



PRISON VOICE

October 2019

Vol. XVII

Issue 2

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹ 20/-

*Count Your
Redeemed*





Medical Camp, Goa Prison



**Gandhi Jayanthi Celebration,
Mananthavadi Prison, Kerala**



Jail Day Celebrations at Kakanad District Jail



Computer Training Course, Ujjain Central Prison, M.P



MSC General Superior's Visit to PMI National Office



**Kurumbala Parishioners' Visit to
Mananthavadi Sub Jail**



**Seminarians from St Thomas Apostolic Seminary,
Vadavathoor Visiting Ernakulam Sub Jail**



PMI JUBILEE PRAYER

Heavenly Father creator of universe, we thank and praise you for your beloved Son Our Lord Jesus Christ who came in search of sinners and died on the cross for our salvation. Beloved Father, we thank and glorify you for our Founder Fathers – Fr Francis and Fr Varghese who brought to light the spiritual movement Prison Ministry India for the release, reformation, rehabilitation and redemption of prisoners. As we celebrate the silver jubilee of the national level prison ministry we praise and thank you for the abundant blessings showered upon brethren behind the bars and on PMI volunteers. Father God, bless all the incarcerated brethren, their families, victims and authorities, bless all those who served in PMI national office, especially our bishops, priests, religious, and lay volunteers. In a special way, sanctify our Founders, former and present chairman, national, regional, state, zonal and unit coordinators, secretaries, rehabilitation centers' staff, diocesan directors and all others who dedicated their lives for the integral human development of prisoners. Bless all our benefactors and those who collaborated with us in redeeming prisoners. Merciful Father, we ask your forgiveness for our sinfulness, unfaithfulness, negligence and sins of omission in the past 25 years. Have mercy on us, sanctify us with your precious blood, fill us with your Holy Spirit and strengthen us with your Word and the Eucharist so that we may be able to do your mission for the Lost with added fervour and fruitfulness. Stay with those who work hard for the success of PMI Jubilee and assist us in various ways. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord, Amen.

1 Our Father, 1 Hail Mary, 1 Glory be to
Mother Mary, Pray for us
St Maximillian Kolbe Pray for us

Contents



PRISON VOICE

NATIONAL MONTHLY



*The Ultimate
Goal of Prison
Ministry India is
Redemption*

Editor's View.....	04
National Coordinator's Desk.....	05
The Lord in His Generosity Helped Me at Every Stage.....	07
I Was Useless but Now I am Priceless.....	08
I Saw Jesus in Her!.....	10
She is Hopeful & Positive Towards Life.....	12
Reaching to the Unreached.....	13
Hats off to You the Volunteers of Snehashramam.....	14
She Cried Intensely.....	16
The Lord's Care, Blessings and Healing.....	17
She Experienced the Good Shepherd Who Found the Lost.....	17
From Beach Huts to Palace.....	19
The Judge Shed Tears!.....	20
Nothing Succeeds like Success ...	22
Success Does not Come at Once but by Prayer, Fasting and Perseverance.....	23
A Memorable Day in Cellular Jail..	24

Are you willing?

"Help a Child of a Prisoner

*Prevent a Potential
Criminal"*

*80% of the children of
prisoners are potential
criminals unless somebody
takes care of them. Prison
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children of prisoners:*

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No Human Being is Bad as to be Beyond Redemption

Life is a journey; it is a fight every day. Every human on earth wants to become better each day on their journey. Some are guided and others not. All of us struggle through this journey of life and only through the experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, the vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved. 'No human being is bad as to be beyond redemption,' said Mahatma Gandhi. The theme that runs through this issue is rehabilitation and redemption of our brethren behind the bars and their families. Rehabilitation is the action of restoring someone to former privileges or reputation after a period of disfavour.

Won't you give me a chance to renew my life? I really wanted to change my life, but I couldn't; won't you help me? I want to live a good life, but when I'm released nobody might believe me, people will not accept me; probably the police will catch me again under the provision of suspicion. Could you arrange for a place where I could stay for at least six months so that I will not be caught by the police again? My family has abandoned me, society considers me a criminal. If you don't help me who else in the world will help me? When I'm released nobody will dare to give me a job. Would you please find a job for me? To answer these questions, we have started many rehabilitation centres for released prisoners, both men and women. There are Kolbe Homes for the children of prisoners and PMI runs another 30 rehabilitation centres. My heartfelt appreciation to all the PMI volunteers who have dedicated their lives in the redeeming mission of Jesus Christ. We have redeemed many souls for God.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"

(Jn 3:16). This was the redemptive act of God that he sent his only Son to redeem every human being who was created by him with love, out of love and for love. God never judges anyone; rather he loves everyone which was the only way to redeem humanity. The Prison ministry volunteers walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, involve themselves in the process of redemption of the lost, the last and the least. There are thousands of rehabilitation and redemption stories by PMI volunteers and few of them are written down in this issue. We will continue to join our hands in the redeeming mission of Jesus Christ. We bring peace and joy in the lives of broken beings by being there for them.

Zacchaeus was a sinner. He was a tax collector. When Jesus encountered him, he told Zacchaeus that he would have dinner with him. We do not see Jesus making a long speech at his home, but the loving presence of Jesus transformed him. He immediately showed repentance. He declared loudly, "Master, if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much". Yes friends, our loving presence with our brethren behind the bars will substantially transform them and bring them back to God who created with love and care. Let us continue to extend our hands and hearts to the wounded and broken beings of our society by being there for the last, the least and the lost. "I have not lost one of those you gave me", (Jn 18: 9). Let these words of Jesus be the chant of every PMI volunteer.



Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
Chief Editor

PMI

LEADS THE LOST TO THE PARADISE

From National Coordinator's Desk



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

Introduction

The occasion of a jubilee is the perfect time to count the blessings from the Lord and to thank and praise Him. As Prison Ministry India (PMI) celebrates the Silver Jubilee of its national-level ministry, it is our responsibility to count the blessings we have received from the Lord. It is true that we have received innumerable boons from the Lord in different ways such as the rehabilitation centres, homes for prisoners' children, national office, more than 7000 volunteers and so on. But the most important blessing, which Jesus our Lord likes and considers very precious is the reformed and redeemed prisoners. It is also a significant blessing that we continue to assist and keep them in the state of reformation. This article highlights the importance of reformed and redeemed prisoners in our ministry for the lost and invites every PMI member to count the number of redeemed prisoners.

Redemption of the Lost

The PMI is a spiritual movement that sprung forth from the Eucharistic heart of Jesus. The PMI founder fathers received this mission while adoring the Eucharistic Jesus in the Malankara chapel of St Thomas Apostolic Seminary. This PMI stream that spouted from the eternal source, the Most Holy Eucharist, is destined to reach the shores of prisons reforming and redeeming the lost sheep. This is a ministry very close to the core of Jesus. "The son of Man came to seek and save the lost" (Lk 19: 10). "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Lk

5: 32). Jesus went to Zacchaeus' house and redeemed him saying, "Today salvation has come to this house" (Lk 19: 9). Similarly, when we visit a prison, we should be able to say salvation has come to this prison. When we meet a prisoner, we should be able to say salvation has come to this person. One of the excellent experiences of the early Church was that daily the Lord added to their numbers those who were being saved (Acts 2: 47). In the same way, the Lord wants to add every day many numbers of saved prisoners to PMI.

The Good Thief

Jesus redeemed the good thief on the cross while he was at the culmination of his agony. "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23: 33-43). Same is the task entrusted to PMI volunteers, that is, leading prisoners and the lost to paradise by helping them to repent, reconcile, reform, rehabilitate and redeem. The Silver Jubilee reminds us of this most important task of PMI of redeeming the lost. Many a time Jesus reminded us that there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent (Lk 15: 7). This redeeming rejoicing is even more evident in the story of the prodigal son. The father of the prodigal son says to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' (Lk 15: 22-

24). To bring salvation to prisoners, rejoicing in heaven, life to the dead and to find the lost, PMI volunteers should take care of the following aspects:

Faith

PMI is a faith-based spiritual movement. Faith has a significant role to play in the day-to-day affairs of PMI. This is a ministry totally dependent and trusting on Lord Jesus. PMI has been able to do great things only through a profound faith in the Lord. To enhance the number of redeemed prisoners, first of all, we need to believe that transformation of prisoners is possible. This is possible only with the grace and firm belief that nothing is impossible for the Lord. This is simply the work of the power of the name of Jesus. As Peter said, "I do not have any silver or gold for you. But I will give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, get up and walk!" (Acts 3: 6).

Prayer

Prayer is one of the best expressions of faith. For the salvation of a prisoner, we must intensify prayer, and request prayers from many others. Daily participation in the Holy Mass and offering it for the reformation of the lost is one of the most efficacious ways of redeeming prisoners. This was the method St Therese of Lisieux used in converting Pranzini. Praying Rosary for the conversion of sinners is another simple and significant practice. Reciting 'Thank you Jesus' with the intention of reforming the prisoner is also effective.

Mortifications

In the endeavour of reforming hardcore criminals, not only prayer but also fasting and mortifications are to be made use of. "This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." (Mt 17: 21). Fasting, mortifications and small sacrifices for the conversion of sinners are not only helpful for our own spiritual growth but also for prisoners' conversion.

Open to the Spirit

In our attempt to reform a prisoner we should keep an open attitude to the Spirit, that is, keenly waiting and looking ahead to the possibilities, opportunities and occasions that would help their change. God who came to seek and save the lost would bring forth the right persons, thoughts, ideas and opportunities for their transformation. It is the duty of the PMI volunteer to recognize this special situation and to make use of this golden chance for their reformation.

Thank You, Jesus

Human transformation is a great gift of God, an act of grace and is a great miracle. For this, first of all, we have to believe it; secondly, we have to pray and work hard; thirdly, we should have an attitude of openness to the Spirit; and fourthly, we should thank in advance for this great gift. The best expression of our gratitude towards God is the prayer, "Thank you, Jesus". This mantra should always be on our tongues especially when we do prison visit. "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).

Conclusion

PMI extends various types of services to prisoners such as material, legal, cultural, recreational, psychological, psychospiritual, social, clinical, medical and spiritual. All these shall lead them to be redeemed. The criterion to judge the ministry is to count the reformed, rehabilitated and redeemed prisoners. The PMI in its 38 years of history have reformed and rehabilitated more than 5000 released prisoners all over India. This is done mainly through its various types of rehabilitation centres and dedicated volunteers. Remember that our final judgement depends on this criterion, "I was in prison, you visited me" (Mt 25: 36). The Silver Jubilee underlines that the ultimate goal of PMI is prisoners' salvation.

The Lord in His Generosity Helped Me at Every Stage



Sr. Adele SCCG

National Executive Member

Rehabilitation is given great importance in the services provided by the Prison Ministry. When people are released from prison after a long period of incarceration, they are at cross roads, puzzled, not sure how to insert themselves back into society. If they do not have a place to go or lack persons to help them, they go through great confusion, disappointment, discouragement and often get frustrated. Some might be tempted to even commit suicide. I have met one such prisoner who was saved with timely intervention and was given good care after his release.

During the past 15 years and more of my involvement in this ministry, I have met several brothers and sisters behind the bars who shared their worries regarding their children. I wish to share here the problems faced by a particular family where all the members were imprisoned. Amala (name changed), her mother and younger sister were arrested in a murder case and sent to the Bangalore Central Jail some years ago.

Amala was accused of having murdered her husband after an unfortunate incident. She had to push away her alcoholic husband who was moving forward to attack her own younger sister with lust. To save her sister from the hands of her husband who was highly intoxicated she pushed him off forcefully. Her husband lost his balance, fell down on the granite stone floor and

lost his life.

Consequently, Amala, her sister and their mother were accused of murder and they had to spend 14 long years in prison. Her two sons were left under the care of her brother. In prison, her worry was mainly about her sons. She requested me to help her sons to continue their education. On approaching Amala's brother, I was told that he would be sending the sons to work in the field. Finally, after continued insistence, he agreed to send her sons to college and school, provided I would meet their educational expenses.

I experienced the providence of God when I went ahead to find a way to assist the boys to continue their education. The Lord in his generosity helped me at every stage. I remember the days when we were looking for openings at schools and colleges to admit the two boys. Prison Ministry India did not have a home at that time to accommodate boys who were children of prisoners.

I was fortunate to get help from the priests of Samaskan and Barnabite Congregations to educate both the boys until the release of the mother. When the elder one completed his B.Com, obtaining a college-level rank, and the younger one finished his P.U.C., their mother, grandmother and aunt were released from the Central Prison, Bangalore.

I recall with great joy that we were able to accommodate them all for a few days in the Indian Social Institute run by the Jesuit fathers. After 14 years of hard life behind the high walls of the prison, Amala spent a few happy hours with her family.

Then, they were taken to Jeevodaya Rehabilitation Centre for released prisoners, run by the Sisters of Holy Cross. Sr. Clara, the Director, welcomed them to the centre. Later, when one of the volunteers of Prison Ministry India offered them a small house free of rent, they were all shifted to that house. As Amala, her sister and mother were all trained in tailoring during the period of punishment, they had earned and saved some amount of money during their 14 years of prison life for their expenses. They continue to earn money from tailoring even now in order to supplement the

income brought in by the sons. Jeevodaya Ashram continues their help whenever they need assistance.

The help this family received during the transition period went a long way in making their entry back into society smooth and peaceful, without any risk for them or to society. They were not hard-core criminals. But in the case of release of criminals, if we fail in this important step of rehabilitation, what is going to happen in the immediate future after their release? They are going to go right back to using the only skills they have to survive, they are going to be caught again; then they will go right back to prison, quite likely with longer sentences, but no more help. **We, the volunteers of Prison Ministry who are called by God to be agents of change in society, need to be aware of these issues.**

I Was USELESS But Now I am PRICELESS

Saranya was an orphan but not orphaned!

This young woman represents the fulfilment of the great mission of genuine love and care. Currently, 25-year-old Saranya married to Mr Jose is a blessed woman having given birth to 4 babies in a single delivery! She is well-adjusted and functioning within the family and society at a level previously thought unattainable for orphans and abandoned!

*"I was abandoned but not orphaned.
I was unloved but I am loved.
I was useless but now I am priceless.
I had heartaches but now I have a heart
full of love."*



Sr Beena Thekkan SdP
Directress - Snehashramam
Monvila, Trivandrum

These words come from her selfless and confident person. The hand of God touched this little orphaned girl when she was placed in a *shisubhavan* by a good soul. Later, she was shifted to a shelter home, Athani in Trivandrum. There she did her academic studies up to the 7th standard, besides learning tailoring and handicraft.

The nuns from Snehasramam used to visit this *shisubhavan*. Saranya having grown

into a youth expressed her desire to get settled in life. Thus, she was brought to Snehasramam. She would say that she had been a stubborn, non-cooperative and at times angry and lonely person. But she says that here she received good guidance. Together with many other girls from a similar background, she received mental, and spiritual formation, life etiquette and learned life skills for home management. The well-scheduled daily disciplinary practices along with spiritual exercises in the form of regular prayers, holy mass, frequent confessions, monthly recollections, annual retreats, counselling and guidance sessions healed her psychological wounds. She learnt of a God who loved her immensely.

She felt God's word spoken through the Prophet Isaiah in chapter 49:15: "Can a mother forget her baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you." She recognized her worth as a human being created, loved, cared for and sustained by a God who has taken form through the selfless and dedicated service of the nuns and helpers.

Saranya spent two years and six months in Snehasramam undergoing life-transforming

experiences. The Sisters noticed that she was mature enough to be married. To her good fortune, she was married to Mr Jose, a middle-class fisherman in 2016. The whole family accepted Saranya wholeheartedly with no judgement and bestowed on her care and warmth. Saranya with her good heart reciprocated the emotions, treating Jose's parents as her own parents and his siblings as her own siblings.

Saranya and Jose are now blessed with quadruplets. They do experience financial crisis due to the frequent adverse situation at sea. Many individuals asked her to give the children away for adoption. But she emphatically and lovingly said, "I was neglected and abandoned but good people never gave up on me. I do not want any of our children to experience the trauma I underwent. Even if I have to face many difficulties I will never give up on my children because I know that every child is a precious gift of God. Besides I wish that no child born in this world should ever suffer the loss of its mother's love."

Saranya is ever grateful to all who fostered and nourished her. She is indeed a source of great happiness and fulfilment to anyone who dedicates themselves to ushering in joy into the lives of the less privileged.

Report: PMI Goa

David Fernandes

Goa State Coordinator

The Goa unit of PMI consists of around 70 volunteers who through their weekly visits cater to the varied needs of almost 480 inmates at the Modern Central Jail, Colvale.

Inmates are encouraged to take part in educational, cultural and sports activities. Programs are organized on festival days and days of national importance. Inmates are then given an opportunity to display their talents. Various indoor and outdoor tournaments are conducted in memory of the Late Sr Mary Jane

SFN and prizes are awarded.

Many inmates have registered for graduation and other short-term courses under IGNOU. Holy Eucharist is celebrated weekly and Adoration is held fortnightly for the benefit of inmates.

Volunteers furnish surety to deserving inmates for parole or furlough. They also visit families of prisoners and help in financing the education of their children.

I Saw Jesus in Her!

In the Vishakhapatnam unit, we had started visiting jails from 1964. The pioneer was Sr Marie Francoise, a Swiss-origin nun, who had come to Andhra Pradesh as a missionary and who had experience visiting jail and doing service for prisoners in her homeland. She used to visit the jail with great zeal and enthusiasm. She was supported by the diocese and our congregation in her ministry for the spiritual growth of the prisoners in jail. Youth from different parishes used to accompany her and help her with the regional language. She used to ask the communities to pray for these prisoners, for their welfare and reunion with their families. All through the year, she used to go to the prison and the observation home. They became very close to her and they used to share their experiences with her and ask for prayers.

I was inspired by her zeal and enthusiasm and joined her from 1986 onwards. I took up the responsibility of the mission from 1996 after she retired. Though it was tough for me, I took it up as a challenge to continue this mission with prayerful support and encouragement. I was afraid of the prisoners and even the police personnel. But Jesus gave me the grace to fulfil this mission whatever the struggles and difficulties I faced. I could see Jesus in the prisoners, especially in those who were innocent and not at fault.

About 15 years ago, a woman was brought to the jail, implicated in a murder case. She was very poor, uncultured and innocent.



Sr Mary James
AP State
Asst Coordinator

On being brought to the jail, she became very violent and troublesome. Even the prisoners and police were scared of her. She would not obey the authority or do any work. One day, I met her and spoke to her. Initially, she was not willing to listen to me. So, every week I used to meet her personally, talk to her and pray with her. As a result, slowly she became so close to me that she would say that she had no one in this world except me. Over a period of time, she changed her ways, became very helpful and responsible.

I came to know that she had lost her parents at a very young age. She was looked after by her uncle, who was rude and had use for her only for her ability to work. She did not have any schooling. When she reached marriageable age, her uncle arranged her marriage with an elderly man, who was already married with two older sons. One day, she had a dispute with her husband regarding property and the stepsons threw her out of the house. She went and stayed in another house to look after an elderly woman who was rich and bedridden. One day this elderly lady had a fall and died. The family blamed her saying that she had killed her for the sake of property. She was put behind the bars, had no visitors, no personal belongings or clothes. She would ask me for items required to meet her basic needs and I used to provide these. She was

transformed with our intervention and we tried to get her released from prison. She requested me to find her shelter. One evening at 7.30 pm, I received a call from the Central Jail saying that she was being released and she wanted to meet me as I was the only one who could take care of her. I was really in a panic as to where to place her. I knocked on many doors and could not find a suitable place. I took one of my community members along with me and brought her from jail by 9.30 pm and put her in our hostel. When she saw the big room, which was provided for her and experienced the serene atmosphere she was shocked. She could not believe that she

was behind the bars for so many years. She cried and cried the whole night out of joy. The next day she was taken out to purchase basic toiletries. After three days, I took her to the Hyderabad rehabilitation centre. She remained there for two months and came back to Vishakhapatnam. Then she came to our old age home and now renders her services here. She is content and happy in our home.

Jesus has come to save the lost, the least and the last. So even now, through each of us, he can give meaningful lives to many through our visits to prisons, through our interventions and by our help to mainstream them back to society.

It always seems impossible until it is done

11 October 2018: It was the day when I committed myself as a PMI volunteer under the guidance of Fr. Sijith John, PMI coordinator, Punjab. Coming from a middle-class family, for me, even thinking of prison was equivalent to committing sin. As written in the Holy Bible, "For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11). In Punjab, PMI activities are going well whether it is the distribution of blankets or the opening of the tailoring centre at the Central Jail Hoshiarpur.

Last month, on 28 September 2019 we had a monitoring visit to the tailoring centre at the Central Jail Hoshiarpur with Sr Mary Abraham Adores. She was pleased with the prison staff and the hard work put in by Mrs Lalita Rani (trainer). The female inmates attending the classes showed their work like frocks, suits, baby pants, shorts etc. While we were about to leave, we heard someone from behind say, "Praise the Lord." A woman wearing a rosary insisted that Sr Mary pray for her. The Sister prayed for

Abhishek

Punjab - PMI Volunteer

her and wished her the best for her future. At the outset, it could be said that women still have so much to overcome to reach true equality, especially female prisoners who are so unfairly stigmatized. We need to not only highlight their problems but also give them hope for the future.

The jail superintendent, Mr Lalit Kholi thanked PMI Punjab and the Navjeevan Charitable Society, Jalandhar for their social work for the betterment of humanity. As the Holy Bible says, "But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded" (2 Chronicles 15:7). He insisted that we open a computer centre in the jail for the male prisoners where they could learn something good. There is no doubt that God will bless us hundred-fold every time we manage to light up the lives of these innocent souls.

Last, but not the least, "Commit to your work to the Lord and your plans will be established" (Proverbs 16: 3).

She is Hopeful & Positive Towards LIFE

Sindhu (Name Changed) was an uneducated village woman without any malice. She was married when she was 19-years old and gave birth to a baby boy after 1 year. Her husband was addicted to bad habits. After she had given birth to the baby, he never came back to take her home. She remained with her aged mother. She started working in a garment factory for her survival. She had to travel by bus to the town for work. One day, while waiting for the bus, she met a well-mannered woman who enquired about her job and family. She met her at the bus stop a few other times.

One rainy evening, while Swarna was waiting for the bus, the well-mannered woman came in a car and offered her a lift. She got into the taxi and went. After a while, Swarna realised that the taxi was going in the wrong direction and when she pointed this out, she was threatened with a knife. She was taken to the railway station and then by train to Mumbai. She was sold to a brothel house. After a few years, the house was raided and she was rescued by an NGO. After completing the case process, she was brought to her sister's house. They said that since she was missing for a long time, they had done the rituals for the dead; now she looked so sickly and miserable as if her organs might have been taken according to her

family. They did not want to take her back.

The NGO that rescued and brought her, contacted Jeevodaya. She was brought

to our House. At Jeevodaya, she regained her health and gained a positive attitude. She started to go outside for work. One year later, 2 volunteers of PMI and myself visited her mother's house where her son and mother lived. Many neighbours came together and asked about her. We told them that she missed the way and she was with us and that she was not able to find her way back. The mother was happy to see her daughter. When her son came back from school, he recognised her, which was a big surprise to her and she was very shaken up. She was so worried whether her son would recognise her because he was a very small boy when she had been taken. We came back to Jeevodaya that day and after a few weeks she re-joined her family. Now she is working and leading a happy life. Her son is an epileptic patient, but she is hopeful and positive towards life.

"For with God, nothing will be impossible" (Lk 1:37)



Sr Clara Alappat
Directress, Jeevodaya
Ashram, Bangalore

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CATHOLIC PRISON PASTORAL CARE



The Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is organizing an international meeting on "Integral Human Development and Catholic Prison Pastoral Care" in the Vatican on 7-8 November 2019. PMI has been invited to this meeting and Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS, the CBCI Secretary to Prison Ministry India is invited to present a paper on the Initiatives and Contributions of the Indian Church in Prison Ministry Amidst the Social and Ecclesial Challenges.

Let us pray for the success of this meeting and in a special way let us pray for Fr Francis Kodiyan for the fruitfulness of his paper presentation scheduled for 7th November at 1755.

Reaching to the UNREACHED



Mr Anthony Jacob
Liaising Officer, PMI, Pune

I feel privileged to share three cases with the PMI family, where God used me as an instrument to show his mercy. We have 53 prisons throughout Maharashtra, divided among 4 regions. The southern region including Mumbai has 12 prisons, the western region under Pune has 13 prisons, the central region of Aurangabad has 16 prisons and the eastern region under Nagpur has 12 prisons. The Central Yerwada Prison, Pune is considered to be the biggest prison in Asia.

Case 1: Just 6 weeks after my open-heart surgery, the Almighty gave me an opportunity to organise the burial rites for a deceased inmate and help his soul rest in peace. I received a call from the Superintendent of Central Prison Yerwada, Pune to help make arrangements for the burial of a middle-aged Christian inmate hailing from Tamilnadu who had died of a heart attack after a year as an under-trial. No relatives had claimed his body. With the help of Mr Mario Fernandes of Ferns Undertakers and a police staff member, I claimed the body from Sassoon Government Hospital morgue. Mario generously waived all his charges to serve this Christian brother. Fr Wilfred Fernandes, our state coordinator and a few Pune PMI members performed the final rituals for our deceased brother at the Indian Christian Cemetery, Hadapsar Pune. We prayed over him so that his soul may Rest in Peace.

Case 2: An inmate hailing from Belgaum, Karnataka, serving his prison term for the last 14 years in the Pune District Open Prison, reached out to the prison officials seeking financial help for his son to complete his engineering studies. I approached the director and trustees of the Mechanical Engineering College in Belgaum in-person to avail of concession for the student. They respected our appeal and PMI took the responsibility of funding his 8th-semester fees. Through hard work, the boy completed his engineering degree and even got a place on the merit list. PMI further supported his education by sponsoring a new laptop for him in his

3rd year which was handed over to him in St Patrick's Cathedral during the 8.30 am Mass on a Sunday. He expressed his gratitude and shared his testimony of experiencing Jesus through regular Bible reading. Inspired and motivated, he also took a vow to sponsor an inmate's child's education in the future. He is currently undergoing naval training in Goa. We thank the Lord for giving us an opportunity to direct a child to grow up to be a respectful human being.

Case 3: A women from Osmanabad who was under trial for the murder of her husband in the Women's Central Prison Yerwada, Pune was diagnosed with last stage cancer caused by the chewing of tobacco. The authorities contacted me to arrange for her bail and to stand as guarantor for her release. I immediately commenced work with the lawyers of the Aurangabad High Court and she was granted bail on compassionate grounds. But before I could arrange for the necessary "surety/guarantor" funds, her health deteriorated further and she was admitted into the Sassoon Government Hospital, Pune. Concurrently, we had to make arrangements for where to take her from the hospital. Her two sons did not want to take their mother back home as they were unable to forgive her for murdering their father. As she was alone and lonely, I used to visit her in the hospital with the permission of the officials. With help from another volunteer, Cheryl, we contacted the nuns of Mother Theresa's Home for Women in Pune to arrange for her transfer to their facilities. But in the meanwhile, her health took a turn for the worse and she passed away in the hospital. After repeated follow-up with her sons for 2-3 days, they finally came to claim her body. With unforgiveness and hurt heavy on their hearts, they were adamant that they did not want to take her body back to their hometown. Instead they cremated her in Pune itself.

HATS off to you the VOLUNTEERS of Snehashramam



Thulasi Annie Thomas
Jesus Fraternity Volunteer
Snehashramam

Manvila Snehashram located in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala is one of the four 'Snehashrams' run under the direct supervision of the Kerala Catholic Bishop Council [KCBC] through its Commission for Justice, Peace and Development, currently headed by Bishop Mar Koorilose of the Major Archdiocese of Thiruvalla. This centre is specifically meant for women/girls in distress, including women prisoners, and functions under the overall supervision of 'Jesus Fraternity', the prison ministry of KCBC, since its inception in 1992. Though conceived as a home-away-from-home for those in dire distress, the centre simultaneously functions as a rehabilitation home providing job-oriented skills, along with generic life-skills, through motivational classes and sessions to the inmates under the guidance of experts from different disciplines. A majority of the inmates belong to the destitute category with no near and dear ones to support or help them. The prisoners' category mostly comes from problematic social backgrounds and broken families. Whatever be the causative problem, here is a 'home' one can always confidently walk in to and be assured of a welcome like that of the familiar parable of the prodigal son in the gospel of Luke.

Looking back to the almost three decades of the ashram's existence, the crowning achievement of the centre can be said to be, without any doubt, the selfless service of the supervising sisters in-charge, providing, arranging and overseeing the conducting of religious marriage ceremonies for 47 of its inmates. This is done in conjugation with assistance for setting up their own homes, thereby enabling their 'coming-back' to mainstream social life. This presents a stark contrast when viewed in the context of today's society wherein we come across a number of girls from better and even affluent backgrounds failing to secure suitable matrimonial alliances despite their social backgrounds, affluence and even higher educational qualifications. It is nothing short of a miraculous turn of events in the lives of these destitute women and one cannot but quote the scripture which says: "From his abundant wealth.... God will supply all our needs" (Phil 4: 19). As we take stock of the development of the ashram at its anniversary celebrations, we proudly report to you that, by the grace and mercy of the almighty God, most of these former inmates are leading happy married lives and they still consider the ashram as their parental home, where they come back



for occasional visits and stay whenever they find the going tough or need assistance in solving emerging problems or situations.

In this context, we would like to introduce to the readers one such family, as a typical example of the fruitfulness of the charity and kind-heartedness of those working through the ashram's social outreach initiatives. Divya was a typical destitute girl when she arrived at the ashram somewhere around 2010. The DSS sisters, then in charge of the ashram, arranged a marriage for her with one Wilson and the ceremony was conducted on 16th August 2012. All possible help was extended to them to start their new life as a family. Today, after seven years we have the joyful news that Wilson is now self-employed and that the family is presently living in their own house in an area coming under the Infant Jesus Church parish in the revenue district of Kollam. They have also been blessed with two girls – Divina (aged 5 years) and Vipina (aged 2½ years). Divya is emphatic that God has been very kind to them and that they are leading a happy life. Both Wilson and Divya take great care in bringing up their children by giving them solid spiritual guidance in their formative years with the help of their parish church and actively taking part in the parish-life of their area.

Now, if anyone is tempted to attribute this positive turn of events to favourable social factors and kindness of well-wishers, it is time for a small flash-back! Before entering into this matrimonial alliance, Divya's husband Wilson used to be a drunkard! Such was his pathetic state that everyone

thought he was beyond redemption. And so if we omit these quotes it would be sheer ingratitude – the first one says: "I have not come to call the respectable, but the wayward and outcasts" (Mt. 9:13) and the second says: "Wives, it should be your conduct which should win over your husbands and make him a believer" (1Peter 3: 1). It is the exemplary conduct of Divya, based on her deep faith, that made this change possible. And what contributed to this whole outcome was the disciplined prayer-filled lifestyle that Divya adopted under the patient guidance of the nuns during her stay at the ashram.

I conclude this write-up by announcing yet another inspiring news. One of the present inmates, who is completely deaf and dumb, is preparing to enter into a matrimonial alliance with another deaf and dumb youth, who is looked after and supported, fortunately, by all his well-off relatives. The ashram sisters are hoping to conduct the marriage ceremony this year. Incidentally, the nuns who are presently in charge of this Snehashram belong to the congregation of the Sisters of the Poor of St Catherine of Siena and are striving their best to be effective witnesses to their call and vocation under the able leadership of Sr. Beena. It should also be mentioned here that the current state director of Jesus Fraternity is Fr Shaji Stephen and the zonal director is Fr John Areeckal. On this blessed occasion of the 27th anniversary of Manvila Snehashram, we offer our heartfelt felicitations to all the nuns and the priests for their selfless service to these destitute. May God bless them and guide them through many more years of fruitful work.



She Cried intensely



Sr Joy Panikulam
Former State Coordinator
Chattisgarh

A prison is a place where some people are locked up for punishment for the crime they have committed and some are innocents. Prisoners who are locked up inside the four walls of prison are in a helpless condition. PMI volunteers reach out to help them. Why do I go to visit them? To work towards their reform, release and rehabilitation. I go to jail to visit them and to make them understand the meaning and consequences of the crime that they have committed and then to repent and ask forgiveness from God.

On one occasion, I met a woman named Suma (Name changed), a middle school teacher who knew nothing about life, in prison. She was a poor and simple village girl from a lower caste family. She was caught and convicted for a murder. She was in need of repentance and forgiveness. When I met her for the first time in jail, she would not look at me. After a few days, I found her warming up to me. She looked at me, smiled and greeted me. That is when I started interacting with her. She was willing to talk and share, but she was not completely mentally prepared. I could see that she was shivering with fear and anxiety. I tried to calm her down and told her, "If you will say the truth, God will pardon you. And you will be freed from fear and anxiety. God will pardon you and will have mercy on you. Trust in God and forgive all those who were involved in this case."

Then she began to narrate how she came to be in prison. She spoke of the boy whom she had killed. She was from a lower caste Hindu family and Ashwin was from a tribal Christian family. They were family friends helping each other out from childhood. Ashwin had a workmate who was Hindu, whom Suma too knew, and they

were on good terms. When the time came for Ashwin to get married, his parents arranged for an alliance with a Christian girl. That was a shock to Suma. Ashwin was very good and helpful to all who came in contact with him. When Suma came to know that he was going to get married, she was extremely angry, angry enough to want to kill him. So, she took the help of the work-partner. Together they planned to kill him. Two days before the marriage, she called him to her house on the pretext of some help she needed, which was usual for them. So soon, he reached her house, as usual, to help her out. He did not know that it was the last day of his life. On a friendly note, she gave him something to drink that was laced with sleeping pills without his knowledge. When he fell asleep, she with help of his job partner, tied up his hands and legs and killed him by thrusting a shovel on his chest. Then, after he died, she went and surrendered to the police, accepting the crime.

After narrating this, she started to cry intensely. She kept saying there was no one to help her. The man, who promised her life, cheated her and did not even appear to help her. Then she told me that she herself had killed him and cried again bitterly. She then asked me to give her a Bible and a songbook. She said that she wanted to become a Christian. I gave her a Bible and a songbook. In the meantime, by her prayers both the families reconciled. From that time onwards, Suma started teaching the prisoners' children in jail. This year, in June 2019, after seven years in prison, she was released and is now living a good and moral life. She is thankful to the merciful Lord Jesus for forgiving her sins.

The Lord's Care, Blessings and Healing

"I praise and thank God for the wonders God has worked in my life. I am filled with joy. I want to sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving".

My name is Arjun (Name Changed). I am 22-years old. I am from a Hindu family. From the age of 12, I have been suffering from blood cancer. My parents took me to many hospitals, only to be disappointed. Later I was taken to AIIMS for treatment. Unfortunately, I landed in Tihar Jail No. 3. I was there for the last 10 years. I was taking medicine and every month I needed 3-4 units of blood for transfusion. In jail, I came to know about Bible and Jesus. I started reading the Holy Bible. One day, I heard Jesus calling me (Revelation 3:20).

I had depression and had lost hope. In this moment of darkness, God sent the PMI volunteer sisters to me. I poured out my life story to them. I could have got out on bail because of my sickness, but there was no one to support me. My family members had

abandoned me. All the money had been spent on my treatment. The sisters and the brothers placed their hands on my head and prayed for me. I felt as if something was happening within me and then, I heard the voice, "Trust me, I am with you." I did not reveal this to the sisters.

I started going to church in jail. One day, my hospital report arrived at the jail. On seeing the report, the doctors could not believe that I did not need blood transfusions anymore. Then on 19 May 2017, I showed my report to the doctors at AIIMS. They too were amazed that I had been healed of my blood cancer. I was in jail for 3½ years without proper care and treatment, but God took care of me, blessed me and healed me. Now I am completely healed. Praise the Lord!



Sr Kokila SChSA
Delhi State Coordinator

She Experienced the Good Shepherd Who Found the Lost

It was the year 2015, I had received permission to do prison ministry. As I was about to start my ministry, I spend time in prayer asking God for a message.

The message I received was Ps 139. After reciting the Psalm and prayers, I went out to commence my ministry. Many women approached me to share their problems



Sr Sophiya Thomas FCC
MP State Executive Member

and to ask for my help. One among them was Pramila (Name changed). She gave me the phone number of her advocate and asked me to talk to her and do the needful to get bail. She was in prison connected with the murder of her husband. She and her brother-in-law were both imprisoned. So, I made a call to the advocate and told her about the need to work towards setting up Pramila bail. Meanwhile, in the central jail there was one woman named Shiny Paul, a protestant woman. She had started a prayer group with a few other women. One among them was Pramila. And whenever I visited, I used to write down and give them sentences from Psalm 139. And Pramila used to pray daily. One day, I received information that she was granted bail. I was informed that both she and her brother-in-law were granted bail, but when the order came in only Pramila had been granted bail. She was sad on hearing this. But the day she came out of prison, I was there to receive her. I took her to my convent and all my sister nuns were very happy.

The next day, I made a call to her children in her presence. When I mentioned her name, they said that they did not want their mother. They hated her. Hearing this, she burst into tears. I consoled her and took her to the chapel. Then I made a private call to her children. The response of her children was that she had killed their papa. They did not want anything to do with her. They shared all the information that they had gathered from news media and other people. Then they cut the phone. After a week,

I arranged a rented house and a job for her. She was happy but she used to visit her brother-in-law. He was married. So, I told Pramila forthright, "I don't know what the truth is. Please don't go and visit him, and please don't destroy a family." She listened to me. She started to attend Sunday prayers and there was a palpable change in her lifestyle. She repented her actions. She gave witness that it was Jesus who gave her new life and peace of mind. She decided not to blame anyone and concentrated her energy on praying for her children so that they may accept her. After a few months, her eldest son came to meet her. However, the other family members were not ready to accept her.

Then one day, she met with an accident. Her condition was critical but Pramila was confident that Jesus would heal her. She prayed to Jesus, "If I become OK soon, I will give witness to your name." And by God's grace, within 3 weeks she was on the mend. She gave witness to Jesus. Though she had not been accepted by her family members, with her newfound faith in Jesus, she decided to go to her village. To her surprise, her own family members accepted her. She has no words to express her thanks to Jesus because in him she has experienced the Good Shepherd who found the lost sheep. She experienced the forgiving love of Jesus who forgave the sinful woman. Really, I witnessed first-hand the transformation in her life. She has changed and has become a new person in spirit. Now she is leading a good, moral life with her family members.

In October 2003, I was the parish priest-cum-rector of the parish-shrine and boarding home at Nandikotkur of Kurnool Diocese. One day early in the morning, I heard the doorbell. When I came out of the presbytery, I saw a man, his wife and children looking for me. I asked him why he rang the bell. He said, "I am a prisoner out on bail. My wife can't work and my growing children need to be educated with your blessing and help."

I admitted the three boys in our Boys' Boarding Home and asked her to visit whenever her health permitted. Now and then the wife and children used to visit him at the Central Jail, Kadapa.

The children started to study well and the mother's health also improved. Slowly she started helping the cooks in the convent and started earning something for her family.

After some years, the man was released from prison and moved with his wife and children to Hyderabad. We found a job for him as a watchman with a reputed company. Now his wife is working in the same company and his children are employed in software companies. They have their own house in Hyderabad.

In July 2010, I was the vicar-cum-parish priest and correspondent-cum-rector at St. Theresa's Co-cathedral, St. Mary's High School and Boarding Home, Kurnool. One day a woman came with her children telling us that her husband was in prison and there was no one to take care of them. They did not even have a house, and the owners of their rented house had thrown them out.

We admitted the children in our Boarding Home and High school. We found accommodations for her and employed her



Fr Pasala Lahastraya
AP State Coordinator

in our school as a sweeper. Sometime later, her husband was released from prison after completion of his term. He came and thanked us for all the help that we did. We employed him in Kurnool as a watchman in a colony. Now those children have completed their computer education and are working in Infosys.

From BEACH Huts to PALACE

In August 2012, we visited the Central Prison at Kadapa. To our surprise, we met one of our co-cathedral parishioners there. We were shaken up at the sight and asked him the reason for his imprisonment. He said that he was illegally imprisoned. He requested us to take care of his wife and two daughters.

After coming back to Kurnool, we started looking for the address given by the imprisoned catholic. We were asking people and they were saying that there was no one staying at that address. We decided to go back when finally, someone showed us the family living under a tiny hut-like structure. They were in a pathetic condition. We admitted the girls in the Girls Boarding Home and employed the wife in the hospital as cleaning staff.

When the man was released by the providence of God, he was accommodated with his wife in the hospital quarters. We made a request and he landed a job in the Corporate Hospital in Kurnool. Now his two daughters are studying for MBBS in Kurnool.

THE JUDGE SHED TEARS!



A. Jesu Raja
Tamilnadu State Secretary
PMI

There was a couple in Andhra Pradesh who did not have a child for a long time. They adopted a girl. They showered love and affection on the girl. God blessed their family and gave them a boy. Once the boy was born everything changed. The couple started neglecting the girl and their affection and love were diverted to their own son. The girl grew up. At the age of 15, she was married to a boy. She gave birth to a baby boy. The husband tortured her in many ways since she could not count on any support from her family. She went and complained to her parents. But they did not take it seriously and chased her away saying that she was married and she should no longer go here. She came back to her husband's house. The husband continued his torture knowing that there was nobody to support her. She went to the local police station and lodged a complaint. The policemen called the husband and advised him to take care of the wife. He assured that he will do the same. But once he came home, he was even angrier and treated her very badly. Her cry was not answered by anyone.

At this juncture, a woman came along to help her. She assured her a good job with a decent salary in Chennai. She started her journey from Andhra Pradesh to the capital city of Tamilnadu. On reaching

Chennai, the woman sold her for ₹ 80,000/- to another woman and left. The girl was pushed to the flesh trade. Since she was not willing, she would not cooperate with the customers. So, the owner started torturing the girl. One day the owner convinced her to go along with a customer on a two-wheeler. A fight ensued between the girl and the customer. On the way, they met with an accident and she was injured on the head. Hence, she was sent back to Andhra. Since that woman had taken money, the girl was sent back after inadequate treatment. The practice of being forced to entertain customers without her consent continued. Then another avenue of rescue opened up before her. The police department came in, arrested her and put her in a vigilance home.

She remained there for 3 years since there was no one to get her released. The other girls were being released within a few days on arriving at that place. Our volunteers heard the cry of the girl and started the journey of locating her family. We found her mother in a remote village with the help of a Capuchin priest in the area. But the mother refused to take her back. She told us that the girl was already married and they did not know where she had been for so many years. She asked us to approach her husband.

When we went to her husband's village, we found him living with another woman. He told us that since he was unable to trace his wife, he had gotten married to another lady from the village. The child was calling the second wife, 'mother.' He also refused to come and take her because if he did go, he would have been excommunicated from the village.

We came back to Chennai and filed a case in the High Court for the release of the girl. During the hearing, the judge listened to the story of the girl, the victim, and shouted at the police at what had happened to the accused even when the victim had been lodged in the Home for the last 3 years. The police replied that the accused had been released. The judge was shedding tears on hearing the pathetic story of the girl. He ordered the police department to produce her mother before the court. We went along with the police to the village in Andhra. With the help of the member of the religious order in the village and the local police, we approached the mother to come and start the process for the girl's release. Even though she refused to come initially, later she agreed due to the influence of the local police and the priest. She was ready to come on the condition that she would not take the girl back to her village. We accepted the condition and she came to Chennai. We produced her before the court. The judge ordered the girl to be released from the home. He also ordered the police to accompany her to her native village. The mother did not want to take her back. The police went and handed the girl over to her mother in the village.

We brought her back to Chennai. On hearing the story of the girl, everybody wanted her for domestic work. There was a

lot of demand for her. Many of the religious congregations also wanted to keep her in their convents as a domestic worker. But we decided to place her as a staff in a school or in a hospital. We put our trust in the Lord as is the usual custom of our ministry. She was accommodated in one of the convents.

After two months, we were able to find her a job in the staff hostel of a hospital. The nuns were kind enough to give her a job and pay her a good salary. She has applied for a voter's ID and she has her own bank account. At her workplace, a boy liked her and wanted to marry her. With the permission of their parents, she got married to him. God blessed her with a baby boy. We had constructed a small hut for her at her husband's place with the help of well-wishers. The boy is now 3-years-old. Recently, she gave birth to a baby girl. Both are happy and well.

Prison Ministry salutes the nuns and dedicated volunteers, who had taken care of her as their own child, with gratitude. We request your prayers and blessings for this girl. She was treated as a mental patient in the girls' home for nearly 3 years. When the superintendent of the home heard that the girl was having a child, she was unable to believe it at first and was happy for her. They say it is a miracle! We are also sure that only with the blessing of the Lord almighty have we been able to do this. It is not our ability but because of His grace.

This is one of the many stories; there are a lot of girls waiting for such rehabilitation. The harvest is plenty and the labourers are few. As our Master said let us not condemn the sinner and try to be by their side and walk with them to lead a good life.

Nothing Succeeds like Success

We have often heard the familiar saying "Rehabilitate a prisoner today, better the world tomorrow." Rehabilitation is a psychological process of re-educating and restraining those who commit crimes. The basic idea of rehabilitation through imprisonment is that a person who has been incarcerated for any crime will never want to be sent back to prison after he has been set free because he has learnt to value his freedom. The ultimate aim is to reintegrate offenders into society so that they can live a dignified life.

The success story of ex-inmate Jean (Name Changed) is one such. He was the youngest of three siblings who were arrested and lodged in Sada Sub-Jail Vasco when he was only 18-years of age. His worst fears came true when he, along with his brothers, was convicted under Section 302 of the IPC and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was then transferred to Central Jail Aguada. He recalls how he "broke down and cried and felt everything was over in his life." He could not comprehend the fact that he would have to be confined within the high walls of the Aguada Jail for a long time to come. His fellow inmates were very supportive and consoled him constantly telling him that he still had a chance to appeal in the High Court.

He recalls how during the lowest point in his life he came into contact with Sr Mary Jane, the then coordinator of Prison Ministry Goa who spoke to him at length and encouraged him to take part in all the reformation activities conducted inside. She assured him that all will be well. Jean adds that Sr Jane was so convincing that he began to think seriously and started looking forward to the future with hope. He then joined the tailoring section which helped him to pass his time besides playing games which helped to keep him mentally and physically fit. Over time, he started taking part in the cultural programs organised by the Prison Ministry and the jail authorities.



Mr David Fernandes
Goa State Coordinator

Jean recalls that one day in the year 2007 Sr Jane enquired if he would be interested in higher studies. He had only completed his 11th Std. schooling and readily agreed. It was then that Sr Jane, along with the prison authorities, managed to convince the authorities at the Yeshwantrao Chavan Open University for Distance Education to set up a centre in the prison. In order to enrol for graduation courses, one had to pass a preliminary exam. Nine inmates enrolled, out of which eight were successful. Jean scored a distinction. As I had tutored the inmates at the request of Sr Jane, I can say that this was the starting point of my association with Prison Ministry Goa. Jean was elated at scoring the highest marks among the group and he never looked back. It is often said 'Nothing succeeds like success.' He then pursued his B.Com with vigour and successfully completed his graduation. He adds that Sr Jane was the motivating factor in his life. He observed that she used to work selflessly for the prisoners even at the cost of her own health.

Today as Jean looks back, he says he is proud of his achievements while in prison. Education has given him the much-needed confidence to face life and cope with challenges. He says that it is because of education that he feels that he had not wasted his years in prison.

Jean is now well-settled. He runs his own taxi business. His family is very happy to have him back and he looks to the future with hope and expectation. His heart is filled with gratitude for all the efforts of the Late Sr Mary Jane and volunteers of Prison Ministry Goa.

Success does not come
at once **BUT**
by prayer, fasting and
perseverance



Dr Michael Noronha
Mysore Unit Coordinator,
PMI

“For the Lord hears the needy and does not despise those in captivity” (Psalm 69:34)

It was in July 2000 that the PMI Mysore unit took birth, and the entire team of laity and religious men and religious women entrusted to work in the unit were enthusiastic about the service to be rendered to the least, the last and the lost in prison. The moment we started our mission there was great joy among many of the prisoners because they found in us a team which was committed to helping them address their woes.

One day, a young boy around 20-years approached us and shared his story with us. Born in a Catholic family, he was dependant on his brother for all his needs. His brother married a non-Christian girl and then his woes began. A growing boy, who dreamed of becoming a noble citizen, he found his hopes dashed to the ground after the marriage. His sister-in-law started humiliating him and ill-treating him and it was endless torture at home. He found that the love his brother had showered on him was lost forever post-marriage and his brother too started alienating him in times of difficulty. He was accused of stealing and selling the provisions, vessels, etc. for pocket money. One day, his brother under directions from his wife filed a

police complaint against him. The police arrested him and he was remanded to judicial custody. It was heartbreaking to see a young boy with his dreams shattered, hope lost and lodged in prison with hardened criminals for a petty offence. He approached the PMI members and sought our help for his release.

One of our members decided to visit the brother of the prisoner and reached his home town - T. Narasipur. He introduced himself as a PMI member and the service we render to prisoners. His family members listened patiently and then started a volley of abuse as if the person against whom the complaint was given was a proclaimed offender. The PMI volunteer was literally asked to get out of the house for helping prisoners. **Success does not come at once but by prayer, fasting and perseverance.** The PMI volunteer decided to return to them again and seek their support. The second visit was more fruitful with the family members agreeing to withdraw the complaint but with a rider that the younger brother would have no place in their home and would have to find a place to stay elsewhere once he was released. The story took a positive turn with the prisoner getting released.

The next herculean task was to find a place for the released prisoner to stay. None of the

families, be it PMI members or otherwise would be willing to entertain a former prisoner because of the mindset, "Once a criminal always a criminal". **It is easy to preach forgiveness and love to others but to practice it we need to be a true disciple of Christ.** Our volunteers knocked the doors of different religious congregations and finally, the Pallotine congregation in Mysore agreed to accommodate him in their seminary and offered him a gardeners' job. A young boy, who had dreams of his own, could not sustain for long in the serene prayerful atmosphere of the seminarians. After a while, he decided to move back to his hometown and start a tea shop. It was a nightmare after he started the roadside teashop in a familiar place since policemen were continually trying to fleece him because he was an ex-prisoner. He was constantly threatened

with arrest for any theft that happened in the vicinity as he was an orphan with no one to stand by him and with his name in the police records. He had to migrate to another place where people did not know him or his antecedents to start a new life. One day, we received a letter inviting us to his marriage. We were happy that he finally found a life partner with whom he could share his joys and sorrows.

Most prisoners, once released, do not like to be tracked either by the PMI members or by the police officials. They would prefer to bury their past and start a new life. So was it with this boy! We firmly believe that his life has become more meaningful ever since he got married. May God's grace and choicest blessings be showered on him.

(Names of the prisoner and his family has been withheld deliberately.)

A Memorable Day in Cellular Jail

Sr Mary Lobo SCCG
Prison Ministry India
West Bengal

The moment we hear of the Andaman Islands, we are reminded of the Cellular Jail where thousands of our freedom fighters shed their blood to bring freedom to our Motherland. The jail is the first sight that greets a visitor on his/her arrival at Port Blair, the capital of Andaman.

A total of 49 volunteers of Prison Ministry India and the staff of Krishnagar Society for Social Reconstruction (KSSR), had gone to Andaman and Nicobar Islands for a Social Exposure Program. The short visit to the Cellular Jail brought home a lot of fond memories of our patriots. Through this article, I would like to recount our memorable visit to the Cellular Jail, which stands as a mute witness to the indescribable sufferings of the patriots, who

were incarcerated in the cells of the Jail and at the end laid down their life for India's freedom. Our visit to the Cellular Jail and the Sound and Light show at the night captured and depicted the cruelty faced by our freedom fighters. Each and every one of us was in tears after watching the way the prisoners were treated.

The structure of the Cellular Jail

The Cellular Jail is designed like a gigantic starfish or spokes of the wheel, with seven massive wings. All the wings are three-storied structures with long rows of small dingy cells with a ventilator placed high above and an iron grill door in the front. Therefore, the name Cellular Jail is derived from its unique feature as it has only cells to live in and no



Cellular Jail

dormitories. At present only three wings exist and the rest have been turned into a Super Specialty hospital.

Since the first war of independence in 1857 to the revolutionary movements in 1913, innumerable freedom fighters devoted to freeing India from the British rule were deported and exiled to the Andaman island.

Life inside the Cellular Jail

A visit to the museum within the Cellular Jail gave us a vivid picture of the harsh lives led by the prisoners. Mr Barrie, the extremely strict jailor then, on receiving the freedom fighters at the main gate, used to proclaim to them that he was the only mortal god in that god-forbidden land and only his orders were to be followed. To defy him meant to entertain death. Well, his utterance was crude reality: the stringent rules caused the death of many and lead others to insanity. For the slightest of mistakes, they were put on the grinding mill and even beaten to death. From the year 1909 to 1938, the freedom fighters who were incarcerated there were from West Bengal, Punjab, Maharashtra, U.P., Assam, Bihar, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu.

Harsh Realities

Once for having committed a slight mistake, Ullaskar Dutta, a very healthy man was yoked to the oil machine, the one that only bullocks could pull. He was exhausted turning the oil mill. As a result of the hard work and torture, he turned insane. He spent the rest of his life in a lunatic asylum.

On another occasion, Indu Bhushan Roy, a young freedom fighter of strong and robust stature could not bear the humiliation and inhuman torture in the jail. One night due to frustration, he tore his shirt, made a rope out of it and committed suicide in his cell.

At daybreak, the prisoners were handed over to the work crew to do all sorts of strenuous and taxing jobs like turning the oil mill, hill cutting, swamp filling, crushing boulders, preparing bricks under the scorching sun, etc.

The political prisoners were not used to this type of work. As a result of the brutal treatment and inhumane torture by the British, on an average, three prisoners committed suicide every month and many died of hardship.

During the twelve hours of the night, the prisoner had to check nature's call till morning for there was no facility to ease himself in the cell. In case the prisoner could not help the call of nature and happened to do it in his cell, then Mr Barrie, the jailor would punish him severely. Adding to the misery of the dingy cells, the prisoners were exposed to combat bugs, centipedes and mosquitoes.

Cellular Jail: The Temple of Freedom Struggle

Most of the freedom fighters who were incarcerated in the Cellular Jail were from West Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra. During the long imprisonment, they had to bear with savage treatment from the British, and many of them had to face the gallows and bullets. The gallows of Cellular Jail bear witness to the atrocities committed under the British rule. Most of the freedom fighters passed away unnamed, unhonoured, unrewarded and unsung. The international airport at Port Blair is named after the martyr, Veer Savarkar.

In short, Cellular Jail is the temple of freedom struggle, which still stands as an incessant source of inspiration to the generations to come. During the revolutionary movements, the freedom fighters were deported in order to suppress their voice, to choke their enthusiasm and to throttle their spirit, and for this, the British government chose the Andamans. Because of their moral strength, iron will and gallant nature, they fought back so courageously, that the British had to yield and the Cellular Jail became a place of pilgrimage.

We sincerely thank the magnanimous heart of Fr Robin Mondal for being instrumental in commencing Prison Ministry India in West Bengal in the year 2002. Again, it was his initiative that took us all the way to the Andaman to view the Cellular Jail in the month of August 2019.





PMI National Office Silver Jubilee Souvenir

"I was in Prison and you visited me" Mt 25:36

Prison Ministry India, 52, Thomas Layout Carmelaram,
Sarjapura Road, Bangalore 560 035, Karnataka, India

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20 September 2019

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Dear Brethren,

Prison Ministry India is a National Voluntary Organization working for the welfare of prisoners all over India under the guidance of Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI). In 1994 being appointed by the Jesus Fraternity in Kerala Fr Varghese Kariperry came to Bangalore to launch the national level prison ministry. He convened the first national convention on 13-15 August 1994 at Christian Workers' Center, Bangalore chaired by Most Rev Alphonse Mathias, the Archbishop of Bangalore. During this convention Fr Varghese Kariperry was elected as the first national coordinator, took the name Prison Ministry India and decided to work under the patronage of Most Rev Arokyasamy, the Archbishop of Madurai and the JPD Chairman of CBCI. In collaboration with Holy Cross Congregation he launched the PMI Office in a cowshed in Huskur on 1st January 1995. This is the Jubilee year of national level ministry and we celebrate it on 19 November 2019 at St Joseph's Auditorium in St Joseph Indian Highschool Campus, 23 Vittal Mallya Road, Near Mallya Hospital, Bangalore – 560 001.

In memory of our Jubilee year we are planning to release a souvenir. The souvenir will be given not only to the participants of the conference but also to all our dioceses and Religious institutions all over the country.

The tariff as follows:

Back Cover	Rs. 1,00,000/-	(Multicolor Art Board)
Second Inner page	Rs. 50,000/-	(Multicolor Art Board)
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Full page Art paper	Rs. 20,000/-	(Multicolor Art Paper)
Full Page	Rs.10,000	(White & Black Map Litho Papers)
Half Page	Rs.5,000	(White & Black Map Litho Papers)

We will highly appreciate if you would kindly give us your advertisement along with your matter and send us the Cheques in favor of "Prison Ministry India" before 25 October 2019.

Yours sincerely in Jesus who came to seek and save the Lost,

Fr Francis Kodiyan

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS

National Coordinator

Lini

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC

National Secretary

Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them" Heb 13:3



Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Goa



Maharashtra Unit Coordinators Meet



Visit to Karjat Plot by
National & Maharashtra Team



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PMI National Office Silver Jubilee



Prison Ministry India

No 52, Thomas Layout, Sarjapura Road,
Carmelaram, Bangalore 560 035
Web : www.prisonministryindia.org

Dear

The PMI National Team cordially invites you for the 'Silver Jubilee Celebration' to be held at St. Joseph's Auditorium in St. Joseph Indian High School Campus 23 Vittal Mallya Road, Near Mallya Hospital, Bangalore - 560 001, on 19th November 2019 from 9 am to 4 pm.

Esteemed Guests

- **Most Rev Dr Allwyn D Silva**
Chairman of Prison Ministry India
- **Most Rev Dr Peter Machado**
Archbishop of Bangalore Archdiocese
- **Most Rev Dr Peter Remigius**
Former Chairman of Prison Ministry India
- **Bishop Mar Jose Pulickal**
Auxiliary Bishop of Kanjirappally
- **Rev Fr Varghese Kariperry**
Co-Founder of PMI
- **Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan**
Co-Founder and National Co-ordinator of PMI

Prison Ministry India

No 52, Thomas Layout, Sarjapura Road, Carmelaram
Bangalore 560 035

Web : www.prisonministryindia.org

Glorifying Jesus who came to seek and save the lost most cordially we invite you to the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Prison Ministry India (PMI) national level service. With most warm thanks for your valuable collaboration in the past 25 years and with heartiest welcome.

Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS
National Coordinator

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
National Secretary



09.00	Arrival and Registration
09.30	Eucharistic Adoration
10.30	Holy Mass
12.00	Cultural Program
13.00	Lunch
14.00	Silver Jubilee Meeting
16.00	Tea & Departure

The Son of Man came to seek and save the Lost, Lk 19,10

RSVP: Fr Francis Kodiyan - 9447710488
frandian@live.in, pmi2005@rediffmail.com
Sr Lini Sheeja - 9880022209
linimsc@gmail.com, nationalpmi2015@gmail.com

Invitation

PMI Jubilee Memorial Blessing

Glorifying Jesus who came to call sinners for repentance, Prison Ministry India most cordially invites you to the Blessing of the PMI Jubilee Memorial Building adjacent to Kolbe Home, Carmelaram on **20th November at 8 AM**. **Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva**, the Chairman of Prison Ministry India has consented to bless the newly constructed building meant for Research, Documentation and Volunteers' Training Center.

Most Rev Peter Remigius, the former PMI Chairman and Mar Jose Pulickal, the Auxiliary Bishop of Kanjirappally will jointly inaugurate it.

Please accept our sincere thanks for your valuable prayer and generous contribution and kindly bless us with your esteemed presence and continued prayer.

Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan MCBS
National Coordinator

Sr Lini Sheeja MSC
National Secretary

RSVP

Prison Ministry India, 52 Thomas Layout, Sarjapura Road
Carmelaram, Bangalore - 560 035; Tel. 9880022209; 9447710488
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