



PRISON VOICE

May 2023

Vol. XX

Issue 5

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-



Renew the Face of the Earth



Birthday Blessings to Sr Theresina and Hearty Welcome to Sr Pushpalatha.



Birthday Blessings to Sr Adele Korah SCCG.



Distribution of Chairs, Mananthawady Prison.



Farewell to Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, Mumbai.



Farewell to Sr Basil SCS and Sr Clara HCM.



International Workers Day Celebration, Baroda Jail.



PMI Sagar Unit Visiting Prisoners.



Kobe Boys Outing, Bengaluru.



PMI Chhattisgarh State Gathering.



**Mar Jose Pulickal, PMI Chairman Inaugurates
Volunteers' Training Program, Bengaluru.**



**PMI Kerala State Gathering,
Kottayam.**

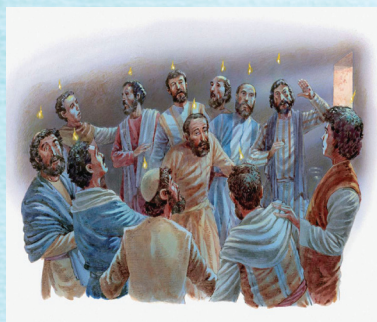


Contents



PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY



Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability (Acts 2, 3-4).

Prayer Intention for the	
Month of May: Pope Francis	05
Editor's View	06
Repatriation of the	
Human Trafficked	7
PMI Training Program to	
Enrich, Enlighten and Empower	10
Positive Speech Leads to	
Positive Action on Prisoners	11
The Ascension of the Lord	12
Can any Good	
Come out of Prisons?	14
Holy Week Services	
Central Jail Colvale, Goa	16
Easter Celebration:	
Jharsuguda Sub-Jail	16
Easter Celebration:	
Central Jail Colvale	16
Best Practices for	
PMI Volunteers	17
Strength and Courage	19
Integral Human Development of	
Prisoners	20
Human Trafficking	
Facts and Figures	22
John 3:16	25
Mother Teresa:	
A Saint Who Conquered Darkness	26
Holy Spirit: Another Helper	31
9th International CURE Conference	30
Chhattisgarh PMI State Gathering:	
Report	34
Jesus - My Love Bomb	36
My Experience in	
Prison Ministry India	37

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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**PRAYER INTENTION FOR THE MONTH OF MAY:
ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS
POPE FRANCIS**



Pope Francis' prayer intention for the month of May is for ecclesial movements and groups. "Ecclesial movements are a gift; they are a treasure in the Church," the Holy Father said in a video released by the Vatican on May 2. "These movements renew the Church with their capacity for dialogue at the service of her evangelizing mission," he said. "Each day, they rediscover in their charism new ways of showing the attractiveness and the newness of the Gospel." "How do they do this? Speaking different languages, they seem different, but it is their creativity that creates these differences. But always understanding themselves and making themselves understood." He added: "Always be on the move, responding to the impulse of the Holy Spirit to the challenges, to

the changes in today's world." Pope Francis encouraged members of ecclesial groups to "remain in harmony with the Church, since harmony is a gift of the Holy Spirit." The pope concluded his message with a prayer: "Let us pray that ecclesial movements and groups may daily rediscover their mission, an evangelizing mission, and that they place their own charisms at the service of the world's needs."



International Workers' Day

International Workers' Day

The first of May is a national public holiday in many countries. On this day workers all over the world join hands to strengthen their unity and to celebrate their solidarity. Their unity and fraternity give them a sense of honour and power and as well proclaim: man is not worthy of his dignity if he does not toil with his hands to earn his bread and there is no place for a lazy man who tries to enjoy through others' labor. The message that the workers announce seems to echo the victory song of Mary who sang: "He raised the lowly and the rich he sent empty away."

St Joseph the Worker

If we look into the Gospels, St Joseph speaks to us more by his work than by his words. It is true to say that Joseph is a worker who toiled according to God's purpose in his life; and we celebrate him today because he lived up to the dignity of work and discovered the meaning of his vocation as a worker. Therefore, it is the Spirit operative in the work of Joseph that is a challenge to us today; his fidelity to work, his honesty in work, his responsibility in working for others and his unobtrusiveness. All this is an invitation to us to realize our dignity as workers and to find the meaning of God's plan in our life. May St Joseph help us to resolve to work hard, to work with love, so that our work may become fruitful in Prison Ministry, and through his intercession let us offer our prayers for our brethren behind bars.

EDITOR'S VIEW



Sr Amala DC
Chief Editor



Mother Mary Devotion

The month of May is dedicated to Mother Mary, the mother of Jesus. We believe that she deserves this honor because God himself honored her by choosing her to become the mother of our Redeemer. Mary's faith and obedience paved the way for the Incarnation. Her exemplary life teaches us faith, obedience, humility and how to love. We believe that she is the greatest saint, and we have always prayed to her through her intercession "now and at the hour of our death," as the Hail Mary prayer states. Mary's role is to lead us to her Son, to deepen our devotion to Jesus as the Christ, our Savior.

Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost, the fruits and gifts of the promised Spirit came down upon the apostles. To the eyes and ears of the Apostles the coming of the Spirit was as the rush of a mighty wind and tongues of fire. The wind and fire, as we know from the Old Testament, are signs of God's presence and action. God erupts into our lives and history when and as he wills. From the apostles and disciples a fearless and universal missionary community came into existence. We have received the Spirit of sonship and the Spirit of love. By the same Holy Spirit we are called to be people concerned with the welfare of the whole world and especially for the integral human development of our brethren behind bars.

Repatriation of the Human Trafficked

Isabel

It was 5th January 2023. Henry Fernandes, coordinator for Prison Ministry India's Special Task Force called Trafficked Women Redeemers (TWR) was visiting St John's Medical College, Bengaluru. On the roadside he found a young lady with her children in a pathetic situation. It was evident that there was no one to take care of this family. She was living on the street and the children were sick and suffering. He enquired about her. Her name was Isabel (name changed) aged 28. Her elder daughter Rosbel (name changed) was aged 3 and her younger son Stalin (name changed) aged about 4 months. She was born and brought up in an ordinary family in Zimbabwe. She came for higher studies in Bengaluru. While studying she developed friendship with a boy and had her first child Rosbel. He left her a year ago and there was no response from him. As she could not pay the house rent, the owner pushed them out of the house.

Street Life

As there was no other place to stay, Isabel went to majestic railway station and remained there many weeks. When the police chased her she went to majestic bus stand. There she lost her important documents such as passport, local ID cards, etc. When she complained about it to the police, they asked her to get an affidavit. When she approached a lawyer, he asked Rs 1000/- which she did not have. Hence, she did not go back to the police station. From majestic bus stand she moved to the city market and from there to Jayanagar. There



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

she conceived again and someone admitted her to Vanivillas hospital. There she gave birth to her son Stalin. From hospital she went to Koramangala side and found some shelter at St John's hospital premises.

Shelter Search

As soon as Henry heard her story he contacted Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, PMI national coordinator and under his guidance began to enquire about a shelter for her. He queried about this possibility in many convents but nobody was ready to welcome them. As many asked for police certificate, he took them to the police commissioner office and informed them of the situation. They called 112 of Madivala Police station. They were then taken to Koramangala police station. They took all documents, photos and videos and asked them to narrate the whole story. First the police threatened them. Then Henry spoke about Prison Ministry India and explained how we work for the emancipation of trafficked women. When police heard about PMI they took them to the sub inspector of Koramangala. Henry narrated everything to the Sub inspector Jyothi. Hearing all

these she stood up and saluted him telling “These are our works but you voluntarily took the job and doing it well”. Immediately she went to her higher officer, the circle inspector and informed him of the whole story. He asked Henry to prepare everything in written form which he gave to the CI. He told Henry to go and get the sign and seal from the police writer at Koramangala police station. He put the seal and sign and kept one copy in his office and the other copy was given by Henry to the CI. Based on this letter from the police department the Good Shepherd Sisters welcomed her to their Good Shepherd Destitute Short Stay Home at Museum Road, Bengaluru.

From CWC to ETD

Henry took them to a hospital because they were suffering from cold and fever. He purchased clothes and other basic necessities for them. He took them to Child Welfare Centre to inform about the children. They took four days to settle things. Sr Clara

HCM and Henry took Isabel and family to the CWC judges. Sr Juliet SCB was there and she guided them well. They prepared a letter, signed and gave it to Henry. He took them to St John’s hospital to get the birth certificate for the youngest child. Then he went to Vanivilas hospital, Kallsipalayam to get the birth certificate of the first child. With these certificates he went to BBMP Birth and Death Register Office. It took one month to get their certificate. These certificates were forwarded to Isabel’s Lawyer and Father in Zimbabwe as well as to the Zimbabwe Ambassador. They all positively responded. After 15 days we received from Zimbabwe embassy the Emergency Travelling Document (ETD). Meanwhile there took place an enquiry from the police commission office regarding her involvement in any criminal activities to facilitate her travel documents to go back to Zimbabwe. The Police commission officer said that there were no complaints about her and they recommended us to approach FRRO.



From FRRO to E-Exit

With much delight we took the ETD to Foreign Residents Registration Office (FRRO), at the 5th floor of BMTC Bus stand, Shantinagar. They asked us to apply online. But the application form's windows were not opening. For more than 15 days we tried to apply online in vain. With utter desperation we went to the FRRO office and reported the situation. The officer revealed the secret to apply online. With this secret we could do this within minutes. After three days they sent the enquiry to the residence of Isabel, that is, the Good Shepherd convent. After a week of enquiry, they sent a message to Isabel asking her to reply immediately. Henry went immediately to FRRO office and enquired about the next step. After payment of penalty, they issued the document called Emergency Exit (E-Exit). We had to enter this E-Exit code in the FRRO application form. Then they would give the Exit document. With these documents we could take the air ticket.

Repatriation

We were working hard to get her passport with the help of her email ID. The expiry date of her passport was 9th May 2023. We approached the emigration department asking their assistance and intervention to help Isabel and family to go back to her native country – Zimbabwe - on humanitarian ground, by clearing her immigration documents. They helped us well. With financial assistance from her father in Zimbabwe we purchased flight tickets. With these air tickets we went to pay the penalty for her overstay in India without proper VISA. Now all the requirements needed for her repatriation were done. Isabel and family left for Zimbabwe on 21

April 2023. On 22 April we received her cheerful photos with her family members in Zimbabwe.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is the trade of humans for the purpose of forced labour, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation. The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which has 117 signatories and 173 parties, defines human trafficking as: the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. 7 in 10 human trafficking victims are women and girls.

Trafficked Women Redeemers

Prison Ministry India launched 42 special task forces for the reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of hardcore prisoners. Trafficked Women Redeemers (TWR) takes care of the trafficked women. Hats off to Mr Henry Fernandes, the PMI coordinator for Trafficked Women Redeemers (TWR), who did an amazing and unbelievable job to repatriate Isabel and Family to Zimbabwe. Let this be a great genesis of the repatriation of trafficked women.

PMI TRAINING PROGRAM TO ENRICH, ENLIGHTEN AND EMPOWER

Sr Rose Chirayil DC

Enrich, Enlighten and Empower

At the outset let me congratulate all those who have organized the PMI Volunteers Training Program to empower and enlighten all those who wish to become good volunteers for prison ministry in different parts of India. I would like to begin by quoting George Bernard Shaw, the famous dramatist who once wrote: "The first prison I ever saw, had inscribed on it, "Cease to do evil: Learn to do well; but as the inscription was on the outside, the prisoners could not read it". This may have been said lightly, but it speaks volumes about our society's age-old attitude to the very idea of prisons and prisoners. Society saw crimes as evil and tended to believe in punitive actions that would resemble a retaliation of equal gravity. The idea was not to correct or to reform, but to punish in the most savage manner. That explains why the conditions in our prisons had remained grim, cruel and frightening for centuries. The very expression, "condemned to a cell" sums up the societal attitude to those imprisoned for crimes. Once condemned always meant, condemned for ever, with almost no human rights. I hope the intention of holding this training program by the PMI is to enrich, enlighten and empower the volunteers to have update information related to the field of prison ministry and to work in it with mission with vision.

Most Rewarding Service

Prison ministry is not an easy job but I would say it is the most rewarding service we do for the most vulnerable and voiceless people in society. In prison ministry we

work on finding a 'balance' between 'justice' and 'mercy'. When we work in the prison ministry, we always have in mind Jesus and the woman caught in adultery. Which virtue do we have to keep in the forefront: justice or mercy? Today, one cannot deny that, our society, which has accepted the recent changes in our approach to prisoners also should not get the idea that prison life is a joy ride. While we should keep our commitment to ensure our approach to them, through positive methods and compassionate heart, we cannot let our society feel that the difference between simple and rigorous imprisonment has been eliminated, since such acts would go against the principle of deterrence, on which lays the foundations of criminal jurisprudence.

Innocent Victims

We know that a good percent of the people within prison bars are innocent victims. In today's society who has got voice? People who have got money and power. They decide, do crimes, divide and rule, ask if then, who we are, and where we are? What happened to Fr Stan Samy? Today we live in an instant world, just fulfilling one's needs and wants, and forgetting the next person standing outside. Human life is taken for granted and the instincts take priority in life. Who is to blame? Upbringing? Circumstances, situation, education, values learnt, desire, greed and so on? All these pass away, as our needs and desires keep piling up. Our human and divine nature which is a gift, which is present in each one of us, has to be nurtured to bring out the presence of God by being human here and now. We need to

be better human beings than what we were yesterday. I am sure; we are trained for that... I am sure this training program was successful in empowering us and updating our knowledge with the contemporary developments. I congratulate the organizers, particularly Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS,

the PMI national coordinator and his team, for fruitfully organizing this program and hope that regular interactions on these lines would ensure a better service to the less fortunate in society through the PMI mission. I wish you all, my prayers, good luck and best wishes for your future mission.

PRISON MINISTRY INDIA

Positive Speech Leads to Positive Action on Prisoners

Sr Maria Rakkini

Authentically, we are called to be trust worthy to our brothers and sisters.

Bravely we teach people to be courageous.

Conviction to face the challenges on the behalf of prisoners.

Discernment: Teach the prisoners to choose between the right and wrong.

Encourage the prisoners to pursue good morality.

Freedom to be part of the teaching and learning in life.

Generosity to be practiced in the whole world.

Honesty is to be every one's policy.

Inspiration of the heart to be followed from the innocence of the childhood.

Justice is to be done to every prisoner fairly.

Kindness and compassion to be shown to our prisoners in life.

Love and affection are to be shown to every living being.

Morality of life should be taught to our prisoners.

Nobility of humble and simple living to be practiced.

Optimism has to be way of daily life.

Purity of heart allows to see God and the reality of our life.

Queries on prisoners' life situations to be known to the society.

Responsibility of prisoners' helplessness to be shared in our daily life.

Serenity of mind and soul to be practiced.

Tolerance towards the prisoners' situation must change them.

Understanding the prisoners and to accept them as our brothers and sisters.

Vision the future of the reconciled prisoners.

Wisdom to make sound judgment by the prisoner is ensured.

X-Mas joy is the outcome of their hope of life.

Youthfulness is the best part of human life to be productive in moral life.

Zeal to be with our prisoners and their families.

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Fr Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar


The Gospels contain many parables of a master who sets out on a long journey and gives his servants charge of his estate until his return. In the feast of the Ascension of the Lord, parable becomes reality. Jesus departs to his heavenly Father and leaves his disciples in charge of the affairs of his kingdom till his return in glory. Each of the Gospels ends with a scene in which Jesus finally takes leave of his disciples. These farewell scenes focus not on describing the event in detail but on the last words that Jesus leaves with his disciples. In fact, the very fact of a bodily ascension of Jesus into heaven is described only by Luke. A later ending of Mark also includes the Ascension. There are important similarities and differences between Luke and Acts on the one hand, and Matthew and Mark on the other, regarding the details of this farewell scene.

For example, in Luke and Acts the Ascension takes place in Jerusalem, whereas in Matthew and Mark it takes place in Galilee. Both traditions, however, agree that it took place on a mountain. In Luke and Acts the Ascension happens forty days after the Resurrection during which period Jesus appears repeatedly to his followers. In Matthew and Mark there is no indication of this time period between the Resurrection and the Ascension. Rather the first appearance of Jesus to his disciples after the resurrection is also the last. The gospel writers apparently were not aiming at accuracy in historical details, but they were more concerned with transmitting a message.

What is the message that Jesus gives his disciples as he takes physical leave of them? The message is phrased in this way: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). “Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16).

According to the Church, the Ascension means the end of Jesus’ bodily presence on earth. This happened after 40 days of his resurrection. Another meaning of ascension, which I like most, is that Jesus goes back to the source of life, who is God the Father. What is the real reason Jesus behind the ascension into heaven? The reasons are: in order to praise God (Jn. 17), in order to become our Saviour and Prince of peace (Acts 5:31), and to prepare our place in heaven (Jn. 14:2).

In fact, Jesus’ departure and ascension into heaven was a great paradox for His disciples: It was both an end and yet it was a beginning. It was the end because it was the end of His incarnate life here on earth, His physical appearance and the completion of His Father’s mission. It was also the



beginning
because
of the great
expectation that
Christ would always be
present with us through
His Spirit forever independent
of time and space in a new way until the
end of time. This is His promise to His
disciples and an assurance for them. Now
as the glorified and Risen Lord and Saviour,
ascended to the right hand of the Father in
heaven, Jesus promised to send them the
Holy Spirit, who would anoint them with
power on the Feast of Pentecost, just as
Jesus was anointed for His ministry at the
River Jordan. When the Lord Jesus departed
physically from the apostles, they were not
left in sorrow or grief. Instead, they were
filled with joy and with great anticipation of
the coming of the Holy Spirit.

What is the command of Jesus for us today?
The first is that we should preach. What
should we preach to others? The Good
News of salvation that we are loved by God
even when we are sinners and we are also

brothers and sisters to each other.
Life has dignity and meaning, and that
death is the only way towards eternal life.
That is why all of us are called in order to
preach and to teach. Preaching is not only
to be done within the Church, but also in
the office, in the workplace, at home and
in many more areas. The second is that we
should heal. All of us are called to become
healers, not only as physical healers but also
as psychological and spiritual healers, not
tomorrow but today. Lastly, we should be
witnesses not just in words but also most
especially in action. As St. Augustine had
said: "Believe what you preach. Teach what
you believe and live it."

Can any Good Come out of Prisons?

God behind Prison Walls



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

God, in Search of the Broken!

God came down in our sinfulness! God came down when we were lost! Every sin brings in shame, emptiness and misery into the human heart. God knew that with the degree of guilt, with that shame, with that power of evil in the heart of man, man would never be happy and therefore God came in search of him to take that burden, that bundle, that misery, that shame of sin away. Man was hiding as we read in Genesis 3:10, “I was naked”, said Adam. That’s when God asked that question to Adam, “Adam, who told you, you were naked? Gen 3:11. I didn’t say that you were naked. Did I say that you need to be ashamed of yourself? Did I say you were empty?”

God, in Search of the Rejected!

Although Adam was hiding himself, God who went in search of him said, ‘I didn’t say that you were naked’. In the Bible, to call someone by name means to call him or her with respect and love. Even after Adam committed sin, God came in search of Adam with love and respect. From then on, the history of salvation has found its strength. Every time man rejected or rebelled, God knew how miserable he would be!

God, in Search of the Lost!

In the eyes of God we never lose our worth. Even when we commit a sin we remain precious in His sight; for God is infinite love. God cannot but love, fire cannot but warm up. The nature of fire is to warm up and the nature of God is love alone that never gives up on any human being. The

nature of God is love. Even when we sin and rebel against God, He continues to love us. In Luke 15, we read Jesus telling us, I go in search of the Lost sheep and that is the nature of God and Jesus reveals this to us.

God, in Search of the Sinful!

When a sheep is lost and entangled in the midst of thorns and thistles in the desert, the Shepherd knows that the sheep will perish if left uncared and so, the Shepherd goes in search of it. God is always of that nature, going in search of the lost. And that is the reason the Heart of God always goes in search of the sad, the broken, the vulnerable, the sick and the sinful. And that’s why God is present fully, living 24/7 in prisons with prisoners.

God, in Search of the Sick!

The Human being was created by God for His own purpose but became fallen, sinful and unable to live in a way that fulfills God’s plan. God also chooses the filthiest places, the stinking places for his work of redemption. Behind the walls of the maximum security prison, hardcore criminals are being transformed into messengers of hope. “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mk 2:17). The purpose of Jesus coming to this earth was to call sinners and to redeem the lost. Jesus who cried out from the Cross, “I thirst” (Jn 19:28) continues to thirst for the souls behind the dark cells of prisons.

God, in Search of the Hard-Core Criminals!

Many a time we tend to think God speaks only to the good people, the bishops, priests, religious and the holy people. God speaks to prisoners too. Today, many of our brethren behind bars are redeemed, whom the society brands as the hardcore criminals. In their sinful bondage they respond to the voice of the Lord, "Follow me" and they follow the God of the Lost. God said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jer 1:5).

Can any Good Come from Prison Cells?

Mathew surrendered everything at the feet of the Master for a cause and followed Jesus. Mathew renounced everything when he found Jesus. The Prodigal Son sitting in the pigs' shed remembered the Father's house. Our brethren come to themselves in the prison cells as they listen, read and internalize the Word of God. The Word of God is read more in prison cells by the rejected and dejected ones. The people who witnessed the miracles of Jesus' multiplication of five loaves, healing the leper, the blind, walking on the sea abandoned Jesus when He was on the Cross.

But the Centurion, who never saw any miracle of Jesus proclaimed, 'Truly He is the Son of God' (Mt 27:54) when he saw Jesus crying out from the cross, 'Abba Father' and when he witnessed the death of Jesus. This is the conversion of the heart, looking at the agony of Jesus, gazing at the way Jesus died for humanity he changed himself and became a strong follower of Jesus. All those who were branded as criminals by the earth became redeemed ones by heaven and found their destination.

We often hear that prison is not a safe place as it is the living space of criminals. Let us never forget that it is the living space of human beings created in the image and likeness of God. The hearts of many prisoners are filled with revenge and hatred. As Moses was entrusted to lead and guide the Israelites, we too are called to guide these broken ones behind bars and lift their souls to God. We need to reach out to them in their wounded-ness and tirelessly work for their integrated development.

What the Earth Gives up, the Heaven Makes it!

The story of the Prodigal Son shows that God will accept any sinner who repents, no matter what they have done. The father in the story is meant to represent God, and the prodigal son is meant to represent a sinner. What the earth has given up, heaven makes it right!

Jesus behind the Bars!

In their dark moments when all the doors seemed closed around them, some prisoners encounter God the Redeemer and open themselves to His holy will. PMI volunteers don't carry Jesus to the prisoners from outside. Our God is already present there, for He says, "When I was in prison, you visited me" (Mt 25:36). We accompany our brethren behind the bars to encounter our Crucified God and to gaze at the disfigured face of our God on the Cross. Jesus taught that God is to be found in prison. Can the convicted and death row prisoners be redeemed too? Jesus redeemed a death row prisoner on the Cross as He said, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43) and it continues even today in the dark cells of prisons. Can any Good Come out of Prisons? Not one good, but so much good comes out of prisons. So many souls are redeemed by our redeemer.

Holy Week Services Central Jail Colvale, Goa

David Fernandes

This year PMI GOA has been blessed with the opportunity to conduct Holy week services post pandemic for all Catholic inmates in the Modern Central Jail Colvale, Goa. As preparation for the celebration of Easter, all Inmates were given the opportunity to avail of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Priest volunteers were allotted different Blocks inside the Jail premises.

The Holy week services were conducted for all Inmates by Fr Maverick Fernandes, Fr Franky Fernandes and Fr Leslie Rego.

The Good Friday and Easter services were conducted in the Main Hall by Fr Maverick Fernandes. The choir led by the Inmates themselves helped to make all the Liturgical services more meaningful. The services were well attended. There was a lively fellowship after the Easter Mass as snacks were served.

Besides the Liturgical services we had organized an Easter program for Men and women separately on different days. They began with prayer and was followed by a cultural program.

Easter Celebration: Jharsuguda Sub-Jail

Sr Mercyan SU & Sr Hermana SCGR

We the PMI Jharsuguda Unit continue to share the joy and hope of Christ's resurrection, with brothers and sisters behind the bars. The keynote of our Easter message was, "Not to lose hope; the resurrected Christ is always with us to bring newness in our lives". We thank the superintendent Mr. Laxmikanta Dhangada Najhi and the staff for their support and cooperation. Sufficient time was given to us, and because of that, we had constructive interaction with the inmates. As a part of the celebration they too received some snacks, new clothes for the ladies, one each usable clothes for men which were collected from the parish.

Easter Celebration: Central Jail Colvale, Goa on 20 April 2023

Before the start of the program, a short film on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was screened in Hindi which was keenly viewed by all. A prayer service was conducted by the Inmates themselves led by Ryan Pinto. The Word of God taken from Jn 3: 1-8 was read in English and Hindi. Fr Savio gave a short reflection in English. Prayers for Inmates, their families, the Prison authorities and Prison Ministry volunteers were written in both languages and read by the Inmates. This was interspersed with suitable hymns.

This was followed by a cultural program which was compered by Inmate Rajendra Singh. At the outset, Fr Maverick Fernandes Director, Caritas- Goa welcomed one and

all present and thanked the Parishes for their participation and generosity. He also appreciated the efforts of the volunteers and Inmates.

St Francis Xavier Parish, Duler and Our Lady of Ajuda Parish Ribander were the two parishes invited for the celebration. The Parishioners came up with action songs and skits. There was a Zumba performance which was very lively and entertaining. The Inmates too participated in the program with their songs. All Hindi translations to the entire program was done by Ms Ezilda Saldanha. Snacks were served to all. The program concluded with the vote of thanks by Inmate Valerian Barretto and singing of the National anthem.

Best Practices for PMI Volunteers

Sr Shanti FC

Prison ministry is a special call within a call. This ministry is founded by Jesus himself on the cross. So a volunteer must be a person who has encountered Jesus crucified. One must know and practice the lifestyle of PMI, i.e., to believe in praying, fasting, reciting “Thank you Jesus”, learning to accept inconvenience as convenience, begging, and having the goal as saving the lost. We need to be love BOMBS not to kill but to heal. He/she has to remember the following points and practice it while doing this ministry.

Praying Together

Pray together before immediate entry to the prison: All the volunteers are expected to pray for the prisoners, officials, volunteers and families of victims and prisoners. After the visit also we must offer thanksgiving prayer. Prayer is our weapon. We shall keep the intentions of prisoners, prison officials, benefactors and volunteers in our prayers especially during the Eucharistic celebration, Eucharistic Adoration, Holy rosary, and Divine chaplet. Word of God should be on our lips.

Enter Together

Punctuality is necessary for any good work. All those who are going to work in the prison must enter at a specific time to avoid inconvenience to the security staff.

Carry Identity Card to Prison

All volunteers have to carry their prison identity card when they visit the prison. Any other document like permission letter if needed is to be taken. Mobiles are not allowed.

Keep Regular Entry Time

Every prison has its own timetable. We need to keep the entry and exit time. Sometimes the authorities don't keep the time. We should not grumble.

Greet the Officials and Prisoners

We need to respect everyone. In a special way we need to show respect to the officials and prisoners during our visit.

Keep Silence & Discipline

We need to maintain silence and discipline both in the office as well as in the prison premises.

Prison Rules to be Followed

We need to sign in the entry book as we enter the prison in the NGO's book according to the practice of each prison. Proper checking is there. We need to be checked in and the bags we carry as well are checked as we enter the prison. We can ask the officials if we have any doubt regarding prison issues.

See Inmates as Individuals

We need to accept and love the inmates. Each man and woman in prison has a unique identity, experiences, feelings and desire. We should not ask about their crime. If they share we should listen with love and respect. Confidentiality is to be kept if they tell us not to share anything. Names of the inmates are not mentioned when we write about their transformation in the prison voice. Taking photos is not allowed.

Learn from Leaders and even from inmates. They have seen life, its joy and bitterness. We need to be empathetic and giving hope.

Be Patient

Inconvenience is our Convenience. Prison work goes at a slow pace. It will take time and patience to see positive effects on some people.

Be Good Listeners

Many inmates have never had any one seriously listen to them and really hear them. We should be non-judgmental and understanding. We should not only be sympathetic, but also be compassionate towards them.

Be Honest and Sincere

Inmates are very sensitive about hypocrisy. Honesty is particularly vital. Let us not make empty promises if we can't fulfill them.

Be Prepared to Take Hardships

Prison ministry like every work for God, deserves our best. If we are to give a talk or sing a song, rehearse it ahead of time, so that it can be done perfectly.

No Evaluative Comments

We should not make negative comments on the officials. They may stop us from going to the prison. We should make Prison officials and inmates of prison as friends inside the prison. We should build up good relationship with officials when we do work with prison officials. We must acknowledge the festal days, birthdays, and wedding days of officials. We shall be aware of birthdays, wedding days of chief superintendent and others and be generous to wish them.

Permission through Responsible Persons

After getting the initial permission we need to approach the officials for permission to conduct various programmes. We shall be prudent and sensitive with the authorities

in our language, behavior and in all our dealings we do so with proper permissions .

Be Modest in Dress

We should never give room for distractions to the inmates by our dress or behavior. Male volunteers also need to consider this aspect. Visitors are advised to have a moderate way of dressing and to avoid extra ornaments in the prison.

Be Available to Everyone

We should go to each section with another volunteer depending upon the permission given. We should maintain healthy distance. We should be prudent and sensitive when we talk to the inmates.

Learn the Local Language

We should be polite and modest in the way we talk. Not a word of criticism should be there. Be a counselor not an adviser: People don't like persons who are always advising people. We shall be counselors, like a friend for them.

Visit Family of Prisoners

With the permission of the prisoner: if we can support his or her family in anyway, we can do so by sharing with the units. If the family is poor, financial help is to be given. Now we have Kolbe homes in some states which educate and help prisoners' children. Recommend the children of prisoners to CWC if PMI children's rehabilitation centres are not found.

Encourage our Released Prisoners

We should encourage released prisoners to go to PMI rehabilitation centers if the family does not accept. They need strong support to lead a reformed life. Try to get employment. Also help them to settle their marriages.

The Unit shall keep a good relation with our rehabilitation centers: The members of the unit shall visit the rehabilitation centres and keep a good contact with them and be sensitive to their needs. Then the society will support us in all our activities to continue our mission.

Keep good relationship with the family of released prisoners. We should help them so that they may not come back again to prison. They may speak against society, officials, volunteers, church and religious faith, parents, relatives, friends and so on. But we are there to change this negative attitude into positive energy. So let us try to be always positive in our talks and approaches.

Volunteers' Meetings

We should have a meeting of regular visiting volunteers at a convenient place both for planning and evaluating. We may discuss some confidential matters in the meetings. The matters of the volunteers meeting should not be carried to prisoners and others unnecessarily.

Campaign for New Volunteers

Have right motivation for prison ministry: We should welcome the new volunteers and give them the necessary training before they visit the prisons. It is good to prepare the next level of volunteers to hand over your responsibility so that everybody get the chance to do their service.

Search, Serve and Save the Lost

We need to reach-out, release, reform, rehabilitate, re-integrate and redeem the prisoners. For this we need to start intercessory groups to pray constantly for the ministry. From time to time we must send articles to national PMI giving details of our work. The Prison work will carry the message.

Strength and Courage

Author Unknown

It takes strength to be firm.
It takes courage to be gentle.
It takes strength to stand guard.
It takes courage to let down your guard.
It takes strength to conquer.
It takes courage to surrender.
It takes strength to be certain.
It takes courage to have doubt.
It takes strength to fit in.
It takes courage to stand out.
It takes strength to feel a friend's pain.
It takes courage to feel your own pain.
It takes strength to hide your own pains.
It takes courage to show them.
It takes strength to endure abuse.
It takes courage to stop it.
It takes strength to stand alone.
It takes courage to lean on another.
It takes strength to love.
It takes courage to be loved.
It takes strength to survive.
It takes courage to live. -

Integral Human Development of Prisoners

Proclaim Freedom for Prisoners

Jesus visiting the synagogue of Nazareth, opening the book of Isaiah read out, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free” (Lk 4,18). Prison Ministry India continues this mission of Jesus to proclaim freedom for prisoners. Let’s be proud of what we do for prisoners. Prison Ministry India, a Catholic spiritual movement and a registered charitable society, participates and fulfills the Jesus’ mission by proclaiming freedom of prisoners, reaching out to them to release, reform, rehabilitate and to reintegrate them.

Pope St John 23rd

It was Pope St John 23rd who began prison ministry in 1958. Visiting Regina Coeli, Rome’s best-known men’s prison, Pope John told them, “I come to you because you cannot come to me. Now you need to rebuild your lives and you need to do one thing: eliminate the word ‘despair,’ and prepare yourselves to spend your lives doing good, because this is also the Father’s house and you are also sons of God.” When Pope John visited the prison’s ward for those serving life sentences, the inmates dropped to their knees – a scene so powerful, and so imprinted on the imagination of the world at the time, that it’s depicted on John XXIII’s Vatican monument. The first papal visit to a prison ever filmed was John XXIII’s historic visit to this Regina Coeli prison on St Stephen’s Day in 1958. “I am



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

Joseph, your brother”, John XXIII said. The inmates gave him a missal with a white leather cover, which from then on, the Pope would use every day during his private Mass celebration. After blessing the inmates, John XXIII asked to visit the various sections of the prison. His meeting with a murderer who was down on his knees waiting for him was particularly touching. The man had tears in his eyes and would not look up. The young man was unable to speak, he simply sobbed. The prisoner asked him: “Does what you said apply even to me? I have so much sin in me. Can there be forgiveness for me too?” John XXIII, who was visibly moved, did not say anything, but bent over and embraced him. As Pope St John 23rd did we have to go to them as they cannot come to us. Prisoners are the most neglected and rejected group of the society so I entrust into your hands the lost sheep in this state to love, them, pray for them, visit them, release them, reform them, rehabilitate them and reintegrate them.

Pope Francis

On April 6, 2023 Pope Francis washed the feet of 12 young prisoners at the Casal del Marmo Juvenile detention centre in Rome.

He stated, “Jesus paid the price for our sins and wants to save us. Jesus never abandons anyone; he has come to save, serve and accompany everyone”. PMI volunteers follow what Pope Francis has been doing for prisoners. In 2019 he convened an intercontinental conference for worldwide prison chaplains at the Vatican. During this conference, in which I also was invited to present a paper on PMI’s contribution Holy Father asked us to focus on the reintegration of prisoners by providing them education, after care homes, job and family settlements. Taking seriously into consideration of this invocation of the Holy Father during the PMI Ruby Jubilee Celebration we launched many new projects for prisoners such as releasing, housing and employment schemes for released and reformed prisoners, scholarships for prisoners’ children, marriage and family settlements for those who are in our rehabilitation centres. You are also welcome to join these projects for the reintegration of prisoners. PMI is in preparation for its golden jubilee celebration and some of the golden jubilee projects are having more homes for prisoners’ children and rehabilitation centres for released prisoners. The Lord is calling some of you to launch such homes in Chhattisgarh. Last year SMMI sisters opened a Kolbe home at Patan in Gujarat where there is no Catholic family at all.

Droupadi Murmu

On 29 November 2022 Smt Droupadi Murmu honorable President of India raised several crucial problems of prisoners to the supreme court judges such as overcrowding of jails, the social identity of those languishing in prisons, prolonged pretrial

detention, the presence of large number of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and OBC members in prisons. More than 77 % of Indian prisoners are undertrials and as our president mentioned they are from the marginalized and minorities. Hence we have a double responsibility to take care of the integral development of such prisoners for Jesus came to seek, serve and save the lost and to set free the oppressed.

Nirmala Sitharaman

Finance Minister Smt Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, 2023 while presenting the Budget said that the government would provide financial support to poor prisoners who are unable to afford penalties and bail amounts. She asked to check on arbitrary and unnecessary arrests to prevent prison overcrowding and deterioration of prison conditions. Its good sign that Indian budget allots a certain amount for the release of prisoners. However, it’s our task to collect it from the government agencies and provide them to our brethren behind bars.

Prison Ministry India (PMI) volunteers with the paternal blessings of the CBCI outreach prisons in India and provide our brethren behind bars spiritual, psychological, educational, and material assistance and take care of hundreds of prisoners’ children and released prisoners. PMI has various projects for the integral human development of prisoners such as houses for released prisoners, scholarships for prisoners’ children, employment schemes for reformed prisoners, releasing prisoners with financial assistance and establishing Kolbe homes for prisoners’ children and Van Thuan Homes for released prisoners.

Human Trafficking – Facts and Figures



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

Little Diana

Diana (name changed) was standing at the school gate, waiting for her father to pick her up. Suddenly, two men appeared there and started a conversation with her. They told her, that her father had asked them to pick her up today as he got busy with some official work. Diana didn't have a mobile as she was studying in 5th STD, but her senior who was also at the school gate waiting to be picked up had a mobile. Diana approached her senior and asked if she could lend her mobile to call her mother. As soon as Diana dialled her mother, those strangers left the spot. Diana immediately understood that they were kidnappers. Noticing those men who came to pick Diana up, leaving the spot, Diana's senior asked her, "What happened, why did those men not pick you up?" Diana said, "See! My mother had told me, other than your parents, if someone else comes to pick you immediately dial me and I will tell you if I have asked them to pick you up! So, as soon as I took the mobile to call my mother, these men escaped. They are kidnappers, my mother had told that many children are being kidnapped and we should be careful with these strangers". This true story highlights the need of the hour to educate children and others on the issues related to trafficking.

Facts about Trafficking

1. India is a source, destination, and transit country for human trafficking.

2) The majority of trafficking in India is for the purpose of forced labor and sexual exploitation. 3) Children, women and men are all vulnerable to trafficking, with children being particularly at risk of being trafficked for forced labor, domestic servitude, and sexual exploitation. 4) Many of the children that are trafficked are from rural, poor, and marginalized communities. 5) The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerability of children and families to trafficking, as economic instability and school closures have left many children without access to education or support. 6) The lack of proper documentation and identity papers puts people, especially migrants and refugees, at the risk of human trafficking. 7) Corruption is a major issue that hinders the fight against human trafficking in India, as traffickers often bribe officials to avoid detection and prosecution. 8) India has laws in place to combat trafficking, such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, but enforcement and implementation of these laws remains a challenge. 9) NGOs and civil society organizations play an important role in raising awareness about trafficking and providing support to survivors and at-risk communities. 10) Community-based efforts are important in preventing trafficking and protecting vulnerable communities. 11) The latest 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: India, by the US Department of

State notes that traffickers kidnap and force Indian and Nepali women and girls to work as “orchestra dancers” in India, where girls perform with dance groups until they have repaid fabricated debts. Traffickers exploit women and children in sex trafficking in religious pilgrimage centers and in tourist destinations. Some traffickers kidnap children from public places, including railway stations, entice girls with drugs, and force girls as young as 5 years old in sex trafficking to take hormone injections to appear older.

Figures

The latest estimates by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), states that at least 18 million Indians suffer under slavely conditions. In India, the incidents of child trafficking continue to increase. According to National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), 2,834, 2,914 and 2,222 children were trafficked in 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively. Over 4,700 people were trafficked in 2020, of which 1,377 were minor boys and 845 were minor girls. Moreover, the pandemic has amplified the menace of trafficking. An increase in poverty, loss of jobs by parents and closure of schools has increased the number of vulnerable children—especially in rural areas—who remain susceptible to trafficking. In terms of sheer numbers, India is reckoned to have the worst problem in the world.

Response of the Church

India is a prime example of where women religious have networked to rescue and resettle thousands of survivors. AMRAT (Asian Movement of Religious Against Trafficking) is the organisation that brings together more than 100 Catholic nuns

from across India. Founded in 2009, it has established a network of civil and social groups. AMRAT networks with government agencies to support safe immigration, and collects relevant data on human trafficking from reliable sources to counter the problem. It also organises campaigns to raise awareness about the risks of trafficking in schools and other places of interest.

Tips to Educators/Parents

1. Educate yourself and your children about the dangers of trafficking, including common tactics used by traffickers and ways to recognize and report suspicious behavior.
- 2) Monitor your children’s online activity and educate them about online safety, including the risks of sharing personal information and connecting with strangers online.
- 3) Keep open communication with your children and encourage them to share any concerns or experiences they may have.
- 4) Be aware of the risks and warning signs of trafficking, such as a child suddenly dropping out of school, or changes in behaviour or communication patterns.
- 5) Be aware of the potential risks of sending children to work or study in other areas, particularly if they will be living away from home and without direct supervision.
- 6) Support organizations working to combat trafficking and exploitation, and advocate for stronger laws and enforcement efforts.
- 7) Be aware of local and national resources available to help prevent trafficking, including hotline facilities, counselling services, and legal assistance.
- 8) Keep an eye on children who are vulnerable such as children of single parents or children from lower-income backgrounds, as they are more at risk of being trafficked.
- 9) Inform local police and government officials about

any suspected trafficking activity. 10) Spread awareness in your community about human trafficking and encourage others to take action to prevent it.

Tips to Children

1. Teach children about their rights, and the importance of staying safe and being aware of potential dangers, including trafficking. 2) Teach children about the common tactics used by traffickers, such as false promises, deception, and manipulation. 3) Teach children how to recognize and report suspicious behavior, and how to access help if they feel unsafe. 4) Emphasize the importance of healthy relationships and boundaries, and teach children how to identify and avoid unhealthy or exploitative relationships. 5) Educate children about online safety, including the dangers of sharing personal information and connecting with strangers online. 6) Encourage children to share any concerns or experiences they may have, and offer them support and guidance. 7) Discuss with children the dangers of migrating or traveling to other areas without proper documentation or supervision, and the risks of being trafficked. 8) Encourage children to be vigilant about their surroundings and to report any suspicious activity to the authorities. 9) Educate children about the importance of community awareness, and encourage them to share information about trafficking and exploitation with their peers and families. 10) Provide children with age-appropriate resources such as books, brochures or videos that will help them understand the dangers of trafficking and ways to stay safe.

The Cry of a Girl Who Was Trafficked

“My parents were finding it hard to feed us as we were extremely poor! All our neighbours knew that we were very poor and a particular man in our village had a special eye on us. I used to call him uncle without knowing his hidden intention regarding me. On a particular day, he told my parents that he could get a job for me in Mumbai city. My parents hesitated as they didn’t want to send their only daughter to a far place for their survival. He tried to convince them and finally they agreed to send me with that uncle. After some time, I slept off in the train and when I woke up we were already in Mumbai city. This uncle who brought me from my village handed me over to an old man who took me to a beauty parlour. They didn’t give me breakfast, but I was directly taken to a beauty parlour. After I was done with a lot of make-up, this old man took me to an apartment and handed me over to another man who was his partner. There was no one to rescue me. I woke up next morning and found myself naked. As I looked down, I was bleeding all over. No one had the heart to take me to the hospital. I was kept locked in their apartment and after a few days I was shifted to another place where I was forced to work in the sex trade. In a day 10-12 men came to my room and I was only 15 years old. So many men came to my room as they wanted a young girl and I was broken to pieces.” Such true stories are not mere isolated incidents. These are the experiences of millions of children in our country. Each of us must contribute in whatever way we can to help our children live and grow in a safe environment.

John 3:16

Author Unknown

In the city of Chicago, one cold, dark night, a blizzard was setting in. A little boy was selling newspapers on a corner where the people were going in and out of the cold outdoors. The little boy was so cold that he wasn't trying to sell many papers. He walked up to a policeman and said, "Mister, you wouldn't happen to know where a poor boy could find a warm place to sleep tonight, would you? You see, I sleep in a box up around the corner there and down the alley and it's awful cold in there. Sure would be nice to have a warm place to stay. The policeman looked down at the little boy and said, "You go down the street to that big white house and you knock on the door. When they come out the door you just say John 3:16 and they will let you in."

So he did, he walked up the steps to the door, knocked on the door and a lady answered. He looked up and said, "John 3:16." The lady said "Come on in, Son." She took him in and she sat him down in a split bottom rocker in front of a great big old fireplace and she went off. He sat there for a while, and thought to himself "John 3:16.... I don't understand it, but it sure makes a cold boy warm."

Later she came back and asked him "Are you hungry?" He said, "Well, just a little. I haven't eaten in a couple of days and I guess I could stand a little bit of food." The lady took him in the kitchen and sat him down to a table full of wonderful food. He ate and ate until he couldn't eat any more. Then he thought to himself "John 3:16... Boy, I sure don't understand it, but it sure makes a hungry boy full."

She took him upstairs to a bathroom where there was a huge bathtub filled with warm water and he sat there and soaked for a while. As he soaked, he thought to himself, "John 3:16... I sure don't understand it, but

it sure makes a dirty boy clean."

You know, I've not had a bath, a real bath, in my whole life. The only bath I ever had was when I stood in front of that big old fire hydrant as they flushed it out." The lady came in and got him, and took him to a room and tucked him into a big old feather bed and pulled the covers up around his neck and kissed him goodnight and turned out the lights. As he laid in the darkness and looked out the window at the snow coming down on that cold night he thought to himself, "John 3:16... I don't understand it, but it sure makes a tired boy rested."

The next morning she came back up and took him down again to that same big table full of food. After he ate she took him back to that same big old split bottom rocker in front of the fireplace and she took a big old Bible and sat down in front of him and she looked up at him and she asked, "Do you understand John 3:16?" He said, "No, Ma'am, I don't. The first time I ever heard it was last night when the policeman told me to use it." She opened the Bible to John 3:16 and she began to explain to him about Jesus. Right there in front of that big old fireplace he gave his heart and life to Jesus. He sat there and thought, "John 3:16. I don't understand it, but it sure makes a lost boy feel safe."

You know, I have to confess I don't understand it either, how God would be willing to send His Son to die for me, and how Jesus would agree to do such a thing. I don't understand it, but it sure does make life worth living. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (Jn 3, 16-18).

Mother Teresa: A Saint Who Conquered Darkness

Kerry Walters

One of Mother Teresa's deepest fears after she founded the Missionaries of Charity was that she or one of her sisters and brothers would do or say something to cause scandal or detract from the Order's mission. In all likelihood this explains, at least in part, her reluctance to speak publicly of the interior locutions she had experienced for seven or eight months after the call within a call came on the train to Darjeeling. Yet Teresa did cause scandal, although only after she'd been dead for a decade, and then only for a short time. In 2007, *Come Be My Light*, a book that collected many of her most personal and private correspondence, was published. It immediately caused sorrow and confusion in her admirers and a glee that bordered on what the Germans call *schadenfreude*, taking pleasure in another's misfortune, in her detractors.

Her letters revealed that, except for one short period, Teresa had been afflicted with a deep sense of God's absence for the last half-century of her life. Such was her unflagging dedication to the work she'd undertaken for God that most of the world was completely unsuspecting of her spiritual darkness. On hearing the news, many Christians were confused. What did Teresa's long stay in the spiritual wilderness mean? Was she a victim of depression? Had she lost faith in God?

What gave her the inner strength to carry on even when she anguished over what she felt to be God's abandonment of her? Even Teresa's closest companions in the Missionaries of Charity were bewildered. Never had she made any reference to the darkness except for an oblique reference that would've meant nothing to anyone but her confessors with whom she shared what she was going through. Four years before she died, she warned her sisters that "the Devil" is continuously on the prowl in order to "make you feel it is impossible that



Jesus really loves you, is really cleaving to you. This is a danger for all of us.” None of them could have guessed that the remark was autobiographical.

For their part, Teresa’s detractors pointed to the revelations in *Come Be My Light* as evidence that Teresa was a faux-saint whose public displays of piety were hypocritical. Long time critic Christopher Hitchens declared that the letters revealed Teresa to be a “confused old lady” who had “ceased to believe,” and whose service to others was nothing more than “part of an effort to still the misery within.” He also argued that the Catholic Church’s interpretation of Teresa’s time in the desert as a dark night of the soul was a perverse piece of marketing that sought to spin despair as faith.

A Soul in Anguish

There’s no sense in denying that Mother Teresa’s sojourn in the wilderness is disconcerting. If God can seem absent to a saint like her, what chance do the rest of us have to connect with God? It’s also quite probably true, given the nature of her work among the poorest of the poor that at times Teresa felt psychologically depressed or burnt out. What normal person wouldn’t? But to conclude that the darkness was the result of depression and much less loss of faith, is to overlook its spiritual significance.

Psychological depression is me-centered; the depressive’s gaze is always directed inward. Teresa’s, on the other hand, was directed outward, to the God whose absence she so keenly felt. Depression renders a sufferer listless; Mother Teresa was always on the go, doing the work to which she felt God had called her. Moreover, dark periods don’t necessarily suggest a loss of faith. Instead, they are recognized in the Christian tradition as periods of great spiritual development.

Many Christian saints have recounted their own experiences of darkness in their relationships with God, but it was the sixteenth-century St. John of the Cross who wrote what’s still considered to be the best analysis of them. Not surprisingly, Mother Teresa knew his writings, and once remarked that even though John’s words made her “hunger for God,” they also expressed what for her was “the terrible feeling of being ‘unwanted’ by Him.”

For John of the Cross, the *noche oscura* or “dark night of the soul” is a forlorn feeling of being abandoned by God. “Both the sense and the spirit,” he writes, “as though under an immense and dark load, undergo such agony and pain that the soul would consider death a relief.” The soul suffers most from the conviction that “God has rejected it, and with abhorrence cast it into darkness.” But what feels like abandonment is far from it. The painful sense of being rejected by God is actually a purgation of the senses and spirit that prepares the way for an “inflow of God into the soul.” There is no set time limit for the dark night of the soul, although most do not last as long as Mother Teresa’s did. Neither does the dark night mean that the sufferer has ceased to believe in God, although intense doubts can arise.

In one of her letters, Mother Teresa writes, “In my soul I feel just that terrible pain of loss - of God not wanting me-of God not being God-of God not really existing.”⁸ But the occasional dreadful thought that God may be a fiction wasn’t her primary torment. Even if Teresa had never read John of the Cross’s description of the *noche oscura*, she would’ve had some idea of it from her namesake, St. Thérèse de Lisieux, the Little Flower, who likewise suffered from a sense of abandonment toward the end of her short life. Thérèse wrote that “God hides,

is wrapped in darkness,” and she accounted for this by arguing that the love of Christ is so overwhelming that its fullness has to be withheld from mortals, a withdrawal that naturally causes suffering.

Mother Teresa’s suffering when God hid from her was intense. From first to last, her private correspondence to her confessors attests to that. Just a few passages, representative of the whole, convey something of the loneliness into which her sense of God’s absence drove her. The longing for God is terribly painful and yet the darkness is becoming greater. What contradiction there is in my soul! The pain within is so great...Please ask Our Lady to be my Mother in this darkness. The place of God in my soul is blank. There is no God in me. In the darkness...Lord, my God, who am I that You should forsake me? The one You have thrown away as unwanted-unloved. I call, I cling, I want - and there is no One to answer - no One on

Whom I can cling; no, No One. Alone! The darkness is so dark - and I am alone.

Before I used to get such help & consolation from spiritual direction - from the time the work has started - nothing.

“The work” Teresa mentions in the last quotation refers, of course, to the ministry to which she was called on that providential train trip to Darjeeling. What especially bewildered and saddened her was that the darkness had descended in 1949; right when she believed she was doing precisely the work God had created her to do. Her loss of the presence of God coincided with the granting of the long-sought permission to found the order that became the Missionaries of Charity. Surely the Vatican’s approval was a sign from God that he loved her and wanted her to succeed. But it was

just at that point that she felt the door slam shut. God disappeared.

There was to be but one time the door opened in her many years of darkness. Pius XII was the pontiff who gave permission to found her Order. When he died in October 1958, Archbishop Périer celebrated a requiem Mass in the Calcutta cathedral. Teresa attended, and on that same day received a respite from her forlornness. As she wrote Périer, “I prayed to [Pius] for a proof that God is pleased with the Society. There & then disappeared that long darkness, that pain of loss - of loneliness - of that strange suffering of ten years. Today my soul is filled with love.” But in just a short time, God “thought it better for me to be in the tunnel - so He is gone again.” Teresa would endure the tunnel for the next four decades.

Yes to God

As the years of darkness came and went, Mother Teresa slowly began to see them as something different from the dark night of the soul described by John of the Cross and experienced by Thérèse de Lisieux. It was, she concluded, an essential part of her vocation as a Missionary of Charity. Even as a teenager back in Skopje, Teresa had longed to serve the poor. When she became a missionary nun, she spent her Sundays roaming the slums around the Loreto compound bringing relief to the poor. When she received the call within a call, she dedicated the rest of her life to giving the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the dying the love that the world had denied them. Moreover, she voluntarily took on their poverty as her own. Teresa dedicated her life to this work because she believed that Christ demanded it of her. As she so often said, when she succoured the poor and the sick, she ministered to Christ in his distressing

disguise, the Christ who thirsted. It was perhaps inevitable, given that she shared in the suffering of the people she served, that Teresa would eventually discern her own inner poverty as a share in the suffering of Christ himself. She remembered the oath she'd made back in 1942 never to deny God anything asked of her, and she realized that loyalty to the oath meant embracing God's withdrawal.

"We must know exactly when we say yes to God what is in that yes. Yes means 'I surrender,' totally, fully, without any counting the cost." It meant accepting whatever God gave, and giving whatever God chose to take away. And for Teresa, it meant accepting the burden of Christ's Passion. When she was allowed that insight into the nature of her darkness, she recognized it as an inevitable aspect of the call within a call, and would go so far as to say that she actually loved the darkness because it was "a part, a very, very small part of Jesus' darkness & pain on earth."

Lost and Found

Teresa's final years were ones in which poor health and physical suffering became her daily burden. Just a few months before her death, suffering from heart failure and pneumonia, she lay in a hospital bed, unable to speak because of the bronchial tube that had been inserted to help her breathe. She tried to communicate with her caretakers by writing on slips of paper, but was too weak to do so. Finally, mustering all her strength, she was able to scrawl, "I want Jesus." Mass was celebrated in her hospital room and she was able to take a small amount of the consecrated wine. Those who were with her at the time believed that her request for Jesus meant that she desired the Eucharist, and that's surely a part of what she meant to communicate. But given her decades of

living without a sense of Christ's presence, it's not too much to conclude that she also meant she wanted the darkness of God's withdrawal to end. She'd spent over fifty years reliving Christ's Passion. If it was God's will that she suffer, so be it. But she longed for it to end.

In 1962, in the second decade of her sense of abandonment, Teresa wrote something that anticipated her later understanding of her vocation to suffer the Passion of Christ, "If I ever become a saint - I will surely be one of 'darkness.' I will continually be absent from heaven - to light the light of those in darkness on earth." This is an extraordinary thing to say, because it suggests that Mother Teresa was willing to relinquish the joy of heaven for the sake of those of us who also lie awake in the night wondering where God has gone. No one would deny that the diminutive nun who served Christ in his distressing disguise for over fifty years deserved some rest. But Teresa thought otherwise. Her lifelong dedication to serving God in his people was, so far as she was concerned, only an apprenticeship for her real work after she died.



The 9th International CURE Conference in Nairobi Kenya

May 1- 5 2023

Peter Onyango Olwal*

International CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants) had its 9th Conference on Human Rights & Criminal Justice Reform in Nairobi, Kenya, May 1-5. There were 95 participants representing 28 countries.

“We were overwhelmed with the response which included countries like Pakistan from the right and Cuba from the left” commented Peter Onyango Olwal, the Coordinator of Pan Africa CURE.

“Also” Onyango Olwal further explained, “many of the countries represented were from Africa and a large African committee was formed to start CURE country chapters to bring about prison reform.”

Finally, Onyango Olwal concluded that “the Kenya prison system could not have been more supportive of the conference. The two top prison officials spoke and arranged for conference participants to tour a prison. Both emphasized their goal that all people incarcerated must have “one bed and one

mattress.”

This most needed reform was echoed indirectly in the recommendations made below by the Conference to the world-wide entities that lock people up.

Universal human rights are inherent to every human being, and must be continually defended thorough advocacy, especially for those in detention and post-release. The death penalty and life sentences should be abolished while voting and telecommunication rights should be implemented.

Also, juveniles should be separated from adults and prison officials should collaborate as allies for more humane conditions. Each country should produce manuals which instruct staff on the needs of the incarcerated, especially concerning women. Finally, restorative justice and diversion should become primary tools in a country’s criminal justice system.



*Courtesy : CURE International

Holy Spirit: Another Helper

Sr Shanti Pulickal SCC

Preeti and Sweta (name changed) were two female prisoners in one of the jails in Odisha. Being Poor, illiterate and unemployed persons from another State they were brought here under the false promise of a good job but were used for drug trafficking with the result that they were arrested and convicted for 10 years in the jail. We live in a world of truth and falsehood, real and unreal and so our sages sang from time immemorial, “Asatoma

Satgamaya, tamasoma
jyotir gamaya...”.

The fulfillment of this aspiration was Jesus who declared “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn14:6). In the gospel of St. John Jesus promised us another Helper, the Holy Spirit, who will stay with us forever and help us (Jn14:16). He will not deceive us but will lead us into all the truth. In our ministries especially as PMI volunteers, it is very important to seek the assistance of the Holy Spirit! Jesus has also specified the areas that the Holy Spirit will help us.

The Holy Spirit Will Reveal the Truth about God

The Holy Spirit will reveal the same truth about God that Jesus revealed that God is a merciful, compassionate, forgiving and caring Father. How will we reveal this to

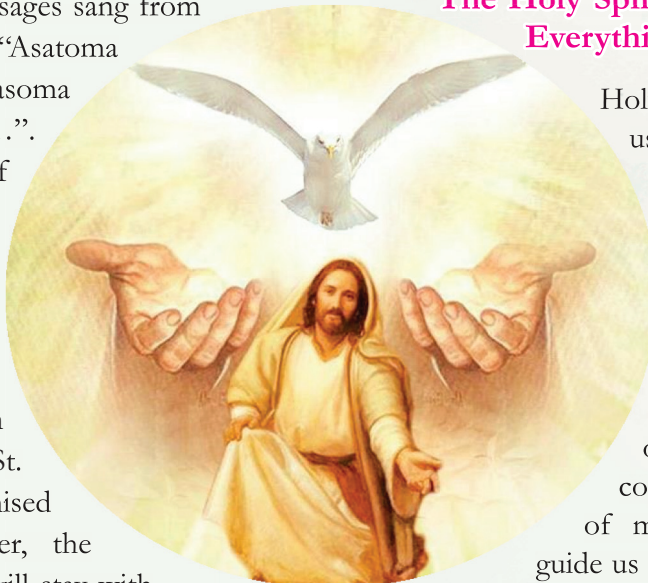
others in our ministry unless we experience it in our lives! Jesus revealed to St. Faustina, “Bring to me all humankind, especially all sinners and immerse them in the ocean of My Mercy”. We are happy that the PMI takes this as one of its priorities; to go to the last, least, and lost and work for their release, renewal and rehabilitation.

The Holy Spirit Will Teach Us Everything

Holy Spirit will teach us to hear the groans of the prisoners, the victims and their families, the cry of the poor, needy and neglected persons and how to reach out to them in compassionate works of mercy. He will also guide us in our dealings with our co- workers, the officials, our benefactors and all who are involved in our ministry.

The Holy Spirit Will Lead us to All the Truth

There are times when we are confused or deceived by others. It can also be that we are carried away by our emotions and reach wrong conclusions. Every day the Newspaper brings us sad facts about human trafficking, money laundering, false promises of politicians and so on. Let us seek the assistance of the Holy Spirit that he will lead us into all truth. Let us pray for those who are trapped by deceptions and



also for those who are involved in working for them. May the Holy Spirit lead us into all the truth.

The Holy Spirit Will Give all Glory to Jesus

It is said that the ego is our worst enemy and it follows us till our death. It is a natural tendency in all to attribute all glory for oneself and forget about God or throw the blame on others as did our first parents. Some may even belittle others and speak sarcastically about them. Jesus condemned such pharisaical attitude and gave us the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. Let us pray for deliverance from such evil.

The Holy Spirit Will Convict the World about Sin and God's Judgment

When Francis became the Pope he was asked to spell out what he felt or thought about himself. His prompt reply was, 'I am a sinner'. It is said that the consciousness of

sin is slowly disappearing from all especially the young. The Holy Spirit will create in us a humble and contrite heart, necessary for receiving God's forgiveness and growing in union with God and with one another.

The Holy Spirit gives us the Divine Gifts and makes our lives fruitful for the Kingdom. St Paul writes elaborately about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in chapter 12 of his first letter to the Corinthians. They are: Wisdom, Discernment, Knowledge, Faith, Healing power, Working miracles, Prophecy, Gift of tongues, and the interpretation of it. The fruits that the Spirit produces in us are: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Humility (Gal 5:22). As we are at the Easter Season preparing earnestly for the great day of Pentecost, let us pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us and all whom we serve.



Prison Ministry India

State Coordinators Online Gathering

**19 May 2023
3.30 to 4.30pm**

**Google Meet Video Call Link:
<https://meet.google.com/rxo-wwwb-ikw>**

"I was in prison you visited me" (Mt 25,36).



Prison Ministry India

Special Task Forces Meet

26 May 2023
3.30 to 4.30pm

Google Meet Video Call Link:

<https://meet.google.com/mip-viye-kbz>

"I was in prison you visited me" (Mt 25,36).



Prison Ministry India

Pentecostal Night Vigil

27 May 2023
8.30 to 10.00pm

Google Meet Video Call Link:

<https://meet.google.com/itt-grit-boy>

"I was in prison you visited me" (Mt 25,36).

Chhattisgarh PMI State Gathering: Report

Fr Alexander Ekka, SJ

PMI volunteers from 4 PMI units of Chhattisgarh Archdiocese came together at Gramin Vikas Kendra, Social Center, Bishop's House, Kunkuri, Jashpur diocese on April 16, Sunday 2023. The gathering was graced by Most Reverend Bishop Emmanuel Kerketta, DD, Regional PMI Chairperson, Chhattisgarh Bishop of Jashpur Diocese and Rev Dr Father Francis Kodiyan, MCBS (Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament), National PMI Coordinator, Bengaluru.

Liturgy

The Holy Eucharist began at 9.00 A.M. in the Our Lady of Rosary Cathedral. His Grace Bishop Emmanuel Kerketta, DD was the main celebrant. Rev Fr Francis Kodiyan, MCBS, Alexander Lakra, SJ, Nirdosh Ekka, SJ, Fr Sergius Kindo, Fr Arul Claret, OMI, Fr Mukti Prakash Ekka, Fr Hemant Xess, Fr Prem Gladin celebrant, Ekka, S.J. Fr Peter Xess, and Fr Zacharias concelebrated.

Lead Kindly Light

The Meeting began with lighting of the lamp by Most Rev Bishop Emmanuel Kerketta, DD, Fr. Francis Kodiyan, Alexander Ekka, S.J., Fr. Sergius Kindo, Fr. Peter Xess which was followed by an opening prayer by the State Coordinator. A simple felicitation was given to the Chief Guest, dignitaries and the PMI volunteers.

Keynote Address and Blessings

In his keynote address Fr. Francis Kodiyan, MCBS revealed that PMI is a spiritual

movement where prayer, fasting, meditation, adoration etc. are used as powerful tools to convert, reintegrate, reform and reconcile prisoners and common people. He also informed that there are numerous government schemes and projects by the State Government for the inmates of the jails. Most Rev Bishop Emmanuel Kerketta, DD in his words of blessings asked the volunteers to continue their great mission in spite of difficulties in the PMI units. He urged the participants to tap the resources from the government. The Bishop assured the participants of full support in future.

Fruit Gathering from Goa Conference

During the sharing session on PMI 13 National Conference which was organized from November 15 to 18, 2022, at St. Joseph Vaz Spiritual Renewal Centre, Old Goa, the participants were all praises about the excellent quality of food, accommodation, resource personnel, workshop modules, entertainment, Cruise trip, Goa sightseeing etc. Concern for the prisoners, mutual support, prayer, fasting and reconciliation were some of the common values that impressed the volunteers during the Convention.

PMI Unit Reporting

All the diocesan PMI unit Coordinators of Chhattisgarh reported that the good rapport with the government, non-government departments and the officials helped the volunteers to go ahead smoothly with the

prison ministry. It was appraised thankfully that the Church personnel of all the dioceses of Chhattisgarh too have cooperated and collaborated with the PMI volunteers. Some PMI units have conducted health check-up, family visits, counselling, rehabilitation, legal assistance to inmates etc. In spite of some problems the PMI activities are going on well in all the units.

Interaction

During the interactive session Fr. Francis Kodiyan shared about the origin of the PMI that went as back as to his Seminary training years. Later in 1990-91 as Assistant Director of Jesus Fraternity, he founded the First Renewal and Rehabilitation centre for the male released prisoners. In 1992 he founded the First Renewal and Rehabilitation Centre for the female released prisoners. He has published more than 15 books and hundreds of articles to his credit in different national and international books and magazines; he is the present managing editor of Prison Voice, Bengaluru. He urged everyone to focus more on the spiritual strength of the PMI movement. He also mentioned that PMI will be celebrating the Golden Jubilee in the year 2031 and all the PMI units are expected to get involved in fulfilling the Jubilee projects like forming prayer groups, Eucharistic adorations, establish Kolbe Homes, Van Thuan Homes for the rehabilitation of released prisoners and their children. He also advocated to find the ways and means to get financial assistance from the projects and schemes of State government.

Action Plan

At the end of the meeting all agreed to make their immediate, short term and

long-term action plans in their respective diocesan units contextually: 1. Form prayer group for 5 hours daily in the units. 2. Regularly participate in the off line and online spiritual activities of the Head Office, Bengaluru. 3. Build Kolbe Home and rehabilitation centres for the released prisoners and for their children etc. 4. Most Rev Bishop Emmanuel, DD will send circular to all the PMI units as guidelines to raise fund and contribute for the State Coordinator's fund and National fund. 5. PMI units will build up their own PMI fund. 6. Utilise the available prisoners' projects and schemes of the State Government. 7. Form a CG PMI WhatsApp Group. 8. Form State PMI Coordinator's team from Raipur with members from diocesan PMI units. 9 Revive and intensify the works of PMI units. 10. All PMI units are urged to subscribe to "Prison Voice" magazine. 11. The next Chhattisgarh State Annual PMI gathering will be in Bilaspur in 2024. Fr. Francis Kodiyan, National Coordinator, has assured the participants of his continual guidance, support and assistance to the PMI units in Chhattisgarh in future.

Vote of thanks

Sr. Sheeba Jose, OSU on behalf of the PMI Chhattisgarh thanked all the participants for enthusiastically and actively participating in the State meeting. She especially thanked Most Rev Bishop Emmanuel Kerketta, DD for availing himself and blessing the participants. She made a special vote of thanks to Fr. Dr Francis Kodiyan for taking so much of trouble to come all the way from Bengaluru and grace the occasion. She thanked Fr. Sergius Kindo for hosting

and coordinating the arrangements. Special thanks were given to Sr. Shiji Joseph, HC who made all the local arrangements of accommodation, meeting hall, as well as the light and sound system for the meeting. The Credit for preparing delicious food for the participants with numerous mouth savouring dishes went to Sr. Sayt Joseph, HC and her kitchen team, Esther Xess, Vibin Varghese and others.

Lunch and Departure

The State meeting ended at 1.45 P.M. with a sumptuous meal, well prepared by Jashpur unit headed by Sr Shiji Joseph, HC. Fr. Sergius Kindo, the Diocesan PMI Coordinator received Fr. Francis Kodiyan from Ranchi (Jharkhand) airstrip and accompanied him to Ranchi airport at the time of departure.

Participants

Most Rev Bishop Emmanuel Kerketta, DD, Fr. Dr. Francis Kodiyan, Alexander Ekka, S.J. Fr. Sergius Kindo, Sr. Shiji Joseph, HC, Miss Mukti Suchita Tirkey, Miss Julia Kujur, Fr. Hemant Xess, Sr. Amita, HC, Fr. Mukti Prakash Ekka, Sr. Sajaya Ampat, Dr. Usia Lakra Mr. Francis Tigga, Mr. Bernard Lakra, Ms. Esther Xess, Mr. Vibin Varghese, Fr. Peter Xess, Sr. Sheeba, OSU, Sr. Sesu Mary, Sr. Maria Jacinta, JB, Sr. Sophy Mathew, Sr. Ferdina Lakra, DSA. Sr. Admina MC. Sr. Adlina, MC. Sr. Prasanna, Fr. Arul Clarette, Fr. Nirdosh Ekka, S.J. Mrs. Anthrecia Bara. Sr. Mary Regina, Sr. Ruma Maria, Fr. Prem Gladin, Sr. Kiran Ekka, Fr. Zacharias Lakra, SJ, Sr. Sarla, JMJ.

Jesus - My Love Bomb

Sumita Reid

Inspired by PMI Priests, Fr Varghese Kariperry & Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

Just as Moses entered the Red Sea & caused an exodus;

May Jesus enter your hearts & cause an explosion!!

May Jesus be your love bomb!!

Just as the fire in Daniel's 3 men caused a holy fusion

May faith in Jesus chase away every life's confusion

May Jesus be your love bomb!!

Just as God made various creatures & saw that it was good

May we carry the love bomb to every corner & see that it is good!

May Jesus be your love bomb!!

Just as the prophets spoke of JESUS's coming

May we too confess, proclaim & declare His name in all the places we are going!

May Jesus be your love bomb!!

With Joshua's faith and Samson's strength let's break all barriers

Let's all put on the whole armour of God & be great Prayer warriors!!

My Experience in Prison Ministry India

Sr Ann John CHF

“I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt. 25.36). 11th April 2023 was the day I reached in front of PMI National office. I entered the house and Fr. Francis and Sr. Amala welcomed me. Fr. Francis had taken me on his scooty and brought me to Van Tuan home where the PMI volunteers training program was going on. I was at peace with everyone and everything. In the evening we had the Eucharistic celebration and all of us attended it with love and gratitude. The next day we had the inaugural session and everything went on well. Bishop Jose gave us a substantial talk and I was so much taken up with all the teachers and all those who came to talk about their experiences. My attitude towards the Prison Ministry changed into a good cause to work for prisoners with my whole heart and mind. Fr. Francis and all others spoke very well and it inspired me to work for the Prison Ministry in the coming years. I fully believe that it was only Jesus who brought me here to listen about PMI or else I had no plan to come over here. It was Fr. Jose, the coordinator of Delhi, who asked me “Are you ready?” And these words of his made me think and come here. Fr. Francis’ introductory talk kept me alive and active to understand more about this Ministry, especially about inconvenience as our convenience and to search, serve and save the lost.

Now I wonder at the work of my community sister, Sr. Grace Matthew who works hard for the prisoners with much enthusiasm. I thank God for this opportunity that he has given me for the upliftment of all the

prisoners. As Sr. Lini said it is because of somebody’s cry that we are here. Yes I feel 100% that it may be true and so I am waiting for the people who cried to the Lord that I should work for them. I hope one day I will meet them. All the talks were very enriching and fruitful for this ministry and all those who had talked to us showed very much zeal to work for all the prisoners. Our strength is the Eucharistic celebration and Eucharistic adoration. Yes, here in Van Tuan home Jesus is 24 hours on the altar. At any time HE is available for us to speak to him and to experience His living presence.

This ministry is a prayer-oriented ministry which is the secret of its growth. Earlier I never prayed for prisoners but now I started praying for them. They are not born criminals but are innocents. Thank you, Lord, for this awareness. I’m begging not for me but for the others. Yes I should not have any shame to beg for my brothers and sisters. As I conclude my sharing experience of the training program, it has given me a strong renewal in my life and I have taken a decision to talk to everybody about this ministry and inspire others to become volunteers for God’s work. Thank you, dear Fr Francis, and all others who work for this ministry. Thank God. “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (St. Luke 23:43).



PMI Kerala State Gathering Inauguration.



PMI Maharashtra Thanking Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva.



PMI National Training Participants Attend Lecture at Central Prison - Bengaluru.



PMI National Training Participants' Visit to Open jail, Devanahalli.



PMI National Training Participants Visiting Central Prison, Bengaluru.



**PMI Prisoners' Releasing Squad,
Pune.**



**PMI Visit to Pardeshipura
Juvenile Home.**



**PMI Volunteers Training
Participants' Picnic.**



**PMI Volunteers Training Program
Inaugural Session.**



**PMI Volunteers Training
Program Participants, Bengaluru.**



**Repatriation of
Prime Rose to Zimbabwe.**



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

