



# PRISON VOICE

October 2023

Vol. XX

Issue 10

NATIONAL MONTHLY

₹40/-

## Laudate Deum







**Adorers of Precious Blood Provincial Team Visiting Kolbe Home**



**Constitution Day Celebration, Men Central Prison, Shimoga**



**Constitution Day Celebration, Women Central Prison, Shimoga**



**Eucharistic Concelebration with PMI Founder Fathers, Kolbe Home, Bangalore**



**First Holy communion of Kolbe Home Boys, Bangalore**



**Gandhi Jayanti Celebration, Kalapet Central Prison**



**Silver Jubilee Celebration of Sr Beena, Sneathramam, Trivandrum**





**Kolbe Boys with Edmund Rice Volunteers**



**PMI - Camillian Collaboration**



**PMI Distributes Provisions to Raisen Prison**



**PMI Convenes Seminar on Deaddiction, Mysore Central Prison**



**PMI Distributes Rehabilitational Materials to Central Prison, Madurai**



**PMI Gathering, Bangalore**



**PMI National Office and Kolbe Home Comrades**



**PMI Organises Eye-Camp at Ambikapur Prison**

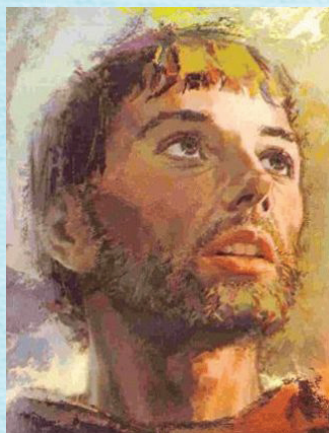


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NATIONAL MONTHLY



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unholy If God can work  
through me He can  
work with anyone."*

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### Are You Willing?

**"Help a Prisoner's Child  
Prevent a Potential  
Criminal"**

**80% of the children of  
prisoners are potential  
criminals unless somebody  
takes care of them.  
Prison Ministry India has  
begun a scheme to  
educate 1000  
children of prisoners:  
Kindly contribute  
Rs. 5,000/- for the  
education of a child.**

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# Missionaries of the Lost

## Mission Sunday

In 1926 Pope Pius XI instituted Mission Sunday for the whole Church with the first worldwide Mission Sunday collection taking place in October 1927. The Mission Sunday collection is always taken on the Sunday next to the last Sunday in the month of October. That day is celebrated in all the local Churches as the feast of Catholicity and universal solidarity. Through this celebration the Church teaches us how to give, as an offering made to God and Christians the world over will recognize their common responsibility with regard to the evangelization of the world. This is a day set aside for Catholics worldwide to recommit themselves to the Church's missionary activity through prayer and sacrifice. On World Mission Sunday let us join our Holy Father in supporting his missions. Let us also be reminded of the fact that as PMI members we are missionaries of the lost, shackled in dungeons worldwide. The latest World Prison Population Statistics, published in December 2021, reports that there may well be in excess of 11.5 million prisoners worldwide. They are eagerly waiting for our visits, prayers and assistance.

## Our Lady of the Rosary

The month of October is dedicated to Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary. The Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rosary was instituted to honour and to thank Our Lady for the protection the Church experienced through her in the victories of the Christian armies against the Turks at Lepanto on 7th October 1571 and then at Peterwarde in Hungary in 1716. The faith that the Church expresses through this month is that Mary is

## EDITOR'S VIEW



**Sr Amala DC**  
Chief Editor



the Protector of the Church. The recitation of the rosary is a means of experiencing her loving care. Recitation of rosary also reminds us of Mary's life and mission in the history of salvation. So in this month of October, let us consider this beautiful prayer of the Rosary as a means that we too can use in order to draw closer to Jesus and Mary by meditating on the great mysteries of our Salvation and redeeming souls from the slavery of sin and for our brethren behind bars.

## St Francis of Assisi

St Francis Assisi was a unique spiritual personality who gave up a life of wealth and social position to embrace a celibate life of poverty and obedience. With the approval of the Pope, he founded a new Monastic Order, commonly known as the Franciscans. St Francis is considered one of the greatest saints in the Christian tradition and an example of a life lived in imitation of Jesus Christ. He was the first person in recorded history to receive the 'stigmata'. Francis experienced stigmata around 1224. He died in 1226 while singing Psalm 141. His Feast day is celebrated on the 4th October. Our Holy Father Pope Francis and our PMI co-founder Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS have taken the name Francis after St Francis of Assisi. In a special way let us pray for both of them and for their great mission.



## Growing in Grace

Tihar Prison in Delhi, which accommodates more than 17,000 inmates, is one of the largest prisons in South Asia spread over more than 400 acres. One day Sr Inigo SSA took me to its headquarters. Our purpose was to obtain permission to conduct Christmas programs in Tihar prisons. During our discussion the highest prison officer told me “Father, as long as this Sr Inigo is here you will have all permissions because she is so gracious”. I felt exhilarated to hear this comment about one of Prison Ministry India volunteers and thought of writing how to do prison ministry gracefully and growing in grace. Prison ministry is a grace-filled service and as we involve more and more in this ministry, we need to manifest highest Christian virtues, values, morals and etiquette. When we strive daily to do prison ministry in this way we will also be growing in grace and glorifying the Lord. It's our duty to examine whether we grow in grace as we do prison ministry and shall also ask ourselves how we can grow in grace by doing this ministry.

### God's Grace

Grace, the basis for the Christian faith, is the spontaneous, unmerited gift of divine favour for salvation and the divine influence operating in us for our regeneration and sanctification. “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). When we do prison ministry, we are invited to manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit such as charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity and the gifts of the



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

Holy Spirit such as wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. If PMI volunteers are adorned with the charisms of the Holy Spirit that would be amazing and much more fruit bearing: “The utterance of wisdom, the utterance of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, the ability to distinguish between spirits, various kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor 12: 8-11). As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states the Holy Spirit by the many special graces called ‘charisms’, by which he makes the faithful ‘fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church’ (CCC 798).

### Growing in Grace

St Peter encourages us to be on our guard and grow in grace instead of falling into error. “You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity” (2 Pt 3, 17-18). Growing is an activity. It relates to increasing in size, knowledge, maturity, or capability. Grace should not be in a static state. “Each of you



should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pt 4:10). As Jesus grew in favour with God and man (Lk 2,52) PMI volunteers shall grow in favour with God and people. This growing is a process of maturation. This is a process of becoming more productive in the ministry and becoming more Christlike in all we do. To grow in grace is not a matter of having God become more gracious to us rather we grow stronger in grace by allowing God's grace to fill us more and more, transforming us into the image of Christ. This lies mainly in our life witness, Christlike attitudes and in our action with compassion which others easily notice, evaluate and appreciate.

### **Practical Ways to Grow in Grace**

We grow in grace by reading the Word of God, participating in the paschal mysteries especially by the frequent reception of the sacraments of communion and confession. Maturing in Christian life is not about what we do, but about what God does in us, by His grace. Charitable works, prayer, meditation on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, deserting sin and its circumstances, reflecting on the glories of heaven, practising self-denial and humility are some other means to grow in grace. Growing in grace is possible even when we are faced with humiliations and hardships by the power of God's blessings and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Grace increases by using it. Gifts neglected decrease, but stirred up and used are improved and increase.

### **What the Early Christians Did to Grow in Grace?**

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread

and prayers (Acts 2, 42-46). Every PMI gathering shall begin with the reading of the Word of God which certainly would allow us to apply our knowledge of God and our experience of his grace to each and every aspect of our lives. PMI members shall always manifest profound human fraternity which the early Christians always practised and Pope Francis often exhorted: "one in mind and one in heart". PMI fellowship is an important aspect of witnessing which will give us a foretaste of the day that we will all gather together around God's throne, singing his praises (Rev 7:9). PMI is a spiritual community where priority shall be given to the cordial relationships with our bishops, national, regional, state, diocesan and unit coordinators. Their instructions and guidance shall be welcomed with loyalty and shall be implemented with docility. PMI is basically a prayer group. When we devote ourselves to prayer, we become more cognizant of his presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Prayer helps us grow in our awareness of God and it activates his grace in our lives. Prayer is the way by which we begin to use the vast and amazing grace which has been given to us.

### **Conclusion**

God desires not only our sanctification, transformation and salvation but also of prisoners worldwide. He wants us to become more holy like Himself so as to sanctify the sinners and the lost. He wants to transform us into the image of His Son so as to dedicate our lives for the reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners. Prison ministry is a great opportunity to grow in grace and making use of this opportunity let's grow daily in grace and glorify God.



# Liberation From Captivity

Fr James Varanasi

After the Baptism and forty days of fasting & prayer Lord Jesus Christ began his ministry by proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God. On a Sabbath day Lord Jesus Christ went to the Synagogue and read the Scriptures from Prophet Isaiah 61:1-2 which reads thus: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour". This Old Testament text is referred to in the New Testament in Luke 4:18-19 at the beginning of the Galilean Ministry of Lord Jesus Christ. According to Luke 4:18-19 Lord Jesus Christ was sent into this world by His Heavenly Father for the following purposes: (1) To bring Good News to the poor; (2) To proclaim Release to the Captives; (3) Recovery of sight to the blind; (4) To let the oppressed go free; and (5) To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Among these above-mentioned activities let us reflect or discuss in this write-up on the mission of Proclaiming Release to the Captives". What is the meaning of the term \*Release" and what are its synonyms? In order to analyse this let us compare different Versions of the Bible regarding Luke 4:18-19. (NRSV) New Revised Standard Version: He has sent me to proclaim Release to the Captives. Good News Version: He has sent me to proclaim Liberty to the Captives. (NJB) New Jerusalem Bible: He has sent me to proclaim Liberty to Captives. (NIV) New International Version: He has sent me to proclaim Freedom for the Prisoners. (KJV) King James Version: He hath sent me to preach Deliverance to the Captives. Four

different terms are used in different Versions of the Bible regarding the phrase "To proclaim Release to the Captives". They are: "Release, Liberty, Freedom and Deliverance". Now let us examine the meaning of the word **Release**. The word Release would mean -to let someone or something come out of a place where they have been kept or trapped. For example: The lion was released from its cage; The hostages have been released; The judge released the prisoner. In the text Luke 4:18-19 the word "Release is used as a noun indicating an action in favour of the captives.

Now let us also analyse the meaning of the terms **Liberty, Freedom & Deliverance** before considering the meaning of the phrase -"To proclaim Release to the Captives". \*Liberty" is a word that denotes freedom from constraint or control'. Liberty is a notion that touches the heart of the biblical experience, from the foundational experience of the Exodus to the Pauline theology of freedom from sin and death. In the Old Testament, Israel's remembrance of its liberation from the power of Egypt nourished their faith in God. Later whenever the Israelites found themselves in an experience of captivity or bondage, they looked to their God for an experience of liberation in a new and ever more powerful way. In the New Testament, Liberty is a state of freedom, especially as opposed to political subjection, civil imprisonment, and spiritual slavery. So there are three divisions in Liberty: spiritual, civil, and political. The "Law of Christ" is a "Law of Liberty". It is a law of freedom made operative through the Spirit of God within us. Therefore liberty in Luke 4:18-19 would refer to freedom from spiritual, social and judicial imprisonment.

There is a universal thirst for "Freedom". Throughout history, people of all cultures have sought it. Some people define freedom as being free from external values and restraints. Others, like the Greeks of



antiquity, view freedom in a purely political sense. But freedom in the Bible is presented differently. In the Old Testament, freedom was primarily a freedom from slavery. God by his grace delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Exo 20:2; Deut 7:8). But after their settlement in the Promised Land (Canaan) time and again, a generation came along that did not know & follow the Lord; as a result, a foreign conqueror would make their lives difficult until the Lord raised up a deliverer. Whenever God's people were disobedient, they often lost their freedom. The Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom (II Kings 17:7-23) and the Babylonian captivity of the Southern Kingdom (II Kings 21:10-15) are illustrations of this pattern. In later Judaism, "freedom movements" arose to gain political freedom in order to allow religious freedom. The Maccabees and the Zealots are examples for such movements. This freedom was often mentioned in the books of the prophets.

In the New Testament, Jesus' reading of the Scriptures & homily at the Synagogue (Luke 4:18-19) echoed this theme from Isaiah 61:1-2 which reads thus: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...He has sent me to proclaim "Freedom for the Prisoners" (NIV). This proclamation of "freedom" was a mark of the Messianic Era. The English verb Deliver" is used in the following meanings: (1) to set free, to draw out (2) to rescue (3) to give or transfer from one to another (4) to speak, or declare (5) Acquittal (release) of a prisoner by the verdict of a jury. And the word "Deliverance" is used as a 'noun' in Luke 4:18-19 and has the following meanings: (0) Release from: captivity, slavery, restraint or oppression; Example -He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted...to preach deliverance to the captives (Luke 4:18, KJV). (i) Rescue from danger or any evil; Example -God sent me (Joseph) to save your lives by a great deliverance (Genesis 45:7).

Deliverance in the Bible is the act of God whereby He rescues His people from peril, or danger. The concept of deliverance' occurs in the Old Testament with two meanings. The first is in a non-theological sense signifying "deliver over" or "give over into the possession or power of another". More often this term refers to people delivered into the power of others, usually their enemies: "The Lord hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us in the hands of the Amorites to destroy us" (Deut 1:27). The second usage of 'deliverance' refers to the acts of God whereby "He rescues His people from danger". This usage of "deliverance" focuses on God's action of taking away or liberating those who are in the midst of trouble or danger.

As in the Old Testament, both meanings of 'deliverance' are found in the New Testament. The phrase "deliver over to" is used to describe the deliverance of people (Matt 5:25; 18:34; 20:19) and goods (Matt 25:14) over to another. Jesus uses this word as a prophecy of his death at the hands of the chief priests and Gentiles (Matt 20:18; Mark 10:33; Luke 9:44). The second usage of deliverance' is seen in the occurrences of the words rescue" and "take out of, which are used most often in the New Testament to reflect the idea of deliverance from danger or distress. The dominant idea in the New Testament is God's deliverance for humanity from sin, evil, death, and judgment. These theological terms closely align with the biblical terms for salvation and redemption. Believers are to pray for deliverance from the threat of evil that dominates the world (Matt 6:13; Luke 11:4). Let us pray that by God's power, believers are delivered from the present evil age" (Gal 1:4) and the power of Satan's reign (Col 1:13). As Lord Jesus Christ taught his disciples (Matthew 6:13) let us pray, Lord, do not bring us to the time of trial (Day of Judgment), but deliver us from the evil -Amen.



# Pope Francis Prays for Reconciliation after Honduran Prison Riot

Christopher Wells<sup>1</sup>



At the Angelus on 25th June, Pope Francis expresses his sorrow over the riot in a Honduran women's prison, and prays for reconciliation and fraternal coexistence. Pope Francis invoked Our Lady of Suyapa, the patroness of Honduras, praying that she might "help hearts to open themselves to reconciliation and to make room for fraternal coexistence even within prisons."

The Pope made the prayer as he expressed his sorrow over a deadly prison attack that left more than 40 women dead in a female correctional facility in Tamara, Honduras, on 20 June. A preliminary investigation into the riot found severe security breakdowns that allowed gang members in the prison to attack their rivals with guns and machetes, and even burn some of them alive in their cells. "I was very saddened by what happened a few days ago in the Támara Women's Penitentiary Centre in Honduras", the Pope said, deploring the "terrible violence between rival gangs" that "sowed



death and suffering" while praying for those who died and for their families.

Honduran president Xiomara Castro has confirmed that the prison riot was organized by gang members "with the knowledge and acquiescence of security authorities," and has vowed to take "drastic measures" in response.

## Laudate Deum Prayer

Laudate Deum,  
O God we praise you,  
for the world sings  
of your infinite love.

Forgive us our failure  
to agree a way forward  
to protect this earth  
and our children's future.

For the way the powerful  
shelter behind their wealth,  
while the poorest people are disregarded,  
and the earth is at breaking point.

Guide our leaders  
to set aside their own interests  
in the interest of us all  
and grant us all the courage  
to turn our concern into change.

Strengthen our faith,  
and let us never lose hope  
so together we may rise up  
responding to the urgent call  
of your people and all creation.

Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Vatican News.



# PMI MP State 8th Convention

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## Bro Sunnlyal Avarappattu MMB

Fraternal Greetings from PMI M.P. State Office! As we know it gave us immense pleasure to celebrate the 8th PMI Madhya Pradesh State Convention which was held on August 20, 2023 from 7:00 am. to 8:00 pm. at SVD Provincialate in Indore under the leadership of the State Team and hosted by the PMI Indore Unit under the leadership of Rev.Fr. Shinoj SVD, the Indore Diocesan Coordinator. God is so gracious that He always cares for us in his loving hands. Nearly 200 volunteers participated in the convention. There was the inaugural session, input sessions, Diocesan reports and State report presentation, Sharing session, Interacting session, Action plan session and thanksgiving Holy Mass. Most Rev Sabastian Durairaj, Archbishop of Bhopal inaugurated the 8th PMI M.P. State convention. Most Rev Chacko SVD, Bishop of Indore, presided over the inaugural session. Rev Fr Wilfred Fernandes PMI Central Region Coordinator delivered the key notes address. Rev Bro Sunnlyal Avarappattu MMB, PMI M.P. State Coordinator, welcomed the august gathering. Rev Sr Sherly OSB presented State report in the assembly. The 8th M.P. State Convention was a great success because of the good co-operation of all participants, better collaboration of office bearers, full-hearted support of coordinators, long-time planning, apt execution, full responsibility and proper handling by the host Diocesan unit and big contribution of all State executive members, 9 Diocesan coordinators, Major Superiors, Diocesan office bearers and great support of all the volunteers. We really enjoyed and experienced the grant celebration of PMI

family. This convention will be remembered in the history of PMI M.P. State forever. Let us thank and praise God for all the blessings and success of State Convention. Let us congratulate and thank one another. I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate Fr.Shinoj and his team. I also thank Sr. Sherly OSB State Secretary, Sr. Tessy FCC State Assi. Coordinator, Fr. George CMI State Treasurer, and State Executive members and Diocesan coordinators for their cooperation, collaboration and hard work towards the success of the State Convention.

## Major Conclusions and Decisions

1. It is informed that any Diocesan unit can take voluntarily the responsibility of hosting the next State Convention. Diocesan coordinators are requested to inform your willingness in the next executive meeting.
2. All the Diocesan coordinators are requested to hold or conduct PMI Diocesan Unit Convention as a one day program for each Diocese in the year 2023 and 2024 and complete PMI Diocesan conventions on or before September 2024. It is mandatory.
3. All the Diocesan coordinators are requested to sell the coupon in their respective areas and submit the amount to Sr. Sherly as early as possible so that she can submit the amount to the PMI National Office.
4. All the Diocesan coordinators are requested to discuss with their Bishop about PMI Sunday collection and submit 50% of the PMI Sunday collection from their respective Diocese to either Sr. Sherly State Secretary or Fr. George State Treasurer as early as possible. You can transfer the money to the bank



account also so that PMI State team can submit the amount to National Office for Golden Jubilee memorial 40 houses constructions.

5. PMI M.P. State financial statement for the year 2022-2023 will be presented in the next state executive meeting.
6. We have given the registration fees only to the Indore Diocese for State convention. Indore Diocesan unit under the leadership of Fr. Shinoj spent all the expenses of the 8th PMI State convention. A special thanks to Fr. Shinoj and his team.
7. There was good participation from various Diocesan units for PMI State convention. 34 from Bhopal, 12 from Gwalior, 19 from Khandwa, 16 from Jhabua, 16 from Sagar, 5 from Jabalpur, 6 from Ujjain, 1 from Satna, 4 from Gujarat, 1 from Odisha, 4 from Jesus youth. It numbered a total 118 from outside and 82 from Indore. A special thanks to Fr. Joseph Thannipilly, Bhopal Diocesan coordinator, Fr. Sinto Sagar Diocesan coordinator, Fr. Arogya Doss Gwalior Diocesan coordinator, Fr. Elias Jambua Diocesan coordinator, Fr. Alex Kandwa Diocesan coordinator and Fr. Shinoj Indore Diocesan coordinator.
8. We extend a heartfelt thanks to our powerful resource persons Rev. Fr. Anand IMS from Varanasi and Rev. Fr. Francis Scaria, Rector KPRT from Ashta for their relevant sharings.
9. We are grateful to Most Rev Sabastin Durairaj Archbishop of Bhopal and Most Rev Chacko, Bishop of Indore who graced the occasion and for their guidance, support and blessings as well as their valuable presence the whole day.

10. We are indebted to extend our heartfelt thanks to our PMI Chairman Most. Rev. James Athikalam, Bishop of Sagar and V. Rev. Fr. Francis Kodiyan PMI National Coordinator for their guidance, support and blessings for the convention.

### **Action Plan 2023-2024 for PMI M.P. State**

To conduct a State Conference.

1. To conduct Diocesan Conference.
2. To visit and activate all the Diocesan units.
3. To visit various Jails in different districts.
4. To release maximum prisoners.
5. To visit families of prisoners.
6. To provide vocation training to prisoners in various Jails.
7. To conduct drawing competition in the schools to promote awareness about the importance of prison ministry.
8. To provide education for prisoners' children.
9. To conduct a retreat for prison volunteers.
10. To visit Parishes and form Parish level prayer units for PMI.
11. To visit different Zonal units of the Dioceses and strengthen the
12. local units.
13. To provide counseling and motivational classes to the inmates of Juvenile homes and shelter homes.
14. To send volunteers every year for full time training programme in PMI National Office Bangalore from M.P.
15. To print a brochure for PMI M.P State.



# Testimony of our Prisoner Apostolate

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**Elisabeth & Karl Brömmel, Germany**

## Confirmation to Prisoners

My husband and I entered the Beatitudes Community with our children after ten years of marriage. The core of the community was the love of daily Holy Mass, Eucharistic adoration and love for the poor and marginalised; contact with Brother Jan, the founder of the Emmaus Community, which cares for prisoners and those released from prison, led us to reach out to prisoners as well. Initially, the contact consisted of going to the prison on Sundays with our priest and celebrating Holy Mass there. Before that, we had a time of Eucharistic Adoration as preparation, where we prayed for the individuals with the laying on of hands and blessing them. The prisoners had very strong experiences of the Eucharist. Among other things, they saw a bright light and they could recognise their guilt in the light. After some time, three prisoners re-entered the Catholic Church. The bishop himself came to give them confirmation. My husband and I were confirmation sponsors for one prisoner and we experienced how the Holy Spirit had visibly touched him. At the moment of confirmation, he did not see the bishop, but a bright light from which, as it were, the Holy Spirit entered him and us as godparents like doves. Then he heard the voice of Mother Mary telling him that she would be with him until the end of his life! The prisoners had deliberately placed the day of Confirmation on the feast day of “Queen Mary”.

The apostolate with the prisoners and the visible signs of God’s love for them have strengthened my faith. The prison

warden was equally surprised to see that the prisoners’ relationship with him had changed. They greeted him kindly when he met them, whereas before hate and curses were often hurled at him; and the cells where obscene pictures hung before would now be decorated with crosses and icons. The prisoners met in the evening in the cells to pray the rosary together. After six years we changed the house of the community and moved to the house of the community in Warstein in the Sauerland. As the house was now 100km further away, it was no longer possible for us to continue this apostolate. We were now living the communal life and focusing on receiving vocations and training them.

## Prison Ministry in Werl

As we were to take a Sabbatical after 6 years of leadership, the question arose for us as to which path to take to continue. The integration after the year was difficult because there was no suitable place. We realised more and more that God wanted to lead us on a new path, but what would it look like? Every time I asked the Lord in prayer, I got this passage more than 10 times: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; for the Lord has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, and to heal all whose hearts are broken, to proclaim release to the captives, and deliverance to those who are bound... and to set free all who sit in the shadow of death” (Is.42:6,7). I asked the Lord how this could be done concretely, as I could not see a way. Then an opportunity arose: a friend from the Emmaus group called me and asked if I could visit a prisoner in the correctional facility in Werl? It was the very prisoner we had taken in the house who gave me a bad cheque and then disappeared forever, leaving me sitting on the cheque.



I immediately refused it as anger rose up inside me. But Karl said that we should forgive him for that. Only later did I realise that God had wanted to open a door for us there. We went to visit the prison in Werl. It turned out that we then visited him regularly and I was able to forgive him for cheating. As we had to make an appointment for a visit every time, it was sometimes not possible to keep the appointment, so the inmate suggested applying for a caregiver status. This meant that we could come for a visit at any time and were not bound to a specific time.

### **Preventive Detention or House of the Dead**

After some time, the social worker asked us if we would also be willing to look after inmates from preventive detention. These were prisoners who had served their sentence but were not released for security reasons for society, but remained in prison for at least another 10 years. Since many of them had already been in prison for more than thirty years, many of them usually had hardly any contact with the outside world. The house where these inmates were kept was called the “house of the dead” because they all thought they would not be released alive. We received an inmate from preventive detention for care, then several more asked because they had no one to confide in. There was a climate of mistrust among the inmates and it also took some time until they trusted us. The warden was also sceptical at first because he knew that we visited prisoners for Christian reasons. He asked us what we would do if someone did not want to know anything about the faith, whether we would then break off contact? Before, we could always bear witness to the

faith. I asked Jesus how we should behave then? In reply I got the passage from the Bible where it says: “I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25, 36). It was not easy for us to recognise Jesus among prisoners at first, but this passage changed our view. Gradually we could actually recognise the “maltreated Jesus” in prisoners. There was a turnaround in policy.

### **Rehabilitation and Reintegration**

The European Court of Human Rights became aware of the situation of persons in preventive detention and declared that someone who had been sentenced to 10 years of preventive detention may no longer remain in prison. Suddenly quite a few were released without being prepared for the situation. Neither accommodation nor whereabouts had been clarified beforehand. No preparations had been made for their release either. They found themselves completely unsettled with their box full of belongings in front of the prison gate. As we were often the only caregivers, they called us to see if we could help them. As we had just bought a bigger house, we gave them accommodation in our house. We also took them to all the authorities, because they didn't know how to use public transport. So much had changed in 30 years. Little by little they left us when they felt safe. In total, we had taken in 28 ex-offenders in the four years. A few relapsed. We were allowed to accompany some in their dying process. Many had cancer! Some have found their feet in society but have kept in touch with us. We continue to accompany them with our prayers of blessing because they too are beloved children of God.



## Prison Ministry: My Dream Mission

### What Led me to the Prison Ministry?

From my childhood days, I had a longing in my heart to serve the least and the lost. My parents used to take us daily for Holy Mass. As I grew up, I felt every Eucharistic celebration was a heavenly experience, not just a routine. I was deeply touched by the love of Jesus who deigned to come down to the earth out of his infinite love and laid down his life to save the whole world. His love is so intense that he does not want a single soul to be lost

### My Personal Vocation

When I dwelt deeply on the love of Jesus in my prayer, I felt that when Jesus breathed his last, He was breathing into me telling me, “Now it is your turn, Adele, to live as I lived, carrying my love and light to others, especially to the sinners who have not known my love for them so that they too may be saved.” I considered it as a personal call for me from the Lord and so I prayed daily after Holy Communion, “Jesus, help me to carry your light to all those who are living in the darkness of sin and ignorance.” On my retirement from the D.Ed. College in Mangalore I was asked by my Provincial to go as a pioneer to start a mission in Nepal along with two more sisters. After serving the mission in Nepal for five years my Provincial permitted me to enter my dream Mission in the Central Prison in Bangalore in the year 2004. Sr. Irene Jane, then Provincial Superior blessed me and sent me saying, “Train yourself and train many more sisters”. She also asked me to give orientation on Prison Ministry to several groups in the Provincial House, including the Provincial Council, Superiors of the Mangalore Province, Heads of Educational Institutions and even Junior Sisters. After that I was sent to Bangalore to start the ministry in the Central Prison,



**Sr Adele Korah SCSG**

Bangalore. My Provincial Superior started a Congregational fund for the Sisters of Charity Prison Mission, of which the Provincial is the President and the signatory of the Society. This fund is utilized for the welfare of the rejected brethren in the prison and the accounts are audited in the Provincial house of the Sisters of Charity in Mangalore.

### My Entry in to Prison Ministry

I was fortunate to attend a training program organized by the National Office of the Prison ministry India in Camillus Study House in Bangalore. I felt privileged to receive a certificate at the end of the Training Program from B.S. Abbai, D.I.G. which enabled us to render service in the Prison. We were welcomed by the D.I.G. to the Central Prison Bangalore to start our service in June 2004. In the first year of my ministry to the prisoners, I had to live in the room allotted for the Sisters, in the Government quarters of police constables along with a sister of another congregation, Sr. Carmelita, a well experienced veteran Sister of St. Ann's Congregation. The room had neither toilet nor running water for our needs. We had to get water in a bucket from outside. There was an Indian toilet outside with a broken commode. On cleaning it I discovered that it was brown due to the thick coat of dirt on it. I scrubbed it hard with a granite piece as we had no liquid cleaner for the toilets. I said a prayer in my heart to accept my sacrifice for the repentance and transformation of the prisoners who are living in sin. We had to



share the same food prepared for the 5000 prisoners as we had no cooking facilities in the Police Quarters. We had to collect water in buckets from outside. Yet, I didn't mind the difficulties and adjusted myself to live with inconveniences because of my desire to serve the rejected brethren living in prison cells in Bangalore. Sr. Irene Jane, my Provincial Superior, during one of her visits came to see me in the Prison Quarters. When she saw the room I stayed in with no proper facility, she was kind enough to give me a sister companion to join in the ministry and a rented house to stay and continue the ministry from there.

I was welcomed to enter the prison without any restriction and was free to visit the inmates of both men and women section. Whenever I met the brethren behind the bars, I felt it was Jesus whom I was meeting, because Jesus said, "When I was in prison you visited me". Jesus reminded me to see him and serve him in every brother or sister in the prison. I considered all the inmates of the prison as my brothers and sisters who were in pain and were in need of love, acceptance and understanding. That was a helpful thought to continue meeting their needs whether it was convenient or not for me to reach out to them. People who saw me going in to the prison, specially the Police Constables, used to ask me, "Sister, don't you have any other place to go? Why do you want to serve these criminals?" In answer I asked them, "Who made them criminals?" None of them was born as a criminal. First of all, those within the prison were not all criminals. Majority of them were under trial. They were brought inside the prison walls, but have not been declared by the court as guilty of the crime they have been accused of. Several of them do not know why they were brought in, because they were arrested on the way back home after their work. Even if many of them had a sinful past, I felt that as a follower of Jesus who came to seek sinners I was called to continue the ministry of the good Shepherd and bring back the lost ones to their Savior who wants

no one to be lost. Many of them would cry out saying, "Please give me another chance to live again."

I recall how a person who was arrested after he had killed his wife by smashing her head with the gas cylinder in a moment of anger and frustration, was unable to sleep at night because whenever he closed his eyes, he could see only his blood-stained hands and he was weeping bitterly. Persons who have committed heinous crimes of murder become restless. But after listening to them patiently without any judgment and after some sessions of counseling, they gradually accept their failings and regain peace. I have heard some saying, "If I had this understanding earlier, I would not have reached this state." My mission in the prison is geared towards Release, Reformation, Reconciliation, Rehabilitation, Redemption and Reintegration of the brethren behind the bars. I had the opportunity to help several of them to experience inner release from the fetters of guilt, sinfulness, anger, lack of forgiveness, hatred and from the desire to take vengeance on those who were the cause of their imprisonment. I used to spend time listening to their woes, besides praying with them and guiding them with appropriate Word of God. I took this initiative to have group prayer, believing that prayer is the foundation of the ministry for the Least and the Lost. It has helped many brethren to begin leading a value based life by turning away from a life of crime. The Lord of love and forgiveness touched the life of many and set them free from their bondages gradually. "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36). Those who are open to accept themselves and open themselves to the healing touch of God, go through a process of inner transformation gradually and take a firm decision to turn away from their crime filled life and to begin a new life in the light of God. When they call out to me I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them" (Psalm 91:15)



Transformation of self is possible only by the grace of God. I am convinced of the fact that no human being can transform a hardcore criminal, but all things are possible for the Almighty who created us and laid down His life to save us. "I shall give you a new heart and a new spirit, put a new spirit within you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead." (Ezekiel 36:26) As the brethren start reading and listening to the lifegiving WORD of God, they start experiencing the love and the light of the Savior and are gradually liberated from their inner bondages of hatred towards their enemies. When our National Coordinator Rev. Fr. Francis Kodyan initiated Special Task Forces to strengthen the Ministry to the prisoners, in the Release and Reformation of various groups of Criminals in the prison as well as in the Society, he requested me to take the responsibility under the Special Task Forces to give release to the suffering brethren in the prison and also to help the brethren who are released from the prison. To render service in these areas, the fund provided by my Congregation was made available to me. Thus I have received a very strong support from my Religious superiors in my Ministry. This year I am fortunate to receive from my Provincial superior, Sr. Angeline Lobo as my sister companion.

### **Ministry Extended to Released Prisoners**

I realized that a committed volunteer needs to serve without counting the cost. Once at 8pm, when we had just finished dinner, I received a call from a released prisoner that he was in trouble as he and his brother were in danger of being arrested and sent to prison because his brother an alcoholic had quarreled with a person in the street and a group had called the police to arrest him. I contacted Rev. Fr. Sony C.P from Snehajyothi for help and he willingly accompanied me to the spot to assist the persons in need. When I saw that the police was trying to arrest him and take him under custody, I pleaded with the police not to send the man to prison but to permit me to

admit him in a Rehabilitation Center for his reformation rather than imprisoning him. The Police replied to me, "If you plead like a mother begging help for her son, how can I refuse you. Please take him and do what you think is best." I was greatly relieved when Rev. Fr. Sony accepted to take him to the Center immediately, though it was night. So the accused was taken for Rehabilitation, instead of being sent to the Central prison.

I had another unique experience when a prisoner approached our Convent, after his release from prison. Wilson a released prisoner came and knocked at the door of our convent late in the evening. We were just two sisters then living in a rented house close to the prison. Wilson was very much scared of being caught by the police on the road as he had heard from his friends of several cases when constables catch them accusing them of another crime and put them back in to prison at night. The jailors look at them suspiciously and Wilson was scared. Knowing our residence he came seeking help. Watching his scared and fear filled face, I took courage to go along with my sister companion to the Renewal Retreat Center which was not very far. The Director of the Center was so very helpful to accept him in the same night. Thus he got the opportunity to attend three days retreat at the Center. After attending a fruitful retreat of three days, Wilson returned to meet us sisters with a grateful heart. He returned to his home town with renewed spirit to begin a new life. We are called to do good to our neighbor and have to be prepared to do everything possible, to suffer everything and to even shed our blood for the good of our neighbor in imitation of the consuming love of our Redeemer in dying for us. Let us become aware of the need to reach out to the areas where people stand in dire need of our services, especially those who are rejected by society and even by their dear ones. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers in to the harvest. (Luke 10:2)



# The Ulma Family, Poland

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**Dominic Mascarenhas**

Prison Ministry India has no doubt been doing a good job. There is surely much more they would like to do; nevertheless, we ordinary people appreciate their courageously spending time with prisoners and helping in various ways including helping to teach young children. The Lord says “I was in prison”. He questions by implication, ‘what were you doing about it?’. Many of us outsiders, sadly will put our head down shamefully; we never even ‘visited’ prisoners, or tried to help them.

## Polish Prison Ministry Volunteers

There is a part of prison ministry that thankfully has not had chance to operate in India (thank God for it), but it did very powerfully (without being called ‘prison ministry’, but rather as ‘resistance’) in Poland and elsewhere. Polish priests like Maximilian Kolbe spoke strongly against wrongs of Nazism. Many Polish people (besides Maximilian Kolbe) even sheltered Jews from being taken away like cattle in goods trains, never to be seen again. These were sent to Auschwitz, Dachau among others; treated like slave labor and when considered incapable of work, were cruelly killed. Nazis made people think it patriotic to report Jews to authorities. In contrast those hiding or protected Jews were considered ‘traitors’. Sad to say, anti-Semitism (that Hitler used) was actually propagated by even Martin Luther (Germany) who said, Jews deserved to die; Hitler used this to call Nazism as ‘final solution’ to the ‘Jewish problem’.

## Ulma Family

But many Polish Christians refused to let themselves be brainwashed. Many lost their lives, solely because they were righteous and did their best to shield Jews. On September 10, 2023, Holy Father Pope Francis beatified the Ulma family. Many of us perhaps never heard of them till today. But they stand today as shining examples of Christian faith and righteousness. The Ulma family consisting of Jozef and his wife Wiktorja and their children were simple Polish people. Jozef was a prominent citizen in his village (active in many spheres with his many talents). Wiktorja was an educated housewife. They were people with ‘conscience’ and hunger and thirst for justice. They could not take on the law. But many people like them, quietly hid Jews until they could be moved further on even to America and other places. This family hid eight Jews. But a greedy person, lured by rewards that Germans promised informers, betrayed them. The Germans came. The Jews were summarily executed. There was no trial even for the Polish family. The gendarmes killed the family including all children, the eldest only eight years old. The mother went into spontaneous labor. The seventh child did not really see the face of the earth, but was buried summarily along with the rest of the family in front of their house. Later in defiance to Nazism, this grave was exhumed and given a Christian burial (this was when the seventh child was discovered). The Church today honors the entire family as martyrs. May the family be shining examples for prison ministry.



# Unjust Imprisonment

**Br Brian Onil D'Souza OFM**

Placing someone in a situation of confinement from which they cannot flee is what is meant by the word imprisonment. Due to a lack of proof or the inability to establish their innocence, coupled with the self-serving motives of the authorities, people are being held against their will in most prisons around the world. Here are a few examples of persons who were wrongfully imprisoned for a significant amount of time.

## **John Bunn**

John Bunn served a prison term of 27 years. He was arrested at the age of 14. He was falsely accused by Detective Louis N. Scarcella, an NYPD detective, of the murder and attempted murder of two correctional officers in Brooklyn. He was just given a one-day trial and sentenced to 17 years in prison. While he was in prison, he did not receive any education. However, in 2013, there was evidence against Detective Scarcella for falsely accusing innocents of crimes. A lawsuit brought by Bunn alleging “malicious prosecution, denial of due process, and civil rights conspiracy” was eventually resolved by the city for \$5.9 million in 2020. With this money, he started the non-profit organization “A Voice for the Unheard,” which distributes books to prisons and underserved neighbourhoods.

## **David Ranta**

David Ranta was another victim of Detective Louis N. Scarcella, an NYPD detective. He was accused and convicted in 1990 for the killing in Brooklyn of the Hasidic rabbi Chaskel Werzberger during a robbery attempt at the Brooklyn jewellery store in February 1990. He served his prison sentence for 23 years. After he was released, he filed a lawsuit against the City of New York, and received 6.4 million as compensation.

## **Susan Mellen**

Susan Mellen, a mother of three, was wrongly charged in 1997 with Rick Daly's

brutal murder. In 1998, Susan Marie Mellen was wrongfully found guilty of murder for the 1997 homicide of a man in Lawdale, California. The testimony of an informant, who said that Susan Mellon confessed to her, served as the foundation for the prosecution's case. Mellen was found guilty by a jury and given a life term in prison. Evidence that the prosecution's informant was a pathological liar was found in 2013. The Los Angeles County DA's Office participated in the reinvestigation of the case. Her conviction was based on faulty witness testimony. Therefore Susan Mellen requested a writ of habeas corpus on September 18, 2014, and it was granted on October 10, 2014, with no opposition from the district attorney's office. Mellen spent more than 17 years in prison before being freed later that day. The California Legislature authorized Mellen to receive \$597,200 on June 8, 2015, in accordance with the state's wrongful conviction compensation law.

## **Luis Vargas**

After DNA evidence connected the crimes to a serial rapist wanted for assaults dating back two decades, a judge in Los Angeles was set to clear a man convicted of three rapes on Monday. The California Innocence Project at California Western School of Law, which took up Luis Vargas' case in 2012, claiming that Vargas had been imprisoned for 16 years for crimes that he didn't commit.

## **Daniel Villegas**

Daniel Villegas was imprisoned for 20 years after being wrongly convicted of capital murder in the fatal shootings of two El Paso residents in 1993. In October 2018, an El Paso jury exonerated Villegas of the charge of capital murder. On April 10, 1993, Armando “Mando” Lazo, 17, and Bobby England, 18, were heading home from a house party with two other males when a car drew up slowly behind them and suddenly pulled away. The automobile then turned around and started driving back in the direction of the group before coming



to a stop. At that point, someone from the rear seat allegedly opened fire, killing Lazo and England. Daniel's initial trial concluded with a deadlocked jury. Daniel's second trial resulted in his conviction because his public defender, who was defending him, called just one witness. After decades in prison, his third trial ended in a total acquittal, making him the first truly free man.

### **Ricky Jackson**

Authorities predicated their case against Ricky, Wiley, and Ronnie, who resided in the area, on the evidence of then 12-year-old Eddie Vernon, who claimed to have witnessed the crime. Karen Smith, a local youngster, had seen two young black guys outside the store prior to the event but testified at trial that she did not recognize them. She was acquainted with the Bridgeman's and Jackson. Additional witnesses or concrete proof were not presented against the defendant. The gun used, the green car, or Frank's briefcase was never found. Vernon's evidence led to their detention; they were later convicted guilty of Franks' murder at trial and sentenced to death. Ricky Jackson was declared guilty of the murder and was never granted parole. He was friends with Ronnie Bridgeman, who was convicted of taking part in the attack as the second man and was sentenced to prison. His older brother Wiley was held responsible for helping to drive the getaway car.

Kyle Swenson released his report on his investigation into faults in the case against the three men, including issues regarding Vernon's testimony, in Cleveland Scene magazine in June 2011. Vernon told the police he witnessed the killing and claimed a friend had given him the names of the young lads. In a notarized letter retracting his testimony in 2014, Vernon asserted that police had coerced him into testifying against Jackson and the Bridgeman brothers. He stated that he was on the school bus with other children at the time and was too far away to see the murder because the Cleveland Fairmount Cut-Rate, where the crime occurred, was situated on Fairhill Road, where he was

riding the school bus with other kids at the time. Jackson spent decades in prison as a result of the incorrect conviction; in 2015, the state of Ohio awarded him \$1 million in restitution. Based on projections of lost income, the state Court of Claims awarded him additional \$2.65 million compensation in 2016. Jackson is believed to have served the longest prison term of anyone in the United States who has been exonerated.

The above mentioned unjust imprisonment cases are like a few drops of the ocean. There are many such cases which are buried and extinct. While being treated unjustly people exhibit resistance, aggression, fear, anger and hyper anxiety. At this state, persons feel hurt, rejected, misunderstood and also become depressed. The American judicial system seems to display that money can solve the deep-seated wounds of an unjust prisoner. It reflects the wisdom of our society which consequently scales the preciousness of life with base needs. This reality is unchangeable and monetary compensation has become indispensable. In my view, here the matter is not about recovering the lost savings of life rather it is something of restoring. True justice is in restoring the self. It was never enough for Jesus to provide things alone for the needy. He restored their life through self-acceptance and reconciliation of heart. This he showcased at the time of his crucifixion. Jesus was also unjustly accused, misunderstood, looked down upon; but he kept pursuing the law of the Spirit which would endow redemptive justice to all. He accepted not only his fate of being unjustly accused but also his mission of restoring life to all people. In restoring life, he accepted himself, as a sacrificial lamb, and through the act of forgiveness reconciled all. As a result, what happened two thousand years ago still affects the world today. Numerous innocent people are held captive, while those with power, wealth and political clout are freed. There are many occasions where criminals are released, and innocent people are held captive. For all those who hunger for justice and righteousness will surely be satisfied!



## **“This is our Opera”: A Musical on Sr Helen Prejean’s Work against Capital Punishment**

**Griffin Oleynick<sup>1</sup>**

This is a conversation with the composer who made the story of Sister Helen Prejean’s work against capital punishment into an opera. Jake Heggie is the composer of ten operas, including works based on Moby-Dick and It’s a Wonderful Life. His first opera, *Dead Man Walking*, with a libretto by Terrence McNally and new staging by Ivo van Hove, will open the 2023–24 season of the Metropolitan Opera in New York later this month. It adapts a memoir by Sr. Helen Prejean, whose work as a spiritual advisor to inmates on death row and advocacy against capital punishment helped bring about a major revision to the Catechism of the Catholic Church under Pope Francis. Heggie spoke recently with Commonweal’s associate editor Griffin Oleynick by Zoom. Their conversation has been edited for clarity and length. Griffin Oleynick: *Dead Man Walking* premiered more than two decades ago, at the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco. It was your first opera—you’ve since composed nine more—and one that altered the course of your career. Take us back to that moment: How did the opera originate?

Jake Heggie: I was actually working full time in the San Francisco Opera’s marketing and public-relations department when all of this unfolded in the early 1990s. I trained as a composer and pianist. But in the late eighties I developed focal dystonia - my right hand began curling into a fist. So I couldn’t play the piano, and I stopped composing. But my day job immersed me in the magic of opera. I heard the greatest singers in the world,

and got to know them, too. That spark of creativity that had always been there suddenly started burning in me again. I began writing songs for famous singers: Frederica von Stade, Renée Fleming, and Dawn Upshaw. They loved them, and performed them all over the world. I felt free and inspired. So I began composing like nobody’s business. I also got through the focal dystonia, thanks to the Dorothy Taubman technique, and began to play the piano again. Before long, the general director of the San Francisco Opera asked me if I’d ever thought about writing an opera. I hadn’t, but when he offered me the opportunity to do so, I immediately said “yes.” I then met with Terrence McNally, a Tony-award-winning playwright, who suggested we adapt *Dead Man Walking* for the stage. I shivered, every hair stood on end - I could hear the music, the possibilities, solos, duets, choruses, etc. I was just thirty-six when Terrence and I got started. I never dreamed I’d have a career inside music. But here I was, in 1998, having gone from the PR department to composer-in-residence.

I connected with Sr. Helen Prejean early on. She was very much on board, and remained active in the creative process. She gave us her blessing to use artistic license, to invent characters and change things for the stage. But she did have one request: that *Dead Man Walking* remain a story of redemption.

GO: *Dead Man Walking* isn’t really about the politics of capital punishment, but about the big themes and emotions that have long been associated with opera: fear and vengeance, love and redemption, tragedy and hope. And the score is incredibly varied, containing everything from the influence of classical Italian opera to rock, blues, jazz, and spirituals.

JH: That’s right. I find it really boring when someone just tells me how I should feel about an issue or a subject, rather than letting me feel it and think about it for myself.

<sup>1</sup> Read more at: [https://international.la-croix.com/news/culture/this-is-our-opera-a-musical-on-sr-helen-prejeans-work-against-capital-punishment/18409?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Mailjet\\_28Sep23N1&cmid=038e05f4-e6d9-4a08-a7a7-981b9e1e12ec](https://international.la-croix.com/news/culture/this-is-our-opera-a-musical-on-sr-helen-prejeans-work-against-capital-punishment/18409?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Mailjet_28Sep23N1&cmid=038e05f4-e6d9-4a08-a7a7-981b9e1e12ec)



# The Lord Will Build a House for Us

**Sr Shanti Pulickal SCC**

Having a house of one's own! Well, this is a dream in everyone's heart. A house is a place where one can relax and feel free, experience security and feel comfortable. Hence, we use the term for guests or at meetings, 'feel at home.' True, our ancestors were nomads, wandering from place to place, but over the ages, people realized the need of settling down in one place and building their own houses. Jesus has insisted on giving Food, Clothing and Shelter as works of mercy which his followers should practice and the Indian Constitution calls it as the fundamental rights of its citizens. Responding to the call of Jesus for mercy and compassion, the PMI National coordinator Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS has launched many audacious plans, one of which is to build houses for reformed and released prisoners. The National PMI would give Rs 3 lacks as an incentive and the local PMI volunteers were requested to contribute their share for further expenses. We, in the Berhampur diocese felt privileged to avail ourselves of this opportunity to help a released prisoner, Elias (name changed) two years ago. Elias's joy knew no bounds, for he had neither asked for it nor expected it.

But now, another prisoner in dire need has requested our help. He is a poor man with 6 children and was earning his livelihood by driving a hired auto rickshaw. The lure of money was too strong a temptation for him to resist! Believing some of his friends, he got involved in Ganja trafficking. He was arrested and convicted for 14 years in prison in 2013. His young wife with 6 small children remained with her in-laws and did

odd jobs for a living. But after the death of her husband's parents she was driven out of the house and was forced to move into a rented room. The children were growing and the expenses were mounting. Feeding and educating them and paying the house rent were too heavy a burden on her and she approached us for help.

With full confidence, we approached Fr. Francis and he responded positively. We were confident about getting the whole amount but as the National office could sanction only Rs. 50,000/- we were desperate. Many questions came to our mind, what shall we do? Where shall we go? Why did we leave our comfort zone and take this burden on ourselves? Once again Fr. Francis came to our help, not with monetary offer but with messages that raised our hopes and strengthened our faith. "Learn the art of doing wonders with nothing", he said. "The Lord will bring new donors which you will enjoy".

Still we had our misgivings. Will we find any donor to help us? If we don't, what shall we do? We were like the apostles with only few loaves of bread to feed an enormous crowd. 'Bring that to me', Jesus said. The apostles obeyed. Jesus blessed them, broke and asked the disciples to distribute. The huge crowd ate and they had even some to spare. "Let's pray, do our best and wait for a similar miracle" we said among ourselves. The 1st miracle was through Sr. Leema Rose, the Provincial of the Sisters of the Cross. With full faith in the Lord the construction work is in progress and we hope to get more donors to complete the work soon so that the prisoner's wife and children will have a safe shelter and a small but comfortable house where they can feel at home. The Lord will be a Shepherd to the poor of his people and will let them live in safety (Is 14:30).



## China's Closure of Uyghur Detention Camps<sup>1</sup>

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Rights groups and media reports have dismissed China's claim of closing detention camps for Uyghur Muslims in Xinjing and claimed that dubious arrests and disappearances have continued in the restive region. The Uyghur internment camps continue to operate, and human rights violations of the Muslim minority go unabated, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported on Sept. 17 citing rights groups and media findings. Chinese authorities claimed the facilities were "vocational training centers" where the "students" voluntarily learned new skills. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) claimed the camps were closed in 2019 and said those who graduated found "good jobs." However, RFA reported that its Uyghur Service investigation has confirmed that detentions continue, and satellite images reviewed by the service indicate that some sites previously identified as internment facilities remain intact. Many people rounded up by police remain missing. "Uyghurs are still very much living in a state of brokenness," said Maya Wang, associate director of the Asia division at Human Rights Watch. An estimated 1.8 million Uyghurs and Kazakhs have been allegedly sent to the camps, rights groups say. RFA claims that the data it gathered confirms reports from several news outlets, including Agence France-Presse (AFP), that Uyghurs and other Muslim minority communities in the region continue to face ethnic persecution despite international pressure on China.

Qurban Nur, a 45-year-old Uyghur man, was allegedly held at a camp in Seriqbuya

township in Kashgar for two years and two months before being released last spring. People are "continuously coming in" to the facility in Kashgar, RFA reported citing an unnamed local village security official who acknowledged Nur's detention. Two men in their mid-twenties - Burham Hizir and Payzulla Rahman - have been detained in a camp operating in the city of Korla, within the Bayingolin prefecture, northeast of Kashgar since 2021, the sources told RFA.

A UN Human Rights report in 2022 condemned China for committing "serious human rights violations" against Uyghurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang. The report found that "allegations of patterns of torture, or ill-treatment, including forced medical treatment and adverse detention conditions, are credible, as are allegations of individual incidents of sexual and gender-based violence." The report stated that "far-reaching, arbitrary and discriminatory restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms, in violation of international laws and standards", including restrictions on religious freedom and the rights to privacy and movement had occurred in the region.

China in a detailed and firm rebuttal of the UN allegations stated that its counterterrorism and "de-radicalization efforts" in the region, had been conducted according to "the rule of law" and by no means add up to "suppression of ethnic minorities." The camps for Uyghurs, according to the Chinese government narrative were "learning facilities established in accordance with law intended for de-radicalization" and not "concentration camps." The UN body had noted that despite China dismantling

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<sup>1</sup> UCA News September 19, 2023.



its camp system the “laws and policies that underpin it remain in place” and lead to increased imprisonment.

Adrian Zenz, a German academic whose research exposed the breadth of the campaign against Uyghurs pointed out that some low-security camps appear to have been closed. But the “capacity for high-security detention and higher security prisons has increased significantly,” Zenz told RFA. “It’s difficult to assess the true situation in Xinjiang given that Uyghurs are unable to freely communicate with outsiders,” he added. This month AFP reporters visited some of the homes in Yarkant County in southern Xinjiang that Zenz’s research identified as the addresses of Uyghurs allegedly gathered up in China’s ideological re-education effort. The houses were closed or abandoned, and the locals drove the reporters away from investigating further, RFA said. The journalists also visited sites identified by researchers as detention camps and found some that appear to be still operating, although they do not identify where they are located. “Several had staffed guard towers, security cameras, and high walls topped with barbed wire,” AFP reported.

The Canberra-based *Australian Strategic Policy Institute* had identified 11 sites in Yarkant County as detention facilities which included jails and re-education camps in 2020. The sites still had external walls and six had watchtowers as of 2022, RFA said citing an analysis of Google Earth satellite images by its team. Bahtiyar Omer, director of the Norway-based *Uyghur Transitional Justice Database* group alleged that more than 12,600 Uyghurs are being held in camps in Xinjiang. “The concentration camps have not disappeared,” Omer told RFA.

## **Turkish Crypto Founder Faruk Fatih Ozer Gets over 11,000 Years Jail Term for Fraud**

Turkey is known for issuing massive prison sentences, which became more common after it abolished the death penalty in 2004 in a bid to join the European Union. A disgraced Turkish crypto founder who fled to Albania and his two brothers have been sentenced to 11,196 years in jail each, the Anadolu state news agency reported Friday. Prosecutors had asked for Thodex boss Faruk Fatih Ozer, 29, to be sentenced to 40,562 years in prison for money laundering, fraud and establishing a criminal organisation. “If I were to establish a criminal organisation, I would not have acted so amateurishly,” Anadolu quoted Ozer as telling the court. His two brothers, Serap and Guven, received the same sentence, which was issued late Thursday after a brief trial, Turkish media reports said. Turkey is known for issuing massive prison sentences, which became more common after it abolished the death penalty in 2004 to help its efforts to join the European Union. Ozer was initially reported to have fled Turkey in April 2021 with \$2 billion in investor assets, although that figure has since been disputed.

Prosecutors said Ozer had transferred 250 million liras in user assets (worth about \$30 million at the time) to three secret accounts when he fled Turkey in April 2021, with much of the money ending up in a Malta bank. The indictment said the Ozer brothers had caused 356 million liras of damage to clients in all. The case grabbed local headlines because it coincided with a Turkish crypto boom that has since largely subsided due to heavier government regulation. Turks began turning to various crypto currencies as a defence against a deep slide in the value of the lira that began more than two years ago. Ozer gained further celebrity status after being pictured meeting with ultranationalist pro-government figures. He was arrested last year in Albania on an international arrest warrant from Interpol.

## Mumbai Pays Tribute to Sister Rosita, the Angel of Prisoners<sup>1</sup>

**Nirmala Carvalho**

The nun, who pioneered the prison ministry in the Indian Catholic Church, passed away at the age of 94. Speaking about prejudices against inmates, she said: “If Christ did not discriminate, why can’t we, who claim to be his disciples, do the same?”



Mumbai’s Catholic community bid a final farewell yesterday to Sister Rosita Gomes, a member of the Franciscan Hospitaller Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and a pioneer in the pastoral ministry among inmates in the great Indian metropolis. Sister Rosita passed away in the house of her institute in Bandra after more than 70 years of religious life. She would have turned 94 in November. Known for her work among the poor and the marginalised, she was instrumental in getting homes built for lepers in 1967, during her stay in the

convent of Agra. But she is remembered above all for the impetus she gave to the birth of pastoral ministry in prisons in India.

In the early 1980s, even before this ministry was established in the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, she delivered letters to and from inmates and their families in Mumbai, going every week to the juvenile prison to pray and promote recreational activities. It was God’s Providence that showed her the way. She was asked to visit a man in prison who had accidentally killed his wife. After that she began to visit him periodically and brought his letters to his children to help them maintain good relations. During those visits she met 21 other Catholic detainees, and came to realise the importance of having a contact person between them and their families. Later, she began to devote herself to the rehabilitation of 42 Catholic boys in a juvenile prison arrested for drug addiction, helping them reintegrate into society. She loved to repeat the words of Jesus: “I was in prison and you visited me: now you enter the kingdom of heaven”. Starting in 1983 Sister Rosita organised Masses and cultural events in Bandra police jail and Umerkhadi juvenile home.

Despite her advanced age, she continued to visit these places until a few years ago, bringing food and other gifts, especially at Christmas and Easter and on 14 August, the feast day of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, the founder of her religious institute. Sister Rosita also invited many lay people to help her in her prison ministry, getting

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mumbai-pays-tribute-to-Sister-Rosita,-the-angel-of-prisoners-59240.html>



them the necessary permits. “The Church, in particular, has a special task towards the marginalised and those who languish in remand homes and prisons. Many, through no fault of their own, are victims of unjust and oppressive structures,” she said. “If Christ did not discriminate, why can’t we, who claim to be his disciples, do the same? Why not let our Christianity come to life, bringing God’s message of justice, peace and love to those who are locked up in prison?”

Sister Rosita was also known for her devotion to the Way of the Cross. For more than 20 years, she revived the devotion of the Via Crucis every Friday during Lent in the six inner streets in suburban Bandra. She was a tireless missionary, who responded to the needs of the time. Another mission in which she was actively involved was helping orphans and destitute children, welcoming them to the boarding school and taking care of them until they completed their studies. “Sister Rosita was a person of great faith, faithful to God, to the Church and to her congregation,” said Fr Vernon Aguiar, rector of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Mount (Mount Mary) who accompanied her to prisons to celebrate Mass. She “was constantly nourished by the reception of the sacraments in a deep relationship with Jesus with the good work she did. Now her memory will remain alive through the love she brought into the lives of so many.”

## The Canticle of the Sun

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,  
all praise is yours, all glory, honour and  
blessings.

To you alone, Most High, do they  
belong;  
no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce  
your name.

We praise you, Lord, for all your  
creatures,  
especially for Brother Sun,  
who is the day through whom you give  
us light.  
And he is beautiful and radiant with great  
splendour,  
of you Most High, he bears your  
likeness.

We praise you, Lord, for Sister Moon and  
the stars,  
in the heavens you have made them  
bright, precious and fair.  
We praise you, Lord, for Brothers Wind  
and Air,  
fair and stormy, all weather’s moods,  
by which you cherish all that you have  
made.

We praise you, Lord, for Sister Water,  
so useful, humble, precious and pure.

We praise you, Lord, for Brother Fire,  
through whom you light the night.  
He is beautiful, playful, robust, and  
strong.

We praise you, Lord, for Sister Earth,  
who sustains us  
with her fruits, coloured flowers, and  
herbs.

We praise and bless you, Lord, and give  
you thanks,  
and serve you in all humility.

# Marlin's Journey to Overcoming Addiction and Living Free

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Emily Andrews<sup>1</sup>

A lifelong motorcyclist, Marlin has rarely felt nervous to ride. That changed the summer he and his wife Erin travelled from Minnesota to the roads that snake through the Black Hills of South Dakota. Though the peaks and valleys offered a stunning view, skirting the edge of a steep cliff on his bike made Marlin tense. The couple made it home safely that day, and Marlin is still grateful that he didn't take the journey alone. After his own treacherous past, he knows there is strength in community.

## A Rough Road

Marlin began riding with his dad at a young age. Early on, Marlin caught an interest in auto and motorcycle repair while helping in the garage. "I learned a lot of very good practical things from my dad," says Marlin. "But I also learned how to drink. In my earliest memories when people were having fun, there was always alcohol in their hand." Marlin got drunk for the first time at age 6. He liked how alcohol made him feel. It washed away memories of being lonely and seeing his parents fight, at least briefly. But his addiction grew. Over time he also experimented with LSD and cocaine, all while struggling with school and relationships. By his early 20s, Marlin was a husband and father straining to keep his family together. "Nobody wanted me around," says Marlin. At one point, Marlin lived with his uncle, the only person left who would drink with

him. Then his uncle's tragic death left him feeling even more alone.

## Downward Spiral

Marlin lost interest in alcohol when he discovered a new outlet: meth. "I thought it was like a gift from God, some sort of magical potion that cured everything," says Marlin. Soon, he was regularly using and selling meth. New friends flocked to him when he had a bag of it in his pocket. He felt accepted and significant knowing people wanted him around. "I felt like I was good at selling drugs and fixing cars," adds Marlin. "Those are about the only two things that I ever excelled at." Marlin's lifestyle led to several felony drug charges, jail stints, and finally prison. Sometimes he attended Bible studies in jail, because they were co-ed, but he mostly wanted to socialize. At every meeting, he also was reminded of the Jesus he heard about as a child in church. Marlin had always had faith, but he had no idea that that same Jesus had a purpose for his life. "I believed for a significant amount of time that God created me to be an example of what people shouldn't be," says Marlin.

## A Hopeless Cycle

In 2007, after another prison stint, Marlin tried to move forward. He joined a long-term recovery program, Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge, and volunteered at church. He made sure his kids attended youth group. But beneath the surface, Marlin was living in pain and isolation. He struggled being a full-time dad without a steady job. His children's mother relapsed after several years of sobriety. His own father was terminally ill. Life only seemed to get darker, and Marlin blamed God. "I was doing all the things that

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<sup>1</sup> Prison Fellowship International.



I felt, in my mind, God should have been blessing me for,” says Marlin. “So, I turned my back on Him and decided that life was easier when I was numb and high.” When the allure of Marlin’s old ways returned, he dove headlong into using and selling meth again. Meth deadened the pain, but it also robbed Marlin’s joy. He felt self-hatred and little else. After a decade living free, Marlin was arrested and headed back to prison.

### **Marlin’s Mind Shift**

Marlin entered Minnesota Correctional Facility asking, “God, where are you?”. It didn’t take long for him to get the answer: Though Marlin had been running for a long time, God had never turned His back on him. Soon, Marlin enrolled in the Prison Fellowship Academy at Lino Lakes, a yearlong life-transformation program he had joined during a previous sentence but never finished. The Academy guides incarcerated men and women on a journey to transformation in the context of a supportive community. Using holistic curriculum and compassionate coaches, the Academy enables participants to examine their worldview and replace criminal thinking with renewed purpose. Away from the distractions of the world, Marlin found space to focus on his relationship with God. “I read where Paul says in Philippians to be content in everything,” Marlin remembers. “I was content in knowing that I was in relationship with Christ. He was working in my heart. If that’s the place I had to be to hear Him and be in relationship with Him, then I was content with that.” Marlin practiced biblically based life principles like integrity and responsibility and discovered a peace he’d never known. Of all the Academy’s benefits, Marlin appreciated the people

most. After graduation, he stayed on as a clerk and continued to absorb the wisdom of others. “It was the relationships with the staff and the one-to-one conversations,” says Marlin. “We had mentors and volunteers that would come in. Having a sounding board to help me process what I was learning was so helpful and necessary.” The Academy ignited in Marlin the desire to do more - to be a more devoted father, to live as a productive citizen and good neighbour. Finally, he began to see his God-given purpose in serving others. “God put this burden on my heart to come out and be successful,” says Marlin, “to be a path paver instead of a stumbling block maker, which I had been for most of my life.”

### **A Life of Purpose**

When Marlin was released in 2018, he was desperate for support in recovery and re-entry. He went from the prison gates to the front door of Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge. His first job was a paid internship with their outreach department. From there, Marlin joined Freedom Works, a faith-based re-entry organization founded to help Academy graduates transition to life on the outside. He served as program manager of a 163-bed facility in North Minneapolis and led Celebrate Recovery (CR) meetings every week. Marlin says CR still encourages him in his own walk, which still has a fair share of bumps. Now, Marlin knows his identity and hope come from Jesus. And Marlin knows that hope does not disappoint. One of his greatest regrets was hurting his children, and now, their reconciled relationship is a treasured gift. He has even reconnected with his oldest son, who was uniquely affected by Marlin’s past choices. Marlin now serves as director of re-entry services at Damascus



Way, which helps provide housing and support to people in re-entry or substance abuse recovery. He also advocates for policy change in the justice system. "I was an auto mechanic and a drug dealer for most of my life, and now I'm managing a budget and supervising people," says Marlin. "God equips me to continue to do the work." Today, Marlin is more than eight years sober and lives in Minneapolis with his wife Erin. He has six children and six grandchildren. It's been several years since he graduated from the Academy, and Marlin still strives to live by the Values of Good Citizenship daily. His passion is to help others to do the same. In community, Marlin has found a safe place to serve, to grow, and to move through grief and other challenges. "God just takes what the world would throw away and turns it into something beautiful and meaningful."

### Finding True Freedom

When he isn't spending time with others, Marlin still loves to drive his motorcycle. In some ways, those rides mean more to him now than ever before. "It is freeing," he says. "When you've spent a number of years incarcerated and you're able to get away from there, and it's almost like a form of therapy, in a way." Once a man who coped with life by numbing out, Marlin is finally living free - and nothing compares to the feeling of knowing Christ.

"Keep a clear eye toward life's end. Do not forget your purpose and destiny as God's creature. What you are in his sight is what you are and nothing more. Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take nothing that you have received...but only what you have given; a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice, and courage." - Francis of Assisi

## Dum Dum Central Correctional Home



Don Bosco Prison Ministry begins skill training at Dum Dum Central Correctional Home. Shri Akhil Giri, Honourable Minister of State in-charge of the Department of Correctional Administration, Government of West Bengal today inaugurated skill training programs at Dum Dum Central Correctional Home. The skill training is facilitated by DB Tech in collaboration with Schneider Electricals. Fr. George Mathew, Director of DB Tech and Mr. Joy Mukherjee, the Director of Schneider Electricals motivated the inmates to participate in the course attentively and make a better living in the future. A total of 40 inmates, 30 boys and 10 girls have signed up to attend the 6 monthly courses in Electrical and Beauty Technician. Fr. N. T. Scaria, the founder and Director of the Don Bosco Prison Ministry approached the superintendent Shri Suprakash Roy to begin multiple skills training programmes for the inmates in collaboration with DB Tech and Schneider Electricals, Kolkata. Fr. Joseph Pauria, the Provincial encouraged the initiative and termed it as a typical work of Don Bosco.



# The Lie of Control and a Life of Surrender

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Joanna Breault<sup>1</sup>

In a small town in Iowa, Angie lay curled in her bed, trying to block out the sound of her parents fighting in the living room. The screaming and crying resounded off the walls of their modest home, and every now and then, Angie would hear something shatter. Her father was drunk again. Angie's heart pounded with fear even though her big brothers were down the hall. She tried praying the prayer her mother had taught her: Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. But nothing helped; the whirlwind of anger and violence kept spinning. When will this end? Angie wondered. How can I stop this madness?

## Superpower and Addiction

Angie's parents divorced when she was 11, and that brought some tranquillity to her home life—at least with her mom. Her father remarried and continued his alcohol-fueled rages. Angie's mother remarried a man who became a source of encouragement to Angie—but his love wasn't enough to fill the void left by her father. Angie says she dabbled in drugs, drank a little, and sought affirmation from boys—which resulted in a prom-night pregnancy. Angie was shocked. She had big plans for a different kind of future; she was going to have a career helping people. Giving up the baby for adoption seemed like the right choice. However, eight months along in her pregnancy, Angie changed her mind. She gave birth to a son she named Jamie, enrolled in community college classes, and started working full time at a restaurant.

Life felt overwhelming—until Angie tried meth. “It was like all my concerns, all my struggles, were answered—like I could manage everything,” she recalls. “I was

losing [my pregnancy] weight. I could go to work. I could do my schoolwork. It gave me energy—I was Superwoman.” At first, Angie only snorted meth on the weekends or when she had a big paper due. She loved the sense of control it gave her. But as time went on, occasional use became addiction. Once again, Angie found herself powerless. She had started nursing school but dropped out during her internship because life became unmanageable. At first, she worked as a bartender and a waitress, but as addiction took over, she could no longer hold down a job.

Eight years after the birth of Jamie, Angie had another son. She married the baby's father - but after six months, they went their separate ways. Five years later, Angie had a third child - a daughter she named Faith - with a boyfriend, Travis. She stopped using drugs during her pregnancy, but the hiatus didn't last long. “Travis was manufacturing meth,” Angie says, “and I had postpartum depression. Then my stepdad passed away - I had never lost anybody close to me before. I just didn't know how to deal with that.” Angie sought relief the way she had been finding it for years: in meth. It wasn't long before she was as entangled as ever. She and Travis broke up, and a year later, Travis was arrested, tried, and sentenced to 10 years in federal prison.

## Love from Church Ladies

The first time the church ladies knocked on Angie's door, Angie didn't know what to think. She had never heard of Prison Fellowship Angel Tree, which brings gifts to children in the name of their incarcerated parent. And she certainly didn't want her messy home or her drug use to be fuel for judgment by strangers. “I was a little apprehensive because of the mind frame that I was in, the world that I was entertaining,” Angie says. “But they were so caring and so kind.” The women knew Angie's children because the kids attended the church's Awana discipleship program.

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<sup>1</sup> Prison Fellowship International.

Angie didn't care about religion, but she let the children go because transportation was provided, and she welcomed the break from watching them. Four-year-old Faith had told the church ladies about her daddy in prison, and they made sure he received an Angel Tree application. "They came over and brought a box of food," Angie recalls. "They brought gifts for Faith. They had asked her what she liked, and she told them, and they were able to provide her with some gifts through Angel Tree on behalf of her dad." In retrospect, Angie says that the love of those women planted seeds in her heart. Four-year-old Faith had told the church ladies about her daddy in prison, and they made sure he received an Angel Tree application.

### Loss And Chaos

When Angie's father died in 2008, she felt cheated. She had wanted him to take responsibility for the ways he hurt her and the family - to say "I love you" or "I'm sorry." But he never did, and with his death, that hope was gone as well. Three months later, Angie's mother died. They had been distant in recent years because of Angie's drug use, and Angie was crushed that there was no more time to heal their relationship. "Then, April 29, 2009, there was a knock at my door, and I had a federal warrant for my arrest," Angie says. "I was hauled down to Cedar Rapids, and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, what is happening?' I wasn't even able to consciously think about what was going on in my life - but there was so much, I thought I was going to lose my mind." Booked on conspiracy to manufacture meth, Angie spent the first two weeks sleeping around the clock. When she woke up, she took stock of her situation. I don't have any drugs, Angie thought. I don't have my parents. I don't know where my kids are. I don't know how much time I'm going to get. Once again, life felt chaotic and hopeless, spinning out of control. 'What if it's true? What if there really is a hope and a future, and that is the plan?' -Angie

### Unexpected Pen Pals and the Word of God

One day, the correctional officers came around and announced that a Bible study was about to start. Angie had no interest in studying the Bible, but leaving her cell sounded good - so she went. She didn't understand much of what was said, but the leader made her feel welcome. And that week, Angie received her first letter. Three women from a church in Angie's small town had read about her indictment in the local paper. One had a grandson who played baseball with Angie's son, Brady, and they wanted Angie to know they were praying for her. That's kind of weird, Angie thought. She tucked the letter away and didn't think much more about it. But a week and a half later, another one arrived. This time, it was from just one of the women, Judy. It was warm and conversational, and it included a Bible verse. Angie had never met Judy and didn't understand why she would take the time to write - but the letters kept coming.

When her Bible study leader gave Angie an Inside Journal Life Recovery Bible, she deposited it in her bin of belongings without opening it. But when she saw the Bible verse in Judy's next letter, she dug it back out to find Judy's verse, hungry to know more: "'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'" (Jer. 29:11, NIV). Angie read the verse over and over again. Then she read the passages that came before and after it. It didn't seem to make sense, given her circumstances. But then Angie thought, What if it's true? What if there really is a hope and a future, and that is the plan? For the first time in as long as she could remember, Angie was overcome with a sense of peace.

### Double Angel Tree

Back home, Angie's children were struggling. Brady's father had taken custody of him, but 21-year-old Jamie was left to care for his 7-year-old sister. He worked



hard as a car salesman, but it was difficult to make ends meet. “Even though the kids were able to manage throughout the year, when Christmas came around, it was a lot harder for them,” Angie says. “The stress was multiplied.” Remembering what a blessing Angel Tree had been in the past, Angie signed up. And that year—and for four more after that - Faith received gifts on behalf of each of her incarcerated parents. One year, the church volunteers brought her a poster of her favorite singer, as well as a children’s Bible that she has to this day. The churches that served Faith and Jamie brought food as well. “The combination of it all was just so valuable,” Angie says. “I can’t thank God enough for that... They were being taken care of.” Remembering what a blessing Angel Tree had been in the past, Angie signed up.

### **Companions while Inside**

Eventually, Angie wrote back to Judy, and their correspondence lasted throughout Angie’s five-year prison sentence. Angie was transferred from one county jail to another and then moved between two federal correctional facilities. “She found me everywhere I went,” Angie says. “She is my guardian angel. She has helped me grow in my faith and trust in God. She didn’t have to choose me. She never left me.” Angie had consistent contact with someone else while she was in prison: Travis, Faith’s father. He was still incarcerated as well, but because they shared a child, they were allowed to email each other daily. Angie was hurt by some of Travis’ past actions—but she was grateful to have a friend who knew her so well and also knew how to navigate prison life. Travis would calm her down when she got stressed or overwhelmed. Eventually, Angie transferred to an in-prison residential drug abuse program. There she learned how to process her anger, grief, guilt, and shame. She also made an important friend, Ms. Hunter. “The lady that God chose to be my bunkie was an elderly lady who spoke God’s Word with confidence,” Angie says.

“She was a very devoted Christian. She was placed in my life on purpose. I was able to learn and grow.”

### **A New Chapter**

Angie was released in 2012, just a month and a half after Travis. They were assigned to different jurisdictions, but after a while Angie was able to change hers, and they lived in the same sober home. Angie and Travis were married in 2015.

Angie feels a strong calling to support those in the same place she once was. She earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology and human services and then an addictions counseling graduate certificate. Angie became a licensed drug and alcohol counselor in 2018 and now helps people dealing with substance abuse disorder at Beauterre Recovery Institute. She has also written a book about her life, *Hope Dealer (A Way Out)*, and she frequently speaks at conferences and churches, sharing her story of hope and restoration. However, Angie says her favorite speaking engagement was at a women’s prison.

“I understand the women,” she says. “I felt kind of at home there with them.” Angie wouldn’t have chosen prison - but she believes God used it to bring her a peace she would not have found otherwise. She recalls a moment behind bars when she was listening to the Rascal Flatts song, *I Won’t Let Go*, on her little prison radio. As she walked the yard and listened, she sensed God’s heart for her through the lyrics: *I will stand by you / I will help you through ... I will hold you tight / And I won’t let you fall.* “That was such a profound song for me,” Angie says. “I one hundred percent believe that God sucked me out of my environment and sat me down, so He got my full attention. I believe that He wasn’t going to let me go, and that He did have plans to give me a hope and a future.” Angie wouldn’t have chosen prison - but she believes God used it to bring her a peace she would not have found otherwise.



## A Tribute of Love to the Late Sr Dr Genevieve CSST

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It was post-retirement as the Principal of Mount Carmel College Bangalore in the year 2000 that Sr. Genevieve was transferred to the Teresian College, Mysore and thereafter became one of the Provincial Councilors. In that year Sr. Genevieve joined the Prison Ministry India, an NGO formed to serve Prisoners, their families, & their victims. Sister was very regular in visiting the prison every week true to the Gospel message “Whoever is faithful in small matters will be faithful in large ones (Lk 16:10) and remained upright and meticulous in discharging her responsibility. Sister Genevieve was elected as the Asst Coordinator, for the Karnataka Region of Prison Ministry India, and was also selected as the Joint Secretary of the Mysore City Prison Ministry India Unit. The then Bishop of Mysore, Late Dr Joseph Roy, appointed her as the Diocesan Coordinator for Prison Ministry India. During her association with the Prison Ministry India Mysore Unit, the National Convention of Prison Ministry India was organized at Mysore which was inaugurated by the then Chief Justice of Karnataka, Mr. Justice Cyriac Joseph, and one of the other speakers Mr. Justice Mallimath, former Chief Justice of Kerala. She also invited the Supreme Court Advocate P. D. Mathew, to address the people of Mysore on the subject of “Death Penalty and Prison Reforms”. She also joined the campaign against the



**Dr Michael Noronha**

death penalty and joined the Mysore Unit in organizing a seminar on “Abolition of Death Penalty” with the then Karnataka High Court Judge, Mr Justice Michael Saldanha as the Keynote Speaker.

On her election as the Provincial of CSST Karnataka Province, her commitment to serving the prisoners was remarkable. In spite of her busy schedule as the Provincial, she included in her planner to attend the monthly meeting and also a prison visit to the women’s cell once a month. The women prisoners numbering over 125 and a few with their babies were provided with toiletries, baby food, and basic necessities meticulously every month sponsored by Sr. Genevieve until her term as Provincial ended. At every visit to her convents as Provincial, she made it a point to advise her sisters to join the local unit of the Prison Ministry team and visit the prison if there was one situated in the city. The Karnataka Prison Ministry Team remembers with gratitude her contribution in serving the prisoners. It offers our condolence to the Provincial Superior, CSST Community and her dear family members and friends. “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, we pray that He will accord her a welcome, ‘Come blessed of my Father! Take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. “I was in prison, and you came to see me”.



# Jailed Iranian Activist Narges Mohammadi Wins 2023 Nobel Peace Prize

**Christian Edwards, Ed Upright and Sana  
Noor Haq<sup>1</sup>**

The 2023 Nobel Peace Prize has gone to jailed Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi for “her fight against the oppression of women in Iran and her fight to promote human rights and freedom for all.” Mohammadi has long campaigned for women’s rights and for the abolition of the death penalty. It has come at huge personal cost – she’s been sentenced to more than 30 years in jail, and has been banned from seeing her husband and children. In an audio recording and letter shared with CNN before she was awarded the prize, Mohammadi spoke about her activism from inside Iran’s notorious Evin prison. The Nobel Committee said it hoped Iran would release Mohammadi so she could attend the prize ceremony in December.

## Human Rights Advocate

Narges Mohammadi spearheaded the campaign for human rights in Iran, in the face of a regime that has used torture to crush dissent. Her rallying cry grew louder in September 2022, after the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while in custody of the morality police sparked nationwide protests. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators used the slogan -- woman, life, freedom -- to organize the biggest threat against the Iranian regime since it came into power in 1979. The motto adopted by the demonstrators -- woman life freedom -- suitably expresses the dedication and work of Narges Mohammadi,” Norwegian Nobel Committee chair Berit Reiss-Andersen said.

## History of Campaigning

Mohammadi started advocating for women’s rights while studying physics in the 1990s, later working as an engineer and writing for reform minded newspapers. In 2011, eight years after first collaborating with the defense of Human Rights Center in Tehran -- which was established by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Shirin Ebadi -- Mohammadi was first arrested. In 2013, she was released on bail and used her freedom to campaign against the death penalty in Iran. The Iranian regime has historically been among the most prolific executioners in the world. Since January 2022, more than 260 prisoners have been subject to the death penalty in Iran, Reiss-Andersen said. Mohammadi’s advocacy work against the death penalty resulted in her re-arrest in 2015. “Upon her return to prison, she began ... opposing the regime’s systematic use of torture and sexualized violence against political prisoners -- and especially women -- that is practiced in Iranian prisons,” Reiss-Andersen added. The Iranian government has denied the widespread allegations of sexual assaults against detainees, including in an in-depth CNN investigation last year, calling them “false” and “baseless.”

## Nobel Tribute

“Last year’s wave of protests became known to the political prisoners held inside the notorious Evin Prison in Tehran. Once again, Ms. Mohammadi assumed leadership from prison. She expressed support for the demonstrators and organized solidarity actions among her fellow inmates,” Berit Reiss-Andersen said. “From captivity, Ms. Mohammadi has helped to ensure that the protests have not ebbed out. “Narges Mohammadi is a woman, a human rights advocate, and a freedom fighter. In awarding her this year’s Nobel Peace Prize, the Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes to honor her courageous fight for human rights, freedom and democracy in Iran,” Reiss-Andersen said.

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<sup>1</sup> CNN.

# St Francis of Assisi - A Saint of the Ecology

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**Br Pradeep Anthony L OFM**

## Human to Cosmic Connection

The present Epoch embraces 'Franciscan Spirituality' universally and it is spreading throughout the world. As this spirituality fits into the need of the time exactly, Pope Francis significantly culled out the spirituality of St. Francis in his encyclical of *Laudato Si* in the year 2015. It gave a universal call 'On Care for Our Common Home.' Pope Francis wrote another encyclical in 2020 called 'Fratelli Tutti' which pointed towards the direction of human fraternity. Both these encyclicals are addressed to the whole of humanity. Our core identity is found in being human, brother or sister to one another, by respecting, dignifying, building, and helping others. But often in our lives the danger is of getting trapped in the roles that we take. The role refers to a particular task to be done for some time, namely, being a Provincial, Manager, Team Leader, and President and so on. We tend to lose our true selves i.e., being brotherly/sisterly, human by associating ourselves too closely with our roles. Each Saint's stories are worth reflecting upon. They inspire us to imitate and get closer to Christ. St. Francis of Assisi himself was clearly a victim, who was trapped in roles. He realized this trap and started to serve the Lord after his imprisonment of almost a complete year in the civil war.

The unique contribution of St Francis was that he found the way to connect intimately with all human beings beyond the boundaries of colour, religion, caste, region, culture,

language, and many other differences. It was not only then but even now his very life and writings still inspire not only Pope Francis, but also environmentalists, people of other faiths, other sects and so on. His composition on *Canticle of Creatures* is a master piece of his deeper connection with the whole cosmos or universe. He was able to relate with fire, water, moon, sun, animals, breeze, air, birds, calling everything as either brother or sister. Pope Francis took inspiration from the *Canticle of Creatures* before writing *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*.

## Life of St. Francis in Short

St. Francis of Assisi was born in 1181 in the city of Assisi, Italy. His father was a rich merchant by name Peter Bernardone and his mother was Monna Pica who had belonged to a noble family. Thomas of Celano writes in his biography that, Francis was a passionate youth, who was by nature a cheerful and generous. However, he was a spendthrift who threw parties very often for his friends. He desired and wanted to be a troubadour first and then later a Valiant Knight. However, his entire aspirations tuned drastically from worldly Glory to Divine Glory once he had encountered God. St. Francis of Assisi inspired people in all walks of life to live the Gospel way of life. Thus, he established three orders namely: The first order was meant for unmarried men, which presently number more than thirty thousand men. The second order was meant for unmarried women, which presently number about twenty thousand women members. And the third order was meant for lay people. Their exact number is not known but it's a widely established order. Besides, all these three Orders, numerous other Orders, Congregations and



even other religious denominations have followed Franciscan spirituality in living out their Charism. St. Francis was Canonized on 16th July 1228 by Pope Gregory IX. He is presently known as the patron of ecology. The common element in Franciscan Spirituality is its deep concern for ecology. They carry the attitude of stewardship towards nature rather than misuse of nature for one's own selfish interests.

### Story of Wolf of Gubbio

From the source of 'Little Flowers of St Francis' we have this story. Once St Francis of Assisi went to a town of Gubbio, there he heard about a fierce wolf which was terrorizing the whole village by killing people and even some children. Then he went to meet that wolf after making the Sign of Cross. He tamed the wolf and brought reconciliation between the wolf and the villagers. He struck a deal with the wolf saying that from its part it shouldn't harm anyone in the village and the villagers in their turn had to provide food for the wolf. This story still gives lots of allegorical truths to the present ecological crisis happening around the world like deforestation, sand mining, air pollution, water pollution, extinction of biodiversity species and so on. There is great imbalance for sustainable development. The story of the Wolf of Gubbio reminds us to make reconciliation between mother earth and us. Climate change in fact can destroy the whole of humanity by floods, earth quakes, and many other natural calamities. Thus, all these call for ecological repentance from humanity.

### Learning from St Francis

St Francis had a conscience that inclined towards owning responsibility over other

human beings. Like Martin Buber, who claimed that 'love is responsibility of I towards you' was clearly manifested in the life of St Francis. St Francis developed this love when he started serving lepers as a penitent in a Benedictine monastery during his time. He saw the image of Christ in them; he saw another human like him in them. Indeed he saw in them more than what met the eye. St. Francis closer union with the Lord made him to be close to his neighbours, nature and with people of other faiths. This aspect is explicitly seen in his canticles of creatures where he associates with every being in a brotherly and sisterly manner. As St Francis was getting closer to the mind of Christ he started to expand universally and was able to interconnect with all beings. Hence St. Francis becomes a learning model for all of us to care for ecology and human beings.

#### Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your  
peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so  
much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal  
life.

Amen



# Kolbe Home: Celebrations

**Mrs Marjorie Correa**

## **Sr Amala DC**

We celebrate three beautiful events today: Sr Amala's birthday and Fr Francis Kodiyan and Sr Pushpa's feast days. It's a triple celebration. Sr Amala whose name I am told is derived from the name of Immaculate Mother Mary, has been like Mother Mary, a silent and hard worker in the PMI office. She has been so devoted to her duties as secretary of PMI and at the same time popular with the boys of Kolbe Home. Sr Amala has diligently been carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to her. As an efficient secretary she has been taking care of PMI interests and goals. I am sure that you will agree that after all that hard work, she deserves a wonderful birthday celebration. On behalf of everyone here, I would like to wish dear Sr Amala a very happy birthday and God's choicest blessings on her especially of good health, peace and happiness. May she continue to be the pillar of strength and support to the cause of Prison Ministry India.

## **Sr Pushpa SCS**

Sr Pushpa, whose patron saint is St Therese of Lisieux also known as St Therese of the child Jesus or that her mission in this world was to make God loved and to teach souls the Little Way. By this she meant that it is the way or spiritual childhood, the way of trust and absolute surrender. Sr Pushpa has really been putting into practice the teachings of her patron saint. The constant smile on her face and her cheerful disposition is proof of the love that she has for the boys of Kolbe Home who do give her a hard time, I am sure, at least sometimes. Through her patience with the boys, her encouragement and interest in both their spiritual and

physical needs, Sr Pushpa has been in her own way another St Therese, bringing the love of God to the forgotten. Sister, on this your feast day we invoke God's blessings on you and the intercession of St Therese in your life.

## **Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS**

Fr Francis' accomplishments are too many to mention. As co-founder of

Prison Ministry India, Fr. Francis has left no stone unturned to pursue his dream of bringing hope and life to prisoners and their families. Ever since he took over as head of this organization, it has grown in leaps and bounds. The projects undertaken by him to improve the lives of prisoners are many - from building houses for released and reformed prisoners, to homes for rehabilitation, to building the new complex RRDC, the PMI office annex, the grotto of our Lady in front of PMI office, which is an attraction to both Christians and non-Christians alike and much more. In spite of all his achievements, his varied experiences, having travelled extensively around the world, his job in the Vatican he has remained humble. Like St Francis, his patron Saint, he has chosen the path of simplicity and service to the least and the lost. In the life story of St Francis we have read stories of how he was a great lover of animals which were drawn to him and he was even able to tame the fierce animals. That was how much he cared for God's creation. Fr Francis has been the same towards the boys of Kolbe Home, loving, patient, gentle and firm when he needed to be. He was greatly missed by everyone when he was away in Europe. He has the gift of spreading love and joy wherever he goes. Father, today we want to wish you a Happy feast as well and may God bless all your undertakings. Our prayers and good wishes are with you always.



# Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Goa

**Felix Barros**

The Prison Ministry Sunday is celebrated in the second week of August as it is the feast of our Patron Saint, Maximilian Kolbe. We celebrate the Prison Ministry Sunday in different parishes every year. St. Anthony's parish at Siolim, Goa, hosted the celebration this year on 13th August, 2023. Through this article we wish to spread awareness about Prison ministry. The Patron Saint of Prison Ministry, St. Maximilian Kolbe sacrificed his life to save the life of a fellow prisoner during the World War II. Kolbe's Love Bomb explosion at Auschwitz concentration camp healed thousands of broken hearted people.

**“Today You Will Be with Me in Paradise”  
(Lk 23:43)**

The theme for Prison Ministry Sunday this year was “Today you will be with me in Paradise”. The scripture reminds us of the good thief, who on the cross turned to Jesus and after admitting his crime asked with humility and repentance, “Lord remember me in your kingdom” and Jesus replied, “Today you will be with me in paradise”.

## Prison Ministry India – Goa Unit

PMI Goa unit consists of 60 volunteers comprising of priests, religious, nuns and laity, who weekly visit the inmates of the central jail, Colvale. Mr David Fernandes is the Goa state coordinator. We also encourage various parish groups to visit the inmates and have various programs keeping in mind moral themes. Our volunteers conduct moral, spiritual activities and counsel the inmates thus helping in their release, reformation and rehabilitation. We also help

in their education. We also celebrate days of national importance and their birthdays. We also conduct free medical camps in collaboration with St. Luke's Medical Guild. Some volunteers visit the inmate's families and help them in their needs. Fr. Maverick Fernandes, Director of Caritas, undertakes the responsibility for providing shelter and arranges surety for those inmates on parole / furlough.

Last November, 2022 Prison Ministry India – Goa Unit had the privilege of hosting the 13th National Conference of Prison Ministry India which coincided with Goa's 25th anniversary of existence at the St. Joseph Vas Retreat Renewal Centre, Old Goa. Late Sr. Mary Jane SFN, the Founder of PMI Goa unit / coordinator, an inspiration of Prison Ministry India - Goa Unit, had laid the foundation of a vibrant ministry in our state. Prison Ministry India is grateful for the generous contribution and prayer support of the parishes in Goa. We cannot forget our benefactors for their support and encouragement.

## Prayer for the Synod on Synodality

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name. With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. - Amen.





**PMI Organises Volleyball Match,  
Shimoga Prison**



**PMI Orientation Program,  
Gulbarga Diocesan Unit**



**PMI Pune Distributes Educational  
Assistance to Prisoners' Children**



**PMI Pune Volunteers' Visit to Open  
Jail, Yerwada**



**PMI Pune Releasing Prisoners  
Paying their Penalties**



**PMI Sports Competition Prize  
Distribution, Kalapet Central Prison**



**PMI Volunteers Distributing Fans  
to Tirur Sub Jail**



**PMI Volunteers Visiting  
Kumbakonam Prison**





**PMI Volunteers Visiting Special Sub Jail KGF**



**PMI Volunteers with Archbishop Most Rev George Antony Samy at Velankanni Shrine**



**Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Baroda**



**Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Mahesana**



**Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration, Naranpura**



**Rakhi Celebration, Anand Sub Jail**



**Rakshabandhan Celebration, Raisen Prison**



**36th PMI House Blessing for Reformed Prisoners, Kakkanad**