, by offering Holy Masses and mortifications, redeemed a hard-core triple murderer, who repented in tears while embracing his capital punishment.

North Eastern Region

Sr Jobina informed that there are a total of 77 Prisons in the North East Region. The 14 North Eastern Units of Prison Ministry India along with the collaboration of C.R.I., visit prisons, interact, assist and counsel them in developing, empowering and motivating them. Skill training, Awareness



PMI TRAINING PROGRAM

Programmes, Motivational Talks, Health Awareness were given; and Medical Camps and Libraries have been set up.

PMI State Diocesan & Local Units

Fr Shaji Stephen reiterated the Vision & Mission Statement of PMI with the 3R's - Renew, Reform and Rehabilitate Prisoners and integrate them into the mainstream of Society, taking care of the overall welfare and integral development of prisoners and their families with the hope of creating a crimeless and peaceful Society. He also explained about the Core Executive Body and the duties of the Chairman, coordinator, secretary etc.

PMI Spiritual Principles

Joseph, John the Baptist and Jesus were all innocent, yet they were put in prison under false accusations. Pope Francis, visited the prison on a Maundy Thursday for the first time and washed the feet of women as well. What a noble act! He appealed to those in authority to abolish Death Penalty. Sr. Inigo wound up saying that Prison Ministry requires a heart to serve as it's based on three important spiritual attributes: The 3Cs: Compassion, Commitment and Creative Action.

PMI Economy

Sr Amala DC enumerated the 5 Funds of PMI: Prayer, Suffering, Penance, Self-Sacrifice and Material Funds. she informed how funds were raised in PMI and requested everyone present to be pro-active in doing

their best to assist collect funds for PMI. She highlighted BDP, the Bank of Divine Providence - begging is a part of the PMI lifestyle as it does not depend on foreign contribution.

Intercessory Prayer


Rowena Luis based her talk on four principles of Raising a Victory Methodology: Believe - Rom 10:9-10; Rom 4:18-21, Pray - Bar 5:56, Rejoice - Phil 4:4, and Testify. She said that David used 5 stones, which she referred to as faith declarations to defeat the evil one, Goliath. The verses in Heb10:32 and Rev 12:11 refer to God's promises. She also said quoting Gal 6:9 that we should not be weary of doing good and walk in love.

Reformed Prisoner

Reni George, a redeemed prisoner narrated his journey from being a condemned prisoner to a completely transformed person by the grace of God. He mentioned that the first person to receive the capital punishment was Jesus Christ. Reni was lucky to have received redemption in his lifetime. Prison life helped him to carry out the mission of Prison Fellowship. He runs a home for prisoners' children whom he calls God's children.

PMI Rehabilitation Centres

Sr Clara spoke about Jeevodaya which was set up on 22 June 1995 for women released from prison, rescued from the flesh trade, rejected and abandoned. These helpless women were welcomed with love and affection, acceptance and forgiveness, reconciliation with God, self, family and



society; and are integrated to become one big family living in harmony and dignity. They are also taught various skills like tailoring, cooking, candle making etc., and take up small duties in the house to become self-reliant.

PMI Homes for Prisoners' Children

Sr Basil said Kolbe Home, named after the patron of PMI, St Maximilian Kolbe, is a haven for prisoners' children. The children of Kolbe Home are qualified through education, spiritual, psychological and social training along with parental affection. To further develop the children's skills, it provides ample opportunities like meditation, exercise, community prayers, scripture and spiritual reading.

Valedictory Function

Mrs Vinita Britto began the programme by invoking God's blessings. Fr Francis Kodiyan welcomed Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, the speakers and PMI volunteers. Abraham Varghese did a wonderful appraisal of the DDTP. He appreciated the extremely professional manner in which the Training was imparted to the participants. Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva released the DDTP Collage, Souvenir and awarded certificates to all Participants. His Excellency, in his message congratulated all the participants of DDTP and encouraged them to be good and committed PMI warriors; and acknowledged the combined efforts of the organisers and resource speakers for diligently and effectively training the participants. Sr Amala proposed vote of thanks. The program came to an end with a prayer by Jennifer D'sa.



PMI Maharashtra

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Fr Wilfred V Fernandes

Greetings from PMI, Maharashtra! It's often said that change is the only constant in life. PMI, Maharashtra has also undergone a change in its office bearers. Ms Rowena Luis from the Mumbai Unit, was the Secretary for PMI Maharashtra, however, she has completed her term. The new office bearers are as follows:

Mr Rajendra Dushing, Aurangabad – Asst. Co-ordinator

Mrs. Libby Nicholas, Pune – State Secretary

Mr. Walter Kamble, Nashik – State Treasurer

I would like to thank Rowena for all her efforts to PMI Maharashtra. She worked with a lot of zeal and enthusiasm. She motivated and inspired the team and was very energetic and dynamic in her approach. We wish her all the best for her future endeavours. I would like to welcome Mr Rajendra and Mr Walter as the State Assistant Coordinator and Treasurer. They were always part of the PMI Maharashtra team. I would also like to welcome Mrs Libby as the State Secretary. She is new to the PMI Maharashtra team, but has been a part of the PMI Pune Unit. Placing ourselves in the hands of the God of the Lost I pray for God's abundant blessings and wish them all the very best on behalf of entire PMI family. I sincerely thank Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, PMI National Coordinator for taking time out of his busy schedule and attending the meeting.

Prison Ministry Sunday PMI Mangalore


Jerome Lobo

The Prison Ministry India volunteers celebrated the PMI Sunday on August 9 2021. Though a couple of events were planned for the day to celebrate PMI day in a grand manner, the committee decided to cancel all the events as lockdown was imposed in Mangalore on weekends. However, all of us got together and took part in the Eucharistic celebration led by Rev Fr Lancy Lewis OCD, our spiritual director, after which refreshments were served. Meanwhile, the PMI volunteers celebrated the feast of St Maximilian Kolbe, the patron of Prison Ministry India on August 14th 2021, by visiting the district Prison. Our visit was graced by our president the Bishop of Mangalore Diocese Rev Dr Peter Paul Saldanha who accompanied us to the prison and felicitated the prison superintendent Mr Chandan Patel and also congratulated him for being the recipient of the chief minister's medal this year for his meritorious services.


Addressing the Bishop & the PMI volunteers the superintendent thanked the bishop for felicitating him and lauded the efforts of PMI Mangalore Unit for their services towards the prisoners. He also underlined the fact that "The PMI members have always responded positively whenever they are here or whenever contacted and have gone way out of their way to reach the inmates and give the best services possible". In response the Bishop thanked the superintendent for

giving an opportunity to serve in the prison without any hassle and supporting the volunteers whenever necessary. The Bishop also appreciated and thanked the PMI volunteers for their selfless service.

On the occasion, the PMI had arranged a delicious breakfast for all the prisoners and inmates including the prison staff. Along with this we also provided them some indoor games (i.e., ludo & chess boards) as well as reading materials i.e., magazines for the inmates. Apart from this, a long pending demand of PMI has also been fulfilled after Dr Caroline Dsouza a physiatrist consented to volunteer and extend her service to the needy inmates. Though it was a long pending demand of prison officials to get a dedicated physiatrist, it took us some time to find someone who would offer their services. We are confident that with Dr Caroline Dsouza meeting that need, many inmates are likely to benefit from her services.



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My Life Is My Faith in God - Story of an Iranian Mother

Sr Fidelis HCM

This is the real experience of an Iranian mother who went through persecution valiantly and kept her faith in Jesus even in the midst of her terrible suffering. Rachel is just one of the Iranian mothers, who were tortured for their faith. Rachel kept herself close to the Heart of Jesus in the midst of her terrible sufferings. She kept her faith in Jesus in her pilgrimage to follow the Way. "God stands by us when we are down. He encourages us when we think of quitting and He guides us when things seem confusing". A mother's heart breaks when she thinks of the sufferings of her children. She understands every pain the child goes through. "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" (Jn3,16).

Rachel and Kimiya

Rachel held her daughter Kimiya to her heart tightly as she heard the knock on the door of her house. When the sound of the knock went on, Kimiya got scared and looked at her mother with fear. Rachel couldn't do anything but pray. The day she most feared had now come, she thought... She was helping the Christians to conduct prayer groups in secret. It was prohibited in Iran. Somehow the police came to know about it and were searching for her. Since she didn't open the door, after a long knock, the police went off. Both the mother and the daughter were a bit consoled. However, how long could they hide themselves? This time Rachel escaped arrest. But the day of her arrest was not far.

Underground Church in Iran

"My faith in Jesus brought me to the church of a family. From then onwards, in all my dreams of life, I experienced the presence of Jesus who gave me life. I was filled with love of God in my loneliness. In this awareness of the love of Jesus, everything else became mere nothing, as St Paul exclaimed even in all the hardships and persecution. I want to love and adore God, nothing else matters for me," said Rachel. For about two years she continued to go to the church of the family. Her husband also followed the Way - Jesus. They were blessed with the birth of a baby girl and their life of faith continued in hidden places with lot of uncertainties and with much fear. They could be arrested at any moment. As the days went by, the number of people in the church started increasing and her husband and she took the leadership of the group. To become a leader of a Christian prayer group in Iran is a very dangerous position as if you are inviting death for yourself. Once they were caught the leaders will be the terrible sufferers rather than the faithful. She was not afraid of anything even though they were living with the danger of cruel death in front of them. But there was some feeling deep in her heart that 'God will protect them'.

They firmly believed that God was taking care of them. They were very cautious and careful in their communications, using only public phone for this purpose. "Be cautious like the serpent and innocent as doves". Their daughter Kimiya and a few other children were the lucky ones of the Catholic parents who got the opportunity to learn catechism and they were blessed with the understanding that they should not communicate this to their friends of other faiths, says Rachel. When the secret police came for the first time, they escaped. But now the second time they acted very cunningly and took Rachel away when her husband had gone to leave her daughter at the school.



STORY OF AN IRANIAN MOTHER

The Notorious Ivin Jail in Iran

They kept Rachel in solitary confinement and she started crying. She was worried about her daughter thinking what will happen to her since she had not revealed anything about her arrest to her. Rachel started questioning within her why God had abandoned her, what is the meaning of her call to follow Him and why He was not coming to rescue her and her daughter. She began doubting God and did not even speak to God for the first few days. She could not trust Him anymore and was slipping away deep into the darkness of disappointment. She stopped praying. The prison officials questioned her on and off ridiculing and insulting her and even beating. She lost 13 kg of her body weight within two weeks and you can imagine the pain and agony she went through.

Where Were You God?

One day after long hours of questioning using foul words and torturing, she slept that night. During her sleep she heard a Bible verse “He was in the world. The world was created through Him. But the world did not know Him” (Jn 1,10). This was a turning point in her life. Though she was frightened in the beginning, after this dream she regained courage and started praying and experiencing that God was accompanying her where ever she moved. From then on, she never felt alone, even in her solitary confinement. But this doesn’t mean that life in the jail was easy. It makes her shudder when she thinks of how she spent those days in the jail. It was only prayer that strengthened her to face all anxieties and fear about her daughter. She was in constant touch with God surrendering her daughter to Him and suffered everything silently for Christ’s sake. After two weeks the prison officials gave her permission to

call her daughter and as soon as she heard her voice she began to weep. When Rachel realized that she was not keeping well, her pain increased but mustering courage she comforted her and told her that she should always be with her father and that she would be back soon. Rachel got bail after one month of being in the prison and could join her family. Her daughter was feeling very insecure and she told her that she should never leave her. Rachel knew that being in Iran she could never give that affirmation to her as there was the possibility of her husband being caught too. Hence they decided to quit Iran.

In Your Time

Even though Rachel was aware of the fact that if they flee from Iran, they would only be able to save their life and their faith in God, because wherever they reach, they would not receive any benefits of the place and would be given only the benefits of refugees. In the midst of her sufferings in the jail, she learned to believe and trust in God. Now she wants to speak more about God’s love to Kimya and read the Bible with her. Rachel reminiscences: “Now Kimya has grown a bit more and has learned to play guitar and she sings beautifully with it. Kimya sings, I raise myself into your hands, I drink your love, I wash my sins with your precious blood, I keep all my fears, pain and anxieties on your shoulders; I place all my hopes and expectations at your feet, keeping myself away from the confusing world, I offer myself to you”. This is her favourite song. Surrendering everything in the hands of God they live as refugees in a country (which she does not want to reveal for security reasons) hoping that God will take care of them and lead them forward in His own way and in his time. “In your time, Lord, you make all things beautiful. Lord, please show me every day, as you’re teaching me your way. That you do just what you say, in your time”.



Creating a Homely Atmosphere in Prison

Br S Michael SHJ

In the beginning, human beings used to keep moving rather than staying long in any particular place. On account of this they felt insecure and faced lots of struggles in their lives. But later they settled down near riverbanks and built houses to live in. When home became the cradle of development it became the starting point of civilisation. Home brings us comfort and freedom. It is also the place where one can experience happiness, security, belongingness, identity and privacy.

The Prison is not like a home because the word “prison” brings fear and insecurity to human beings. In the prison there is no freedom but only punishment. Within four walls a person experiences depression and loneliness. He/she finds no one to understand his or her feelings. Even though there are some facilities like a gym, a playground, medical facility and library for prisoners, there is no homely atmosphere in a prison. Normally a person gets respect at home but in prison only humiliation; at home a person prays and experiences God’s love but in the locked cell he/she experiences only emptiness.

Jesus was in the custody of the Roman government in Judea even though he did no wrong. Nevertheless He was accused as a criminal. Similarly, St Paul, St Peter, St John, St James and many other Biblical personalities went through prisons and experienced its humiliation. St Paul wrote many of his letters mostly from prison because he succeeded to create a family atmosphere there. (Acts 16: 16- 40).

When Jesus was hanging on the cross within the walls of the worldly cell, he experienced loneliness, because he was suffering in his human nature. Since mother Mary was with him to create a homely atmosphere, Jesus was able

to overcome his loneliness and pain. This same kind of atmosphere should be created in the prison cell so that all the prisoners may be able to overcome depression and loneliness.

It is the responsibility of every Christian to create a homely atmosphere in prison. It is our bounden duty to teach the love of the wounded heart of Jesus to prisoners. Even though this sounds like a challenge, this is possible by our personal commitment and personal communion with Jesus. Invariably, this will give prisoners a hope for the future.

Pope Francis Distributes 15,000 Ice Creams to Prisoners in Italy¹

Pope Francis wanted to help Italy’s prisoners cool down as temperatures soared to record levels this summer - so he sent them 15,000 ice creams. Inmates at the Regina Coeli jail and Rebibbia prison in Rome were blessed with the frozen goods, an act the Vatican described as one of several “small evangelical gestures” made “to help and give hope to thousands” imprisoned in the capital. The ice creams were delivered in Francis’s name by Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, who is known as the “papal almoner.” The role, to which Krajewski was appointed in 2013, requires him to carry out charitable acts on behalf of the pope and the Vatican’s charities.

Volunteers working for the pontiff’s charitable organizations spent the summer “continuing to devote themselves, among other things, to two of the seven works of mercy: visiting prisoners and consoling the afflicted,” the Vatican said. For Catholics, the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy are charitable actions that help “respond to the basic needs of humanity,” and also include feeding the hungry and visiting the sick.

There is also an ice cream shop which sells ice cream dedicated to Pope Francis - a mascarpone and strawberry-flavored creation - in Cassano allo Ionio, southern Italy.

¹ Courtesy to Jennifer Hassan, Washington Post, 9 September 2021.

New Kolbe Homes

Kolbe Home, Bangalore

On August 15th Kolbe Home, Bangalore celebrated three great feasts: Feasts of St Maximilian Kolbe, Assumption of Mother Mary and Independence Day. On that day we organized a cultural program. Many priests, sisters, brothers, and guests were present. We received gifts for storytelling, drawing competition, and science exhibition. We played a Tableau in the form of drama and action song. I got first in drawing and science exhibition. The prizes were geometry box, pens, pencil, books etc. We learned so many things from this program. Brother Pradeep Antony's mother and family members visited us on that day. They brought chicken biriyani, cakes and sweets. It was a wonderful and memorable celebration.

- Ranga from Kolbe Home, Bangalore

Kolbe Home, Sindhudurg

Most Rev Anthony Alwyn Fernandes Barreto, the Bishop of Sindhudurg offered a plot of land and building for the use of PMI to establish a home for prisoners' children under the supervision of PMI Pune unit. Holy Cross Sisters signed a MoU with the PMI Maharashtra State Coordinator Fr Wilfred Fernandes assuring the service of three sisters to this new home for prisoners' children known as St Antony's Home. On 14th September this home will be blessed. PMI extends prayerful best wishes and hearty congratulations to Bishop Anthony Alwyn Barreto, Holy Cross Sisters and all PMI volunteers behind this new venture.

Kolbe Home, Patan

Most Rev Thomas Macwan, the archbishop of Gandhinagar out of his generosity and compassion for the lost offered a plot of land and building at Patan in Gujarat to establish a Kolbe Home. Fr Dominic Savio the PMI director of Gandhinagar Archdiocese supervises this mission. SMMI sisters of Gujarat province agreed to take care of the children. PMI national office most cordially extends prayerful best wishes and hearty congratulations to Archbishop Thomas Macwan, Fr Dominic and SMMI sisters.

The Nuns of Siberia

Fr Robert F McNamara

In 1977 the missionary magazine Echo from Africa published a fascinating true story about ten heroic Ukrainian nuns sentenced by Russia to Siberian exile in 1951. Soviet authorities arrested three sisters in the Ukraine and tried to get them to renounce the pope and their religious vows. When they refused, they were condemned to ten years of hard labor in Siberia. At their Siberian prison camp, the atheistic commandant renewed the effort to break these ten women. He called them "dogs of the Vatican," and ordered them to give up their "idolatry." Though they angered him by their firmness, they won the admiration of their fellow prisoners by the way they helped the women and girls. They were even able to secretly baptize hundreds of adults.

In January 1952, when the Siberian winter was at its coldest (the temperature is usually 50-60 degrees below zero), the camp commander summoned the sisters and announced that since they had proved themselves fanatical agents of the Vatican, Moscow had instructed him to take more severe measures. He told them that they were now to be put into solitary confinement on bread and water until they came around. If this method failed, he would force them to stand in the cold for three hours clad only in their underclothing.

The first measure did not work. Therefore, after a week of solitary, the commandant sent them out to stand in the middle of the snowy camp square in the scantiest of clothing. Asked again to sign a statement of "confession," they still declined. Then they began to sing the Creed. This was too much for the officer, and so he ordered that the savage watch-dogs be unleashed to attack the singing nuns. The blood-thirsty dogs bounded towards the sisters. But when they were six feet away from them, they suddenly stopped and lay down in the snow. A crowd of sympathetic but helpless fellow prisoners had been watching all this. Now they cried "A miracle!" The commandant turned pale, and sent the sisters back to the barracks. There was no further harassment, and eventually they were released.



PMI Volunteers Visiting Bhopal Prison



PMI Volunteers Visiting Girls Observation Home, Pune



PMI Volunteers Visiting Idukki Prison



PMI Volunteers Visiting Mananthawady Prison



PMI Volunteers Visiting Pala Subjail



Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Bengaluru



St Maximilian Kolbe Day Celebration at Ernakulam Prison



St Maximilian Kolbe Day Celebration, Baroda

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” –
Matthew 25:40

Prison Ministry India, Maharashtra & Sisters Of The Cross
Solicit the pleasure of your presence for the blessing of

St. Anthony's Home,
Phanaswadi,  1st Rehabilitation Home in
Maharashtra

On 14th September 2021 at 5:00pm
(Programme overlaf)

Rsvp – Fr. Wilfred V. Fernandes – 9822066675 / Libby Nicholas - 9823277956



**Prison Ministry Sunday
Celebration. Bhavnagar, Gujarat**



**Sr Maria Goretti, Superior General of
Fatima Sisters Distributing Blankets to
Prisoners**



**Raksha Bhandan Celebration,
Sagar Central Jail**



**Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration,
Bengaluru**