



PRISON VOICE

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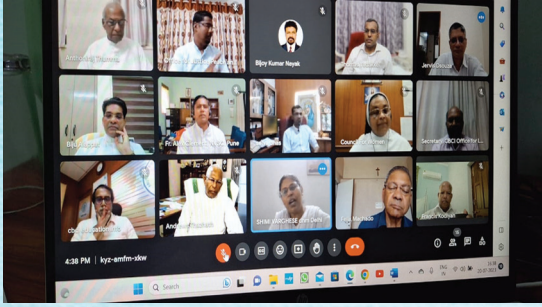
Issue 8

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-



St Maximilian Kolbe – The Martyr of Love



CBCI Secretaries Online Meet



Congratulations to Mr Antony Jacob



Farewell to Fr Antony O de M



Mango Harvest at Marianist Fathers Garden



PMI Bihar Gathering



PMI Coimbatore Unit Distributes Educational Scholarship to Prisoners' Children



PMI Contemplative Wing Inauguration



PMI Convenes Medical Camp at Joherganj Prison



PMI Distributes Carom Boards to Prisoners



PMI Distributes TV to Hiriadkka Jail



PMI Donates Books to Prisoners



PMI Guwahati Diocesan Gathering



PMI Jharsuguda Gives Training to Mango Jam Production



PMI Motivational Talk at Shivpuri Prison



PMI National Office Welcomes New Regent Brothers



PMI Pune Releases Prisoners

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PRISON VOICE

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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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Bank : South Indian Bank
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A/C No : 0416053000001419
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Assumption and Indian Independence

Assumption and Independence

On 15th August we celebrate the feast of Mary's Assumption into heaven as well as the Independence Day of India. In Mary we see fullness of salvation, sanctification and the transfiguring glorification of the whole humanity. Mary is the first human person to be fully liberated, freed from sin and all its consequences. Both India's Independence and the Assumption of Mary proclaim the same message of freedom and liberation. If our Independence Day brings to our awareness the truth that we as individuals and as a nation are called to sacrifice our self-interest and fight for the genuine and full freedom of our people in every sphere of life, the Assumption offers us the hope that like Mary and through her prayers we can achieve our personal and national goals. Let's place our country with all its problems under the care and protection of our Blessed Mother. Mary, Mother of Jesus, glorified in body and soul in heaven, is a sign of sure hope and solace to us, the people of God, during our sojourn on earth, as declares the Second Vatican Council in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church No.68. Let us pray to Our Lady in heaven to keep alive in us the faith that makes us blessed.

St Maximilian Kolbe

On 14th August we celebrate the Feast of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, the patron saint of Prison Ministry India. In July 1941, three prisoners appeared to have escaped from the Auschwitz concentration camp; as a result, the Deputy Commander of Auschwitz ordered 10 men to be chosen to be starved to death in an underground bunker. When one of the selected men Franciszek

EDITOR'S VIEW



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor

Gajowniczek heard he was selected, he cried out "My wife! My children!" At this point, Kolbe volunteered to take his place, saying "I am a Catholic priest from Poland; I would like to take his place because he has a wife and children." Gajowniczek later said: "I could only thank him with my eyes. I was stunned and could hardly grasp what was going on. I was put back into my place without having had time to say anything to Maximilian Kolbe. I was saved. And I owe to him the fact that I could tell you all this. The news quickly spread all round the camp. It was the first and the last time that such an incident happened in the whole history of Auschwitz."

Prison Ministry Sunday

Prison Ministry Sunday is dedicated for the brethren behind the bars, for their liberation, rehabilitation and reintegration. Through the diverse ministries of PMI many brethren behind bars are able to enjoy a dignified life especially through PMI projects and other ways and means for the integral human development of prisoners that PMI has adopted for them. As we stand in front of churches with dumb boxes, let us remember that begging is our life style. Let us not be ashamed to beg for our brethren behind bars. We wish you all Happy Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Feast of St Maximilian Kolbe, and Happy Independence Day.

Ashoka Chakra

International Red Cross

In 1995 with my brother Augustine Kodiyan, I visited the permanent exhibition of International Red Cross in Geneva, Switzerland. This exhibition illustrates the genesis of disarmament initiatives and charitable services in war-torn territories in human history. To my surprise I noticed that the exhibition begins with the story of Emperor Ashoka's Kalinga declaration of "No more war" – with which begins the history of disarmament and humanitarian services among the war-torn areas by international agencies like Red Cross. As we celebrate the 76th Indian independence day let's be reminded of the preamble to the Constitution of India adopted on 26 November 1949 by the Constituent Assembly and came into effect on 26 January 1950: "We the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens: Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation".

Kalinga Declaration

The Kalinga War was fought between the Mauryan Empire and the state of Kalinga, an important kingdom that controlled the trade routes with Southeast Asia. Ashoka, the Mauryan king, wanted to capture Kalinga and his huge army conquered it in 262 BC. Although Ashoka won the war, he realized the futility of war. He saw the bloodshed and suffering of the soldiers' families and



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

vowed never to fight again. He converted to Buddhism and dedicated his later life to help his subjects. He wrote inscriptions wanting his son and grandson also never to think about war. He decided to observe Dhamma, a common code of conduct and was also inspired by the teachings of Buddha. He sent many Buddhist scholars to distant lands to propagate Dhamma.

Ashoka Chakra

Last month I had an opportunity to go to Sarnath near Varanasi, UP and visited the Sarnath museum, Stupa, Ashoka pillar and saw the original Ashoka Chakra. The Ashoka Chakra, the depiction of the "Dharmachakra" is represented with 24 spokes. This is also called the wheel of duty. Let us find out the meaning of the 24 spokes of the Ashoka Chakra. The 24 spokes in the Ashoka Chakra represent 24 qualities or virtues in a person. In other words, these spokes can be termed the 24 religious paths made for humans. All the paths mentioned in the Ashok Chakra will lead any country on the path of progress.

Spokes in Ashoka Chakra

The first spoke - chastity (inspires to live a simple life). Second spoke - health (inspires to be healthy in body and mind). Third spoke - peace (to maintain peace and harmony

throughout the country). Fourth spoke - sacrifice (ready to do sacrifice for the sake of country and society). Fifth spoke - morality (to maintain high morality in professional and personal life). Sixth spoke - service (readiness to serve country and society when needed). Seventh spoke - forgiveness (forgiveness towards humans and other creatures). Eighth spoke - love (love towards the country and all other creatures of God). Ninth spoke - friendship (to have cordial relations with all the citizens). Tenth spoke - fraternity (to develop a sense of brotherhood in the country). Eleventh spoke - organization (strengthening the unity and integrity of the nation). Twelfth spoke - welfare (participation in welfare activities for country and society). Thirteenth spoke - prosperity (participate in the development of the country). Fourteenth spoke - industry (to assist the country in its industrial progress). Fifteenth spoke - safety (to be always ready for the protection of the country). Sixteenth spoke - awareness (to be aware of the truth and don't believe in rumours). Seventeenth spoke - equality (establishment of a society based on equality). Eighteenth spoke - artha (optimum utilization of money). Nineteenth spoke - policy (to have faith in the country's policy). Twentieth spoke - justice (talking about justice for all). Twenty-first spoke - cooperation (working together). Twenty-second spoke - duties (to obey your duties honestly). Twenty-third spoke - rights (do not abuse your rights). Twenty-fourth spoke - wisdom (to know books).

Constitutional Values and Virtues

Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the architect of Indian Constitution was instrumental in reviving the legacy of Ashoka, and using the Ashokan Wheel on the Indian national flag. The chakra intends to show that there is life in movement and death in stagnation. The

24 spokes represent the twelve causal links taught by the Buddha in forward and then reverse order. The first 12 spokes represent 12 stages of suffering. The next 12 spokes represent no cause no effect. Through constant practice of awareness of mind, formation of mental conditioning can be stopped. Like Ashoka before Christ and Mahatma Gandhi in the contemporary world let's uphold the principles of ahimsa, truth, peace and nonviolence. As Indians of 21st century and members of PMI it's our duty to continue the legacy of Ashoka, Ambedkar and Gandhi, by practising and promoting the 24 virtues represented by the 24 spokes on our national flag and the constitutional values such as socialist, secular, democratic, justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation. This genuine effort would certainly assist us to establish a peaceful, progressive and harmonious atmosphere within India and with our neighbouring countries.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;
LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

We Have a Mother in Heaven! Solemnity of Assumption



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

“The Virgin Mary shows us that our goal is not to gain the things here on earth which are fleeting, but the homeland above, which is forever”, said Pope Francis during the Angelus on the feast of the Assumption on 15 August 2020. It was celebrated in the West under Pope Sergius I in the 8th century and Pope Leo IV then confirmed the feast as official. In the light of a long history of Christian belief since patristic times, in 1950, Pope Pius XII defined Mary’s Assumption into Heaven as a dogma of Roman Catholicism: “the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heaven.” The heaven has place not only for a soul, but for the body too is the simple message, the feast of Assumption conveys to us. I’ve highlighted in this article about our Heavenly Mother from the homilies of Holy Fathers, namely, Pope Francis, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John Paul II.

Mary Leads us to Heaven: Pope Francis

On the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 15 August 2021, Pope Francis gave a reminder that God exalts those who humble themselves. “Today, looking at Mary assumed into heaven, we can say that humility is the way that leads to heaven. Jesus teaches this: ‘The one who humbles himself will be exalted’ (Lk 14:11). God does not exalt us because of our gifts, because of our wealth, or how well we do things, but because of humility. Those who are filled with themselves have no space for God. And many times, we are full of ourselves, and the one who is filled

with him or herself gives no space to God, but those who remain humble allow the Lord to accomplish great things” said Pope Francis in his Angelus address. The Pope asks us to examine our lives and to reflect in our own hearts: “How am I doing with humility? Do I want to be recognized by others, to affirm myself and to be praised, or do I think rather about serving? Do I know how to listen, like Mary, or do I want only to speak and receive attention? Do I know how to keep silence, like Mary, or am I always chattering? Do I know how to take a step back, defuse quarrels and arguments, or do I always want to excel? Mary’s secret is humility” added Pope Francis.

We Have a Mother in Heaven: Pope Benedict XVI

“The Feast of the Assumption is a day of joy. God has won. Love has won. It has won life. Love has shown that it is stronger than death, that God possesses the true strength and that his strength is goodness and love. Mary was taken up body and soul into Heaven: there is even room in God for the body. Heaven is no longer a very remote sphere unknown to us. We have a mother in Heaven. And the Mother of God, the Mother of the Son of God, is our Mother. He himself has said so. He made her our Mother when he said to the disciple and to all of us: Behold, your Mother! We have a Mother in Heaven. Heaven is open, Heaven has a heart” said Pope Benedict XVI during the Mass on the Solemnity of the Assumption

at the Parish Church of Castel Gandolfo on 15 August 2005. He highlighted the song of Mary, Magnificat, the great canticle. “It begins with the word My soul magnifies the Lord, that is, proclaims the greatness of the Lord. Mary wanted God to be great in the world, great in her life and present among us all. She was not afraid that God might be a rival in our life, that with his greatness he might encroach on our freedom, our vital space. She knew that if God is great, we too are great. Our life is not oppressed but raised and expanded: it is precisely then that it becomes great in the splendour of God” he added.

“Only if God is great is humankind also great. With Mary, we must begin to understand that this is so. We must not drift away from God but make God present; we must ensure that he is great in our lives. Thus, we too will become divine; all the splendour of the divine dignity will then be ours. Let us apply this to our own lives. It is important that God be great among us, in public and in private life. Let us make God great in public and in private life. This means making room for God in our lives every day, starting in the morning with prayers, and then dedicating time to God, giving Sundays to God. We do not waste our free time if we offer it to God. If God enters into our time, all time becomes greater, roomier, richer” he added.

Mary Shows us the Way to Life: Pope John Paul II

“Mary’s yes becomes joy to all who were in darkness and the shadow of death. Indeed, through her the Lord of life came into the world. Believers rejoice and venerate her as Mother of the children redeemed by Christ. They contemplate her today, in particular, as a sign of hope and comfort for every

person and for every people on the way to the eternal homeland. Let us turn our eyes to the Virgin whom the liturgy invites us to invoke as she who breaks the chains of the oppressed, brings light to the blind, drives away every evil and implores every good for us” said, Pope John Paul II during his homily on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 15 August 1999. “As the Son, through His death, never stops redeeming all who have been begotten by God as His adopted children, thus the new Eve continues from generation to generation to give birth to the new man, “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:24). This is the Church’s eschatological image, which is present and active in the Virgin. Taken up into heaven, Mary shows us the way to God, the way to heaven, the way to life. She shows it to her children baptized in Christ and to all people of good will. She opens this way especially to the little ones and to the poor, those who are dear to divine mercy. The Queen of the world reveals to individuals and to nations the power of the love of God whose plan upsets that of the proud, pulls down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the humble, fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich empty away (cf. Lk 1:51-53)” he added.

As we celebrate the Solemnity of Assumption, let us thank the Lord for blessing us with a Heavenly Mother who teaches us that not to fear death. God didn’t allow her decay to touch her body. She was born holy, lived holy, died holy, was taken into heaven as holy and today lives in heaven as holy.

Asha Kiran: A Ray of Home for Prisoners' Children

Sr Vijaya SCCG

Asha Kiran

Asha Kiran – a home for prisoners' children was established in 2005 in Vikrampuri, Secunderabad and later due to insufficient space shifted to Shaktinagar, R.K. Puram which comes under the Diocese of Hyderabad. The SCCG Sisters who regularly visited the prison, discovered that the prisoners were preoccupied and concerned about their neglected children and their future. The children were left at times at the mercy of their relatives who misused them or they faced moral danger. Hence there was urgent need to protect and provide education as well as give an all-round formation to these children and help the young develop their potentialities and be a part of the society. The Institution is financially supported by the province and generous contribution of the well-wishers. There are 33 children among whom there are 2 Catholics, 4 Muslims and 27 Hindus. There are 8 boys who are brothers among these children. They are placed in one of the NGOs called Manchu Kalalu Organization.

Role of the NGO / the Objectives:

The role of this institution as envisaged, transcends beyond the basic needs of the children, supporting the young and encompasses several other activities connected to this project i.e., visiting the homes of the prisoners' children in order to know their family status, background etc., sometimes accompanying the prisoners who are released from jail to their homes or families, so that they are welcomed and are in a position to adjust in the family. All these activities carried out in view of bringing a positive change in the social structure of the society. The young girls are supported in distress irrespective of their culture, creed,

religion and these are the focused targets of the Institution.

Facilities extended by our Society are: Quality food, safe drinking water, clothing, shelter, toiletries, complete free education with bus facilities in our own Schools, health and hygiene, regular health checkup [one of our students was detected for leg deformity due to polio and she was treated successfully]. The children are given various opportunities to excel in their talents such as competitions for singing, dancing, rangoli, drawing, painting, art and craft etc. conducted not only in our Institutions but also outside our Institution premises like in the jails and in various other institutions. Such exposure programs enhance their creativity, helps in discovering their inert talents, thus preparing them to face the future with courage and self-confidence in this competitive world. Children are taken to the jail to meet their parents on a regular basis; recently when there was a protocol due to Covid, children had weekly video conference with their parents. After the completion of their studies, some children are taken back by their parents or relatives; whereas a few children who are completely orphaned or are in moral danger in their homes, express their desire to stay longer in this Institution and continue their higher studies, get some experience doing part time jobs. Hence, we have with us two girls who have joined distant education affiliated to Osmania University, one is pursuing her degree and one pursuing MBA. One girl after completing her General Nursing is now full-time staff nurse working in our Vijay Marie Hospital.

We are grateful to our Society i.e., our religious congregation of the Sisters of Charity for their constant support and to our few local doners who contribute their share in running this project. Our address is: Asha Kiran Children's Home, No: 33-163/1, Shaktinagar, RKPuram, Secunderabad, Telangana – 500056.

Follow Your Heart

The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his captive people. Ps.69:33 describes very clearly that captives are not to be overlooked, rejected or scorned at. We all of us are the children of God who has created us in his own image and likeness. He has not created us alike but rather with uniqueness and individuality that has to be respected by everyone. Each one has one's own flaws, strength, beauty etc. All are likely to fall, fragile and weak but credibility lies in one's own ability to rise, learn from the blunders and walk again through the right path. Impediments are a part and parcel of life. To muster up courage and to trust in the providential care of the Lord is praiseworthy, magnanimous and that which gives us identity to be called as the sons and daughters of our heavenly father. His very life sheds light on the many trials, tribulations and obstacles that he had to face in His public life. He cried out to his father in agony and said, "It's not my will, but let thy will be done in my life". When in agony, and when false accusations and allegations were made, he realized the will of God. He fought injustice, criticized the wrong doers even to the extent of giving his life as a ransom for many. And we follow that Jesus who gave us life, life in abundance, freedom and the invitation to do what he required us to do.

Jesus left 99 sheep and went in search of the one lost sheep. Such was his love. And then are we not called to do the same in our life too? There are lakhs and lakhs of people behind the bars and it is our bounden duty to seek the lost and serve them without fail to fulfill the law. When one door closes thousand other doors open to for us. But we have to persevere and jump in to uncertainties, rummage around other possibilities to realize our heart's desire. That's how Sr. Tessy Clare and I visited sub jail Vidisha. We met Superintendent Mr. P.D. Shrivastav and unveiled the purpose of our



Sr Shirley Kidangan OSB

visit. Sky is the limit for every aspiration. This was very true in our case. We discussed many aspects of prisoners, their well being and the problem they face time and again. At the end he permitted us to conduct motivational classes and counseling in the women's wards and agreed to permit us to do something in the men's ward too. Thus our sorrow turns into joy. Prison punishment has the function of punishing the wrong doers as well as reforming their behavior. Prison punishment has also the objective of making the offenders who serve their time to re-enter society as better people. When we go in search of the 99 sheep that are in the prison and do something for the least of the least for their betterment, bring consolation and hope to the broken hearted, we are meeting Jesus in them. In a way we are helping them to reform their behavior. Our actions may have some impact in their life too which may be manifested at a later stage. We are celebrating life, life in abundance which God has given us freely. So let us be grateful to God for keeping us as the apple of his eye from every unforeseen hazards to do His holy will.

In the month of June Mr. Ramkrishan Pal who has been teaching computer in the Central Jail, Bhopal since five years has got a sponsorship from an international Organization SEWA for two years. He has been always committed, enthusiastic and vibrant in his approach to the prisoners and at the same time actively involved in all our activities in the jail. We extended a bouquet of gratitude and wished him all the best in his new endeavour.

PMI Sharing: Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul, Christnagar, Varanasi

Bro Alfred Daniel Dass

On 18th July 2023, we, the students and staff of Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul were indeed fortunate to have Frs. Francis Kodiayan MCBS and Jose Thannippara MST in our midst. These Fathers are engaged in the 'Prison Ministry', sharing the message of repentance and spreading the joy of the gospel as proclaimed by Jesus. They celebrated the Holy Eucharist for our community and exhorted us to constantly intercede for the prison inmates of our country.

We had a short session taken by Frs. Francis who is the National Coordinator of Prison Ministry, India and Jose the PMI North Regional Coordinator and Delhi State coordinator. Fr. Subhash, the Rector, gave a brief description of both the esteemed guests of the day. During his address Fr. Francis shared his experience in the Prison Ministry. He described the inception of this ministry which although started on a subtle and small scale, transformed into a major movement that gained the support of numerous people in the long run. He emphasized the teaching of fraternity and Jesus' prophetic call to 'liberate the prisoners.' He made a special mention of the BDP, i.e., the Bank of Divine Providence and how it inevitably comes to the rescue of their ministry. The importance of prayer as the beginning key to every action and movement was also highlighted by him. Before concluding, he gave us the Mantra: "Thank you Jesus" to help the prisoners in knowing Jesus and His unconditional mercy.

Fr Jose shared his experience in the field of Prison Ministry. He is currently ministering in Tihar Jail. He had expressed his concern regarding the hurdles faced especially by Christian representatives in ministering to the prisoners due to the supposed allegations of religious conversions. He invited each one of us to be part of this noble cause, moreover being future priests ordained for the liberation of captive souls. Both the sharings ignited a spark within each of us to explore the horizons specifically of the Prison Ministry. We would surely keep this Ministry as well as the prison inmates in our prayers and hope to involve ourselves in this ministry soon.

Assumption of Mary

A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems on his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to deliver a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule[a] all the nations with a scepter of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days (Rev 12, 1-6).

INTERVIEW

V. Ngamshemla

Sr. Inigo was the former Superior General of St. Anne's Sisters of Madhavaram, in Chennai. She was also elected as the Secretary of the Women's Section of the National Conference of Religious India-CRI and was the only religious woman elected to represent Southeast Asia at the Synod of Bishop held in Rome on the theme "Vita Consecrata". The Bishops' Conference of India selected her as the only religious woman to represent the women religious of India to present a paper on "Empowerment of Women in the Church and Society" which was well received. She has been a resource person and lecturer on many occasions both in India and abroad. She travels widely conducting seminars and directing retreats, especially to religious, male, and female including Priests. She has helped many religions and Laity in more than 10 countries like the Philippines, China, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Hong Kong, Thailand, Kentucky (USA), and France besides more than 200 Congregations in India. Sr. Inigo has authored two books on Consecrated Life: "Called to Move Beyond" and "Ever Evolving Consecrated Life". She is now currently in New Delhi with her community of sisters bringing solace and liberation to the prisoners of Tihar Jail, the biggest jail in Asia, teaching moral values, counselling the inmates, and keeping in touch with their families. This interview is conducted by V. Ngamshemla (V.N) with Sister Inigo (SR. I).

(V.N): What Motivated you to Join PMI?

(SR. I): I was inspired by my Foundress' vision of uplifting the rejected, illiterate, rural girls.



**SR. INIGO,
PRISON MINISTRY INDIA (PMI)**

When I translated her vision considering today's changing situation, I found the prisoners as the most neglected, rejected, and forgotten people who are the least, last, and the lost. Sr. Carmelita, one of our sisters had already been involved in Bangalore Central Jail and I got an opportunity to visit that prison during my periodical community visits, this gave me firsthand information of who those people were and how they would need my involvement. On the prison walls, it is written: "Hate the crime and not the criminal". Mrs. Kiran Bedi, the first woman IAS officer posted as Director General of Tihar prisons, was also my inspiration; she was the one who changed the jail into an ashram as she spoke the words of wisdom, "Prison is not a place of punishment but a place of correction and reformation". She opened the gates of Tihar prisons for NGOs to be able to meet the inmates and bring a change in their monotonous life and outlook.

(V.N): What is Distinct about your Ministry from the Rest?

(SR. I): We can proudly say that this is the only ministry in the Church that gathers and involves all sorts of people-priests, religious, seminarians, laymen, and women. Lay people's involvement in this ministry is highly appreciated. This ministry has been accepted by the Bishops Conference of India as an important ministry of the church. Almost all the Popes had taken an

interest in the Prison Ministry. They visited the prisons in Rome or other prisons during their pastoral visits.

(V.N): How Was the Situation of the Prison?

(SR. I): Prisoners are kept under close watch. They are under CCTV surveillance. There are no doors, privacy, or dignity. There is no provision to safely keep their personal belongings. They keep asking for a pen saying the one given earlier was stolen. Their sense of gratitude is admirable. They remain ever grateful even for your smallest of deeds. You can easily enter their hearts. When the bus I took to reach home halted at the traffic signal, a beggar called my name and said: “Take all the pens and give them to our brothers in the prison. They need pens. When I was in prison you brought pens to me. You don’t need to pay, and all the pens are free for you”. Do we ever have such generosity and concern for the suffering? The nature of discipline for both the innocent and the under trial is the same as that of hard-core criminals. Overcrowding and congestion and the resulting close contacts lead to sicknesses like TB, HIV, Dengue, and other illness spreading easily. The poor inmates cannot afford legal aid and lawyer’s fees.

While variety is the spice of life, in prison life, there is no room for variety. They experience the same faces, the same timetable, the same menu, and, more than anything else, the same treatment. It is very tough to pass the time in jail. There are high walls and several gates, with numerous locks. The design of the buildings, the cells, and the walls are such that even a normal person will soon become insane and mentally deranged. They are like fish accidentally caught in the net and have no chance of getting out. Hence, they eagerly await a liberator, the

one who could speak for them and get them released from that hell. Some are summarily rejected by their family and have no visitors for months together. They have no contact whatsoever with the outside world. This causes tremendous mental agony, gradually leading to deep depression. A thick glass wall stands between the inmates and the visiting family members; it is impossible even to touch or wipe away each other’s tears. It is an emotionally draining moment and a traumatizing experience. Sometimes, the visitors come from far-off places traveling long hours only for a 20-minute visit. It is the most agonizing and depressing moment. Inmates suffer from utter loneliness, mental agony, and helplessness. Rejection by their dear ones leads them to choose the wrong friends while inside the prison.

In the year 1982, some of you might still remember having read in the newspapers about the hanging of Ranga and Billa in the Tihar Jail. When the Judge pronounced the death sentence, they literally froze. In the end, the Judge asked them for their last wish, if any. Ranga related a pathetic story. He said: “During my imprisonment, no one from my family visited me. One day a friend of mine came to the Jail to convey a terse message from my mother. The message was: “Go and tell him that I don’t have a son like him”. When he shared this, he wept bitterly and said to the Judge: “I have no one to love me here on earth. I am ready to die”. They were hanged on 31st January 1982. Yet, another young inmate, Nitin, with tearful eyes said: “For the past 6 years, no one visited me even once”. The inmates feel that their families have given up on them. Sadly, no one wants to remember them any longer. Only the visits by PMI volunteers give them a slim assurance that out there, there is someone who truly cares for them; and that, after all, they are not totally forgotten.

(V.N): What Do you Do in Prison?

(SR. I): The Prison Ministry is not about doing miraculous work among the inmates or securing their release from prison. It is about presence and availability. A kind word, a listening heart, a gentle touch, and a concerned look do wonders. Many have asked me what I am doing in prison. My immediate answer to them is, “It is not about what I am doing which is important. I am not going there to give but I am going there to receive. They are my benefactors and evangelizers. I am the receiver. They can survive without me, but I can’t live the Gospel meaningfully without them”. Our primary purpose in visiting the prisons is to learn from the inmates. They inspire us.

(V.N): What are your Main Initiatives?

(SR. I): My main initiative is to give counseling and provide psychological help, as many inmates have deep-seated anger, feelings of revenge, frustration, and even suicidal and homicidal tendencies. Attending to their basic needs, providing them with writing materials, and generously contributing to the maintenance of the rehabilitation centers. Organizing access to free legal aid through Advocate friends to help the inmates get acquitted or to be out on bail and render financial and moral support at the time of their release from prison. Provide medical assistance with the help of doctors. Contacting their family members either by direct visit or through telephones and making efforts to bring reconciliation with their family members. Inmates would often ask for our prayers. Even though they feel they have lost everything, yet they say they can’t afford to lose God. Our assurance of prayers for these unfortunate brothers and sisters will go a long way in removing

their families of guilt and helplessness and bringing hope into their hopeless lives.

(V.N): How Do you View your Own Profession?

(SR. I): Archbishop Fulton Sheen once told the prisoners: “You are caught, I’m not”; that is the difference between you and me”. We all make mistakes, and we are all sinners, but we are given an opportunity to repent. But the prisoners are denied any opportunity to prove themselves as good. All of them may not be criminals. Some are there as victims of circumstances, many others are wrongly accused. Often there are some other reasons like poverty, hunger, unemployment, exploitation, irresponsible parents, peer pressure, wrong formation, or no formation, etc., which forced them to commit an offense. To love them and to participate in their agony is an experience from God. To meet and treat people who are unlawfully implicated as our own brothers and sisters is spirituality for me.

(V.N): Any Message you Would Like to Share with our Readers?

(SR. I): I would like to quote Nelson Mandela, “A nation is known, not how it treats its highest citizen but how it treats the prisoners. You will never know a nation unless you are in prison. If we want to measure the civilization of a country, visit a prison”. This is reiterated by Pope Francis in his recent visit to Bahrain on 4th November 2022. “How prisoners are treated reflects the level of dignity, the hope of society”. Therefore, we should all understand the fact that these brothers and sisters of ours have fallen “with our silent knowledge, our difference to their cry, our faulty educational system, and the selfishness of Society”.

“Is He Jesus?”

Sr Adele Korah SCCG

“Is He Jesus” - was the query of a co-prisoner, when a prisoner by name Praveen stayed some months in a prison in the North. One of the co-prisoners asked his friends, whether the new-comer in their room was Jesus. Those who were living in the same room had only heard about the love and compassion of a person by name Jesus, who lived on this earth many years ago. When they were watching the exemplary behavior and dealings of the new-comer Praveen, the other inmates in the barrack were astonished. Those who lived along with him in the room had never before seen anyone among them who was kind and loving to all. As Praveen was one who had spent a period of renewal in his life during the years he spent in the Central prison Bangalore, he had imbibed the values of Jesus after he started making a deep study of the Gospel. He had reflected and assimilated the values and teachings of Jesus. Consequently, he had started to live depending on the unconditional love of Jesus and treating others with love for all. He began following the teachings of Jesus and had made it his pattern of life. After having been transformed by the touch of the Holy Spirit through the Spirit of God, Praveen lived as a new man filled by the Holy Spirit and the Gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. During the period when Praveen was in Bangalore prison under trial, he received an order from the Sessions court to attend the courts in two other States in North India and in the South. It was because two more false cases were added to his case and so he was shifted to the said prison for a period of time for attending a court in the North.

When he was in the prison in the North, a shabbily dressed prisoner, Jack, was shifted

to the room where Praveen was. The others in the room grumbled and complained as he was in rags and appeared like a beggar. Praveen came to know that Jack was considered by others as mad and he was hated and treated rashly by all. The inmates of the barrack where Jack was sent earlier, used to try to push him out of their room. They complained to the constable in charge and he was shifted from one room to another and from one barrack to another. When Jack arrived in his room, Praveen felt great pity and compassion for him and wanted to be of help to him. Considering the new arrival to his room, as his own brother, he treated him with love and understanding. He took care of him by trimming his long hair, gave him a clean hair-cut, shaved his dirty long beard and helped him to have a good bath. He helped him wash his soiled linen and shared his clean clothes with him. The man who was unwanted in other rooms was heartily welcomed by Praveen. His roommates were astonished to watch Praveen's heart-warming dealings with a shabbily dressed new comer who was ill-treated by others in every other room. Those who watched Praveen's attitude to the one who was dirty, with tattered and worn-out clothes and unpleasant manners, they were bewildered, as they never before had found a prisoner who had such a noble behavior. Some considered Praveen as an Angel sent by God to their room. Another inmate asked, “Is he Jesus”? “We have only heard about Jesus, but here is a man like Jesus who was compassionate to the sick, the lonely and rejected and had come to seek and save even the sinners and those who were abandoned and not accepted by others.

Transformed by the Spirit

This is the effect of transformation in a person, who is deeply touched by the love

of God. He was eager to share whatever he had with those who were in need of his help. St. Paul in his letter to the Romans reminds us not be conformed to this world “but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect”(Rom.12:2). During my experience in the service of the rejected brethren behind the bars for about two decades, I had the privilege of observing the radical changes in the lives of several criminals who received God’s loving touch during their prison life and who reorganized their own life by taking firm decisions to walk with God for the rest of their lives following the path shown by their Lord and Savior Jesus. Those who accepted Jesus as their only Lord were fortified by the Spirit of God, though they were once trapped in their evil habits. When a person is transformed within himself by the touch of God, he becomes a catalyst inside the prison itself reaching out to others too to help them bring about a change within them. Praveen was one who was strengthened by the Spirit of God.

An Advocate, who had helped me with legal assistance for the release of poor prisoners, once requested my help to meet his cousin brother who was brought in to prison. I met him, helped him and referred the boy to Praveen to assist him and to spend some time with him in prayer. After a few months, when the boy was released on bail, his cousin found him remarkably changed. He readily gave up the company of his old friends who had led him to crime. Until his release Praveen kept some time apart to help others in this way to pray with him and to regain their peace of mind. Several new-comers used to go to him in the prison chapel and share their life with Praveen so that they could be relieved of their tensions and problems. Several inmates in the prison

were helped by him to take a new turn in their lives by getting rid of their bad habits which led them to a crime-filled life in the past. This was the fruit of his prayerful study of God’s Word and using the gifts of God received, for the good of others in need.

I noticed how the persons who came in to prison after committing murder were first restless, but gradually they became calm after I started sharing God’s word with them and spent my time to lead them to a change of life through counselling. Gradually, they started accepting the past events, repenting over their sinful past and accepting the punishment in reparation for their sins. They begin to turn to the Lord in prayer with true repentance. “Come now, let us argue it out says the Lord, though their sins are like scarlet they shall be like snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be come like wool” (Is1:18). They find relief in God’s promise, “If the wicked turn away from all their sins that they have committed and keep all my statutes and do what is lawful and right, they shall surely live, and not die. None of the transgressions that they have committed shall be remembered against them” (Ezk 18:21-22). When we meet the brethren with acceptance of each one, without being judgmental, whatever be the background of their past life, they open up their life experience and take the needed steps to take a ‘U’ turn in their life. It was with this understanding that I started sharing God’s word regularly during the weekly prayer meetings with all those who came to the prison chapel seeking peace in their life of pain and struggle. A good number of persons who listened to the word of God with attention and spent time in reflection and prayer showed a remarkable sign of transformation in their life

“Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds” I feel the responsibility of remembering this call in my daily life, very specially in my service in the prison. As volunteers of Prison Ministry, God has called us all to be transformed in our attitude to those whom we serve. Be it in the School or parish, we have been called to be good shepherds of the flock entrusted to our care. As we try sincerely to follow the path walked by Jesus on this earth, we are called to reach out to our brothers and sisters who have deviated from the right path and have fallen in the trap of the evil one. There are several college students who were brought to the prison in N.D.P.S. section. The youth fall prey to the abuse of drugs and the powers of darkness draw them gradually into evil habits. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and to destroy, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (Jn10:10). The Lord who said “I am the good shepherd” (Jn 10:14) is the one who has called us to be good shepherds to seek, serve and save the lost. Jesus came to save all, and be a friend to all, even of the sinners. His mission was a saving mission. All need to be saved and sinners are most in need of God’s mercy. Hence his call to repentance, his association with the rejected people of society, was to announce that God loves them. Our mission is just a continuation of the mission which Jesus started on earth to bring the last, the least and the lost back to fullness of life in Him. May the prophecy made about St. John the Baptist be fulfilled in us, “He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God” (Lk 1:16).

Transformation comes from God who sent His WORD. During my mission in the prison during the past years, nearly two decades,

I had the joy of witnessing the changes, the transition, and the transformation that happened in the lives of the incarcerated brethren. Those who imbibed the messages received through God’s word have been touched and renewed and were able to come to a renewed life. “Indeed the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). I raise my grateful heart to the Almighty who is blessing us as Isaiah prophesied: “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth, it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and succeed in the thing for which I purpose.” (Is 55:10,11) People who receive God’s powerful touch become truly a blessing for others. “They are like trees planted by streams of water which yield their fruit in season. Their leaves do not wither. In all that they do they prosper.”(Ps 1:2,3) Those who meditate on God’s word are blessed. May we, who regularly meditate on God’s word, live it and share it with the others who are deviating from God’s ways and His will. May Jesus our Redeemer who called us to this beautiful ministry and whom we follow, enable us to continue the saving work of Christ, pardoning and forgiving, accepting and loving as Jesus did and help the inmates of the prison and their families to be redeemed and thus contribute our share in transforming the world at large.

The Vision of Jesus Christ – As the Model for Prison Ministry India, Members

Dr Michael Noronha, Secretary, PMI Karnataka

Prison Ministry is the rarest of the rare opportunity available to those who desire to serve the least, the last and the lost. It is a call within a call. It is needless to state that the opportunity to serve in society in schools, hospitals, social service centres etc is easily available to all. When given a choice the vast majority opt for these easy avenues of service available than serving the Prisoners. It may not be wrong to say that many are called only a few are chosen to serve the prisoners. The general perception by the vast majority of the people is that “Prisoners deserve to be in Prison”. But the harsh reality is “Few are caught, many are not” and we are among those not caught. We hardly reflect to ascertain the real cause for which these people are in prison. It is the sins of the flesh, which has contributed to the cause for such crime in many instances. St Paul in his letter to the Galatians 5:19-20 gives a clear narration of what comes from the flesh: “fornication, impurity and shamelessness, idol worship and sorcery, hatred, jealousy and violence, anger, ambition, division, factions, and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like” - all these points to greed for – Wine, Women and Wealth that have resulted in the loss of self –control in the person ending up in crime. To the PMI Members St Paul advises our role in prisons to manifest the fruits of the Spirit: “Charity, joy and peace, patience, understanding of others, kindness and fidelity, gentleness and self-control” - Gal. 5:22-23. The manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit in the prison by our service is possible only if we respond to the call of Jesus “I was in prison, and you

came to see me” (Mt 5:36). It should not be a ritualistic visit on Christmas day to share a piece of cake with the prisoners and return. One who desires to help the prisoners is motivated by love for these people and a desire to serve them – a mission they never drift from it. Human needs fundamentally are four in nature:

- A sense of Worth – if missing, we feel inferior.
- A sense of Belonging – if missing, we feel insecure.
- A sense of Purpose – if missing, we feel illegitimate.
- A sense of competence - if missing, we feel inadequate.

These needs are found missing in the prisoners as most of the prisoners find their dear ones abandoning them by not visiting them. The inadequate information about their case status from their solicitors makes them all the more anxious and depressed. The large number of undertrials and overcrowding of prisons is a ground reality. The realization of having committed the crime out of anger instantly in a few cases and the sense of remorse for having committed the crime are scenes visible when they share their pain with the PMI volunteers. In recent years the implementation of the POCSO Act 2012 on romantic relationships has ended up with young minds below 18 years in Judicial custody who are unaware of the law of the land. Of late the Judges of the High Courts

of Madras, Allahabad and Bombay have urged Parliament to take note of changes happening across the world concerning the age of consent for adolescents to enter into a consensual sexual relationship. In Assam, nearly 1800 adolescents were imprisoned in March 2023.

God created humankind to lead and rule, but only within the context of His leadership. While discharging our mission we are called to hold on tenaciously to the vision of Christ – “God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world; instead, through him the world is to be saved” – John 3:17. This vision is very much embedded in the vision of PMI “to attain the restoration of complete human dignity in society.” As PMI Volunteers we are reminded of the fact: “God loves the Sinner but not Sin”, which Jesus reminds us in the parable of the Lost Sheep – Luke 15:10 “I tell you, in the same way, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner”.

We should see the benefits of the vision before we commit to it. The vision of PMI gives a bird’s eye view of the benefits: “We shall Reachout, Release, Renew, Rehabilitate, Reintegrate and Redeem prisoners. We shall reform prisons, facilitate social re-integration, and ensure the congruent function of government systems and structures for the amelioration of victims, offenders, society, government authorities, families of victims and offenders. We shall attain them by having committed volunteers, priests, religious and laity by conducting need-based training, creating sensitivity in government authorities, facilitating empowerment, appropriately using philanthropic people, praying, using scientific research tools, follow up programs,

creating social awareness, planning and executing meticulous preventive measures, conducting regular and holistic counseling, providing legal assistance and using network to ensure that prisons are renamed as Repentance Retreat Centers, prisoners are empowered and called Repentant Retreat Citizens, and government systems and structures are streamlined to attain the restoration of complete human dignity in society”.

Mt 9:35... & 10:5 gives us the process of how to fulfil the God-Given Vision

Take initiative to obey by getting active in service – “Jesus went about all the cities and villages” (9:35). Communicate the truth, the gospel values in your own words which you have already known: “teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom” (9:35). Observe and understand the reality of the human condition in a prisoner: (“But when He saw the multitudes (9:36). Allow God to burden you with a specific need to help the prisoners to reform: “He was moved with compassion for them because they were... like sheep having no shepherd”) (9:36). What is the issue to be resolved as per divine analysis? Need for service-minded PMI volunteers: “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few” (9:37). Pray to determine what action could meet the needs of the prisoners: “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest” (9:38). Choose a team and empower them for partnership in the prison: “When He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power” (10:1). Take immediate action after the formation of a team by visiting the prison towards the fulfilment of the vision: “These twelve Jesus sent out” (10:5).

Prison Ministry India, Bihar

Fr Arogya Samy

Prison ministry India is a registered NGO with its National head office in Bengaluru and state unit offices in respective states. In Bihar PMI involves in many welfare activities for prisoners. We presented two times documentation to IG of prisons office Patna but they are not willing to permit us to go inside jails. They say that our ministry doesn't require in the Bihar jails, the government has all the facilities to take care of prisoners.

Buxar Open Jail

With permission of Superintendent, we went to the families of prisoners in open Jail. This is the only open jail in Bihar. We have collected data of seventy families. Some students are helped for their studies in our Catholic school with minimum fifty percent of school fee. We do counselling for prisoners and release prisoners. Our team helps prisoners with legal aid and recently released three prisoners. We take care of their case in Buxar. Adv Rajeev is deals their case.

Finance

All the financial needs are met by generous contribution from the general public and institutions. PMI national office in Bangalore sponsors prisoners' school fee, house construction, E Ricksha or 3-wheeler for free. Let us make use of these benefits. I am glad that our team is still working from our region. Our WhatsApp group for prison ministry is active. I thank Fathers Anand and Claud of Betia diocese for their daily thoughts and messages. Bishop Cajetan is active in our group.

Prison Ministry - A Call to Holiness

Mrs Lili P Vaz

Prison Ministry is a vocation all volunteers are blessed with,

We are chosen by God, it's a call to holiness.

Our goal is to become more like Christ Jesus, The Good Shepherd, the Saviour, the one who redeems us.

Our ministry needs no diploma nor a high degree,

Just follow Christ's teachings and set the captives free.

Serving the prisoners should be our one mission,

Unconditional love requires no qualification.

So let's seek the lost, the least and the last, And help prisoners forget their turbulent past. Our presence adds a spark in their pathetic life, A life riddled by fear, anger and strife.

For years altogether some have not seen the sun,

Not a visit from family, friends or anyone. Steeped in misery they are so hard to console, Our visits act as a balm to their bruised soul. As Prison Ministry volunteers let's reach out to all prisoners,

Help mitigate their pain and stop their tears. Our regular visits help them realise with time, That God loves and forgives them no matter their crime.

Charged with Christ's love let's fulfill this mission,

To search for the lost ones and bring them salvation.

With the grace of Jesus as we serve them with love,

God's blessings will rain down on all volunteers from above.

Prison Ministry An Experience of Inner Spiritual Journey

“I was in prison and you visited me” – Mathew 25:36. Prison Ministry India was founded on 8th December 1981 and was officially recognized by CBCI. The patron saint of Prison Ministry is Saint Maximilian Kolbe. There are 6000 Volunteers in prison ministry and over 850 branches all over India. It is almost more than 10 years that I am engaged in Prison Ministry apart from my Music Ministry in Pune. During this period, I have attended many local, state, regional and national conferences; often visited the prisons; met many released prisoners, conducted charity concerts to collect funds for the release of prisoners; gave healing therapies of music to the Juveniles and actively inserted myself in the heart of the ministry. I was inspired by the apostolic and spiritual nature of the ministry which is why I can say with confidence that prison ministry is an experience of my inward, spiritual and transformative journey and I am still on this journey.

When I entered the Prison for the first time, I felt as if I had entered a hidden world radically cut off from the rest of the world. While I returned from the Prison, these words were ringing constantly in my ears “I was in prison and you visited me”. But I asked a question to myself, “Have I really visited Jesus? And in the core of my heart, I felt ‘YES’ and I am going to visit him again and often and there after I continued visiting him in the prisons. As I inserted myself well



Sr Marina Gulati

into the core of this ministry, the prisoners and the prisons of Pune became a part and parcel of my life and prayers. One day while praying the breviary, as I remember, it was Wednesday the third week Morning Prayer hymn which had these words, “fallen men may rise again on wings of prayer”. My heart was filled with joy as I felt these words were surely for the prisoners and that my prayers would surely make a difference in their lives.

Life in the prisons is very tough, challenging and at times depressive. One main problem is overcrowding which leads to many health issues and affects mental health. The majority of prisoners suffer from loneliness



Faces blurred as per prison rule

and the stigma of being in the prison. That is why visiting the prisons is most comforting for the prisoners and talking to them gives me a lot of satisfaction and happiness as it means giving them a ray of hope.

The main objective of the Prison Ministry is renewal, release and rehabilitation. I visit the prison on many occasions like Diwali, Christmas and many other occasions and conduct programmes for the inmates. We have weekly intercessory prayer group to strengthen the people engaged in Prison Ministry. The intercessory prayer is the back bone of our ministry. Since the time of the Pandemic, we also have many digital programmes.

Our last National Conference in Goa in 2022 was very inspiring and uplifting. At the conference each volunteer was given three jails to pray for the next 5 years. I have been given three jails to pray for: Central jail Ambala, Haryana; District jail Bhiwani, Haryana; District Jail Faridabad, Haryana. I accompany these three jails in my daily prayer. Apart from all these activities our Music school takes care of the education of the girl Child whose father is incarcerated for lifelong imprisonment. It gives me immense joy to be part of the Prison Ministry India and I'm delighted to serve the incarcerated in all my capacity. Jesus too loved the outcasts, the sinners and tax collectors and despite their past he gave them a new identity. By serving the prisoners I can say with full confidence that the prisoners are no more prisoners but brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus and I am sharing the Mission of Christ.

St. Maximilian and the Two Crowns of Glory

In the now-famous vision of his youth, St. Maximilian was offered two crowns by Our Lady: the white crown of a life of heroic virtue, and the red crown of martyrdom. He was rewarded with these two crowns for a life totally spent for the Immaculate. By divine Providence, the Church has seen fit to confirm this gift given to a Saint whose love knew no bounds. On January 30, 1969, Pope Paul VI approved his heroic virtues "without further delay." Numerous cures attributed to the intercession of Fr. Kolbe were submitted for verification. On October 17, 1971, in the Basilica of the Holy Apostles in Rome, in an event officiated by the Conventual Franciscans, Fr. Kolbe was inscribed into the register of the Blessed as Confessor of the Faith. Paul VI thus conferred upon the Polish Franciscan the "white crown" that Our Lady had promised him in the famous vision of his childhood. The recognition of a martyr requires the verification of two criteria: 1) on the part of the persecutor, hatred of the Faith or of works connected with the Faith; 2) on the part of the martyr, the licit performance of a work directly or indirectly obligatory by reason of the virtue of faith, forbidden by an iniquitous law of a tyrant. Kolbe received the red crown on October 10, 1982, when he was canonized by Pope John Paul II. The Holy Father enrolled him among the martyrs-a wonderful surprise for those who knew the Saint who had lain down his life as a "Catholic priest," an alter Christus.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe: The Patron Saint of Prison Ministry India

Introduction

Welcome, dear readers, to the remarkable story of a priest who demonstrated extraordinary courage and compassion in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Poland. This is a journey through the life of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, the Polish Catholic priest and Franciscan friar who sacrificed his life to save a co-prisoner during the darkest hours of World War II.

Early Life and Religious Calling

Born on January 8, 1894, in Poland, Maximilian was raised in a devout Catholic family. His calling to serve God led him to join the Conventual Franciscan Order in 1907, where he took the religious name, Maximilian. Young and passionate, he pursued studies in philosophy and theology in Rome, eventually being ordained as a priest in 1918.

Founder of the Militia Immaculatae

A devout servant of the Virgin Mary, Maximilian founded the Militia Immaculatae in 1917. This Catholic organization aimed to promote the veneration of the Virgin Mary and her Immaculate Conception. The MI would later grow into a global movement with millions of followers.

Media and Missionary Work

A man of vision, Maximilian was passionate about using the media to spread the Catholic faith. In 1922, he launched a



Anugrah Singh

religious magazine called Knight of the Immaculate, which would reach over a million readers by 1939. His dedication to the media and communication led him to establish a monastery near Warsaw that housed a printing press, a radio station, and more. In 1930, his missionary work took him to Japan, where he founded another monastery and printed a Japanese version of his magazine. Health issues eventually forced him to return to Poland in 1936.

World War II and Arrest

When the dark clouds of World War II descended upon Europe, Maximilian's monastery became a refuge for those in need, including many Jews. Undaunted by the risks, he continued to publish materials criticizing the Nazi regime. However, in February 1941, the Gestapo arrested him, and he was eventually sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp.

The Ultimate Sacrifice

In July 1941, as a reprisal for a prisoner's escape, the camp's deputy commandant chose ten prisoners to be starved to death. When Franciszek Gajowniczek, a fellow prisoner, cried out in despair for his family and children, Maximilian in true Biblical fashion made the ultimate sacrifice – he volunteered to die in the man's place. In the starvation cell, he comforted and prayed with his fellow prisoners. After two weeks,

the guards, astonished by his endurance, finally executed him by lethal injection on August 14, 1941. Recognized as a martyr, Maximilian Kolbe was beatified by Pope Paul VI in 1971 and canonized as a saint by Pope John Paul II in 1982. His selfless sacrifice, courage, and compassion have left an indelible mark on history, inspiring generations to stand up against hatred and inhumanity.

Prison Ministry India's Patron - St Maximilian Kolbe

As we take a step forward in our journey, we observe the ripple effect of Saint Maximilian Kolbe's actions in the world today. His life continues to inspire prison reform movements globally, emphasizing rehabilitation over punishment and human dignity over degradation. Prison Ministry India is a 42-year-old national movement for the integral human development of prisoners rooted in the belief that "Our God is never tired of forgiving." Inspired and driven by the heroic sacrifice of St Maximilian Kolbe, PMI aims to extend love and concern to the brethren behind bars. Saint Maximilian Kolbe has become a beacon of hope and a patron for all people involved in prison ministry. His story of selfless sacrifice resonates deeply with those behind bars, and those who work with them, challenging us to see humanity within each individual, no matter their past mistakes. His life has encouraged dialogues about the value of every human life, the potential for redemption, and the power of compassion. Today, various prison programs around the world, influenced by his teachings, focus on spiritual growth, education, and vocational training, seeking to offer inmates a second chance in life.

Kolbe Home

In 2015 his memory was immortalized in the form of the Kolbe Home by Prison Ministry India. Today there are Kolbe Homes in Bangalore in Karnataka, Patan in Gujarat, and Chennai in Tamil Nadu. These Kolbe Homes are specifically aimed at bringing holistic rehabilitation to the children of prisoners and released prisoners. These children undergo tremendous pain emotionally and are often stigmatized by society for no fault of theirs. Kolbe Home, Bangalore, gives sanctuary to around 30 boys in the age group of 4-17 years who stay in the love and care of PMI and whose needs are taken care of very well. They all attend the nearby school and live harmoniously under one roof looking forward to a great future where they can be self-sufficient and recognized by society.

Conclusion

As we conclude our journey through the life of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, let's carry forward his message of courage, compassion, and selfless love. May we strive to see the world not as it is, but as it could be, transformed by understanding, kindness, and respect for all. In a world often quick to judge and condemn, Kolbe's story serves as a stark reminder of our shared humanity. His legacy challenges us all to remember that even in the darkest corners, there is always room for hope, change, and love. Thank you for joining us on this journey through the life of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, a shining example of love and sacrifice. Let his story serve as a reminder that even in the darkest moments, humanity can triumph.

St Maximilian Kolbe

Dominic Mascarenhas

August 14 commemorates St Maximilian Kolbe. Prison Ministry Sunday honors him. In India, it is celebrated on every second Sunday close to this day. Through happy coincidence our Independence Day is also feast of the Assumption. Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. Maximilian Kolbe of Poland is patron saint of prisoners especially of political prisoners and of those who raise their voice for truth and justice. Very early in life, he knew the cost of fighting for freedom. The Russians caught and hung his father as a traitor; during World War I. The Polish were fighting for freedom against Russians (Poland was then part of Russia). Maximilian initially spoke against freemasons raised evil standards verily in Vatican against the Pope and shared blasphemous literature. Maximilian later spoke against Communism. He clearly recognized dangers associated with communism. Later, during World War II, Nazism arose and quickly swallowed up Poland. Maximilian used many tools, not just the pulpit, but also the media as also radio and printed various magazines to make people aware of these dangers, and to bring people back to the faith, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.

Nazism that some evil people still admire claimed many innocent lives including clergy and religious who spoke fearlessly against it. Many including St Maximilian were arrested for hiding Jews and making their premises as refugee centers for innocent people. These defenders lost every human possession besides human dignity and finally their lives. We ask, has anything really changed? We consider ourselves 'modern civilization'. But many people rot in jails worldwide, without trial even for years and with none to defend

them. Many countries have laws that allow people to be jailed even on mere 'suspicion'. Rulers and politicians, worldwide use this method, against people who speak for rights and justice for the powerless and exploited. Authorities worldwide use laws in various ways to deal with political opponents and opinions differing from their own. You cannot speak against the leaders.

Authorities use cruel laws to stamp out religious beliefs other than their own. The only 'freedom' in some places is to follow 'state dictated religion', even if that religion is 'atheism'; leave alone joining another religious belief, even speaking against this religion invites imprisonment, violence and even death. But many other categories also, are not free. We say slavery is gone, but what about sexual trafficking? Is it not slavery, where even minors are forced into small cage like places, and forced to satisfy daily the lust of many? A life sentence in many places is 14 years; there is parole also. But these victims suffer a lifelong sentence without escape. Those who try to escape die. Worse still, in many cases, even some religious beliefs actually permit some things.

What about 'bonded labor', where men, women and children forcibly must work many years, without reprieve, against pittance as loan? What about freedom in many places where people of different categories and classes of people cannot even congregate together? In some places, there is no freedom to even drink water from wells and some sources; attempts to do so, can invite beating and even death. We thus note that there are many prisons; some with prison bars, others do not. Some have 'government sanction', some others have no sanction. As noted, many in the prisons are there because of ignorance. So, an important part is education and making people know the truth. May the Truth who is Jesus, help them be free.

Demarcus' Journey to Transformation

Lou Havilland¹

Going to prison was considered an initiation into adulthood in the Virginia community Demarcus grew up in. It was expected and accepted. "A lot of people glorified going to jail," he says. "It was like a badge of honor, a path of passage. Once you go, you're solidified." An uncle gave 13-year-old Demarcus and his cousins a piece of advice he still hasn't forgotten: "If you ever go to jail, don't let anybody punk you. Mind your business." His uncle meant that it was important to defend yourself, always stand up for yourself, and not let anyone take advantage of you. Demarcus would put that counsel to use in a matter of years.

Lured by False Status

While there wasn't an abundance of material wealth in Demarcus' early life, what his family had plenty of was affection and caring for one another. He recalls a childhood of riding his bike and climbing trees. "It was a loving home," he says. "They always made sure that I had everything I needed. I was blessed to grow up with a great family." Demarcus' grandparents were very active in their church and brought him along as often as possible. He sang in the choir, and his grandmother wrote plays for the church to perform. But even more importantly, they taught Demarcus to pray and to develop a strong inner life with God. He admits that, while God was drawing

near to him, he wasn't ready to draw near to God. "My grandparents showed the way and I followed up, but I didn't really have an understanding of who God and Jesus were," he says. Even though he was rich in his family's love and attention, Demarcus coveted what many of the young men in his neighbourhood had - money, cars, jewellery, and most importantly, respect. He wanted to be looked at with admiration in his community, to have money, and to lift his lower-middle-class family economically. Pulled by an attraction for the streets, Demarcus was determined to be like those young men, ruling the neighbourhood by selling drugs. "The way they walked around, the way they dressed themselves - I wanted that," he recalls. "When you come from such a small place, you want to be at the top of the food chain."

Walking in the Wrong Path

Demarcus began to have regular and frequent run-ins with law enforcement starting at age 11 when he participated in a burglary with a group of friends. "We were stealing out of the mall one time, and they started chasing us," he recalls. "A lot of us got away, but one guy got caught." Thanks to his friend, the police informed Demarcus' parents of what he had done. But he and his friends continued committing minor crimes, avoiding any severe punishment since they were juveniles.

By age 14, Demarcus was selling marijuana and developing a steady clientele. Soon he moved on to selling crack cocaine and heroin. The money his "business"

¹ *Courtesy: Prison fellowship International.*

brought in was changing how he viewed himself. No longer was he a small fry in the neighbourhood. He was gaining the respect and awe of his peers, and it felt good. “That was the beginning of my lifestyle,” he says. “It began to become a part of my identity, so I began to walk in that path.”

New Role Models

By 2007, Demarcus could no longer fly under the radar. After an attempted robbery that had gone bad, he was sentenced to more than 15 years in prison. Serving time was not the celebrated pit stop Demarcus had heard so much about. He disliked being labelled a criminal and recalled the values and integrity his family had lovingly poured into his life. Being locked up made him face what he had become. “I hated prison,” he says. “I hated the belief systems that came along with it. My family taught me respect, manners, and things of that nature, but I was a criminal.” The life he’d been leading was no longer attractive to Demarcus. He took note of those around him who were flourishing and intentionally choosing to be better individuals. “When I got to prison, I was 22 and I would always look at the people who were about 35, because I knew that’s around the time I would get out,” he says. “They never knew this, but I would watch them. I wanted to mimic these people because this is who I wanted to be one day - a real man, a mature man.” Demarcus was honest with God about his behaviour and criminal life. He wanted change and knew it could only begin with God. “I went to God, and it was one of the first times in my life that I let go and I let God,” he says. “I was like, ‘I surrender. I submit.’ And it wasn’t because

I wanted to go home. That’s when I started reading the Bible.” Daily, he began to build himself up - studying the Bible, exercising, opening up more with family members, and learning as much as he could about running a business to prepare himself for life after release. “If I could grow every day mentally, physically, emotionally, financially, spiritually, I could see my progress in life,” he says.

Going Where the Growth is

Demarcus had the opportunity to have a paying job in the prison. But he turned it down because he heard that the first Prison Fellowship Academy was coming. It was the perfect next step because his mentor and Academy director, Mike “Coach” Dunavant, would be leading the group of men through the yearlong course. That was all Demarcus needed to know. “We were not getting paid to be with Coach,” he says. “But I knew I’d rather go with Coach because I understood his vision and passion for helping people grow.” The Academy uses targeted curriculum, compassionate coaches, and the power of community to replace participants’ criminal thinking and behaviours with purpose and biblically based life principles. “I love Coach, that’s my guy,” Demarcus says. “I went with Coach because I wanted to go where the growth is. I wanted to be the best version of myself that I could be for my family, for society, for everything. The Academy was a rigorous program, but I enjoyed it.” Demarcus was in his Academy site’s first graduating class. In that year, he gained empathy for others’ points of view and learned to be open, candid, and transparent with others.

Blessings From Angel Tree

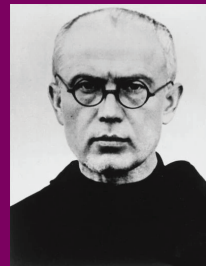
In addition to being part of the Academy, Demarcus also signed up his children for Prison Fellowship Angel Tree. Angel Tree allows incarcerated men and women to keep a loving connection with their kids through a gift and a personal message. “The reality is, as a parent when you’re not there to be with your kids, you still want to be the provider for your children,” he says. “At the time I left my children, they were very young. Angel Tree was such a blessing.” Once his kids entered their teen years, Demarcus didn’t sign them up for Angel Tree because he thought they would see it as something for younger children. He was wrong. “My kids’ mom said, ‘Why didn’t you send the Angel Tree? The kids loved it. They appreciate it every year, going to those parties and getting those gifts,’” he recalls.

Building Positive Change

Demarcus has realized the goals he hoped for after prison: He’s close to his children, and he’s the owner of a successful commercial cleaning business. “I don’t want people to look at me as the dude that just did the time,” he says. “I’m an entrepreneur. I add value to life. I add value to communities. I’m here to help build positive change.” Demarcus proved this shortly after his release from prison in 2020 when he played a key role in getting a driver out of her burning car on the highway. The car was engulfed in flames and appeared to be half of its original size by the time Demarcus reached it. Using a fire extinguisher from another driver, he settled the flames long enough for two other bystanders to loosen the motorist’s seatbelt and pull her out.

Demarcus was awarded a commendation from the local fire department for his heroism. “It was a blessing to be there,” Demarcus says. “Thankful to be at the right place and able to help.” He acknowledges he’s not the same man who went to prison in 2007. After his release, he took the bus daily to his job at a tree service company. He keeps one of those bus tickets in his wallet to remember the progress he’s made and God’s faithfulness. “For me, there have been so many different hurdles and so many challenges, but I have to keep a strong view emotionally, spiritually and mentally. And I can’t give up,” he says. “I have to keep going. I thank God for everything. I thank Him every day.”

Maximilian Kolbe: Quotes



1. For Jesus Christ I am prepared to suffer still more.
2. A single act of love makes the soul return to life.
3. The Cross is the school of love.
4. If angels could be jealous of men, they would be so for one reason: Holy Communion.
5. Let us not forget that Jesus not only suffered, but also rose in glory; so, too, we go to the glory of the resurrection by the way of suffering and the Cross”

Love for Christ Undergoes Suffering - St Edith Stein

“The mystery of the Cross gradually enveloped her whole life, spurring her to the point of making the supreme sacrifice” said St Pope John Paul II during the canonization of St Edith Stein. She teaches us “that love for Christ undergoes suffering”, continued Pope John Paul II. Who is Edith Stein? Why did she connect love and sufferings together? Why was she killed? This article written in honour of St Edith Stein, whose feast we celebrate on 9 August will give us a brief history about her and what made her to lay down her life for Christ. Edith Stein is also known as Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (12 October 1891 – 9 August 1942) was a German Jewish philosopher who was converted to Christianity and became a Discalced Carmelite nun. This Carmelite nun, who took the name St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, was the first Jewish woman to convert to Catholicism and was elevated to the altars. She is canonized as a martyr and saint of the Catholic Church; she is also one of six patron Saints of Europe.

Early Life and Education

Edith Stein was born on 12 October 1891 into a bourgeois Jewish family in Breslau, Prussia (now Wroclaw, Poland). She was the youngest of 11 children and was born on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Hebrew calendar; these facts combined to make her a favorite of her mother. She was a very gifted child who enjoyed learning, in a home where her mother encouraged critical thinking, and she greatly admired her mother’s strong religious faith. By her



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

teenage years, however, Stein had become an agnostic. Her father died when she was two, leaving her mother to run the family business, a lumberyard, while raising the children. Though her father died while she was young, her widowed mother was determined to give her children a thorough education. Edith attended local school and then the Victoria Gymnasium in Breslau. She became a great intellectual giant of her times studying under people like Edmund Husserl, who was a great man in terms of academics and Philosophy. He was one of the most influential Philosophers of 20th century.

Conversion

One day around 1917, the young Jewish woman, Edith Stein, a student and teacher of philosophy, visited Frankfurt Cathedral. She noticed another woman going into the church with a shopping basket in her hands to say a quick prayer. Edith Stein was astounded and she said: “This was something totally new to me. In the synagogues and Protestant churches I had visited, people simply went to the services. Here, however, I saw someone coming straight from the busy marketplace into this empty church, as if she was going to have an intimate conversation. It was something I never forgot.”

Edith Stein was from a practicing Jewish family but had lost her faith in childhood.

She was a brilliant mind who studied German, history, and her most beloved subject, philosophy. Her studies and providential encounters with people of faith pushed her continually towards the truth. She was baptized in 1922 and subsequently left her university appointment as Husserl's assistant. In October 1933, she entered the Carmelite convent at Cologne. In April 1934, she entered the novitiate, taking the religious name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Teresia Benedicta a Cruce). In 1938, Stein was transferred for safety to the Carmelite convent at Echt, Holland. There she wrote her two most important theological treatises, *The Science of the Cross* (2003) and *Ways to Know God* (1993).

Imprisonment and Death

Ultimately, she would not be safe in the Netherlands. The Dutch Bishops' Conference had a public statement read in all churches across the nation on 20 July 1942 condemning Nazi racism. In a retaliatory response on 26 July 1942 the Reichs Commissioner of the Netherlands, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, ordered the arrest of all Jewish converts who had previously been spared. Along with two hundred and forty-three baptized Jews living in the Netherlands, Stein was arrested on 2 August 1942. Stein and her sister Rosa were imprisoned at the concentration camps of Amersfoort and Westerbork before being deported to Auschwitz. A Dutch official at Westerbork was so impressed by her sense of faith and calm. He offered her an escape plan and Stein vehemently refused his assistance. On 7 August 1942, early in the morning, 987 Jews were deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp. It was probably on 9 August that Sister Teresa

Benedicta of the Cross, her sister Rosa, and many more Jewish people were killed in a gas chamber.

Courageous Woman in God's Vineyard

"In sacrificing her life for her people, she followed to some extent in the footsteps of a man who almost exactly a year earlier had sacrificed his life for an unknown fellow prisoner - merely because he had a wife and children - in the footsteps of Fr Maximilian Maria Kolbe" said Archbishop Jędraszewski. She displayed mystical qualities in terms of her depth relationship with Jesus. She had heroic virtues and qualities, particularly courage. Her courage to live for the Lord Jesus, her courage to stand firm amidst hardships and her courage to stand for the truth are admirable. She campaigned publicly on issues relating to women's rights and education. Stein is known philosophically primarily for her phenomenological work on empathy and affectivity, her contributions as research assistant to Edmund Husserl, and her philosophical anthropology.

Festal Blessings

St Edith Stein contributed important intellectual works in the fields of philosophy, women's studies, theology, and education. Stein believed that women needed to be educated not only as human beings, but also specifically as women. "Let go of your plans. The first hour of your morning belongs to God. Tackle the day's work that He charges you with, and He will give you the power to accomplish it," are her words. As we celebrate the feast of St Edith Stein, let us reflect on her words and give our first hours to the Lord.

Singapore Hangs First Woman Convict since 2004¹



Singapore hanged a 45-year-old citizen for drug trafficking, the city-state's first execution of a woman in nearly 20 years. The execution was carried out despite appeals from rights groups, who argue capital punishment has no proven deterrent effect on crime. "The capital sentence of death imposed on Saridewi Binte Djamani was carried out on 28 July 2023," the Central Narcotics Bureau said in a statement. She was convicted of trafficking "not less than 30.72 grams" of heroin, more than twice the volume that merits the death penalty in Singapore. Djamani, who was sentenced in 2018, "was accorded full due process under the law, and was represented by legal counsel throughout the process," the bureau said. "She appealed against her

conviction and sentence, and the Court of Appeal dismissed her appeal on 6 October 2022," the bureau said, adding that her plea for presidential clemency was also rejected.

Djamani is the first woman to be executed in the city-state since 2004, when Yen May Woen was hanged for drug trafficking, the Singapore Prison Service told AFP in an email. Yen was a 36-year-old hairdresser, according to media reports. Djamani on Friday became the 15th prisoner sent to the gallows since the government resumed executions in March 2022 after a two-year pause during the Covid-19 pandemic. A local man, Mohd Aziz bin Hussain, 57, was hanged on Wednesday for trafficking about 50 grams of heroin.

¹ UCA News 28 July 2023.

Tragic Spotlight

Local rights group Transformative Justice Collective said Friday it had confirmed that another drug convict on death row has been scheduled for execution on August 3. It identified the convict as a Singaporean man who worked as a delivery driver before his arrest in 2016. He was convicted in 2019 of trafficking around 50 grams of heroin. "This week has cast a harsh and tragic spotlight on the complete lack of death penalty reform in Singapore," said Amnesty International's death penalty expert Chiara Sangiorgio. "As most of the world turns its back on this cruel punishment, Singapore's government continues down the path of executing people for drug-related crimes, violating international human rights law and standards. Singapore, a wealthy regional financial center, insists the death penalty has helped make it one of Asia's safest countries. The city-state has some of the world's toughest anti-drug laws - trafficking more than 500 grams of cannabis or over 15 grams of heroin can result in the death penalty.

Amnesty and other rights groups urged the government to halt the executions this week, saying there was no evidence the death penalty acted as a deterrent to crime.

"This is the fourth execution this year and there will be another one next week. It's horrible for the families and worrying for other death row inmates," Singaporean rights activist Kirsten Han told AFP. There "is no sign of the government wanting to give an inch," she added. Billionaire Richard Branson on Thursday urged Singapore to "grant mercy" to Djamani and stop her execution. Singapore is among four countries - along with China, Iran and Saudi Arabia - confirmed to have executed prisoners for drug-related offenses last year, Amnesty said.

Lord You have Set Us Apart

Sr Lidwin

Lord you have set us apart.
From our mother's womb to be your mission part,
To pray and serve from our hearts.
To make our brethren life wholesome smart.
We plead you for those in the jail,
To liberate them without fail.
Lord we too are weak and frail
Seen unseen selfishness prevail.
Let our conscience be clean and hale.
Lord we are bound by the worldly ways.
By our limitations and self-willed ways.
Make us instruments for the future days.
Gracefully prepare for the which doesn't pay.
Within the four walls our brethren a suffer.
None to speak and to heal none to offer
Lord make us worthy to help to open up.
With your grace may they gracefully come out.
You alone know the core of our being lean us,
heal us before engaged in doing.
Free us from all that prevents our noble mission.
Grant us humble attitude and clear vision.
Thank you Father for your love that made us free.
From all obstacles of our prison ministry.
Keep us humble with much capacity.
Strengthen us with all gifts of the holy spirit.
Make us worthy with faith and mission spirit.
Amen

Gandhi's Life Story Inspires a Prisoner Prisoner Confessed his Crime after Reading an Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi

Walter Kamble



An undertrial prisoner of Thane Central Jail, after reading an Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi, has not only confessed to the crime he committed, but also written apology letters to the people whom he had harassed and threatened before. In the Press Conference at Nashik Central Jail organised by Mumbai Sarvodaya Mandal today, a prisoner, Shri Laxman Tukaram Gole, presently lodged at Nashik Central Jail said, "After reading the Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi – 'My Experiments with Truth', supplied by Mumbai Sarvodaya Mandal on my request; I am determined to follow Gandhi's path of truth & non-violence and wrote an application to Hon. Judge of Vikhroli Court that I am confessing my crime and do not want to waste the time of the Court. I also requested the Judge to end the proceeding of my case." The Press

Conference was addressed by Dr. Rajan Welukar, Vice-Chancellor, Yashwantrao Chavan Open University, Nashik and Shri. A. C. Rane, Nashik Jail Superintendent.

Laxman Gole was a hardcore criminal and 19 cases for scuffle, threat, dispute, terrifying & beating people were filed against him by Chirag Nagar Police Station, Ghatkopar, Mumbai. He was declared free in 18 cases. He confessed his crime in last case and the judge had convicted him under:

1. u/s 384 of IPC r/w 34 and sentenced to suffer R. I. for 2 years and to pay fine of Rs. 500/-, i/d to suffer R. I. for one month.
2. u/s 506 (ii) r/w 34 of IPC and to suffer R. I. for 2 years and to pay fine of Rs. 500/- and i/d to suffer further R. I. for one month.
3. u/s 37 2 (a) r/w 135 of Bombay Police Act and is sentenced to suffer R. I. for one month and to pay fine of Rs. 50/- and i/d to suffer R. I. for 5 days.

The Hon'ble Judge, Shri M B Gosavi, Spl. Metropolitan Magistrate, Vikhroli Court considered his case sympathetically and ordered all above substantive punishment shall run concurrently thus reducing 2 years punishment to him. Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal has deposited Gole's fine of Rs. 1050/- so he will be released soon. He had spent 18 months in Thane Central Jail as an under trial. Today Gole has become a brand ambassador of Mahatma Gandhi in Nashik Jail. He is inspiring other inmates not only to read the book, but to confess their crimes also. Mandal has received letters from five inmates of Nashik Jail who want to read Gandhi's Autobiography & other books of Mahatma.

Spiritual Warfare

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

Introduction

Lorenzo Scupoli (1569-1610) an Italian born Theatine who was accused of breaking the rule, arrested and was deprived of his priestly faculties. He was exculpated from blame, but had to wait for it almost till his death. He endured the unjust accusations and punishments with humility, offering the suffering for various intentions. In his renowned book *Il combattimento spirituale*, the Spiritual Combat, Scupoli writes that spiritual warfare is the Christian concept of fighting against the works of supernatural evil forces. This is based on the biblical belief in evil spirits, or demons, that are said to intervene in human affairs in various ways. Prayer is the most common form of spiritual warfare. Other practices may include exorcism, the laying on of hands, fasting with prayer, praise and worship, and anointing with oil. This article anchoring on this book briefly illustrates how to win in our spiritual warfare. I am sure this would be beneficial to PMI volunteers who are engaged in the spiritual warfare of liberating and redeeming the incarcerated.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

God fills us with strength, wisdom, and discernment through His own Spirit to stay strong in the battle. He never leaves us to fend for ourselves and fight with our own strength only. We need His fresh filling every day; we need the empowerment that only He can offer. Every believer has the gift of God's Spirit dwelling within them. The power that raised Lazarus from the dead, parted the sea, broke open prison doors, and caused the lame to walk, is the same powerful Spirit who is still alive and at work within us today. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Armor of God

God reminds us not to go into the day without being prepared and equipped for battle. He tells us to take up his full armour in order to stand against the enemy's schemes. Each piece has a specific purpose and is designed for our protection and covering. Just as a soldier would not go to battle unprepared, we also should be fully ready for the attacks we will face. "Put on the full armour of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the worldly forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Take up the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:11-17).

Prayer

God invites us to have a relationship with Him, He desires for us to spend time in His presence, pressing on to know Him more. He reminds us constantly in His word of the importance of prayer and the power that is found there. He tells us to pray without ceasing. Even when we don't know what to say, He tells us that the Spirit intercedes for us. He never leaves us to fend for ourselves in a dark world, but reminds us that He is constantly with us, fighting for us, even when we cannot see. "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Eph 6:18).

Word of God

God arms us with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to stand against the enemy's lies. Praying God's words back to Him, is a powerful weapon against the forces of evil. It is truth going out into enemy territory. It reminds us that God knows our way and understands what we face today. It builds our faith and our trust in God. It guards our hearts and focuses our minds back on Him. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

Power of Praise

Praise invites God's Presence. He dwells close to us when we praise Him. Praise is a powerful weapon as well. It makes the enemy flee. Evil will not stick around if we're praising our God, who will fight our battles for us. In the story of Jehoshaphat, we see God miraculously defeat the enemy, because of the people's obedience to praise Him (2 Chron 20:22). "He inhabits the praises of His people." (Ps 22:3). At the sound of hallelujah, demons flee. They run at the clap of your hands and tremble at the shout of your voice. You are a weapon created in Christ Jesus, and you were made to praise the Lord. To deliver means to equip you for the fight. He is teaching your hands to war. By Him, you can run through a troop of enemies. By Him, you can leap over a wall. By His Spirit, you can bend a bow of bronze with your arms. You are God's warrior, and He is teaching you how to war!

Obedience to Christ

Our willingness to obey the words and commandments of Christ in a world that would say to walk our own way is huge. It sets a powerful example that says we are willing to die to our own desires and live for the glory of God. But it will never happen naturally. Our very flesh, our own desires

and sinful nature will fight against it every step of the way. It's a daily choice that says we will be careful of every thought, we will take up our cross daily and follow Christ's ways, not our own. Submit to God's authority. Be ruthless with sin, which is an open door for the enemy to work. Resist him and he has to flee. "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Lorenzo Scupoli writes "Humbling ourselves not only before Him, but, for His sake, before all men, in renouncing entirely our own will in order to follow His."

The Body and Blood of Christ

When we have been set free by the blood of Christ and the power of His sacrifice by his death on the Cross, we have a new identity in Him. We've been bought with a price, we are not our own, but covered by the grace and forgiveness of Jesus. We live victorious, and no demon or darkness can ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ our Lord. There is Power in the Name of Jesus. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death" (Rev 12:11). When we belong to Christ, the enemy never has the final word over our lives. We are secure in God's hands. The battle belongs to the Lord, and He has the final victory!

Conclusion

In spiritual warfare we can never win without God. Always remember that it is first and foremost the battle of our Lord. Secondly, the prayer of our leaders is essential for the win. But know that they too can grow tired and they need the help of others. Finally, the people themselves have to face and fight for the win. "Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me" (Ps 144, 1-2).

PMI Contemplative Warriors

Goretti Martins

I am Goretti Martins PMI volunteer from Goa working in this ministry since last 20 years. God is always closer than we may think. God has created man out of love and He has created him for Himself to be with him for all eternity. God called Abraham when he was 75 years old. Abraham listened to God call and followed Him by placing his full trust in God even though he did not understand anything. There are many men and women who God chose to be His instruments of love or rather prophets to be witnesses to His living word. In the New Testament Mary becomes a role model to each of us. Like Abraham she too didn't understand anything but she humbled herself to do the will of God. Jesus came into this world to fulfill his father's mission of bringing salvation to the whole of humanity and this He accomplished by His birth, life, passion death and resurrection. Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist at the age of 30. When He was baptised the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove then a voice said from heaven this is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased (Matthew 3:16-17).

Again at the transfiguration with disciples Peter, James and John heard this very voice of the heavenly Father saying this is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased, listen to him. Time and again we read in the gospel how Jesus made time to pray and how he preferred to go to lonely places to be one in communion with His Father. Spending time in silence and pray helps one grow more spiritually. Many great prophets and saints did this very same thing. When Moses went to meet the Lord on Mount Sinai, he

stayed there with the Lord for 40 days and nights, eating and drinking nothing. When he came down from Mount Sinai carrying the 10 commandments his face was shining because he had been speaking with the Lord. (Exodus 34:28-29)

But today in a rapidly changing world, family and other responsibilities that can be very challenging to find time for ourselves. And yet this is what we need to do. Contemplative prayer allows us to come to know and experience God's unconditional love and be transformed by it and then in turn grow in our love of God. It was always my heart's desire to spend time in silent prayers and meditation. I had been praying over it for nearly a year or so. Finally on the 25th of July this dream was fulfilled when I entered KOLBE home Bangalore. Although this was a short time of five days, I felt deep peace within me. God really gave me this great opportunity to pray in silence for the various PMI special task forces as well as all the other innumerable intentions. I felt closer to God when I spent more time in contemplation. This kind of prayer help physically as well as spiritually. All this was made possible because of my family members who supported me very strongly. I feel every prison ministry volunteer is called for this kind of prayer as this is a very challenging ministry where we need to storm heaven not only for those in prison but also for those working for the prisoners and for their families.

Before I conclude I want to thank God almighty for blessing me to come here and spend time in silent prayers and I also want to thank Rev Father Francis Kodiyan and Sister Amala who did not leave any stone unturned to make us feel at home. Whatever you pray for with faith you will receive it (Matthew 2:1-2).



PMI Sharing with CRI, Varanasi



PMI Sharing With IMS Brothers, Varanasi



PMI Sharing with Our Lady of Providence Provincial House Members



PMI Sharing With Queen of Apostles Sisters, Varanasi



PMI Sharing with Varanasi Minor Seminarians



PMI Trivandrum Zonal Gathering



PMI Varanasi Diocesan Unit Meeting



PMI Visit to Cuddalore Central Prison



PMI Visit to Dharmapuri Prison



PMI Visit to Madurai Prison



PMI Visit to Open Prison, Devanhalli



PMI Visit to Pondicherry Prison



PMI Visit to Shivpuri Prison



PMI Visit to Special Jail, KGF



PMI Visit to Varanasi Central Prison



PMI Visit to Varanasi Central Prison



PMI Volunteers' Training Program, Hasan



PMI Wishes Jubilee Blessings to Fr Paul G



Prison Ministry Orientation Seminar, Gwalior



CBCI Secretaries Meet Delhi



Sharing with PMI Varanasi Members



Welcome to PMI Contemplative Warriors



Prisoners' Children's Camp, PMI Kochi