



PRISON VOICE

March 2023

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Issue 1

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-

Empowering Women Prisoners





**Ash Wednesday Celebration,
Sundargarh Prison.**



**Class on Counselling
Psychology to Prisoners.**



**Fr Sergius Kindo's Birthday
Celebration with Jail Staff.**



**Gayathri's House Construction
with PMI Assistance.**



**Dongri Children's Art,
Mumbai.**



**Dr Martin Frei and Ruth's
Visit to PMI.**



**Jeevalaya Brothers' Visit to
Open Prison, Devanahally.**



**Kadappa Diocesan PMI
Meeting.**



**Kolbe Boys' Visit to
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**Kolbe Children at
Cherai Beach.**



**Lions Club Members Visiting
Kolbe Home.**

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PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY



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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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Sanctifying Ourselves to Sanctify Prisoners

Sanctification of Prisoners

Lent is the God-given time to reflect, repent and to sanctify ourselves and the world around. It is a salvific time to intensely live our faith by participating in the paschal mysteries of Christ through prayer and penance. Because innumerable roots of sin and death have sprung up in us, we are bound, fettered, and unfree. We have become virtually prisoners of our little selves. Hence let us renew ourselves ever more actively our baptismal death to sin during this lent, and rise daily more and more to Jesus' new life. The Church wants to bear witness in India to the Kingdom of God, to her faith in God whom she has experienced in Christ. She seeks to convince people that she stands for divine values and wants to make India realize that her Lord has overcome the values of this world. PMI volunteers have the responsibility to do penance and reparation for the sanctification of the whole world especially for the purification of prisoners worldwide.

St Joseph - Patron of the Universal Church

God called St Joseph to be the spouse of Mary and the foster father of Jesus. God chose him to be with them, to watch over them, and to foster them. Responding to God's call, he nourished them, protected them, and saved them in Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth, enduring the hardships of poverty and the pains of exile. He offered his entire life for Jesus and Mary fulfilling God's designs and carried out his mission with great courage and fidelity. Pope Pius IX declared St Joseph as the patron of the universal Church in 1870. He is a role model for all fathers, every working person and for every family. St Joseph teaches us that

EDITOR'S VIEW



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor



human work has dignity and it becomes a spiritual duty when it is done for the glory of God. He is the model of humility which enabled him to obey, a model of chaste living, a just man and indeed a good model for the perfect Christian life. He protects the Church from the snares of her enemies. The holy mother invites us to go to him with confidence. Let us pray to this saintly man of silence, dream and strength to do PMI work like St Joseph with courage for our neglected brethren behind bars.

International Women's Day

International Women's day, commemorated on March 8th of every year, is earmarked to celebrate womanhood, and to recognize her achievements regardless of divisions - national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, or political. International Women's Day had its basis in 1908 when 15,000 women took part in a New York City march, calling for shorter working hours and voting rights. A year later, the Socialist Party of America marked the anniversary of the march by declaring the day as the first National Women's Day. It is also the appropriate occasion to raise awareness about women's rights and gender parity. Without women the world and our lives would be incomplete. This day is dedicated to all women and to the recognition of their amazing deeds in their gender role. Prayerful best wishes to all those who go to celebrate women's day in prisons and PMI wishes a happy women's day to all PMI women volunteers.

EMPOWERING WOMEN PRISONERS

Rahab

Rahab (name changed) lost her parents as a child and grew up in a boarding. When she completed 9th standard her maternal uncle took her to his home. One day she ran away from there out of fear. Police caught and brought her to Snehashramam - a PMI rehabilitation centre for released women prisoners in Trivandrum, Kerala. PMI volunteers offered her vocational training such as tailoring, handicrafts, cloth clip assembling, gardening, animal husbandry, farming etc. The tender loving care and sisterly accompaniment of sisters transformed Rahab into a mature, responsible and self-reliant person. She began to work as a home nurse. In 2012 Rahab married Mr Vincent. Unfortunately, Vincent was a drunkard who spent all his earnings from fishing on alcohol. It was a hard time for Rahab as she had to look for means to meet the daily expenses of the family. Many a time she felt depressed and wanted to leave her husband and go back to Snehashramam, but the strong support of sisters sustained her through these difficulties. Knowing her problems, sisters bought for her a sewing machine and she began to earn money through tailoring.



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

She got her first girlchild after two years of marriage. As the child grew up, she was scared of her father and wouldn't approach him at all. This disturbed Vincent a lot. With immense trust in the Lord Rahab continued to pray for his transformation. Her prayers brought the desired fruit. Vincent came out of his drinking and began to take care of the family. Rahab is now 32 years old, a happy wife and mother of three children. She says that in Snehashramam she was born again, empowered and became a healthy, mature woman thanks to the constant support, care and encouragement of PMI volunteers.

Meena

Meena and Shivu (names changed) have three children, a 5-year-old boy, a 3-year-old girl and 10 months old baby girl. They were poor, simple and innocent people making their livelihood by doing whatever work

they got as daily wage earners. One day unexpectedly some police officials came to their house and asked Shivu to come with them to the police station. When he came to the station, very stealthily they accused him of a murder case and put him behind bars. The family was broken and devastated and didn't know what to do and how to go about and was in tears. Meena went to the station with her two girl babies and they too were put behind bars. The visit of PMI volunteers gave them some consolation. When the elder girl was 6 years old PMI took her to Premodaya - a PMI home for prisoners' children run by St Anne's Sisters of Chennai where she joined their English medium school. After two years the third child was also taken to Premodaya and both of them got good education. When Meena was released after 14 years, she was brought to Jeevodaya - a PMI home for released women prisoners under the care of the Holy Cross sisters. Slowly Meena rented out a house and started selling vegetables.

After 22 long years Shivu was released. The children have grown up, started working and supporting the family. Now they are building a house of their own with the help of PMI housing project. In the midst of all the struggles, chaos and confusions, Meena never lost hope and courage. She developed faith in God and realized that it's only God who can help and that help comes through human beings.

Prison Ministry India

Prison Ministry India, a national Catholic spiritual movement for the integral human development of prisoners, their families and victims, is a registered charitable society that works under the justice, peace and development commission of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI). In every Indian state and diocese PMI has its coordinators to take care of the integral human development of prisoners. Its 8000 volunteers regularly reach out to the Indian prisons and through its 20





rehabilitation centres for released men and women prisoners thousands of Rahabs and Meenas have been reformed, empowered, rehabilitated, and reintegrated with job and settled in families.

Rehabilitation Centres for Released Women Prisoners

It was the women prisoners in Kerala who inspired the pioneers of Prison Ministry India to launch rehabilitation centres for released prisoners. During our All-Kerala Prison Pilgrimages in 1986, 1987 and 1988 from St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam women-prisoners repeatedly pleaded with us to establish rehabilitation centres for them so that when they would come out of prison they could stay there. Otherwise, they would again be on the streets doing the same business and as a result police would once again catch and put them in prison. In response to their request Prison Ministry India launched the first renewal and rehabilitation centre for released male prisoners at Vettukad,

Thrissur in 1991 and for female released prisoners at Monvila, Thiruvananthapuram in 1992. In 1993 John the Baptist Sisters commenced Ashadeepam, Vettukad, Thrissur, Kerala; in 1995 Holy Cross Sisters began Jeevodaya Ashram, Bangalore and in 2004 Ursulines of Mary Immaculate (UMI) launched Karunasadan in Kannur, Kerala for released women prisoners

PMI Homes for Prisoners' Children

In 1994 Mar Jose Pulickal, bishop of Kanjirappally began Snehadeepam for boys at Inchiyani, Kanjirappilly under the care of Holy Spirit Sisters. In 1977 Clarist Sisters started Asha Sadan for prisoners' girl children at Noida, UP. In 1999 SABs Sisters launched Karunyashram for girls at Thoppil, Kochi, Kerala. In 2003 St Anne's Sisters of Chennai began Premodaya for girl children in Bangalore. In 2005 Augustinian Sisters launched Jeevan Jyothy for girls at Anavilasam, Idukki, Kerala. In 2007 Sisters of Charity of St Anne began Bonal Bhavan for girls at Kadumeni, Kasaragod.

In 2015 PMI commenced Kolbe Home for prisoners' boy children at Carmelaram, Bangalore under the supervision of Satya Seva Sisters. In 2017 Dominican Sisters began Marie Pushpan's Girls Home at Ranchi, Jharkhand. In 2021 SMMI sisters launched Kolbe Home for girls at Patan, Gujarat. In 2022 PMI Maharashtra began St Antony's Home for boys at Kankavly, Sindhudurg under the supervision of the Holy Cross Sisters.

Women Prisoners' Empowerment

Prison Ministry India has been empowering women prisoners through its rehabilitation centres and homes for prisoners' children since 1991. PMI volunteers outreach them in prisons, rescue homes and brothels. We release them free from the clutches of bondages. We reform them, educate them, empower them with skills, and give them professional training. We rehabilitate them and settle them through marriages and family life. We reassure them in their life ahead by constructing houses for them and settling them in jobs with business and small-scale industries. We do follow-ups by calling them twice a year for celebrations and spiritual renewals. PMI Rehabilitation centres are like their mother house where they can come at any time and receive guidance and support.

Conclusion

The fifth Edition of the World Female Imprisonment List by Helen Fair and Roy Walmsley shows that more than 740,000 women and girls are in prison globally. The number of women and girls imprisoned worldwide has risen so dramatically in just two decades, far outstripping the rate of increase in the numbers of male prisoners. Huge increases have been seen in developed and less developed countries alike, with poverty, structural inequality, and the failed war on drugs the key underlying factors. According to NCRI as on 31 December 2021 in the 32 women jails in India there were 3,808 women prisoners. The women inmates in other types of jails were 19,115. Uttarakhand has reported the highest female occupancy rate (178.8%) followed by Bihar (152.3%) and Chhattisgarh (147.6%). However, the highest number of female inmates were confined in the jails of Uttar Pradesh (4,995) followed by Bihar (3,067) and Madhya Pradesh (1,892). PMI continues its efforts to empower released women prisoners with added enthusiasm through its rehabilitation centres and the homes for prisoners' children. PMI can be proud of their thousands of reformed, empowered, rehabilitated and reintegrated families who glorify the Lord by bearing witness to Jesus who came to seek and save the lost.



LENT: 7 THINGS TO ABSTAIN FROM : POPE FRANCIS¹

ISABELLA H. DE CARVALHO

Here are 7 recommendations taken from Pope Francis' messages, addresses, and homilies to abstain from to better live the season of Lent! Lent marks the 40 days leading up to Easter where Catholics are called to fast and abstain from certain things in preparation for the celebration of victory over sin and death.

1 Abstain from Avoiding God

"Lent is indeed the 'favorable time' to return to what is essential, to divest ourselves of all that weighs us down, to be reconciled with God, and to rekindle the fire of the Holy Spirit hidden beneath the ashes of our frail humanity," said Pope Francis during his homily of the Ash Wednesday Mass on February 22, 2023. The Pontiff explained that "the rite of the imposition of ashes serves as the beginning of this return journey," which reminds us "who is the Creator and who is the creature." This journey leads us to "the truth about ourselves," and helps us emerge "from the fortress of our self-sufficiency." It is an opportunity to "return to God and to our brothers and sisters."

2 Abstain from Spiritual Arrogance

During his Sunday Angelus address on October 23, 2022, Pope Francis warned against "spiritual arrogance," that makes us put ourselves before others and before God. It stops us from going towards others: "Where there is too much 'I,' there is too little God." "We all run the risk of falling into this trap. It leads you to believe that

one is righteous and to judge others. [...] Without realizing it, you adore your own ego and obliterate your God. It revolves around oneself. This is prayer without humility," he explained. "Let us ask the intercession of Mary Most Holy, the humble servant of the Lord, the living image of what the Lord loves to accomplish, overthrowing the powerful from their thrones and raising the humble."

3 Abstain from Digital Media Platforms

In his 2022 Lent message Pope Francis said this liturgical period is perfect for resisting the temptation of digital media, "which impoverishes human relationships." He encouraged cultivating "authentic encounters face-to-face." This is a warning the Pontiff has given often, such as in a message in July 2022 to SIGNIS, an international Catholic association for communication. Although he acknowledged "how digital media can bring us together" by "disseminating essential information" and "uniting whole families and ecclesial communities," it must be used wisely. "Especially social media, has raised a number of serious ethical issues" and many "media sites have become places of toxicity, hate speech, and fake news."



4 Abstain from Polarizations and Divisions

It is easy to get caught in the debates and divisions that affect society daily. However Pope Francis calls Catholics to be "not either-or" but "both-and, combining differences." In an interview with Jesuit media outlet America, published in November 2022 he clearly stated "polarization is not Catholic." "The Catholic unites the good and the not-

so-good. There is only one people of God. When there is polarization, a divisive mentality arises, which privileges some and leaves others behind. The Catholic always harmonizes differences," he explained.

5 Abstain from Being Indifferent to Others

"Indifference to our neighbor and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience," the Pontiff said during his 2015 Lent message. Caring for the forgotten, the marginalized, and those who suffer in society is a central pillar of Francis' pontificate.

He often condemns "throwaway culture" and calls for the dignity of every human being. "Lent is a favorable time for showing this concern for others by small yet concrete signs of our belonging to the one human family," he said.

6 Abstain from Unnecessary Noise

Pope Francis emphasized the importance of silence in a general audience on December 15, 2021, as he was doing a catechesis on St. Joseph. "With his silence, Joseph invites us to leave room for the Presence of the Word made flesh, for Jesus," the Pontiff said, explaining how the Gospels do not contain a single word uttered by Mary's husband. The Head of the Catholic Church acknowledges that silence makes many people "afraid," as it forces one to look within. However, he highlights that "to cultivate silence" is to "give the Spirit the opportunity to regenerate us, to console us, to correct us." In a recent speech on January 20, 2023, to diocesan liturgical leaders, Pope Francis also explained that silence during Mass is especially important. It "enables you to prepare for the mystery" of the Eucharist. And the Pope has a devotion to Our Lady of Silence.

7 Abstain from Narcissism, Victimhood, and Pessimism

In his Pentecost homily from 2020 Pope Francis identified "three main enemies" that prevent us from receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit filling our hearts: "narcissism, victimhood, and pessimism." "Narcissism makes us idolize ourselves, to be concerned only with what is good for us. Victims complain every day about their neighbor. Thinking that no one understands us and experiences what we experience. The pessimist gets angry with the world, but sits back and does nothing, thinking: 'What good is giving? That is useless,'" the Pope illustrated. The antidote to these enemies is praying. Asking the "Holy Spirit, memory of God, revive in us the memory of the gift received," the Pontiff said.

From Snehashramam on International Women's Day

8th March, marked annually as International Women's Day, is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2023 is, "Digit ALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality." The United Nations Observance of International Women's Day recognizes and celebrates the women and girls who are championing the advancement of transformative technology and digital education. International Women's Day 2023 will explore the impact of the digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities. The event will also spotlight the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in digital spaces and addressing online and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence.

Snehashramam

This theme is aligned with the priorities and objectives of Snehashramam, a Rehabilitation and Renewal center for female released prisoners and abandoned girls. It is a home away home for the homeless and unwanted girls and women who stray on the street without hope in life. It is a response to the need of the hour when young girls and women are thrown out of home and society; and sometimes unwanted by everyone and nowhere to go when released from prison cells after their period of imprisonment. Snehashramam attempts to give them a new experience in life in order to bring them back to society restoring their respect and dignity. It helps these unfortunate girls to



Sr Beena SdP

accept the various painful experiences of the past and look forward to a renewed life and build it up from where they had lost. As an institution standing for the upliftment of women, Snehashramam organized various internal and outreach programs for the abandoned and unwanted girls. Vocational training like art of stitching, art of making handicrafts, cloth clip assembling, gardening, animal husbandry and farming are organized for the inmates of Snehashramam. We encourage them to develop their music, dance, drawing and painting talents through proper practice and give them outdoor opportunities to exhibit them. Suitable partners for the inmates were found and were given in marriage and they lead a virtuous family life today.

Reintegration of Released Prisoners

Through these 31 years of service, we could accommodate and train 561 girls out of whom 50 got married. Even after their marriage and being sent to different places, they continue to keep contact with Snehashramam. On special occasions they are invited with family members to Snehashramam to continue ongoing formation. As an outreach program with the support of Prison Ministry India, financial help was given to buy an Auto to a housewife whose husband was under

psychiatric treatment. Tailoring machines were distributed among women to make them self-reliant. One of the inmates was trained in classical dance which later became the main source of livelihood for her family. A few inmates were trained in housekeeping and given employment to earn their livelihood. One of the basic needs of human beings is shelter. With the help of many generous contributors, Snehashramam could construct a house for an orphan girl who was also an inmate and given in marriage from the same institution. We could help the wife of a prisoner financially to construct a small house and organized an amount of money to repay the housing loan and to another to pay their rent.

Medical Assistance

Women have many unique health concerns. There are many health issues due to poverty, illiteracy etc. As a rehabilitation and renewal center, we also rendered possible medical help to those are in need of it. One of the prisoner's wives was helped financially to do her heart surgery and one of the diabetic patients was given a blood sugar monitoring gadget. A prisoner's wife and his three children who are partially blind are being helped for their medical treatment.

Educational Assistance

We also give educational help to all those children whose parents are either in prisons or extremely sick, with study materials and other required help. Their children are brought together once in a year to the Snehashramam for the summer camp. The girl children of prisoners, those who are fit for higher studies like nursing, degree course etc. are supported financially to

continue their studies. As per the need of the girl children of the prisoners especially at the time of their marriage we find sponsors to meet their wedding expenses. A major commitment we had to shoulder was the disaster management in the wake of the raging covid pandemic. The collective efforts of many sponsors helped us to distribute raw food kits to 150 mothers. It was also a time of trauma and a hopeless situation which necessitated the need of counselling among the women prisoners and the inmates and we could help them out to strengthen their mental and moral capacities.

31 Glorious Years of Service

Having been started in 1992 at Monvila, Snehashramam has crossed more than 31 Years of service. We do our best to help the inmates to have a deep experience of God's infinite love. We also visit the shelter homes and prisons, carrying the good news of love and care. Those girl inmates released from the shelter homes or prisons - if they have no home to go back - are accepted by the sisters of Snehashramam after having completed the legal formalities. Snehashramam stands for a noble cause bringing peace and joy, justice and love to those marginalized, particularly to women who are drawn into crime due to poverty and despair, forced to sell their very womanhood for survival, brutally molested in brothels and 'flesh trading centers'; or are despised and abandoned by society and by their own families; and those in any form of moral danger. Most of them are abandoned by their own parents and hated by society.

Devadasis: 21st Century Prisoners

"I was dedicated to the temple when I was 10 years old. I was too young to comprehend what was happening to me. I was dedicated because I was the only child of my parents", says Galimma, a devadasi. "I had no one to look after me, so, I was offered to the temple" says another devadasi named Sidhamma. "Initially, I never agreed to become a devadasi. I wanted to get married. There were four sons born before me. So, I was given off to the goddess. Also, my brother had to be cured of his disabilities. So, it was expected of me not to express my desires but to accept my fate. I came across many difficulties. I don't want to remember my past anymore as it pains me" says another devadasi. All these devadasis whose stories are portrayed are from Karnataka. This article presents the life stories, history and the painful journey of these women from the state of purity to becoming prostitutes in Karnataka.

Seventh Century

The Devadasi traditions' origin can be traced back to the seventh century in India, during the reign of the Cholas, Chelas and the Pandyas. They were women who lived in temples and were married to the gods. In the seventh century, the dedicated women were from high caste families, even from royalty. They held a very special place in Indian culture: were incredible dancers, poets, artisans. They had specific religious roles to play within the temple performing various sacred religious rites. The dedication took place in a ceremony that was somewhat



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

similar to a marriage ceremony. They were almost like nuns and they had nothing to do with prostitution. It was more like being a priestess.

21st Century

Coming to the 21st century, they became nothing more than prostitutes. Today, devadasis are young girls who are dedicated to a Hindu deity at a young age and support their families as sex workers. There's very little of religious link remaining now. A respected tradition of Karnataka has now become part of a prostitution racket. Devadasi system which was a religious practice whereby parents marry a daughter to a deity or a temple has turned in recent decades as the practice of pushing young girls into prostitution. Lives of these women turned from being Servant of God to prostitutes. In the seventh century, devadasis were granted a higher social rank, and today, many economically struggling families think that sacrificing their daughters will raise their social standing. In modern-day Devadasis are no longer considered auspicious, rather they are now the sex slaves and prostitutes of India. Physically impaired children mostly and girls from the lower section of society are likely to follow this norm. The question is why are they in this situation? The children are forced by their own parents to take up this profession as they see no other way for earning a better income. These children fall into this vicious trap of sexual exploitation in which they give away the right of their own body to

an unknown person for fulfilling their basic needs. Since these children and their families are from the underprivileged section of society, their means of living is through cleaning sewage, streets, etc. They see their child as an opportunity to better their life by pushing them into the pond of devadasis.

Devadasi System: Karnataka History

The Devadasi system is one according to which children are dedicated to the service of a Goddess. "Deva" means God and "Dasi" stands for a woman who is in willing servitude. Thus, etymologically, a Devadasi is a servant, a slave of God. The tradition of the Devadasis stems from the myth of Yellamma, a Goddess of south India, in whose shrine in Saundatti, thousands of children are dedicated each year. The Devadasi system is still prevalent in the districts of Belgaum, Bellary, Bijapur, and Gulburga in Karnataka. It is estimated that around 10,000 girls are dedicated each year, amongst whom 3,000 on the January-February full moon day.

21st Century Prisoners

These young women are ostracised and exploited and they're ashamed of what they do. They wish they could get married, but they can't and are in this dreadful prison. Many have contracted HIV for not having the means to protect themselves. Most get pregnant soon after they were raped by men who bought them for the first night. Some of the devadasis say, "I was dedicated to the goddess, but I didn't know this was what was expected." Their children are considered illegitimate for they were born out of wedlock. The young devadasi mother struggles to support her children on her own.

Sad Statistics

According to the survey conducted by the State Government in 2008 and the figures of Karnataka State Women Development Corporation, the number of Devadasis is about 40,600. But in 2018, a study conducted by a foreign NGO and Karnataka State Women's University found 90,000 devadasis in Karnataka, of which more than 20% devadasis from northern Karnataka are below 18 years of age. Although the practice was made illegal more than 20 years ago, there are still more than 23,000 women in the state of Karnataka selling their bodies in the name of the mysterious Hindu Goddess Yellamma. Official statistics indicate that 45,000 children in Karnataka are born to Devdasi women. There have been reports of intimidation, coercion, and application denials by the authorities due to the father's name.

Conclusion

Devadasi system has become a social evil and it must be stopped. As children, they are offered to the temple! Now, it is not only these children and women who suffer, but the children who are born to them too suffer? Are we not responsible for this evil? Children who are picked up from poor socio-economic background, need to be educated and empowered. Children of Devadasis undergo discrimination, drop out of school early, face violence and abuse. Even the children who do not take the path of sex work still face society's stigma of being a prostitute's child' which holds them back from maximizing their potential. Every child born on this earth must be brought up with dreams. Let us not kill their future.

St Joan of Arc - An Embodiment of Women Empowerment

The Present Context

In the Karnataka Budget 2023, CM Basavaraj Bommai has announced a sum of Rs 46,278 crores being allocated for women empowerment. The Budget also has under its belt Rs 350 crore allocated for issuing of free bus passes to female students and a subsidy of Rs.500 to be given for women workers. Free passes are set to benefit around 30 lakh women. It's a good thing that so much of money has been allocated for women empowerment. However, it should be noted that it is a clear sign that we are in need of women empowerment in our present times. Women empowerment is defined by world vision as: "Promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. It is closely aligned with female empowerment – a fundamental human right that's also the key to achieving a more peaceful and prosperous world. Though 2023 years have passed, still women empowerment remains as much needed especially in the rural sector.

Women's Role in Society

In world history, women have been subjected to a patriarchal society and they have been subjugated to obey the writs given by the norms of society, whether it be in Asia, in Europe, in America, in Africa or on any other continent. Sadly, India had the practice of Sati in its history. It meant that the wife was compelled to end her life after her husband died. This system had



Br Pradeep Anthony L OFM

been practiced in India till the 19th century until the British government banned it by the law promulgated by Lord Bentick in 1829 during his term as Governor General. However, there is a strong fixated mindset in society that women are subject to men in most fields, be it in sports, or in work, or in education, and particularly in politics, in the cinema world and so on.

St Joan of Arc - An Embodiment of Women Empowerment

St Joan of Arc was born in 1412, at France, in Domremy-La-Pucelle. She was a peasant girl who believed that she was acting under divine guidance. She felt being led by the voices of St Michael, St Catherine of Alexandria and St Margaret of Antioch. She had a remarkable mental and physical strength and robust common sense, which were the traits of a good female visionary. She believed herself to be having a deeper personal contact with God for a mission which made her less attentive to the hierarchy and priesthood of that time. It is here that we see her being autonomous in choosing her own life, acting freely and taking full responsibility for her life. Surprisingly, though she was the commander in battle she never killed anybody, thus standing as a role model for women. Indeed, she stands as a real embodiment for women empowerment even to the present era, as her 19 years of life impacted the world in so many ways: she made a holistic impact on the society in which she lived, politically,

socially and spiritually, and her life has ever been remembered and lessons taken from it. It's still astounding to recall how she gained the confidence of so many during those patriarchal times. Perhaps she believed in herself. She had faith in a loving God, who doesn't discriminate between people based on gender. She seems to have understood the concept of women empowerment before it came to the platform of World Vision. She understood that Christ made his mother to be assumed into heaven, and also crowned her Queen. Perhaps she understood that God's mind is not patriarchal and doesn't discriminate between people based on race, caste, gender, language, rich, poor, and so on. It was she who led the French army in a momentous victory at Orleans that repulsed an English attempt to conquer France during the Hundred Years' War. After a year she was captured and declared as a heretic, by the English.

Burned to Death

Her autonomy didn't direct her to individualism but rather to freedom. She acted as the daughter of the Church, though she was accused of 70 charges, among which only 12 ambiguous charges were not cleared, and therefore, was told to submit her answers to the Church. But the inquisitors, who didn't pay any heed to her plea, kept on heaping her with irrelevant charges. She continuously maintained that she was willing to do anything for the love of the Church. Though, she was burnt alive she kept hope in the voices that spoke to her, and believed that Christ would deliver her. A Dominican Priest was not only a consoler to her but also a witness to her death. Her own words before her death are a strong proof of her faith and hope. She had said constantly: "I am relying on our Lord." On May 30, 1431, she was put to death by

being burnt alive at the stake for the false and alleged crime of heresy. But she was deemed to be a national Heroine, as she was instrumental in uplifting the French national consciousness. Since 1431, Joan of Arc laid the foundation stones for the ideologies of the French revolution, namely: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Joan of Arc was canonized on May 16 in the year 1920, by Pope Benedict XV. The second Sunday of May is celebrated in France as the national day in her honour.

Women's Day Celebration, Indore

Fr Shinoj Joseph SVD

Janvikas Society Indore celebrated International Women's Day with the theme "Digital Innovation and technology for Gender Equality" on 4th March 2023 in Ashram Campus, Palda Indore. There were 400 women from different slums of Indore participated in the celebration and the women gave a beautiful and colourful program. The chief guest on the occasion was Prof. Rekha Acharya, from DAVV Indore, the guests of honour were Mrs. Pallavi Porwal, Director CWC Indore, Mr. Dharmendra Pandya from CWC Indore, Mrs. Sapna Sharma, Parshad Ward - 64, Fr. Sanjay Kujur SVD. The Chief guest Prof. Rekha Acharya spoke on how we need to help women to empower with digital technology for the good of the Society. Fr. Sanjay also spoke how Janvikas is helping the women to empower the society to have a just society. The guests spoke on the contribution of Janvikas towards the empowerment of women, children and youth in developing nation with Justice and Peace.

Joyful Moments in Dongri

Mrs Lili Vaz

Dongri Observation Home is a shelter in Mumbai,
Where children in conflict with the law have to reside.
Far from their families they are full of despair,
Longing for a bit of tender loving care.
Sad and forgotten, alone and dejected.
Isolated from loved ones by society rejected.
For these lonely children Prison Ministry is a saviour,
Our volunteers comfort them and wipe many a tear.
In their pain and suffering we want them to know,
We empathise with them, a new person we want them to grow.
We help them to regain their lost identity,
Through loving guidance we give them a sense of dignity.
All through the week we visit Dongri,
We go there in groups of two or three.
We don't mind the journey in a packed local train,
Nor the blistering hot weather or the pouring rain.
Just to see their smiles, hear their welcoming voice,
That warm tight hug, oh it feels so nice.
“What are we doing today?” they are eager to know,
Forming a close circle we all squat on the floor.
We begin our session with prayer and meditation,
Then art and craft or cooking or value education.
Maths and computers and beauty course too,
And counselling for some to begin their life anew.
It gives me great pleasure and tremendous joy,
That a mother I can be to that lonely girl or boy.
So be a ‘Love Bomb’ - let it explode - not to kill,
To heal the broken hearted - hearts bitter and ill.
We are on a pilgrimage its Jesus I see,
“What you do to the least you do it to me.”
I thank my God for this golden opportunity,
To serve the lost, the least and the last through Prison Ministry.

TRAITS OF PMI WARRIORS

Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

Introduction

A warrior is a very brave, skilled, fearless and experienced combatant like Benaiah one of David's mighty men who killed a lion in a pit on a snowy day (2 Sam 23,23) or Spartacus, the Thracian gladiator (111-071 BC), or the legendary female warrior and a Roman Catholic Saint Joan of Arc (1412-1431) who approached King Charles VII of France and offered him assistance in his efforts to expel the occupying English in the later days of the Hundred Years' War. Every Christian is a warrior. Every Catholic priest, every consecrated religious is a super dynamic warrior. Prison Ministry India (PMI) volunteers are called to be the most super dynamic warriors like Jesus the greatest warrior who accomplished his entrusted task surrendering himself to be crucified on the cross. PMI volunteers are called to be warriors, heroes and heroines to release, reform, rehabilitate, reintegrate and redeem prisoners. This article focuses on the ten salient features of PMI warriors that they may make use of in their adventurous ministries for the lost.

Know Your Commander in Chief

Jesus the righteous, the holy, the true, and the mighty warrior is the commander-in-chief of PMI warriors. St John in his Revelations insightfully illustrates the features of Jesus, the Holy warrior: He rides on a white horse; with justice He judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword

with which to strike down the nations. On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev 19, 11-16).

Know Your Enemy

Our enemy always is Satan and his different manifestations. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. He is a liar and the father of lies (Jn 8,44). St Paul illustrates it better in his letter to the Ephesians: “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph 6, 12).

Know Your Target

The target group of PMI is clear – the lost such as prisoners, prostitutes, human trafficked, drug addicts, beggars, alcoholics and so on. Jesus' purpose on earth was to inaugurate a system of redemption for Adam's fallen family. “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (Jn 3,17). “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Mk 2,17).

Know Your Armor

Prayer and fasting are the most powerful weapons of PMI warriors. St Paul elucidates excellently well the spiritual armor in his letter to the Ephesians: Take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having

put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints (Eph 6, 13-17).

Know Your Task

Jesus' entrusted task was to redeem humanity from the clutches of sin and death. He accomplished this task by obeying unto the cross, through his passion, death and resurrection. PMI warriors shall remain steadfast in their faith and imitate the humility of Christ, who "emptied himself" and the obedience of Christ who "became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2,7-8). As a warrior for Christ, we train ourselves daily under the direction of the Holy Commander, and become ready to immolate ourselves.

Know Your Style

Like Jesus and his Apostles who were led by the Spirit, PMI warriors are called to be led by the Holy Spirit. To be led by the spirit means to have high spiritual intelligence. To grow in spiritual intelligence, we need to take care of our daily spiritual exercises, especially the Eucharistic celebration, Eucharistic contemplation, Eucharistic adoration and relentless prayer (Eph 6,18).

Know Your Battleground

As battlegrounds are often very tough terrains such as deserts, Rocky Mountains, snowy peaks, marshy valleys, and violent ocean, PMI warriors are called to heal the

hardcore criminals in different notorious prisons. Hence their maxim itself is maximum inconvenience. Inconvenience is PMI's convenience.

Know Your Battalion

One of the Spartan army tactics was to fight shoulder to shoulder or back-to-back. Fighting alongside is better than fighting alone. PMI is a prayer group under the patronage of CBCI and we do our ministry representing the Church keeping her norms and teachings. We make sure that the whole Church intercedes for us when we fight.

Know Your Mantra

"Thank You Jesus" is the mantra of PMI warriors. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4,12).

Know Your Bank

Bank of Divine Providence - BDP is the bank of PMI. Complete trust in the Lord is the PMI style. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Mt 7,7). PMI follows the style of St Peter, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Conclusion

The ten traits of PMI warriors are 1) know your commander in chief, 2) know your enemy, 3) know your target, 4) know your armor, 5) know your task, 6) know your style, 7) know your battleground, 8) know your battalion, 9) know your mantra, 10) and know your bank. PMI warriors shall aspire to possess these traits and shall make use of them in their day-to-day adventurous ministries for the lost, the least and the last.

Ever Remembered Obedient Father: St Joseph

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Millions of wealthy, educated and powerful families in history have come and gone but they've been forgotten. However, there is one carpenter, one Holy family is ever remembered and we call him St Joseph and the family of Jesus. Before getting married to Mother Mary, Joseph was a simple carpenter. After his marriage to Mary and becoming foster father of Jesus the Redeemer, he continued to be a carpenter. His profession was not even admirable in the eyes of others. "Isn't this the son of Joseph, the Carpenter?" (Luke 4:22). St Joseph, a noble and humble man, a gentle and respectful husband, a caring and protective father, is a great example for every family who wants to become rich in the eyes of God, rather than in the eyes of the world. St Joseph, whose feast we celebrate on 19 March, the husband of Mary and earthly father of Jesus, is often referred to as the father in the shadows. This article portrays on the feast of St Joseph and the teachings of the Catholic Church about this humble carpenter, a foster father, a faithful husband and a great saint.

St Joseph day: A Solemnity during Lent

The Church celebrates two feast days for Saint Joseph: 19 March for Joseph the Husband of Mary and 1 May for Joseph the Worker. The Catholic Church under Pope Pius IX declared Joseph to be the patron and protector of the Catholic Church. Saint Joseph's Day, also called the Feast of Saint Joseph or the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, is in Western Christianity the principal feast day of Saint Joseph, husband of the Virgin Mary and legal father of Jesus Christ,

celebrated on 19 March. It has the rank of a solemnity in the Catholic Church.

Quemadmodum Deus: The Decree of Pope Pius IX

On 8 December 1870, The Sacred Congregation of Rites promulgated the decree, Quemadmodum Deus, which communicated the decision of Pope Pius IX declaring St Joseph Patron of the Universal Church, and raising his feast of March 19 to the rank of double of the first class. Pope Pius IX says on St Joseph, "Him whom countless kings and prophets had desired to see, Joseph not only saw but conversed with, and embraced in paternal affection, and kissed. He most diligently reared Him whom the faithful were to receive as the bread that came down from heaven whereby, they might obtain eternal life. Because of this sublime dignity which God conferred on his most faithful servant, the Church has always most highly honoured and praised blessed Joseph next to his spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in times of trouble".

Quamquam Pluries: The Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XIII

Quamquam Pluries is an encyclical on Saint Joseph by Pope Leo XIII. It was issued on August 15, 1889 in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome and it says, "Joseph shines among all mankind by the most august dignity, since by divine will, he was the guardian of the Son of God and reputed as His father among men. Hence it came about that the Word of God was humbly subject to Joseph, that He

obeyed him, and that He rendered to him all those offices that children are bound to render to their parents. Joseph became the guardian, the administrator, and the legal defender of the divine house whose chief he was. And during the whole course of his life he fulfilled those charges and those duties.” Leo XIII presented St. Joseph as a model at a time when the world and the Church were wrestling with challenges posed by modernity.

Bonum Sane: The Motu Proprio of Pope Benedict XV

Bonum Sane (St Joseph against Socialism) was a motu proprio on Saint Joseph written by Pope Benedict XV and delivered on July 25, 1920. “We, full of trust in the patronage of him, to whose providential vigilance, God was pleased to entrust the custody of his Only Begotten Incarnate and of the Virgin Mother of God, strongly exhort all the Bishops of the Catholic world so that, in such stormy times for Christianity, lead the faithful to implore with greater commitment the valid help of St. Joseph”.



Le Voci che da Tutti

On March 19, 1961, Pope John XXIII, gave, what was at the time, the longest papal document ever written on Saint Joseph, For the protection of St Joseph on the Second Vatican Council. This apostolic epistle had as its primary purpose the naming of St. Joseph as Patron of the Second Vatican Council. After outlining at length, the history of devotion to St Joseph especially since Pius IX, and after proclaiming Joseph’s patronage over the Council, the Pope encourages prayer to him.

Redemptoris Custos

Redemptoris Custos is the title of an apostolic exhortation by Pope John Paul II on Saint Joseph. It was delivered on 15 August 1989 in Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome on the occasion of the centenary of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical Quamquam pluries. The apostolic exhortation says, “Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took his wife (Mt 1:24). Inspired by the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church from the earliest centuries stressed that just as St Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ’s upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ’s Mystical Body, that is, the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model. God entrusted his most precious treasures into the custody of St Joseph”. Pope John Paul II continues, “I gladly fulfill this pastoral duty so that all may grow in devotion to the Patron of the Universal Church and in love for the Saviour whom he served in such an exemplary manner”.

Paternas Vices

On May 1, 2013, the Memorial of St Joseph the Worker, Pope Francis issued his first decree on liturgical matters, entitled Paternas vices. In this important document, he decrees that the name of St Joseph should be inserted into Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV, effective immediately, as they appear in the third typical edition of the Roman Missal, after the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as follows: in Eucharistic Prayer II: “as with the blessed Mother of God the Virgin Mary, blessed Joseph, his Spouse, blessed Apostles”; in Eucharistic Prayer III: “with the blessed Virgin, Mother of God, Mary, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with the blessed Apostles”; and in Eucharistic Prayer IV: “with the blessed Virgin, Mother of God, Mary, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with the Apostles.” “Exercising his paternal care over Jesus, Saint Joseph of Nazareth, set over the Lord’s family, marvellously fulfilled the office he received by grace”, says Pope Francis on St Joseph.

Patris Corde

Patris Corde, (With a Father’s Heart) is an apostolic letter from Pope Francis on the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, and Pope Francis proclaimed a Year of Saint Joseph from December 8, 2020, to December 8, 2021 with the promulgation of this apostolic letter. In his apostolic letter Patris Corde (“With a Father’s Heart”), Pope Francis reflects on Saint Joseph and his multifaceted role as a father. The purpose of this letter, Pope Francis writes, “is to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal. Saint Joseph is a beloved father; a tender, loving

father; an obedient father; an accepting father; a creatively courageous father; a working father; and a father in the shadows. As protector, advocate, and guardian of the Holy Family, Saint Joseph has always been venerated as a father to all Christians”.

Sleeping St Joseph and Pope Francis

The Sleeping St Joseph statue has such a deep and important meaning for Pope Francis. When in 1953 he was only 17 years old he received the Lord’s Call, Jorge Mario Bergoglio entered the church of San José in Buenos Aires, where he became Archbishop later. His devotion towards the foster father of Jesus has been remarked on 19 March 2013, only six days after his election as Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the Universal Church. While inaugurating his Pontificate, he strongly focused his sermon on the role of guardian of St Joseph. Many times Pope Francis told about his habit of putting underneath the Sleeping St Joseph statue some little notes with requests for grace and prayers of the faithful, trying to invite the Saint to sleep on it and put it a good word with God. The Pontiff himself declared in 2015 he particularly loves Saint Joseph, as he is such a strong and silent man, the man of the dreams that protects and helps everyone even in his sleep. St Joseph is the patron saint of the Universal Church, families, fathers, expectant mothers, travellers, immigrants, house sellers and buyers, craftsmen, engineers and working people. Be with me today as I offer my requests to the Father. St Joseph, let me recognize God’s will as I open my hands to accept what God bestows in loving kindness. With tenderness, God fills creation with life and love. Open my eyes to the wonders that God works without ceasing. Amen.

WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION AT CENTRAL JAIL, BHOPAL

Sr Shirley Kidangan OSB

To mark the importance of International Women's Day, M.P. State designed different programs in Central Jail, Bhopal. This year 2023 the colour theme for women's day is purple, green and white which signify justice, hope, purity and dignity. In spite of all these endeavors women are denied justice, equality, and dignity in every sphere of life. Yet they become an inevitable component of the whole universe. It is our endeavor to show love and solidarity towards the women behind the bars and to recognize and acknowledge them on this auspicious day. We honored all the women in the Central jail with rose flowers. At this juncture we acknowledged the great achievements the women have to their credit in their life, considering the amount of sacrifices a woman takes up on her shoulders and above all her patience and tolerance towards various issues that crop up on her way through life.

We also conducted various competitions and distributed prizes for the winners. All were quite elated with a sense of satisfaction and rays of happiness shone on their faces. It was indeed a great day for the women who learned the skill of tailoring as we distributed certificates for the participants. We provided a file with its models to the Central Jail and each participant too prepared a file for themselves. Dr Jaya Peter, a scientist and the principal of an eminent college was the chief guest. To show our love and appreciation for the women we served refreshments for every one present there. From their part too they came up with a group dance, drama and some other programs. The children from the special school Shalom presented cultural fest for the women. All were delighted by their mesmerizing performance. There were around 270 people who took part in this important event.



JUSTICE DELAYED IS JUSTICE DENIED THE PLIGHT OF UNDERTRIAL PRISONERS¹

Madhurima Dhanuka

"He does not stay in jail because he is guilty, he does not stay in jail because any sentence has been passed, he does not stay in jail because he is any more likely to flee before trial, he stays in jail for one reason only – because he is poor". Under-trial prisoners constitute a significant majority of the prison population (65.7%). All the 2,45,244 persons who are within prisons as under-trials are deemed to be innocent in the eyes of the law. How can a system that calls itself just and fair, justify depriving 2,45,244 "innocent" people of their liberty? "The consequences of pre-trial detention are grave. Defendants presumed innocent are subjected to the psychological and physical deprivations of jail life, usually under more onerous conditions than are imposed on convicted defendants. The jailed defendant loses his job if he has one and is prevented from contributing to the preparation of his defence. Equally important, the burden of his detention frequently falls heavily on the innocent members of his family."

An effective criminal justice system inevitably needs to ensure that accused stands trial for the crimes they are alleged to have committed. Therein lie the historical roots of incarcerating people accused of committing crimes. Depending on the gravity of the offence, the police are empowered to keep a person in their custody for 24 hours, after which any further detention must be authorized by

the judiciary. Save a few exceptions, all are entitled to be released on bail. The Code of Criminal Procedure 1973 (Cr.P.C.) does not define the term "bail" although offences are classified as bailable and non-bailable. The former are less serious offences and any person accused of committing these is entitled to be released on bail as soon as s/he is willing to furnish bail. When accused of committing non-bailable offences, a person can only be released on bail by the court if it is satisfied that the person shall attend the court to stand trial; will not tamper with evidence or influence witnesses or obstruct police investigation in any manner; will not commit any other offence or hinder the interest of justice. Despite sounding fair, the bail provisions and their implementation is highly discriminatory.

As far back as 1971, the Legal Aid Committee appointed by the Government of Gujarat noted: The bail system causes discrimination against the poor since the poor would not be able to furnish bail on account of their poverty while the wealthier persons otherwise similarly situated would be able to secure their freedom because they can afford to furnish bail. This discrimination arises even if the amount of the bail fixed by the Magistrate is not high, for a large majority of those who are brought before the Courts in criminal cases are so poor that they would find it difficult to furnish bail even in a small amount. The evil of the

1. Courtesy to Supreme Court Cases (2 SCC 2010, 25-32).

bail system is that either the poor accused has to fall back on touts and professional sureties for providing bail or suffer pre-trial detention. Both these consequences are fraught with great hardship to the poor. In one case the poor accused is fleeced of his moneys by touts and professional sureties and sometimes has even to incur debts to make payment to them for securing his release; in the other he is deprived of his liberty without trial and conviction and this leads to grave consequences.

The Supreme Court has held that the unwarranted “cruelty and expensive custody” inherent in the case of “avoidable incarceration makes refusal of bail unreasonable and a policy favouring release justly sensible”. Following on from the Supreme Court, this paper argues that in a huge number of cases, pre-trial detention is avoidable and unnecessary. Indiscriminate arrests by police, ignorance of legal rights, delay in trial, reluctance of the courts to grant bail, inability to provide

surety, are some reasons that have led to the unnecessary detention of large number of under-trial people. The Supreme Court has recognised this for years and has been devising ways and formulae to secure the release of under-trial prisoners on bail. The union government has also realized the gravity of the situation and amended the Cr.P.C. to incorporate liberal provisions of bail. Arguing that the non-implementation of the existing legal provisions is a major reason for the large undertrial population lodged in prisons, this paper explores the legal dispensation of bail under the Cr.P.C. It further urges the prison authorities and the prison visitors to pay attention to as well as play a positive role in ameliorating the plight of under-trial prisoners.

Undertrial detention is India’s most ignored problem. Around 2.8 lakh Indians are being held in prison during their trials or awaiting trial, without having been convicted of a crime. Many have been awaiting trial for

years, some for a longer period than their maximum formal sentence. These prisoners who are known as ‘undertrials’ account for two out of three prisoners in India’s prisons – a percentage far higher than other democracies around the world. India has the third highest undertrial population in Asia. Bail not Jail shall be our maxim.

Background

Under India’s Constitution, prison management is the responsibility of state governments. To assess the effectiveness of various legal safeguards to prevent excessive undertrial detention, between 2014 and 2016, Amnesty International India filed nearly 3000 Right to Information applications to every district and central prison in the country and to various state government departments. The applications sought information broadly under four categories: (a) the implementation of section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC); (b) the rate of production of undertrials in court for their hearings; (c) the adequacy of legal aid provided; (d) adherence to guidelines on undertrial detention issued by the Union Home Ministry in 2005. In addition, researchers interviewed undertrial prisoners at the Bengaluru Central Prison, legal aid lawyers, public prosecutors, academics, and civil society organizations.

Amnesty International India Makes the Following Recommendations:

To the National Legal Services Authority

Standardize the remuneration paid to legal aid lawyers across India, and ensure that lawyers are paid competitive salaries in a timely manner.

To the Union Ministry of Law and Justice:

Set up a computerized database and tracking system for prisoners in all prisons, which will regularly alert prison authorities on undertrials eligible for release which will be maintained and updated at the state-level.

To State Legal Services Authorities:

Appoint more legal aid lawyers according to the needs of the state. Strengthen the monitoring of legal aid lawyers’ effectiveness to ensure accountability and quality representation. Ensure that legal aid lawyers at the state, district and taluk levels are required to submit regular reports on the status of their cases, and hold lawyers failing to do so accountable. Ensure that legal aid lawyers are paid on a monthly basis. Undertake regular awareness programs in prisons to ensure that all undertrials are informed about their legal rights, including access to legal aid, procedural safeguards and bail.



To State Police Departments

Collaborate with state legal services authorities to ensure that legal aid is provided at the time of arrest. Create a separate reserve of police personnel dedicated to providing escorts for undertrials to be taken to court. Ensure that alternatives to undertrial detention are used as early as possible, and that undertrial detention is used only as a last resort, and shall not last any longer than necessary.

To State Governments

Monitor the implementation of the Home Ministry guidelines, and hold accountable officials who fail to meet their obligations. Ensure that district and central prisons maintain updated lists of undertrials and the details of the cases against them, which are sent to district prosecution officers, the Prisons Department, the Undertrial Review Committee and the relevant legal services authority, and made available to all non-official visitors. Undertrial Prisoners mean the persons retained inside the prison (judicial custody) when the charges against him are being tried in the competent courts. In several cases, the time spent in jail, while a trial is on; may be more than the sentence finally given. This is an unacceptable violation of fundamental rights. In many countries there are separate institutions for undertrial prisoners. Delay in trial of cases is the main human rights issue for undertrial prisoners. The purpose of keeping undertrial prisoners in the custody is to ensure fair trial so that they cannot be in a position to influence or induce the witnesses.

Many poor people are detained in prisons for alleged involvement in bailable offences primarily because they are unable to furnish

surety. This is a serious concern because in such cases bail is a matter of right and people end up spending long periods in jail merely because they are poor. Many prisoners suffer in prisons because the police do not finish investigation, and file the chargesheet in time. This is a very serious matter because such people remain in prisons without any inkling of a police case against them. It is very common in the criminal justice administration of Bangladesh that undertrial prisoners are confined under judicial custody for a long time and after the trial they are declared innocent. This is a major human rights violation and especially poor persons are such victims. In many cases influential and rich people go for compensation but the poor remain silent as they are not in a position to engage lawyer and pay court fee for this purpose. Another concern is that the undertrial prisoners in Bangladesh are kept in the same jail where the convicted prisoners are kept. Hence, it is very important that separate accommodations provided to the undertrials. It should be promoted that no convicted prisoner shall be kept in the same area in which undertrial prisoners are kept, or be allowed to have contact with undertrial prisoners. No convicted prisoner shall be allowed to enter the undertrial yard or block.

Universal Declaration on Human Rights under Article 9 states that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, states that everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one should be deprived of his liberty save in the cases of lawful arrest and detention, which is to be done in accordance with a procedure prescribed by law.

7TH WORLD CONGRESS ON DEATH PENALTY

POPE FRANCIS

I greet the organizers and participants in the 7th World Congress Against the Death Penalty, being held in Brussels. Human life is a gift we have received, the most important and primary gift, the source of all the other gifts and of all the other rights. And, as such, it needs to be protected. Moreover, for a believer, the human being has been created in the image and likeness of God. However, both for believers and non-believers, each life is good and its dignity must be protected without exceptions. Hence, capital punishment implies a grave violation of the right to life that every person has. Although it's true that human societies and communities must often face very grave crimes, which attempt against the common good and the security of people, it's no less true that today there are other means to expiate the harm caused, and the systems of detention are increasingly effective to protect society from the evil that some persons can occasion. On the other hand, the conviction must never be abandoned of also offering the guilty one of crimes the possibility to repent. For this very reason, it is a positive sign that there are increasingly more countries that wager for life and that no longer use the death penalty, or have eliminated it completely from their criminal legislation.

The Church has always defended life, and her vision on the death penalty has matured. Therefore, I desired that the Catechism of the Catholic Church be modified on this point. For a long time, the death penalty was taken into account as an appropriate response to the gravity of some crimes and

also to protect the common good. However, the dignity of a person is not lost even when he/she has committed the worst of crimes. The life of no one can be taken away and deprive him/her of the opportunity to be able to embrace the community again that he/she wounded and made suffer.

The objective of the abolition of the death penalty at the world level is a courageous affirmation of the principle of the dignity of the human person and of the conviction that the human race can address the crime, and also reject the evil, offering the condemned the possibility and the time to repair the damage committed, to think about his/her action and thus be able to change his/her life, at least interiorly.

I accompany you with my prayer and I encourage you in your works and deliberations, as well as the governments and all those that have responsibilities in their countries so that the necessary steps are taken towards the total abolition of the death penalty. It's up to us to recognize in each person his/her dignity and to work so that no more lives are eliminated, but that they are won for the good of the whole society. Thank you very much.



"Families are Part of the Solution for our Prisons, but their Voices aren't Being Heard"¹

Andy Keen-Downs

In a new report "Nobody's Listening", Pact demonstrates that listening to prisoners' families can make a life-or-death difference. I've been in a lot of prisons over the last 18 years. High security prisons holding people on long sentences, women's prisons, overcrowded Victorian prisons holding men on remand who are awaiting trial, resettlement prisons and "open" prisons, which release people back into the community. When I look at a map of England, my mind no longer turns to the local landmarks, but to the nearest jail. It's a strange life, being the chief executive of Pact, but I wouldn't swap it for any other job in the world.

We're the national Catholic charity for people affected by prison. That means women and men in prison, people leaving prison, and equally importantly, their children, mums, dads, partners, and families and friends. Being a Catholic charity means we are all about relationships, community, belonging, and hope. Hope of being redeemed, of living the kind of lives God wants for us. But what does any of that mean for the woman who has been sent to prison because she has committed a crime as a result of mental illness? What does it mean for her children? Or for the man in prison whose physical and mental health is deteriorating to the point that his life is at risk?

Talk of "redemption" can seem remote and fanciful when people are struggling with the basics of staying alive, separated from everyone they know and love by prison walls, gates and bars. From our beginning

in 1898, Pact has responded to the needs of prisoners and their children and families. I acted as an advisor to Lord (Michael) Farmer. His seminal reports in 2017/19 identified what we at Pact knew in a more visceral way, that when prisoners' positive family relationships are nurtured and maintained, the risk of committing more crime on release is reduced by 39 per cent.

The Farmer reports, which were welcomed by Government, also highlighted how the support of family ties reduces the risks of violence, and of self-harm, in prison. Today rates of self-harm are at record levels. We know of course that not every prisoner has healthy relationships with family. We know that some prisoners need to escape family backgrounds which have been abusive and harmful. But we also know that where there is a loving family, however imperfect, it offers prisoners, and the people who work with them, the hope of a fresh start. And fresh starts for people leaving prison means safer streets, safer communities, fewer victims. Importantly, our new report demonstrates that listening to prisoners' families can make a life-or-death difference to people in prison.

Pope Francis has called us as a Church to be "synodal", to listen in particular to those on the margins. A year ago, I was in the chapel at HMP Wormwood Scrubs with our president, Cardinal Nichols, who was sitting with a group of men to hear "whatever they wanted to say to him". Contact with their families was one of the main concerns the

men brought up, together with anxieties about whether they would be accepted and welcomed by a parish after release. They didn't complain about the state of their prison cells, the food, or being locked up for hours every day. They didn't claim that they were innocent. They wanted the cardinal, and the Church, to know that the two most important things for them were their families, and being able to belong somewhere when they were released.

There is a sad irony in the title of our new report: "Nobody's Listening". We spoke with family members whose loved one had been in prison and who had serious health concerns. We asked them about their experience of prison healthcare services. Some good accounts were given: a fantastic mental health nurse supported someone to keep taking medication and finally get their condition under control while they were inside. But there were too many hard to hear accounts like this one: "I just feel like my voice hasn't been heard...I just wanted to look after him. I am his mum." Another family member said the same thing. They just wanted to keep their loved one alive, having cared for them before prison, and knowing that they will be the one to care for them after release. The statistics show that at least half of prisoners have mental health problems. Prisoners' life expectancy is on average 20 years less than the general population – indeed prisoners have the poorest health of any group in society.

Last year, at Pact we heard from over 4,000 people who wanted to tell us how worried they were about their family member's health or mental health in prison. They wanted to talk to prison healthcare teams to explain, to share information about medication,

symptoms, treatments and what works. They know what "well" looks like and many had picked up on the signs that someone is struggling, perhaps from a phone call or a prison visit, or because the person isn't communicating with them. But all too often, there was no channel of communication. Prison walls, and all the natural concerns of professionals about prison security, GDPR, and patient confidentiality, means that no one was prepared to take their call. Some families spoke of prison staff seeing them as the problem, and feeling as if they were being viewed as criminals, or troublemakers. Others simply said that no one would speak to them or listen.

Prison is prison, you might say. But what prisoners' families articulate is that they want to help – to keep their loved one in prison alive and well – and to ensure that when they leave prison, they don't go back. "A prison sentence should not be a death sentence," one person said to me. "People recover better when their family are involved," said one family member. "If you cut that off then you are just creating a revolving door because you are not going to find the right solution." The title of the report "Nobody's Listening" came from one of the families who had spent years trying to persuade HM Prison Service that their son's offending was due to schizophrenia. Eventually this was diagnosed, and after a spell in a secure mental health unit, with the right medication, her son's condition stabilised. Today, he pays his taxes, has a flat, and is living a good life. So we published the report. We facilitated families "speaking truth to power". We brought together senior officials from the Ministry of Justice, NHS, and other organisations, to hear directly from families and to respond to the report. The thing is,

they are listening, and we will all continue to work with them to find solutions. As one senior healthcare leader said to me: “We need to see families as part of the solution rather than an inconvenience.”

Just because someone has committed a crime doesn’t mean that they are beyond the love of a family or the care of communities in wider society. As Christians, we recognise the truth of this wisdom at a deeper level. In Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis says “No one can face life in isolation....We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead....how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbours, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good”. In the light of Pact’s new report and the expertise of the family members who drove it, I might respectfully paraphrase Pope Francis and say succinctly: “No one can face a life in which Nobody’s Listening.” So, if simply being moved is insufficient, what is an appropriate response for the Church?

Bishop Richard Moth, the lead on prisons for the bishops’ conference of England and Wales, has given Pact his full backing. He calls for fresh thinking in prison healthcare and a greater openness to engaging with family members. “The findings reaffirm a Christian understanding of our connectedness as human beings and especially of the importance of family relationships. It is to be hoped that the report’s recommendations are recognised and inspire real change in a system which so often leaves families feeling unheard and isolated.” Pact works in 62

prisons. We are in 60 per cent of the public sector prisons across England & Wales so we are probably somewhere near you. Our work depends on the goodwill and financial support of HM Prison and Probation Service. It also relies on volunteers, whom we train and support, to provide simple care and guidance to families. It relies too on Catholic parishes and local communities, who share our belief in the innate dignity of every person, including those in prison. We are building a national network of parish link volunteers, people who can help us raise awareness, build safe links between parishes and prisons, and build connections. We hope this work we do will speak to readers of The Tablet. As one family member who contributed to the report said: “I pray that changes are made to our justice system. No one will ever know how hard this journey is.” By walking alongside people on their difficult journeys, we can offer light and hope.

International Women’s Day and Holi Celebration Jharsuguda Sub-Jail

Sr Mercyan SU

Mrs Pratibha Behera, Sub-divisional Social Security Officer and Mrs Goretti Dum Dum addressed the women gathering. FCC Candidates put up a beautiful dance. PMI members arranged a wonderful entertainment program for the women prisoners. Each person was given gifts for daily use and fruits. Sisters were present from different congregations, along with few parishioners. We thank each one of you for your presence and generous contribution.



PMI Awareness Program against Alcohol and Drugs at Chittur Prison.



PMI Counselling Course, Kerala.



Tree Planting in Puzhal Prison.



PMI Karnataka Executive Body Meeting, Shimoga.



**Women's Day Celebration at
Special Women's Prison, Madurai**



**Cloth Collection for Prisoners,
Jharsuguda.**



**Women's Day Celebration,
Central Prison, Bangalore.**



**Women's Day Celebration,
Hindalga Jail, Belgaum.**



**Holi Celebration,
Jharsuguda Prison.**



PMI MP Unit.



**Women's Day Celebration, Nari
Bandi Nikethan, Sambalpur.**



**PMI Volunteers Visiting
Tanjore Prison.**



**PMI Volunteers Visiting
Trivandrum District Jail.**



**PMI Volunteers Visiting
Kumbakonam Prison.**



**Women's Day Celebration,
Sundargarh Jail.**



**Women's Day Celebration,
Vishakhapatnam Prison.**



**Women's Day Celebration,
Bhopal Central Prison.**



**Women's Day celebration,
Bilaspur Prison.**



**Women's Day Celebration,
Sagar Central jail.**



PMI Cultural Program at Muttom Jail.



Prisoner's Repatriation to Bangladesh.



Simimol's House under Construction with PMI's Assistance.



St Vincent De Paul Society, Ascension Church, Bangalore Visiting Kolbe Home.



Women's Day Celebration, Indore.