



# PRISON VOICE

September 2019

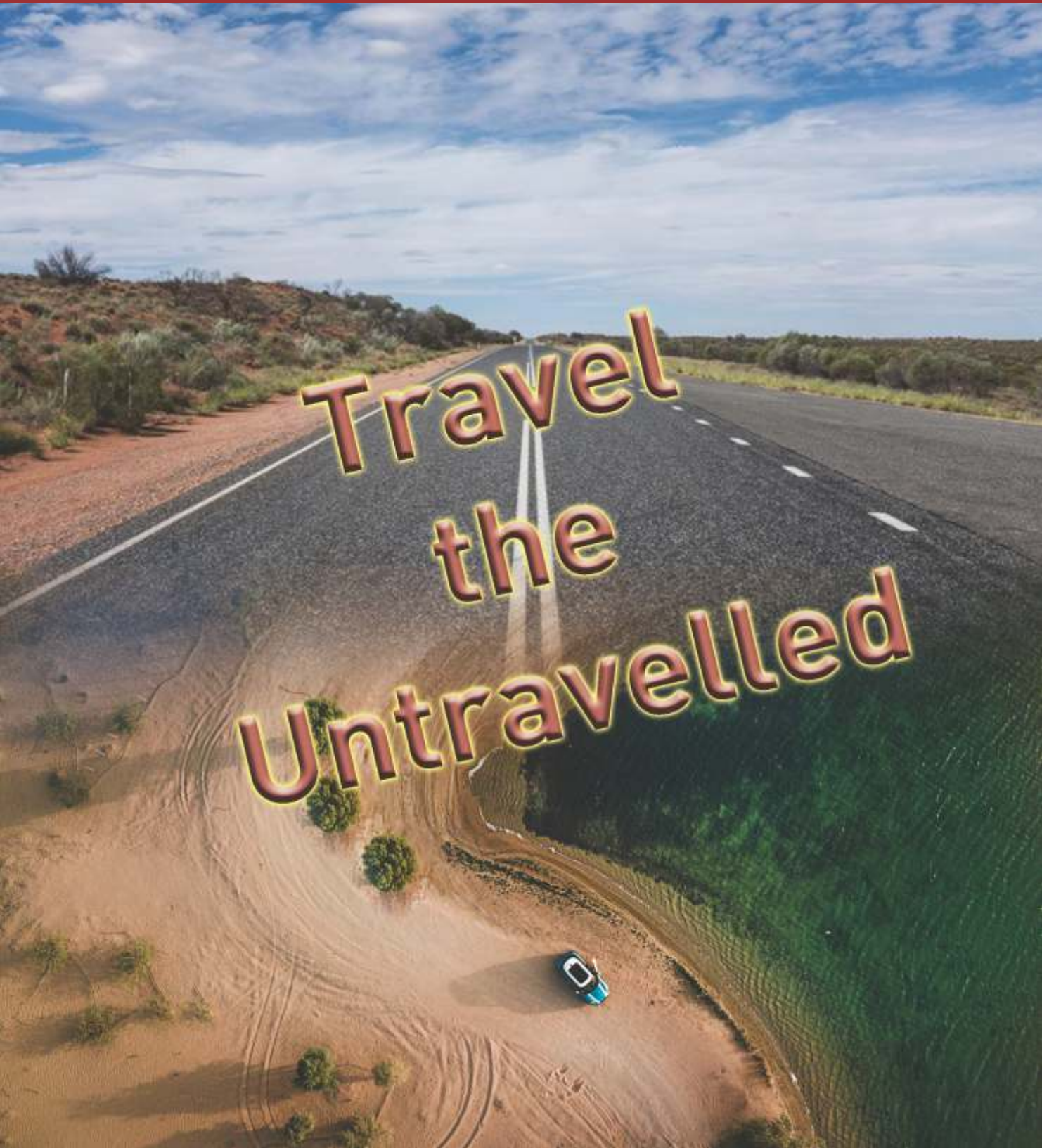
Vol. XVII

Issue 1

**NATIONAL MONTHLY**

₹ 20/-

Travel  
the  
Untravelled







**Seminar on PMI at Jnanodaya,  
Dharmaram, Bangalore**



**Seminar on PMI at Jeevalaya Institute (MCBS)  
Bannerghatta, Bangalore**



**PMI Jharkhand State Executive Members**



**Seminar on Legal Aid in Jharkhand State, PMI**

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## PRISON VOICE

### NATIONAL MONTHLY

*The Little Things, The Little Movements, They Aren't Little  
Hats Off To You*



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### *Are you willing?*

*"Help a Child of a Prisoner*

*Prevent a Potential  
Criminal"*

*80% of the children of  
prisoners are potential  
criminals unless somebody  
takes care of them. Prison  
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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## CONGRATS TO LOVE BOMBS!



**Sr Lini Sheeja MSC**  
*Chief Editor*

The death of Jesus on Calvary was an explosion of a super dynamic Love Bomb. The person who dropped the love bomb was broken into pieces but others gained life. If Jesus is a Super Dynamic Love Bomb, everyone can become a dynamic love bomb, not to kill but to heal broken hearts. This is the call received by the founding Fathers, Fr Varghese Karipperry and Fr Francis Kodiyan from the Crucifix. The law metes out life sentence but in reality, it becomes a death sentence for the inmates in prison. In this context, the release, renewal, rehabilitation and redemption work carried out by Prison Ministry India is essential, to give love and hope to these unfortunate children of God, to come out of prison with a renewed life, looking forward to a bright future. During the last 38 years, Prison Ministry India has done a yeoman's service to many who have embraced a normal life. It was possible only because of thousands of dedicated volunteers.

My heartfelt appreciation to all the 7000 volunteers who devote their time and energy on this more of demanding and less of rewarding work. Today, these volunteers have become the love bombs that heal broken humanity. The ministry which started in front of the Blessed Sacrament by the offering of intercessory prayers for dejected people such as alcoholics, prisoners, the sick, drug addicts, slum dwellers would reach its culmination when we have reached the unreached: the last, the least and the lost.

Outside the prison is the world of those who can go wherever they want, the world of those who are able to choose the people they want to meet. Outside is also the world of interpersonal relationships, the world of families, jobs and leisure. The scene is totally different inside prisons. Freedom to move is severely restricted. Inside is the world of limited contact, administratively regulated visiting times, and forced togetherness of people who

would otherwise never have dreamt of sharing their living space. Most of the prisoners, because of their hardship, loneliness and despair, not only feel deserted by people, but also feel abandoned by God. It is at this juncture that our PMI volunteers enter carrying the ray of light and hope to the people in darkness. God's unconditional love and mercy are carried by our volunteers, who expect nothing in return except the redemption of souls.

First and foremost, I thank the innocent God, who was imprisoned, for calling our beloved Fathers, Varghese Karipperry and Francis Kodiyan, and using them as his instruments to begin this noble ministry. As we celebrate the Silver Jubilee of our national office, I gratefully remember the former and current national coordinators of PMI, Fr Varghese Karipperry, Fr Sebastian Theckanath, Fr Sebastian Vadakumpadan, Fr Josekutty Kalayil MST and Rev Dr Francis Kodiyan for leading the flock of PMI with their passion, innovative ideas and inspiration. Special thanks to the pioneers of our national office, Sr Clara and Sr. Fidelis. I do gratefully acknowledge and appreciate the national secretaries, Sr Fidelis HC, Sr Jemma DHM, Sr Mary MJ, Sr. Rosamma CSSR, Sr Keerthana CMC, Sr Jhoncy HSM, Sr Maria DC, Sr Diana CTC and Sr Lini Sheeja MSC for their selfless service in the growth of the PMI family, their commitment and hard work. I do thank all the assistant national coordinators, who were part of our family in the PMI national office, and their accompaniment in the working of the Kolbe Home. I do salute all the priests, sisters and brothers who have rendered their service at the national office in the past 25 years and in reaching out to the broken beings of our society.

**The  
Birth of**

## **PRISON MINISTRY INDIA**

**From National Coordinator's Desk**



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

### **The First Sin and the Promise**

The first parents committed sin in the garden of Eden by disobeying the commandment of God (Gen 3, 6). Though God punished them by throwing them out of paradise, he assured them a saviour, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). To fulfil this promise, God called Abraham to prepare a generation for the birth of the promised Messiah. God sent Kings, Judges and Prophets to sanctify this generation from time-to-time. Letter to the Hebrews explains this mystery well, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days, he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world... When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1: 1-4).

### **Jesus' Mission**

Jesus born in a manger in Bethlehem proclaimed in the synagogue of Nazareth, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4:18-19). He expressed his

mission more clearly by visiting the tax booth of Mathew and by calling him to be his disciple and by ascertaining, "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mk 2:17). Jesus clarifies his unique mission again and again, "the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost" (Lk 19:10).

### **Mission of PMI**

The twenty-first century has innumerable captives, slaves, sinners, oppressed, rejected, dejected and lost people who live in the peripheries. The Church, continuing the mission of Jesus, needs to take care not only of those who come to the church but also those who do not come to the church; those who are in prisons, brothels, streets, terrorist camps, and so on. Herein lies the reason for the birth of Jesus Fraternity, later known as Prison Ministry India (PMI) and the mystery behind the 'call within the call' of Father Varghese Karippery and Father Francis Kodiyan MCBS. The purpose of PMI is to leave the 99 and to seek, serve and save the one who was lost (Lk 15:7).

### **Birth of Jesus Fraternity**

In order to continue the redeeming mission of the Father God and Son Jesus, the Holy Spirit prepared two seminarians at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala. On 8 December 1981, the Holy Spirit anointed them in the phone cabin of St Thomas Apostolic Seminary during a

conversation and blessed them to be close friends. Their friendship was deepened with the Eucharistic adoration during siestas at the Malankara chapel and weekly visits to the peripheries of Kottayam. The Holy Spirit inspired them to begin a prayer group in their batch and assisted them to visit Kottayam prison, which in the course of time led them to the All-Kerala Prison Pilgrimage. On 8 September 1989, the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council welcomed this ministry under its Justice, Peace and Development Commission and appointed Fr Francis Kodiyan at the Pastoral Orientation Centre to seek, serve and save the lost.

### **Birth of Prison Ministry India**

To extend the horizon of prison ministry from the boundaries of Kerala to other Indian states was an ardent prayer of the Jesus Fraternity members. As a result of their prayer, the Jesus Fraternity executive committee, with the consent of Mar Joseph Kundukulam, the Archbishop of Thrissur, appointed Father Varghese Karipperry to launch the national level prison ministry residing at Snehashramam, Vettukad, Kerala. On 13-14 August 1994, Father Karipperry convened the first national gathering of Jesus Fraternity at Christian Workers' Centre, Bangalore. At this gathering, the new name, Prison Ministry India, was recommended to maintain a secular nature. Bidding goodbye to Snehashramam, Fr Karipperry reached Bangalore on January 1, 1995. Sr Clara from the Holy Cross Congregation, together with Mr Kolanda, the driver picked him up from the railway station. They went to Jacob's Farmhouse at Huskur, where Fr Karipperry together with Sr Clara and Sr Fidelis launched the national office in

a cowshed, like Jesus' earthly mission began in a manger. On 19 April 1995, he shifted the centre from Huskur to a lepers' rehabilitation centre at Sumanahalli. On 26 July 1995, Father Karipperry registered PMI under the Society Registration Act at Ernakulam, with the assistance of Mr P.C. Varghese. On 24 August 2000, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) recognized Prison Ministry India and welcomed it to work under its Justice, Peace and Development Commission.

### **PMI Jubilee**

The past 38 years of the ministry for the lost narrates to us innumerable stories of divine providence, unfathomable divine love and care, uncountable miracles, conversions, rehabilitations and redemptions. Thousands of lost sheep tasted the forgiving love of Jesus and reached the haven of salvation. Hundreds were released, reformed, rehabilitated, settled in marriage and are redeemed. Many rehabilitation centres for released prisoners were opened in many states of India and many Kolbe Homes were launched to take care of prisoners' children. More than 7000 PMI volunteers serve prisoners, released prisoners, prison officials and their families all over India. My highest appreciation and most warm thanks to all the national coordinators, secretaries, asst. coordinators and to all the PMI volunteers. In a special way I express my most warm thanks to Most Rev Dr Peter Remigius and Most Rev Dr Allwyn D'Silva, the former and present chairmen of PMI. All praise and thanksgiving be given every moment to Lord Jesus who came to seek and save the lost. "Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen" (Rev 7:12).

## Neither Struggles Nor Initiatives ONLY PROVIDENCE OF GOD

The above title is my experience during the last 14 years as the national coordinator of Prison Ministry India. Now I am working in a parish as a pastor. I visit at least a few houses every day. A couple of days ago I was visiting a family where I met an elderly mother. After chatting for a while, she went inside and brought out around 9 letters written by her son. I was surprised as to why she was showing me these personal letters from her son. She started to tell me that her son was in prison for the last 13 years. The first Sunday when I spoke about the prison ministry in the parish, she had wanted to talk to me but was scared to come to meet me. Now she had the chance to speak to me. She continued, "I want to see my son but I could not go due to various reasons. My husband is no more and I am living with my brother who has not married and we are very poor." I promised her that I would take her to prison. We checked about her son in the prison as she had not received any letter after 2016. We took all the necessary permission and are taking her and her family members to prison for the first time. This could be the initiative of the Kerala state: to check the list of prisoners who have not been visited by family members in a while. So, everything

### Experience



**Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan LLM,**  
Former National Coordinator

is the providence of God rather than our initiative and struggle.

**Prison Ministry India Jail quarters in Bangalore:** I had taken charge as the national coordinator on 12 February 2002 without much experience in Bengaluru. We had taken the initiative to ask for living quarters in the prison for Sr. Carmelita. Seeing the struggle and inconvenience that the sister had to bear to visit the prison, a living quarter was allotted for her use on 4 May 2002. We had to convince many volunteers to stay in the quarters during the 17 years that the PMI has been functioning here. Many people have since then stayed and served in prison.

**The Spirit of Assisi National Award by Franciscan Centre for Peace and Dialogue India:** It was a nice experience to share our experiences at Prison Ministry and receive the award for the work done by prison ministry volunteers across the country.

**The formation of regional, state and local units and the executive body with an office:** I was feeling that things were not moving properly due to lack of structure in the regional, state and unit levels as there were no basic rules and regulations. So, we divided the country into four administrative regions under the different states and units. We formulated rules and started regional offices in Delhi, Guwahati, Mumbai and Chennai.

**Prison Ministry Sunday recognized by CBCI for the first time in 2003:** I was visiting all



the parishes of Bangalore as I was struggling to meet the daily running expenses of the national office. One day, the Late Archbishop Pinto called me to his office and said, "You don't go to different churches every Sunday but go once to all the churches." That was the starting point of the concept of Prison Ministry Sunday. Thereafter, we approached the CBCI for permission to hold the Prison Ministry Sunday in churches. The Sunday prior to Independence Day was designated as Prison Ministry Sunday by a CBCI letter dated 17 August 2003. Thus, the Prison Ministry Sunday was celebrated and pastoral letters were read in churches across the country.

**First All-India Coordinators Meet at Delhi, 27-28 March 2004:** This was another step taken for synchronizing all the coordinators in order to strengthen the volunteers of Prison Ministry India. We draw up plans for the next two years for the Prison Ministry in the All India Coordinators' Meet.

**Prison Voice-The National Monthly Magazine:** It was felt that our news and programmes were not being communicated properly to the bishops, major superiors and the general public. So, we needed to start a national magazine. While travelling, I came across a magazine called Divine Voice. It was the inspiration to name our magazine Prison Voice. Thus, we started the Prison Voice with registration number and postal concession in December 2004.

**Prison Ministry India Full-time volunteers:** Once I was travelling to Assam for Prison Ministry programmes. There were a few full-time volunteers of Jesus Youth in the train. My travel with them and their experiences and initiatives to start new units in different parts of India inspired me to start the Full-timers' course and the ministry in Prison Ministry. We started the Full-timers' ministry in June 2005 with a batch of 29 full-time volunteers attending 24-days intensive

training. Thereafter we have held many full-timers' courses.

**10th Anniversary Celebration of Prison Ministry India national coordination:** There was a huge function held at St. John's Medical College Auditorium to commemorate the 10th Anniversary celebration of Prison Ministry national coordination. During this function we inaugurated four things:

1. The mission of Indian nationals in foreign prisons
2. Prison Ministry India flag
3. Prison Ministry India anthem in both Hindi and English
4. Video CDs on Prison Ministry.

**Prison Ministry India Rehabilitation Centres:** Any rehabilitation centre is not established one fine day, but there are constant follow up measures and inspiration being provided to many people. I had the privilege of being part of the inspiration that started many rehabilitation centres such as the Nannet Illam for children of prisoners in Salem, Karunasadan for women in Ezhimala, Kerala, Vishwa Jyothi for women in Andhra Pradesh, Ashadham for children in Bhopal.

**Appointment of National Coordinator as the secretary to CBCI for PMI:** The appointment of the national coordinator as secretary is another milestone for the Prison Ministry. We had the privilege of being a part of CBCI as a separate desk under the JPD Commission and attend the bishops' conference meetings full time. We had the special privilege of presenting the report along with other commissions.

**The Golden Phrases Brought Through me by the Grace of God:**

"Prisoners no more, but brothers and sisters".

"Rehabilitate a prisoner today, better the world tomorrow".

"Create home not cells".

"We are all in prison; there is only one difference, the distance between the wall and us".



Prison Ministry India was started in the year 1986 in Kerala by two seminarians, namely Brs. Varghese Kariperry and Francis Kodiyan. The group was known as Jesus Fraternity. It spread all over Kerala. Then they wished to extend the mission to all over India and elevate it to a national-level mission. With this in mind, the first national-level meeting was conducted in Bangalore on 13-15 August 1994, at the Diocesan

Workers Centre near the Bishop's House. The then Archbishop Dr Alphonse Mathias presided over the meeting. Rev. Fr. Varghese Kariperry was elected as the first national coordinator. When the ministry started at the national level, the name Jesus Fraternity was changed to Prison Ministry India.

We were searching for a place to start the national office. By the providence of God, Mr Jacob offered his farmhouse at Huskur gate to be used as the national office and rehabilitation centre. On 1 January 1995, the national office started functioning in a converted cowshed of the farmhouse. On 22 January 1995, Sr. Fidelis and Sr. Clara joined the national office and started the rehabilitation centre in the farmhouse.

We did not have permission to visit the jails in Karnataka. Fr. Kariperry and Sisters Fidelis and Clara started visiting different religious houses, government officials and other people. We formed a unit in Bangalore for Prison Ministry. Every member was allotted a day to pray for the new ministry. Once, Fr. Varghese went to the courtyard of the Bangalore Central Prison. He sat there and prayed. Later he collected some sand from the prison grounds and came back to the office. He asked for some newspaper, wrapped the sand in 3 packets and gave it to us. In the evening, three of us spread the sand on the floor, knelt on it and started praying the rosary. After a week, we gained permission to visit the Central Prison in Bangalore. The

## "Every Great Thing Has a Small Beginning"



**Sr. Clara Alappat HC**  
Directress, Jeevodaya  
Ashram

jail visit started in the month of March. At that point, the jail was in the city and it was known as Freedom Park. All the members visiting the prison used to gather in St. Martha's Hospital chapel for 1 hour of prayer and then proceed to the jail. This was done every Tuesday at 3. Till September, all who used to visit would stand outside the jail holding hands and pray for a few seconds.

Since the owner of the farmhouse wanted it back, we had to shift to Summanahalli. The then Archbishop was generous enough to give us the leprosy colony, which had 5 huts left by leprosy patients. So, one hut was used as the national office and the residence of the national coordinator. One hut was used as the common prayer room, the other three were for the nuns and the rehabilitation centre. In 1996, a small building was bought in Koramangala for the national office. The Holy Cross sisters bought a plot of land in Doddakannali for the rehabilitation centre. Then the office started functioning separately from the rehabilitation centre as the ministry expanded and more people had to work in the office. Fr. Josekutty MST, who was the then national coordinator, bought the present office building, which is located in Carmelaram in the year 2008. Let us thank God for all the blessings we have received so far. We shall remember all the benefactors and all the volunteers who have worked and sacrificed for this noble cause. Let us grow forward with more enthusiasm with the armour of prayer and sacrifice to build a better society.

## From School to Prison



**A. Jesu Raja**  
State Secretary and National  
Executive Member

### The Seed of the Ministry at School

In the year 1993, my daughter joined Our Lady's Nursery, Holy Angels School, Chennai run by the Franciscan missionaries of Mary. We had a Bible session for the catholic parents once a month. Rev. Fr. Joe Antony SJ used to conduct Bible classes with relevance to our daily life. With time, along with the Principal, Rev. Sr. Rosakutty Kottaram FMM and the priest, we the parents, felt that the gospel we read and study must be put into practice. We started a programme wherein once a month we would have a theory class; the other three weeks we were supposed to live the gospel that we heard in class. To put this into practice, we divided the group into four, to visit various places such as old age homes, hospitals, orphanages, and prisons. Many were afraid to go to prisons. Even my wife was reluctant to let me visit the prison. Each group shared their experiences with the others in the class.

### First Visit to the Prison

We received permission as per order No 53722/94 dated 24/08/1994 from Sri. T.S. Panchapakesan IPS, Inspector General of Prisons, to visit the Madras Central Prison regularly. My experience was really an unforgettable one. After we received permission from the Inspector General of Prisons we had to get the time schedule from the Central Prison Superintendent. For that, we went to Central Prison, Chennai. Since the jailor was known to me and with the letter I had, I was allowed inside the prison along with a friend. We met the Superintendent and after finishing our discussion when we came out we were not allowed to leave because we had not procured the token or signature to enter the prison. Both

of us were alarmed for a moment, but by then my acquaintance came along and sent us out.

The visit to the Central Prison, Chennai is continuing. Two nuns visit the female section while two men (sometimes with a priest) visit the male section. We can say that this was the starting point of the Prison Ministry in Tamilnadu. But we are sure that St Paul's Seminary, Trichy and Arulchudar in Armenian Street, Chennai were doing this ministry for many years.

### Collaboration with the National Team

In 1996, we had contact with Fr. Varghese Karippery, who is the pioneer of this challenging ministry. He had arranged a Tamilnadu state-level gathering on 31 January and 1 February 1997 at the Archbishop's House, Madurai. The Archbishop Rev. Marianus Arockiasamy inaugurated the session. We had only a few members. Sr. Leena of Kumbakonam, Sr. Amala of Vellore and I were a few who attended the first meeting.

### Departmental Order in Favour of Prison Ministry

It was a year of blessing for the Prison Ministry in Tamilnadu. On 16 April 2007, we gained general permission to visit all the central prisons and sub jails in the state to work towards the rehabilitation of prisoners as per order No. 51861/PW.3/2007 dated 16/04/2007 by Sri. R. Sekar IPS, Additional Director General of Prisons. The Tamilnadu government, on 11 September 2008, ordered the premature release of 1405 life convicts who had completed seven years of actual imprisonment or prisoners who

were 60 years and above and spent five years in actual imprisonment.

### **Initiative in the Field of Education**

The inmates of the prison were made conscious of the importance of education and they were enabled to pursue their studies even while in prison. With great difficulty, the PMI Tamilnadu managed to get special permission from the government to conduct the Public Examination for Standards VIII, X & XII inside the prison campus in the year 2008.

In 2011, Fr. G.J. Anthonysamy was appointed as the assistant state coordinator. After serving nine years in Prison Ministry, Fr. M. Vincent Xavier SDB was relieved from the post of the state coordinator. We thank the Lord for his tireless work for the ministry. In 2014, Fr. G.J. Anthonysamy of Madras-Mylapore Archdiocese was appointed as the state coordinator.

### **Rescue of Victim Girls (Commercial Sex Workers)**

Through the effective intervention of our staff members and volunteers, 18 girls from Bangladesh, who had been detained in the Vigilance Home at Chennai by Anti-Vigilance Squad, have been freed and sent back to their native place, i.e. Bangladesh with the help of the Bangladesh Embassy and the Our Church in Bangladesh, particularly the Rev. Bejoy D'Cruz of Bangladesh.

### **Repatriation of Foreign Nationals in our Prisons**

Prison Ministry India, Tamil Nadu is proud of repatriating many foreign prisoners to their countries with the help of the prison department, concerned embassies and particularly the catholic church in the respective countries like Bangladesh, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Netherlands, Vietnam etc.

### **New Chairman**

In 2017, Most Rev. George Antonysamy, Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore, took charge as the Chairman of Prison Ministry India,

Tamilnadu. We thank the Most Rev. Peter Remigius, former chairman, for his committed service to this ministry.

### **Society Registration**

In April 2017, Prison Ministry India, Tamilnadu was registered under the Tamilnadu Societies Act. We have also registered with the Income Tax department and secured the 12 AA registration and the exemption under section 80 G of Income Tax Act.

### **Kolbe Home**

The first rehabilitation centre for released men prisoners, Kolbe Home was inaugurated on 13 August 2018 by Archbishop George Antonysamy. The Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore has kindly given over the place near Tirutani at K. G. Kandigai. The Chennai PMI unit has also contributed a considerable amount for the running of the home. We also thank Fr. Gerard Francis for assigning a priest, Fr. Thomas SDM and a brother for Kolbe Home.

### **Condolences**

We are very sad to inform that on 27 May 2018, Sr. Rosakutty Kottaram FMM, who was my inspiration, was laid to rest with the Lord. On 13 September 2018, Fr. J. Anthony Raj, who was the state coordinator from 1999 to 2002, was taken by our Lord. We have lost two diligent workers of the ministry. May the Lord grant their souls eternal rest!

### **Gratitude**

The Prison Ministry India Tamilnadu remembers the growth of the ministry as not being that of the effort of any single individual but as that of the collective effort of many, including the diocesan coordinators who were behind its success. We thank the Almighty for his powerful intercession. We thank the Most Rev. Peter Remigius and the Most Rev. George Antonysamy for their guidance and timely intervention. We thank all the former state coordinators, diocesan coordinators and all the volunteers for their dedicated service to this ministry.



## From Dark Cells to Clear World

### 1. Origin and development

The tiny seed of love, which had been sown through divine intervention in the fertile soil of human hearts of a few, has now grown into a large tree providing cool and gentle shade to many who feel frustrated, disappointed and broken, spending their lives in the dark cells of prison. Christ Himself – the most powerful and dynamic bomb that had once exploded and broken into pieces on Calvary out of love for humanity, was the one who sowed this seed, transforming a few into bombs of love. The same movement known as Jesus Fraternity, with a focus on the renewed life of those in prison, their families and those of the victims of various crimes/offences in society, functions today under the guidance of Mar Thomas Koorilos, the chairman, Fr Shaji Stephen ODEM, the director and Sr Mary Agnes Jitha SOLS, the secretary. The movement has grown state-wide, having 46 units which minister to prison inmates and 9 centres to minister to the released prisoners and the children of prison inmates from poor families. Among these 9 centres, 2 are for men, 3 for women and 4 for children. A good number of priests, nuns and laity join hands to pray and work for this category of people in society.

### 2. Background Information

Jesus Fraternity is a church organization established in 1985 and approved by the Peace, Justice and Development Commission of the Kerala Catholic Bishop's Council in 1989. The organization focuses its attention on the correction, reformation and rehabilitation of those in prison, the welfare and integral development of their children, families, the victims and their families. It also attempts to orient its services to prevent potential criminals and delinquents. At present, it has been operating in all the central prisons and jails in Kerala offering various religious and non-religious services to all categories of people, irrespective of their caste, creed, sex and colour. As such it has been widely accepted and appreciated by the state department as a voluntary agency and by a majority of the masses. The Church in Kerala, through this agency, caters to approximately 8000 prisoners and to double that number of others. The ministry tries to help those prisoners already released through



**Rev. Fr. Shaji Stephen**  
State Co-ordinator, Kerala

an immediate programme of rehabilitation through 9 centres across the state. They remain in these centres for a period of 6 months before they move with their families in order to attune themselves to reintegrating within society and family. Following is the list of these 9 centres:

1. Snehasramam, Vettukad
2. Santhinivas, Pathadipalam
3. Snehasramam, Manvila
4. Karunyasramam, Thoppil
5. Nirmal Bhavan, Thrissur
6. Snehadeepam, Kanjirappally
7. Snehanivas, Aluva
8. Bonal Bhavan, Kasargodu
9. Jeevan Jyothi, Idukki

These centres contain around 250 men, women and children, and help them to maintain a better lifestyle and behavioural pattern before they get back to their families and society. The centres do not have a supportive fund but run on the generosity and goodwill of the people around, which is often meagre.

### 3. The goal of the organization

The specific goal of this ministry is the overall welfare and integral development of prisoners and their families, their victims and their families with the hope for a crimeless and peaceful society, being at the greater service of God, holding high the sacrificial and compassionate love of Christ who died a criminal's death.

### 4. Activities of the Organization

- a. Prison visit
- b. Liturgical and spiritual celebrations in prison
- c. Legal and parole aid
- d. Work and counselling programme in prison
- e. Cultural and recreational programmes
- f. Aid to families
- g. Scholarship to children
- h. Insurance coverage
- i. Financial and other support
- j. Get-together

## Blank to Well Written Slate

Sr Kokila

Delhi State Coordinator

For the past 26 years, the volunteers of PMI have been rendering welfare services in the Tihar Jail complex, now called the Tihar Ashram. Sr. Archangel SABS started the jail ministry at the request of Dr Kiran Bedi, the then I.G. of Prisons (Tihar) in Delhi and in Tihar jail. Fr. Kavlakat was the regional coordinator and Sr. Archangel was the state coordinator appointed by the Prison Ministry India. Sr. Archangel has the credit of being the first Catholic nun inside Tihar Jail to teach prisoners. Organizing and arranging all the programs in Tihar Jail, she remained the state coordinator for 25 years. Some of the staff of Tihar refer to her as the senior-most staff of Tihar jail. Even after 25 long years of volunteer service in Tihar, she is still very active and enthusiastic to serve and help our brethren behind the bars. Tihar ashram is extremely different from any of the other jails in India. It is the largest tight-security prison in Asia and is spread over 450 acres of land with a population of about 15,000 plus prisoners, whereas the actual capacity is for 6850 prisoners only. There are 16 jails in Delhi, and the PMI volunteers provide welfare services in 11 jails. To enter the Tihar complex, we have personalised passes and we have to pass through security checks by the CISE, the ITBP, the Delhi Police, the Tamilnadu Special Police and the Delhi Jail security.

### Origin of the PMI Delhi State

In 1993, at the request of the then Archbishop of Delhi – the late Rev. Alan De Lastic – an MSFS priest became the first chaplain of Tihar. Whenever he visited the jail, Sr. Archangel SABS, accompanied him and talked to the prisoners. That was the first entry to Tihar jail. Later when Dr Kiran Bedi, the first IPS woman officer of India became the I.G. of Tihar Prisons, she invited us to come and teach the adolescent prisoners. Thus, Sr. Archangel and Sr. Placid became the first nuns allowed inside Tihar jail for teaching and counselling. Sr. Celine joined the Prison Ministry in the year 1997 and still continues her work here.

### The thrust of our Involvement in Tihar

Every day, there are volunteers visiting the jail. Some go daily; others go thrice a week. Teaching, moral value education, the art of positive living, spoken English counselling, and motivating them to study (as many of them are pursuing their higher studies through IGNOU which has its centre inside the jail) are the main areas of work. Since IGNOU offers a lot of technical and job-oriented courses, our volunteers guide and encourage the prisoners to choose their line of study according to their aptitude. In one of the jails, at the request of



the jail authorities, PMI has started training in dye-making for spare parts of motors.

We motivate them to use their time productively and effectively, and as a result, they progress towards a study-oriented vision. We encourage them to develop their innate qualities and talents, like painting, singing, acting etc. We are happy to say that Tihar jail had bagged the first prize in the National PMI competition twice in the past 4 years, and this year, Tihar had the highest number of entries for the painting competition,

for which the jail authority was given a prize too. Faith-formation is taken care of in the jails where we are permitted to do so. Many prisoners are helped to overcome their anxiety and fear with spiritual anchoring. We speak to them about the forgiving love of God, and many of them find solace in reading the Bible, regardless of their religion. We extend our hearty thanks to Bro Nabin Kishor Ekka who served as the North Regional Coordinator and now travelled to Peru for missionary work.

## SEMINAR ON LEGAL AID IN JHARKHAND STATE

**Rev. Fr. Napoleon**  
Secretary, PMI, Jharkhand State

Prison Ministry India, Jharkhand unit had arranged a two-day workshop/seminar on legal aid. We had a special guest from Bangalore, Fr Francis Kodiyan, the national director of Prison Ministry India. On 31 August 2019, the inauguration ceremony of the seminar was led by the distinguished guests, Rev Anand Jojo, president of Jharkhand state Prison Ministry, Fr Francis Kodiyan, national director, PMI Bangalore, the advocates Sr Helen CHF, Fr Mahender Tigga S.J., Fr Martin S.J., Fr Shyju S.J. and the members from all the diocese in Jharkhand. In the first session, Fr Francis Kodiyan explained the inception and growth of Prison Ministry India. In the second session, Fr Mahindra Peter Tigga S.J. provided inputs on the do's and don'ts while visiting prison. It was an enriching session where the participants were eager to learn more. After lunch break, Fr Peter Martin S.J. explained about prisoner's rights. Sr Helen CHF, then, explained elaborately about the women prisoner's rights. This was followed by a sharing session by Mr Chiranjeet, an ex-prisoner. We ended the first day with inputs on the election of the executive body by Fr Francis Kodiyan.

Next day, on 1 September 2019, Fr Francis Kodiyan, along with Fr Napoleon, Daltonganj Catholic diocese, Sr Nivedita, Jharkhand PMI

state coordinator, and Sr Julia George OSU visited Ranchi Central Jail. Fr Napoleon celebrated Holy Mass. After the Holy Mass, Fr Kodiyan explained about the Prison Ministry India and its activities in India. Prisoners gave a warm welcome to Fr Francis Kodiyan. We visited Fr Alphonse and Sr Concilia MC who work in the jail. They shared their difficulties and the problems they face in jail. We consoled them and prayed for them. After returning back from jail, we had the session, "Procedures in Criminal Cases" by Fr Shyju Thomas S.J. At the end of the workshop/seminar, we held the election for the executive body in the presence of Rev Anand Jojo and Fr Francis Kodiyan.

The new general body members in the PMI, Jharkhand unit are Sr Nivedita, state coordinator, Fr Shyju S.J (Hazaribag Province), assistant state coordinator, Fr Napoleon, (Daltonganj Catholic Diocese) secretary of Jharkhand PMI unit, and Sr Jini OP, treasurer. All the members present congratulated them by wishing them all the best for their Prison Ministry Mission. In the end, we had a group-wise discussion on the action plan to be implemented for the coming year. The group dispersed after the vote of thanks.



## NEW LEAVES - "An adventure of Hope"



**Sr. Rose Mathew FCC**  
*Pioneer of MP State PMI*

**"T**he Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives ... to set free the oppressed" (Luke 4:18-19)

### A Short History

From 1998 onwards, the Archdiocese of Bhopal had an interest in this ministry. So, a group of priests, nuns and other volunteers used to visit the central jail in Bhopal and conduct various programmes for the inmates from time-to-time. Yoga classes, yoga training programmes, and meditation practices were organized for the inmates. Seeing our interest, commitment and dedicated service, the then superintendent, Mr Purushotham Somkumar requested us to visit the jails regularly and to eventually take up the rehabilitation process of the women released from the jail.

"I was in prison and you visited me" (Luke 25:36), "Be a love bomb, let it explode, not to kill human beings but to heal broken hearts," (Prison Ministry Motto) - with these two mandates from Jesus Christ and in response to a written request from Mr Purushotham Somkumar, we, Sr. Rose Mathew FCC and Sr. Reena FCC, started regular visits to the Central Jail, Bhopal in the month of May 2003. The whole experience and narrative were shared with the Archbishop Rev. Paschal Topno, who was very interested in this ministry. His Grace made it his own personal call and his own words were, "Yes, we will do it'. He wanted the ministry to flourish under his patronage and stewardship.

We were given permission from the then DGP and the superintendent for regular

visits. On 12 May 2004, we started the visits to the women's section, with a view to continuing this service more intensely and in an extensive manner. Rev. Dr Paschal Topno, Archbishop of Bhopal, inaugurated a centre for Prison Ministry on 8 September 2006. The centre was named Asha Dham. Rev. Fr. Joseph Thannippilly and Sr. Rose Mathew were appointed as director and assistant directress respectively by his Grace, Dr Paschal Topno.

### Our Activities in Brief

Rev. Fr. Joseph Thannippilly, with a group of dedicated persons consisting of brothers, priests and nuns, visited the different barracks of the central jail on a regular basis. Two brothers of Samanvaya, Br. Jaison and Br. Siby, and one brother from the Malabar Missionary Brothers, Br. George, and a few youths from Bhopal were the regular volunteers. The superintendent and the jailors, as well as the officials in-charge, were very cooperative and supportive of the ministry. The volunteers were allowed to visit the inmates and have contact with them.

Sr. Rose Mathew and Sr. Selmy Paul dedicated their time for this ministry under the guidance of the diocesan coordinator, Rev. Fr. Joseph Thannippilly. The women's section was visited twice a week, their problems listened to and they were morally supported. We help the prisoners to accept themselves as they are and their life situations as it is. The counselling sessions are meant

to bring peace, reconciliation and hope in their lives. By the grace of God, we have succeeded in this to a great extent. And the prisoners look forward to our visits.

We contact the families of those who are completely neglected by their families. Sometimes we travel far and wide to meet and motivate the family members to visit their mothers, sisters, wives or relatives that are imprisoned.

**Besides the visits and contacts, we do a few other things:**

- Conduct medical camps.
- The feast of Raksha Bandhan, Diwali, Women's Day, Christmas, New Year, Children's Day etc. are celebrated with the inmates and sweets are distributed on these occasions.
- Bhajan Mandali and Satsang were conducted many times under the guidance of His Grace Dr Paschal Topno and Rev. Fr. Joseph Thannippilly.
- Prominent women from society are invited to give lectures on health and hygiene, the dignity of women, etc. in the women's section.
- Games and competitions are conducted for women and prizes are distributed on various occasions.
- Cultural and entertainment programmes are conducted almost every month throughout the year to keep the inmates happy.
- Wool was distributed to the women and they knitted sweaters for the children inside.
- We were asked to give a one-month training in English-speaking to the jailors of Madhya Pradesh.
- 5 typewriters, 2 tailoring machines, 1 TV and 1 tape recorder were donated to the Central Jail, Bhopal by our Archbishop.
- Another milestone was the readiness to

organize the national conference of PMI in Bhopal at the pastoral centre as the Archbishop agreed to host this national gathering in the month of October 2005. So many meetings were conducted for the execution of this conference. We collaborated with the diocese and the national team of PMI at different levels. Another thing to note is that the Archbishop was personally present at all the meetings and we could collaborate with the authorities for fundraising and finding resource persons. We could arrange a visit to the Central Jail, Bhopal for the participants of the conference and get the superintendent himself as the resource person to share his experiences. He enlightened and inspired the group with his rich experience in prison as the superintendent.

In the year 2006, during the regional level meeting in Agra, Sr. Rose Mathew was appointed as the state coordinator. Under her leadership, the MP state governing body was formed for PMI. They were

- Assistant coordinator - Mr Bedwin Alvares from Indore diocese
- Secretary and treasurer - Fr. Paschal Cuthina (Passionist).

After the formation of the team, Sr. Rose Mathew visited each diocese under the MP state and motivated them to come under the banner of PMI and diocesan units were formed.

**Conclusion**

Now PMI has grown in leaps and bounds at all levels of RELEASE, REFORM AND REHABILITATION. And many, who are behind the bars, experience the compassionate love of Jesus through the volunteers, and many who are released experience the accompaniment of the volunteers. Whatever we could do is very little - a small drop in the vast ocean.

## All because of you!

In 2001 Mrs Marlene Lalhmingangi (L), wife of Mr Marlon Dixon Mason, spent nine months at Adra, West Bengal for her children's schooling. During this period, she was deeply moved by the lives of the socially-deprived children in the slums of the Railway Colonies of Adra. She started gathering these children and teaching them Bible stories, conducted prayer sessions, shared and listened to their problems. Many of them received healing during her prayers. Her work and preaching spread in Adra town and many people came to attend the prayer service. As she could not speak in Hindi, her talks were translated by a local person, and in spite of that many people were touched by her preaching and prayers.

After she came back to Mizoram, she could not go back to Adra due to her father's illness. She started a prayer group called 'Catacomb' in August 2005 as she experienced God's blessing and inner contentment that inspired her to continue with the mission. The members consisted mainly of boys who were struggling due to alcohol or drug abuse. Eventually, those boys and girls who had overcome their bad habits volunteered to help others who were combating similar issues. They would recite the Divine Mercy prayer every day at 3:00 pm in the church; sometimes they would pray the entire night till 5:00 am. Fr. Alban D'Suza, a Capuchin priest used to offer mass for them at 1:00 am which was followed by counselling sessions. Today many of these members are active youth leaders in many of the parishes within Aizawl City.



In the year 2006, Mrs Marlene felt the need to conduct religious service inside the jails. She started visiting the

district and central jails in Aizawl with her friends. With her passionate zeal for starting a PMI Unit, the office of Prison Ministry India, Mizoram was officially inaugurated on 27 July 2006 by the Most Rev. Stephen Rotluanga, Bishop of Mizoram, Aizawl diocese. She worked ceaselessly and had done the groundwork to get it officially started. She was the pillar of the PMI, Mizoram Unit. She initiated and nurtured the ministry from nothing to a state-level unit, covering prisons from Central Jail, Aizawl, and eventually extending to the district-level prisons in Mizoram. She advocated the principle of petitioning and went all around begging for money to organise programmes in prisons. Some of the programmes conducted were: medical camps, games and recreational activities for the inmates. Skill training on handicraft, mushroom cultivation and cooking were organised. Through her initiative, the collection for Prison Sunday was begun. With her tremendous devotion and hard work, the PMI, Mizoram unit started conducting programmes two times every year in each and every one of the district and central jails in Aizawl, which is being continued till now.

Mrs Marlene Lalhmingangi was appointed as the first coordinator of PMI, Mizoram unit on 10 May 2010. After she died of cancer on 07 June 2011, Fr. Praveen Fernandez was appointed in her place.



**Francis Thantluanga**  
State Secretary  
PMI, Mizoram Unit.



## *Joined Hands: Mission of Solidarity*

Prison Ministry India was officially inaugurated by the Most Rev Patras Minj, Bishop of Ambikapur on 25 December 2002, on Christmas day. Just prior to that, the Bishop had invited all the heads of the religious and educational institutions to join hands in this mission of solidarity and asked us to start a welfare program in the jail for prisoners. For this purpose, we needed to have a team that could lead the group and so we had to elect a coordinator, a secretary and a treasurer. The Bishop then asked if anyone had any experience working in

jails. Sr Joy Panikulam HC had worked for 4 years in the Bilaspur Jail. So, Sr Joy Panikulam HC was elected as the coordinator. She, with the help of the secretary of the Bishop, Fr Alexander Ekka, prepared a list with the team. This was for all the volunteers who were elected from each community for the programs to be conducted in the various male, female and juvenile jails. Thereafter, we began the program systematically in all the sections – male, female and juvenile – after Christmas.

After the inauguration, the following action plan was worked out by the Coordinator Sr Joy: Prayer, entertainment, counselling, various handicrafts like tailoring etc. for the brothers behind the bars.

Thus, we the team members continued to reach out to all the other diocese like Raigarh, Raipur, Jagadapur, Jashpur, Durg, Kanger, and a few sub-jails and district jails by conducting one-day seminars, two-days seminars, state gatherings, etc. For these we requested help from Rev Fr Josekutty and Rev Fr Sebastian, who were the national coordinators at the time.

We thank, Most Rev Bishop Patras Minj, Bishop of Ambikapur diocese and all the different institutions that took the initiative for the success of this mission. We are grateful and thank the national coordinators for their help and support.

**Sr Joy Panikulam HC**

### **PRISON MINISTRY INDIA**

52 Thomas Layout, Sarjapur Road, Carmelaram PO, Bangalore – 560 035

#### **PMI National Office Silver Jubilee**

Glorifying Jesus who came to seek and save the lost most cordially we invite you to the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Prison Ministry India (PMI) national level service to be held at St Joseph's Auditorium in St Joseph Indian Highschool Campus, 23 Vittal Mallya Road, Near Mallya Hospital, Bangalore – 560 001, on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019 from 9 am to 4 pm.

With most warm thanks for your valuable collaboration in the past 25 years and with heartiest welcome,

**Fr Francis Kodiyan MCBS**  
*National Coordinator*

**Sr Lini Sheeja MSC**  
*National Secretary*

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

**RSVP: Fr Francis Kodiyan – 9447710488; email: pmi2005@rediffmail.com, frandiyan@live.in;  
Sr Lini Sheeja – 9880022209; email: nationalpmi2015@gmail.com, linimsc@gmail.com**

## I WAS IN PRISON, you visited me

**Sr. Reena D'Souza SSpS,**  
*Coordinator, PMI, Gulbarga*

To actualize the above phrase in the lives of people behind the bars, the team of Prison Ministry India, Gulbarga unit organized a programme to celebrate the 73rd Independence Day and Raksha Bandhan Day in Central Prison, Gulbarga on 17 August 2019.

The day began with the active participation of the inmates in decorating the stage and making seating arrangements for the dignitaries. While one group was actively involved in arranging the sound system and musical instruments, the other group was fully involved in blowing the tricolour balloons and decorating it beautifully in front of the stage. It was wonderful to see how each one was involved in their own creative way in the preparations.

We began the programme with the prayer, 'Let the flame of your light continue to burn in me', as the dignitaries lit the lamp. Thereafter we praised the Creator God and thanked the mother earth and

our land Karnataka by singing the state song. The Chief Guest of the day Rt. Rev. Robert Miranda, the Bishop of Gulbarga spoke to the inmates as a loving father. He addressed them with compassion: 'The walls of prison do not bind us, rather the cruel attitude within us binds us to prison. Therefore, let us rise above the indifferences and live in harmony, peace and co-operate with one another'. He promised them his constant prayerful support. The Chief Superintendent Shri. P.S. Ramesh assured his full support to Prison Ministry India to organize various programmes and activities for the welfare of prisoners. The other dignitaries were Dr Myageri, Superintendent, Mr Gopal Krishna, Mrs Shainaz, and Mrs Sunanda, the jailors of Central Prison Kalaburagi.

The event was made more meaningful and creative by the students of St. Mary's School, Kotnoor and St. Xavier's P.U. College, Sitnoor, with their patriotic dance and songs. The Raksha Bandhan day was celebrated by joyfully tying the rakhi on the arms of the dignitaries and inmates by these students. One of the inmates was very enthusiastic and danced rhythmically to the song. Mr Singh and team, sang Bhajans and patriotic songs melodiously to add joy to the day. Thus, everyone contributed to make this event a memorable one.

Prison Ministry India, Gulbarga Unit had taken the initiative to organize the celebration. Fr. David, compeered the whole programme, Sr. Alphonsa welcomed the gathering and Fr. Praveen SJ thanked everyone including the other members of Prison Ministry India. Fr. Roshan, Sr. Irisa BS, Mrs Leena Pereira, and Sr. Vinny SSpS actively joined their hands for the smooth running of the programme.

## FR. BARRY JOHN O'LOUGHLIN, S.J. [HAZ]

The Man who dedicated his life to prisoners

[21 Sept. 1939 – 05 Aug. 2019]

Fr. Napoleon  
Daltonganj Diocese,  
Jharkhand

Fr. Barry John O'Loughlin was born in Melbourne, Australia, on 21 September 1939, the second child of John O'Loughlin and Catherine.

Barry's Jesuit vocation developed during the years he was attending

Burke Hall and Xavier College, Kew. Barry joined the Jesuit novitiate, Loyola, Watsonia on 1 February 1959, and pronounced his first vows on 2 February 1961. The following 3 years were spent in philosophy studies, during which time he applied to the Australian Provincial, to be sent to the Hazaribag Mission.

His novitiate and three years of Philosophy spent at Loyola College, Watsonia helped to foster his missionary vocation, as during those years several scholastics (those between novitiate and priesthood) were sent from Watsonia to India. Barry laid a deep Jesuit foundation within himself during those formative years at Watsonia and in 1964 joined the Hazaribag Jesuit mission in India.

Arriving in India on 1 January 1964, he started teaching in St. Xavier's, Hazaribag at once, under Fr. John Moore, the then Principal. In June 1966, he attended a six-months language study at Manresa House in Ranchi. This opened up for him the spirit and structure of the vast Ranchi mission. In 1976, he joined Fr. Hans Hendricks in the rapidly developing Santhal parish of Maheshmunda, which has since been given over to the Bhagalpur diocese. There he acquired a great interest in the Santhal apostolate.

He was also a great confessor and spiritual guide. As a confessor, he gave much emphasis to the confession of love. In the confession of love, one needs to be aware of God's unconditional love and abundant mercy rather than just being sorrowful of one's sins. So, he encouraged the penitents to approach this sacrament with an attitude of gratitude and deep love for God.

In 2006, Barry moved to the pre-novitiate community in Shahpur, Daltonganj, where he taught the pre-novices. Barry was not satisfied, merely relying on his old bundles of retreat notes, rather he kept himself updated in this regard. Whether it was teaching the pre-novices or giving retreats to other groups,

he worked with single-mindedness and devotion in preparing the matter. In order to achieve his desired goals, Barry followed a strict self-disciplined life. He was a person of determination and dedication.

He was a man of simplicity and humility which attracted many people towards him. He was very sensitive to the needs of others, and thus he was a man for others. Barry used hearing aids as his hearing was poor, but when he found out that one of the neighbours had a hearing problem, he gave away his own hearing aid to that person.

Fr. Barry was a man of prayer and action. His prayer life was well-reflected in the way he celebrated the Holy mass, the way he related to people in the community when he visited inmates in jail and in other places. He always had a special love for the sick and the prisoners, so he liked to say mass in the Daltonganj jail on Sundays. He was on the mailing list of the special Catholic Prison Ministry in India. In all these years, Barry developed an apostolic combination of parish and retreat work that made a real contribution to the Hazaribag missionary scene.

In April 2018, while giving a retreat to the Missionaries of Charity Sisters in Kolkata, Fr. Barry developed a serious infection on

his left calf muscle which was diagnosed as gangrene. As he needed a long time to heal, he stayed in the dispensary of St. Xavier's College Kolkata for 8 months. Our sincere gratitude to the Provincial of Kolkata and St. Xavier's College community Kolkata for taking good care of Fr. Barry, particularly Br. Chintamani SJ.

On 6 February 2019, Barry moved to Australia and took up residence at the Campion House. It was while under treatment and undergoing skin grafts in the Royal Melbourne Hospital that his final illness took place. After a heart attack, he suffered kidney failure, and before dialysis could begin, he died in the early morning of 05 August 2019, in the Royal Melbourne Hospital. We express our gratitude to the Provincial of Australia, and those others who gave support and help to Barry during his last days of stay in Australia.

Let us pray for his departed soul!





The Prison Ministry India, Vasai Group paid a visit to the Bhiwandi Observation Home on 22 August 2019, accompanied by Fr Sanjay Feriera and Sr Irene. Fr Sanjay taught the kids devotional songs and they all danced to action songs. All the kids were jumping up and down and dancing to the tunes of Fr Sanjay's guitar. We then got some of the kids to participate in a skit based on 'forgiveness'. The theme of this skit was taken from the Bible (Matthew 18:21-35).

The kids participated actively in the skit and those that watched the skit were touched by the idea of the importance of forgiving others. Many of them had heard of the concept of forgiveness for the first time.

Afterwards, we conducted a drawing competition based on the theme of celebrating Independence Day and Raksha Bandhan Day. We were motivated by the response we received from them. We then asked them questions based on the skit and everyone agreed that forgiveness was the way to heal broken relationships.

## PMI Vasai Unit visit to Observation Home

In the Girl's Section, they narrated to us their experience of celebrating Raksha Bandhan Day on 15 August 2019. All the girls tied rakhi on the hands of the other jail inmates. They were inspired to take part in the drawing competition based on the theme of Independence Day.

Whenever the Prison Ministry Vasai Group goes to visit these children, the children express comfort and joy on seeing us, and they always ask us this recurring question while we are leaving, "Phir kab aaoge?" (When will you come back?)

### Gujarath State - From Nothing.....

Years ago, when I was working in Kajra Social Service Centre (KSSS), Justice and Peace Commission, we were asked to attend a seminar in Pune. Dr Kiran Bedi IPS was the resource person who talked to us about the Prison Ministry, after which she had taken us to Yervuda Jail. I was eager to meet these people whom we think of as criminals and people with negative energy. While we were visiting the lady's section, my attention fell on an incarcerated mother with children. It was at this moment that I felt the call of God to enter this ministry, to fulfil the words of Christ, "When I was in prison, you visited me" (Mt 25:36). After attending the training programme in Bangalore, I entered the prison to meet our brethren behind bars.

On my first visit, I was denied permission and it took 3 years to get the entry pass from the jailors. We started teaching Gujarati, Spoken

English, and value education. We started to spend time with the broken beings behind the bars, listened to their life and spend time in counselling them. We also reached out to their families, educated their children while also providing them with uniforms, notebooks, fees etc. We took care of our brethren's medical needs and provided legal aid whenever and for whomever it was needed. After their release, we constantly follow-up and make sure that they do not re-enter prison. A number of spiritual exercises were conducted that many turned to God. Now, there are a good number of volunteers who are involved in this ministry in Gujarat. It is a great blessing to be provided with this opportunity to extend our services to the brethren as we bring God's blessings into their lives.

**Sr. Fulmani**

*Gujarat State Coordinator*

## The Beginnings and Growth



Mrs Vinita J Britto

Prison Ministry started in the diocese of Poona in the year 2006 and every attempt to obtain permission to visit the prisons was futile. Following in the footsteps of our founder brothers, Varghese Karippery and Francis Kodiyan, and adopting the principles of PMI - Prayer is our powerhouse, God's providence is our bank balance, Inconvenience is our convenience, Begging is our lifestyle - the breakthrough came in 2013 when Fr. Wilfred V. Fernandes and Bro. William Antony along with a few volunteers started an intercessory prayer group to pray for the intentions of the ministry. This has been our armour worn before entering a prison against all adversities.

"I was in prison and you visited me" - Matthew 25:36. The scripture calls us to visit those in prison. Thus, Prison Ministry India which started in St. Patrick's Cathedral in June 2013 opened its doors to parishioners from other parishes as well. Gradually, as people came to gain clarity and knowledge about the ministry, the numbers have increased. This was a great consolation. The first permission to enter the prison was granted to conduct a medical camp on 28 September 2013 at the District Men's Open Jail. Once the permission was granted, we had to remember that it was

extremely important to strictly follow the prison rules and regulations.

Luke 14:28-29 reminds us, "Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to lay a foundation and see if you have enough money to complete it?" Hence, on Mission Sunday 20 October 2013, the Prison Ministry canteen was inaugurated. Volunteers stood in solidarity with one common goal in mind, to offer time and talent for the welfare of prisoners behind the bars and families of the incarcerated. With the support of our fellow parishioners and support services, we were able to raise sufficient funds to cover the cost of medical supplies, spectacles, etc. In our passion to do more, we are still discovering activities in order to generate funds to support the ministry. Since 2013 to the present day, we are committed to financial accountability in accordance with accounting principles and audit reports by an independent chartered accountant firm.

In the process, we have provided education to several prisoners and prisoners' children to enrich their lives. In the words of Victor Hugo, "He who opens a school door, closes a prison". One such inspiring case is of a mechanical engineer whose education we had funded and who is now serving in the Navy. Besides, in the area of health and hygiene, we have arranged eye, dental, skin and gynaecology medical camps on a regular basis. We have conducted vocational training programmes, given talks on moral guidance, held sports competitions as an annual feature, and inter-religious appreciation; the celebration of feasts, including Easter and Christmas followed by fellowship to build trust, peace and harmony. All of these are done with the prior permission of the officials, and

develop love for creation – tree plantation, provide family support in order to help inmates to function more positively within the prison environment. Necessary assistance is provided to ex-offenders for re-entry into the community and family. An after-care programme to prevent recidivism is underway. In all this, we have witnessed the amazing results of God's grace and power at work.

National gatherings in 2014 & 2018 – thanks to Bishop Alwyn Misquitta, Fr. Sebastian Vadakumpadan, Sr. Dhannam Athisayam ScSc and Sr. Diana Mankuzhy CTC for imparting their invaluable knowledge – the state coordinators' meet held on 7 November 2015, the regional conferences held on 13-15 May 2016, and the Maharashtra state conference held on 29 September-1 October 2017 gave us deeper understanding of the challenges faced, an opportunity to exchange ideas and build a rapport with the state coordinators and volunteers from different states.

The Prison Ministry meets once a month to update volunteers about the current affairs of the ministry. With prior permission, and as the volunteer strength has increased, we are able to meet the growing requests of the prison authorities. This goes to show that Prison Ministry India has set a benchmark in the mind and heart of the officials and prisoners as well. Always keep a humble attitude and show courtesy and appreciation to prison officials.

Our journey has not been a smooth one, but definitely a satisfying one. Each year we meet inmates from different backgrounds. Our motto "Transforming Lives" signify treating everyone with dignity and respect, and it is never too late to give people a second chance. It is always best to refrain

from asking for particular details about an inmate's crime.

Fr. Wilfred V. Fernandes has put in a good word to the Poona diocesan priests to start a Prison Ministry cell in their parish. A special thanks to Bishop Thomas Dabre and all priests for their love and understanding.

The seminarians who render their services on weekdays and Prison Youth Ministry that started on 13 July 2019 has brought a new ray of hope in the lives of Boys U/18 and U/21 at the Observation Home for Boys by their active involvement in prison activities.

As part of our activity, we have been able to build a 60" x 40" gymnasium at the District Men's Open Jail in spite of all odds. And recently, the 2019 PMI Pune Half-Marathon has given a tremendous boost to the plans to set up a rehabilitation centre for women and children in Karjat and the fight to reach the goal continues. Our upcoming event 'Run for a Cause 2020 – Edition 2' Marathon is to be held on 9 February 2020 at Don Bosco High School and Junior College.

The prisoners are overwhelmed by the support and love shown to them and, therefore, we are determined to live up to the trust and commitment made by us. When we see such a change happen, we know that we have made a difference in society.

Proverbs 46:10 says, "Be still and know what God wants from you." Listen to the Prison Ministry Spiritual Director for guidance and as God prompts you with ideas, wait patiently, watch for ways to serve and listen as He guides Prison Ministry through each step! Seek wisdom and guidance as walls do not create prisons.



As on Friday in the Passion Week, so again in mid-September, the Church commemorates Our Lady's great sorrows. The seven principal ones were: the prophecy of aged Simeon in the temple, the 300 miles flight into Egypt with the infant, the loss of Jesus in Jerusalem when he was a boy of 12, Mary's encounter with her Divine Son on his way to Calvary, his crucifixion, the taking down of his body from the cross and his burial. The Lady of Sorrows feast was first granted to the Servites in 1668, and when Pope Pius VII came out of exile in 1814, he extended it to the universal Church in gratitude. Now, I would like to illustrate the seven sorrows of Mother Mary.

Firstly, the prophecy of aged Simeon in the Church: He blessed the Child Jesus and said to Mother Mary that this child was destined for the fall and rise of many, and to be a sign that would be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many would be revealed and a sword would pierce her own soul too.

Secondly, the 300 miles flight into Egypt with the one-year-old infant: The Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to seek for the child to destroy him". Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night and went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

Thirdly, the loss of Jesus in Jerusalem when he was a boy of twelve: When the boy Jesus went missing, Mother Mary suffered extremely. Mother Mary and Joseph searched actively for Jesus, but they could not find him. After having requested for three days, they found him in the temple sitting among the teachers and listening to them and asking them questions.

Fourthly, Mary's encounter with her Divine Son on his way to Calvary: While Jesus was carrying the cross, Mother Mary's sufferings and tribulations were unbearable. Jesus too suffered a lot while carrying the cross. Fifthly,

Jesus was crucified on the cross. While soldiers were crucifying Jesus on the cross, she wept bitterly. She experienced extreme anguish and pain.



Bro A S Manoj Kumar

Sixthly, we see Jesus'

body being taken down from the cross: after having struggled on the cross for a long time, Jesus died on the cross. When evening came, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who had also been a disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate and requested for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. Seeing Jesus on the cross, Mary's heart was saddened.

Seventhly, let us examine the burial of Jesus Christ. Joseph of Arimathea provides his new tomb as a token and symbol of his discipleship. The value of anything we give to Jesus is in the dedicated heart that leads to the gift. The women watched, giving their time and themselves in person, in their desire to remain with him.

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, in fact, it is we who make her sorrowful by our wrong deeds and evil tendencies. Mary at the foot of the cross epitomizes the attitude of a faithful disciple who no matter what the extent of the suffering he/she may be experiencing, no matter how many tears he/she had shed, continue to have faith in God who will never abandon him/her. Throughout her life, Mary was prepared for the worst and yet she never gave up faith and she inspires us to face our own sufferings in life with an attitude of complete surrender to God. Like St. Paul, "We should be able to say that no loss, no pain, no suffering, not even death can separate us from the love of Christ". Here Mary asks us to be steadfast and firm in times of tribulations. Let us remain close to Jesus even in the most adverse situations and circumstances of our own life.

## MATER DOLOROSA (MOTHER OF SORROWS)

## Paryushan Festival celebrated at Central Jail

September 4, 2019: Sarva Dharma Maitri Sangh along with the Universal Senior Secondary School and Rotary Mewar of Udaipur celebrated Paryushan Parv [an annual festival of repentance and forgiveness for self-purification, to remove accumulated karma of the previous year and develop control over new accumulating karma, by following Jain austerities and other rituals. Paryushan means abiding and coming together. Paryushan Festival is the most important holy events of jains] with the inmates of Central Jail, Udaipur on Wednesday the afternoon. While speaking on the festival, the district chairman of Rotary Mewar Sandeep Singhatwadia said that this festival can bring change in the mind and hearts of the inmates of this jail. The Director of Maitri Sangh, Fr. Norbert Herman SVD said that the students of St. Mary's Senior Secondary School Fatehpura presented a TV Based Serial "saas bhi kabhi bahu thi" in a humorous way to the inmates.

Jail Superintendent Mr. Surendra Singh Shekavat and Assistant Jail Superintendent Mr. Chandan Singh, the President of Rotary Mewar, Mr. Chetan Prakash Jain, Secretary, Mr. Dinmay Choudhary, former president, Dr. Arun Bapna, Sisters from St. Mary's Fatehpura, Udaipur Catholic Diocese, Seminarians and Sr. Rosly Panchikaran SSPs were present on the occasion. Po Mushtaq Chanchal was the master of the ceremony. Fr. Norbert Herman SVD proposed vote of thanks at the end of the programme.



Fr Norbert Herman SVD  
Rajasthan State Coordinator





Sr Jobina USFS

*North East Regional Co-ordinator*

## History of

## PRISON MINISTRY IN THE NORTHEAST

Like all the ventures of the Catholic Church, the work of reaching out to prisoners in the North-east had its humble beginning in 1998 with a group of committed volunteers from various religious institutions. During the local CRI meeting in Guwahati, after a lot of reflection and discussion, the group unanimously placed the responsibility of initiating the Prison Ministry in Guwahati on the shoulders of Bro. Joy Padayathil CST. In the meantime, Fr. Joseph Puliylakkattil, who was delegated by the national office, came to Guwahati in 1998 and they tried to gain the necessary permission from the jail authorities. Initially, the response from the prison authorities was rather negative. It was in September 1998 that Fr. Varghese Karipperri, the national coordinator and Fr. Sebastian Thekenath, the assistant coordinator came to Guwahati to conduct a seminar on PMI. During this seminar, Archbishop Thomas Menampampil SDB encouraged the group to go forward and to take up this mission as a challenge. Thus, after the meeting, along with Fr. Varghese and Fr. Sebastian, some of the members met the Inspector General of prisons, Assam and received permission to visit the Guwahati prison every Saturday. Thus, the long-awaited project took off on 10 October 1998, sowing the seed of Prison Ministry in the North-east. Sisters of the Ursuline Franciscan congregation, Northeast Province began to closely associate with PMI, since 2005, when Sr. Rosin Noronha UFC was deputed to work at the regional office in Guwahati. Even though permission was granted to visit the prison, there were a number of difficulties, the prison authorities were not cooperative and there were a lot of restrictions, only limited number of volunteers could visit (6 members). Yet, the volunteers enthusiastically moved forward with the mission of reaching out to the brethren behind the bars. As a result, today we have PMI units in all the states of North-east and the volunteers continue to carry out the mission with zeal and enthusiasm, facing all the challenges to reach out to the brethren in the North-east region till date.

Thus, the Prison Ministry is the ministry of presence where the inmates are encouraged and morally supported. They experience God through forgiveness and get back their identity as a child of God. On a humanitarian basis, the Prison Ministry India launched in the North-east in the year 1996, opening an office in Guwahati. And it was registered in the year 2018, on 11 May under the Society's Registration Act XX1 of 1860.



## Independence Day and Rakshabhandan Day Celebrations in different Prisons within the Diocese of Gulbarga



Sub jail - Shorapur

Coordinator: Sr. Anitha UFS



Sub jail, Bidar

Coordinator: Sr. Christine



Sub jail, Aurad



Coordinator: Sr. Ida SSs



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**Seminar on PMI at Redemptorists Theologate  
Bangalore**



**Felicitating Bp Mar Sebastian Adayanthrath on his  
installaation ceremony as the Bishop of Mandya Diocese.**